

OPELOUSAS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE ODDD JUNE 25, 2021

ADOPTED BY THE OPELOUSAS CITY COUNCIL AUGUST 10, 2021

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A special thanks to the residents of Opelousas who gave their time and input to the plan.

We also thank Parish President Jessie Bellard, Opelousas City Mayor Julius Alsandor, Opelousas City Manager Purvis Morrison, Police Chief Martin McClendon, Opelousas City Tourism Director Melanie LeBouef, Code Enforcement Director Margaret Doucet, and the St. Landry Parish Tax Assessor's office for their support.

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We thank the members of the **Opelousas Downtown Development District Board** for their leadership in this planning initiative:



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This plan is an initiative of the Opelousas Downtown Development District and was prepared by Center for Planning Excellence, with CARBO Landscape Architecture and Fregonese Associates.

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The background of the page is an aerial photograph of a city street grid, rendered in a teal color with a halftone dot pattern. The text "Executive Summary" is centered in the upper right quadrant of the image.

Executive Summary

The Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD) Master Plan sets the vision for the future of downtown Opelousas—one that celebrates its heritage while embracing the planning and design recommendations needed to move the District forward. The Plan is based on guiding principles that reflect residents' core values. These principles were reached through public input that informed the actions recommended in this Plan, expressing residents' vision for the future and how the city can provide a livable, resilient downtown environment for all residents and visitors. It also provides a roadmap for the Opelousas Downtown Development District to implement these transformational changes. The successful implementation of the Plan will take a concerted effort by city leaders, area businesses, community advocates, residents, and investors. This Plan has a strategic focus on the historic downtown core but also presents a vision and path forward for the adjacent areas within the Opelousas Downtown Development District, addressing a broad range of planning and development issues to guide the ODDD toward sustainable growth.

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN OPELOUSAS

During our engagement efforts throughout the course of this planning process, several themes emerged. Building renovations, street improvements, historic preservation, commercial development, additional programming—we heard consistent demand for these kinds of improvements. The Downtown Plan vision statement incorporates these themes and serves as the foundations for the recommendations that follow.

Opelousas is one of the best small cities in Louisiana and is a model for downtown revitalization. Opelousas' downtown economy retains and recruits new residents and businesses, drawing people from across Acadiana, the state, and the region. Downtown Opelousas is walkable and vibrant, reflecting its rich culture and history while looking to its future as a destination for residents and visitors to live, work, and play.

Our vision for downtown Opelousas is that it...

- » *Is the heart of economic, cultural, and civic life in the city*
- » *Features a vibrant mix of commerce, open space, active streets, and housing options that serve adjacent neighborhoods and beyond*
- » *Has buildings, streets, public space, and programming that are inclusive and inviting, providing opportunities for future generations to live healthy, productive lives*
- » *Demonstrates environmental stewardship that will ensure downtown remains a destination for generations*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that should be implemented across the entire District as shown in the map above are provided in the Overall Recommendation section of this Plan (pages 36 to 73). These general recommendations are followed by specific recommendations for each sub-district. (pages 76 to 113) Some of these recommendations can be implemented within one to three years, others could take up to 5 to 10 years to implement, while others are long-term and can take up to 20 years to see full results of implementation.

Overall Recommendations

The Overall Recommendations section of the Plan identifies recommendations that are relevant throughout the Opelousas Downtown Development District. These recommendations reflect the input of the many Opelousas residents and business owners who attended public meetings, Opelousas High School students, city and parish staff, and elected and appointed officials.

The overall recommendations will create a greater downtown area that is cohesive, well connected, and attractive to existing and future residents and

business owners. If implemented, the results of these recommendations will create a vibrant downtown as described in the shared vision described above. A number of these recommendations could be implemented citywide, if applicable.

The overall recommendations are organized into the following categories:

Urban Design recommendations address the protection and enhancement of the District’s historic character, visual distinctiveness, and pedestrian friendliness by guiding public and private development practices.

Mobility recommendations address improvements that allow pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and all other modes of transportation to easily navigate through and access the District, with an emphasis on developing safe multimodal corridors.

Economic Development recommendations address attracting potential residents and employers to the District, fostering entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, developing robust, sustainable programming, and strategic recruitment and approval of new uses within the District.

Arts and Culture recommendations address supporting and improving arts and culture organizations and creating opportunities to leverage art in future development, both public and private, in innovative ways.

Sustainability recommendations address planning for the long-term viability of future development in the District and suggest actions that will address persistent environmental stressors and prepare the District for sustainable future growth.

Adaptive Reuse recommendations address maintaining or returning vacant or blighted structures to commerce by adapting older buildings for new uses, as well as the required changes to existing zoning, education, and incentives for the developer community.

Sub-district Recommendations

The Plan establishes five character areas within the

Downtown Development District. These character areas were inspired by the existing conditions of downtown Opelousas today, but they are also visionary in their framing. They take cues from the form and use of existing buildings, but with an eye toward how these areas can each grow and contribute to a vibrant downtown environment.

Downtown mixed-use core sub-district

This sub-district consists of higher density mixed-use buildings that accommodate retail, offices, government, civic, and public buildings, along with a mix of housing types including small lot housing, townhomes, and multifamily units. This urban center has a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, street trees and buildings set close to the sidewalks to encourage activity.

Innovation sub-district

This sub-district is adjacent to the mixed use core and capitalizes on existing community resources within the area, most notably T.H. Harris Community College. By encouraging the development of entrepreneurial ventures, technological infrastructure, and shared workspace alongside education and workforce support services, this sub-district is intended to help foster collaborative endeavors and economic opportunity.

Commercial corridor sub-district

The Landry and Vine Street commercial corridor promotes the adaptive reuse or redevelopment of vacant, underutilized, obsolete, or structurally-deteriorated industrial and commercial properties. The area may include new commercial offerings as well as updated and emerging light industrial uses.

Highway commercial sub-district

This sub-district provides establishments offering accommodations, supplies, or services to motorists, while also highlighting the character and presence of local businesses and serving as an effective gateway into downtown Opelousas. Uses in this area serve the entire city and its trading area and support the central business and neighborhood districts.

Neighborhood and Community Services sub-district

This sub-district highlights the Opelousas' residents and promotes neighborhoods that are supported by shared public spaces and the services and amenities needed for daily life. They are also safe and accessible and have infrastructure like connected roadways, bike paths, green space, and sidewalks that improve connectivity to people, recreation, and jobs, increase home values, market the community, create standards for property improvements, and forge connections among residents.

PRIORITY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Priority actions are the first steps that the ODDD and city should take to address pressing issues. These recommendations should be completed in one to three years, and their implementation will take significant effort and collaboration by the ODDD, the city's elected and appointed officials, developers, businesses, and residents. Priority actions include:

- » Establish an implementation taskforce and appoint a lead entity charged with facilitating the implementation of the Opelousas Downtown Development District Plan.
- » Create a detailed inventory of buildings available for renovation/adaptive reuse, complete with property contacts. (See Recommendation F.1)
- » Increase programming of events downtown to draw residents and visitors into the core. Work with other providers to activate the downtown area weekly through markets, music, food, and art events. (See Recommendation C.2)
- » Review enforcement procedures for code violations for vacant buildings and incorporate more tools into the city's toolbox to address vacant and abandoned buildings. (See Recommendation F.2)
- » Review development ordinances to streamline and simplify the zoning and development processes and requirements. (See Recommendation F.2)
- » Create a sidewalk improvement program to enhance sidewalks and create safe, continuous paths. (See Recommendation B.2)
- » Develop a program to empower local entrepreneurs and foster innovative business endeavors downtown. (See Recommendation C.3)
- » Develop a program to educate and facilitate the clean up of downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to provide a more inviting environment for investment. (See Recommendation C.1)

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An implementation chart includes a summary of the next steps and identifies a timeline for implementation, responsible parties/champions, and potential funding sources. The implementation plan timeline is divided into short- (1 to 4 years), medium- (5 to 8 years), and long-term (9 to 20 years) recommendations. The implementation plan can be found on page xx.

Plan Implementation Actions:

1. Establish an implementation taskforce and appoint a lead entity charged with facilitating the implementation of the Opelousas Downtown Development District Plan
2. Create and maintain a website that serves as a communication, educational, and monitoring tool for downtown improvements
3. Prepare periodic reports of plan implementation progress and present key implementation outcomes to the ODDD, the city, and the public
4. Review and make necessary updates to the plan at 5-year intervals or as needed, based on the achievement of major implementation milestones or changing market conditions
5. Conduct and sponsor demonstration projects to field test and gauge community support for new land use and design elements

CALL TO ACTION

To accomplish the plan goals and bring the Vision to reality, the City must harness the combined efforts of the numerous stakeholders already engaged in improving Opelousas' greater downtown area. The Opelousas Downtown Development District Plan works to capture programs and practices that will be implemented through partnerships working towards the same goals. This plan creates a coordinated, strategic framework of pragmatic policies and tested actions that will achieve steady progress toward the Vision as expressed by the many residents and business representatives who have participated in the formation of this plan. These actions are also aligned to leverage complementary work and targeted investments to maximize benefits and ensure shared success. Collaboration between the ODDD, the city and parish, academic institutions, business groups, nonprofit organizations, residents and private business is critical to the success of the Opelousas Downtown Development District Plan. Working together we can improve the economic position of our city and create a vibrant community reminiscent of the thriving Opelousas that many residents remember.





Introduction

1

PLAN BACKGROUND

Opelousas is one of Louisiana's oldest communities, and its long history is infused with a cultural richness that sets it apart. This wealth of history and character is expressed most clearly in its downtown, which has been the center of commerce and activity for the city and surrounding communities for generations. Historic buildings and stately live oaks bear witness to the prominent past of downtown Opelousas and establish a distinct sense of place.

Downtown Opelousas enjoys many benefits that contribute to its position as the city center of commerce and public life. It serves as the seat of St. Landry Parish and houses many administrative and civic functions in that capacity. It also sits at a convenient crossroads of two primary regional corridors—Interstate 49 and Highway 190. This relative proximity to both smaller communities within the parish as well as larger metropolitan hubs like Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and Alexandria positions it well to be a destination for a range of residential, commercial, tourism, and other types of development.

Despite these important assets, downtown Opelousas has struggled to capitalize on them and maintain its status as a regional destination for business, services, and recreation. Like many downtowns across the country, a growing dependence on the automobile and access to abundant land has resulted in a migration from the central core, and today it lacks the density and diversity of uses needed to sustain a thriving environment. Decades of disinvestment in the downtown area are evidenced by vacant storefronts and blighted properties scattered throughout the Downtown Development District, leaving the downtown appearing incomplete. These vacancies, coupled with poorly planned corridor development through the heart of downtown,

discourage pedestrian activity and contribute to negative perceptions about the quality of life in Opelousas.

This plan sets the vision for the future of downtown Opelousas—one that celebrates its heritage while embracing the planning and design recommendations needed to move the District forward. The Plan is based on guiding principles that reflect residents' core values. These principles were created through public input that informed the actions recommended in this Plan, expressing residents' vision for the future and how the city can provide a livable, resilient downtown environment for all residents and visitors. It also provides a roadmap for the Opelousas Downtown Development District to implement these transformational changes. The successful implementation of the plan will take a concerted effort by city leaders, area businesses, community advocates, residents, and investors. This plan has a strategic focus on the historic downtown core but also presents a vision and game plan for the adjacent areas within the Opelousas Downtown Development District, addressing a broad range of planning and development issues to guide the ODDD toward sustainable growth.

This Plan should be considered the city's "blueprint" for long term development. It includes overall recommendations that are relevant to the entire ODDD, focus sections with priority actions for each of its sub-districts, and an implementation guide. This Plan, in itself, is not a regulatory document. Instead, once adopted, the Plan will be used to guide city development decisions. In addition, the City Council will consider the adopted Plan before adopting or approving local laws, ordinances or regulations, as required by state law.



Commercial establishments along Landry Street

PLANNING PROCESS AND ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

In 2019 the Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD) initiated a downtown master planning process to set a collaborative vision for what the community will become over the next 20 to 30 years, addressing issues like infrastructure, greenspace, walkability, beautification, and catalytic projects. The ODDD identified the need for a comprehensive plan for downtown to provide a road map for the District and city to make decisions about the downtown's redevelopment and growth priorities. While previous planning efforts have touched on necessary improvements and recommendations for some areas within the Downtown Development District, these efforts were dated and did not address the needs of the District in a comprehensive, holistic way. Though this plan is sensitive to the District's context within the city, it focuses exclusively on the needs within the District to offer a vetted, implementable roadmap for downtown Opelousas' revitalization.

THE DOWNTOWN PLANNING AREA

This planning process was initiated and funded by the Opelousas Downtown Development District, and the boundaries of that District serve as the boundaries for this planning initiative. The Downtown Plan encompasses more than the historic "downtown core." The Plan boundary incorporates areas planned and zoned for commercial activities, stretching from the I-49/US-190 junction west along Landry and Vine Streets, and follows Union and Market, the north-south commercial corridors to comprise a cross-shaped District. The boundary also includes a

special taxing district that collects a designated tax on transactions at six businesses and funds improvements within the District.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLAN

The foundation of any successful plan is a meaningful and robust public engagement process that involves a broad cross-section of stakeholders. This helps ensure that the plan is relevant to the community's specific issues and builds ownership among many so that the plan does not simply sit on a shelf, but generates public support that can



Map of ODDD boundaries

maintain momentum for implementing changes through election cycles and turnover of city staff. The process to develop the Opelousas Downtown Master Plan included many avenues of engagement to give the Opelousas Downtown Development District a relevant and effective plan. Each of those avenues is detailed below.

Advisory Committee

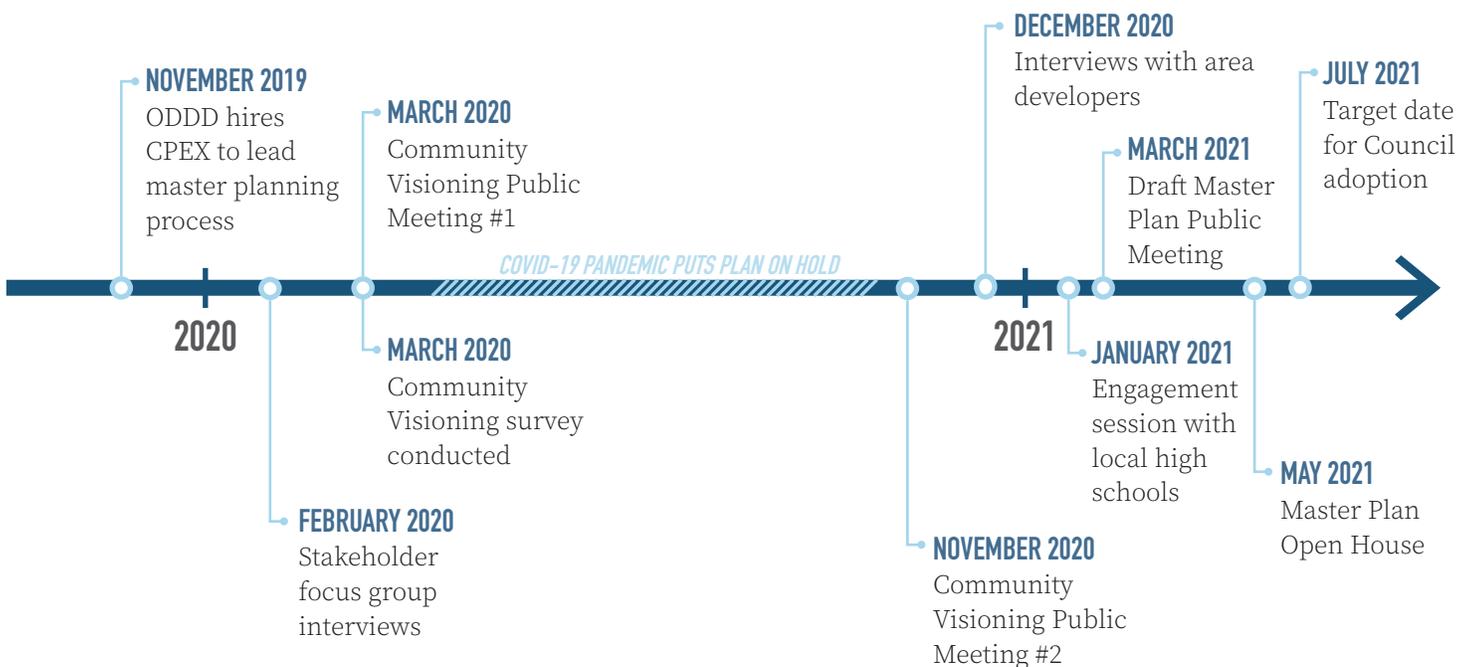
An Advisory Committee was formed to help guide the master planning process. The 20-member committee was composed of Opelousas residents with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, representing multiple facets of the community. The Advisory Committee met with the client and consultant ahead of project milestones to review draft documents, offer feedback, and help plan effective community engagement activities. Members also participated in public meetings and helped publicize these events, acting as a line of communication and information between their community contacts and the project team.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholders are people or organizations who have an interest in the Opelousas Downtown Master Plan or who will be affected by it. The consultant team conducted individual and small-group interviews with stakeholders, including representatives from the District’s major employers, small business owners, real estate professionals, law enforcement, and other focus groups. These interviews gave the project team a more in-depth understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Opelousas’ downtown, and common themes from these interviews helped to define the plan’s guiding principles.

Developer Interviews

Future development feasibility is a critical factor in envisioning the future of downtown Opelousas. To better understand market perceptions and realities, interviews were conducted with area developers. These interviews specifically asked about existing roadblocks to development within the District, perceived opportunities, and anticipated rental values—information which is valuable in calibrating feasibility and projected return on investment for proposed development.



Student Focus Groups

Given the long-range vision of this planning process, it was important to integrate the perspectives of young Opelousas residents. To do this, the consultant team conducted an engagement event with high school students representing Opelousas Senior High School, Opelousas Catholic School, and Westminster Christian Academy. After sharing a presentation on what planning is and introducing the Opelousas Downtown Master Plan, students were able to voice their own observations and priorities for the District.

Public Surveys

Online surveys provided a method for Opelousas residents to share their vision for the future of the District despite

the limitations on in-person engagement imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic response. Surveys also provided an extended opportunity for those who were unable to attend in-person public meetings to contribute their perspectives and ideas.

Public Meetings

Visioning Workshop #1

In March 2020, the consultant team hosted a Visioning Workshop at the Opelousas Civic Center which asked attendees to think big about what they wanted to see happen in Opelousas. Attendees wrote words that describe downtown Opelousas now and how they would like to see it in the future and voted for the most prominent challenges



Community Visioning Workshop #1



Community Visioning Workshop #2



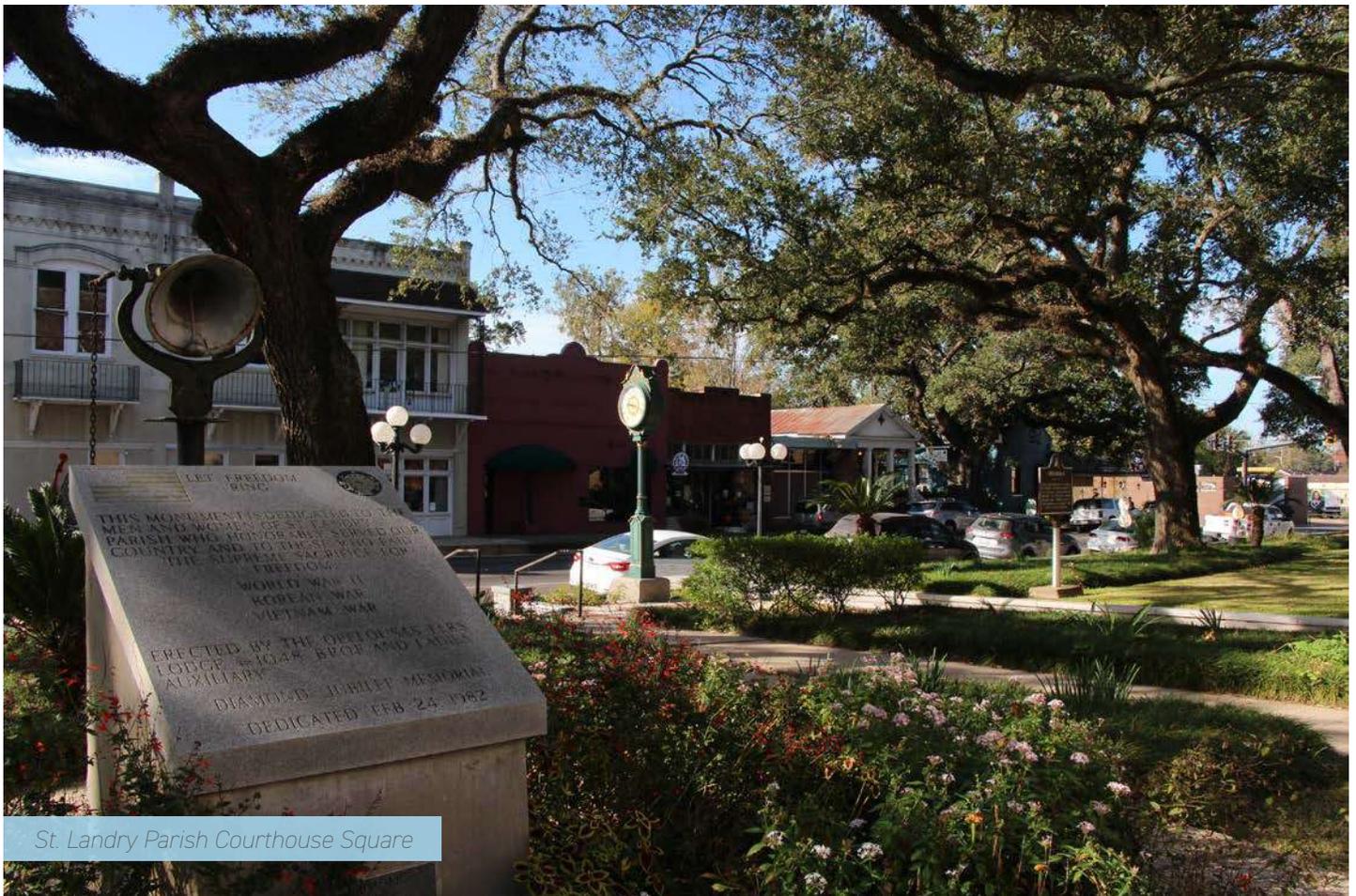
Community Visioning Workshop #2

Master Plan Workshop in the Parish Courthouse Square, again employing COVID-19 public safety measures. Participants were asked to provide their input at a series of stations. The first included the plan vision and vision map along with a series of draft overall recommendations. Participants voted for their priority recommendations and wrote additional comments on sticky notes. Then the public was asked to provide feedback on the draft priority actions for each of the various sub-districts.

information about next steps, approval and adoption of the plan, and they were asked to help name the plan.

Master Plan Open House

In May 2021, the consultant team hosted an outdoor Open House event in the Parish Courthouse Square. Several boards summarizing the material in the Draft Master Plan were displayed, and participants were given comment cards to share their support and/or recommendations for revisions to the plan. Participants were also provided with



St. Landry Parish Courthouse Square

DOWNTOWN CONTEXT

DOWNTOWN OPELOUSAS TODAY

Much has changed about the context, condition, and character of downtown Opelousas in the two hundred years since the city’s incorporation. While it used to enjoy a position at the center of civic and commercial life, activities that in the past occurred in the downtown have largely migrated to highway corridors and nearby metropolitan areas. However, throughout the course of the planning and engagement process, residents and stakeholders expressed their conviction that downtown Opelousas is brimming with potential and is ripe for revitalization. In a March 2020 public meeting, participants identified downtown’s available real estate, beneficial geography, community character, historic building stock, local culture, historic significance, and existing industry as some of its most valuable assets.

RANK	ASSET/OPPORTUNITY
1	Potential for vacant buildings downtown to become available
2	Beneficial geography: crossroads of 1-49 and 190, proximity to Lafayette and Baton Rouge
3	Community character: historic downtown buildings and homes
3	Local and regional culture
4	Historic significance of Opelousas
5	Existing food industry- Lou Ana, Tony’s, Savoie’s, Targil

Top downtown assets/opportunities identified by the public during Community Visioning Workshop #1

Summary of Issues and Opportunities Facing

Downtown

In developing this plan, downtown stakeholders and residents contributed to meeting materials and surveys

to identify the District’s issues and priorities. This analysis helped guide the structure and direction of recommendations included in the Downtown Plan. A thorough exploration of current conditions, direction from the Advisory Committee, and stakeholder interviews further refined and supported the findings. This section summarizes the issues and opportunities facing downtown, highlighting the ways in which many of the perceived issues currently facing downtown can be reframed as opportunities to create a vibrant downtown environment—one that includes a mix of housing, commercial, public spaces, arts and culture, and other elements that attract people to live, work, and play downtown.

RANK	ISSUE/OBSTACLE
1	Poor condition of infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, parking areas, utilities
2	Negative perceptions about Opelousas: high crime, bad schools
3	Blighted properties, vacant/abandoned buildings
3	Large amount of vacant property in downtown
4	Education system is lacking, including adult education options
5	Not much for families to do, few entertainment options

Top downtown issues identified by the public during Community Visioning Workshop #1

Creating a complete downtown

Despite its mixed-use zoning, downtown lacks many desired and essential uses. While the market for some commercial types, like auto repair shops, is over saturated, there is a significant need for other commercial types, like boutique retail, bars, and restaurants—key features of successful downtown environments. Retail is consistently listed as the largest employment sector in Opelousas, and market research indicates that Opelousas is attracting regional residents for retail of household goods and groceries, but losing local revenue to food and drink retailers outside of

the Opelousas area. A 2019 Downtown Market Analysis was prepared by Louisiana Main Street and examines business retention, expansion, and recruitment opportunities for downtown. It also presents market information that can be used to identify business gaps in the community and to fill empty and new commercial space.

Improving quality of life downtown

Perceptions of violence and danger in the District were noted throughout project engagement activities. These accompanied frequent complaints about the quality of education and lack of job opportunities in Opelousas. All of these factors have significant impacts on residents’ quality of life and affect the District’s ability to retain and recruit visitors, residents, and businesses. While there are many contributors to these perceptions, this plan acknowledges the connection between the built environment and social outcomes and highlights strategic opportunities to address these concerns.

Investing in downtown housing

While there are several neighborhoods within the boundary of the Downtown Development District, there are very limited residential options within the downtown core. Despite its mixed-use zoning, the downtown core severely lacks buildings that include any residential units. Establishing a downtown residential base is critical for the long term success of new and existing businesses within the District, as having a strong contingency of downtown residents helps provide consistent support to local businesses and improves safety conditions. Investing in residential development downtown can be a great first step in bringing more consistent activity to the area while also bolstering the business community downtown.

Providing quality public spaces

For a city of its size, Opelousas lacks quality open space for public gatherings and civic activities. While the St. Landry Parish Courthouse anchors its historic downtown core, there are not many opportunities for passive or active recreation on the grounds, and there are no other public open spaces downtown. Providing a variety of public spaces—parks, plazas, greens, pocket parks, etc.—is an important component of a successful downtown, offering residents and visitors spaces to convene and encouraging them to spend more time downtown. The distribution of these spaces and the connections between them are also critical in establishing an effective network. Several vacant lots within the District offer opportunities to create more public space and contribute to a vibrant public realm.

Creating economic opportunity

Vacancies and blight are common throughout the District, signifying a historic disinvestment in the area, particularly downtown, and discouraging potential investors from considering locating in the area. Stagnant population growth, high poverty rates, and low median income has kept potential rents and thus the return on future investment low. While these conditions can be challenges for attracting new investment, they should also make Opelousas competitive for state and federal funding programs designed to counteract poverty and blight.

AREA	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2019)
Louisiana	\$49,469
St. Landry Parish	\$36,403
Opelousas	\$22,646

AREA	POPULATION			CHANGE 2000 TO 2019	
	2000	2010	2019	NUMBER	PERCENT
United States	281,421,906	308,745,538	328,239,523	46,817,617	17%
Louisiana	4,468,976	4,533,372	4,648,794	179,818	4%
St. Landry Parish	87,700	83,384	82,124	-5,576	-6%
Opelousas	22,860	16,634	15,911	-6,949	-30%

Current social and economic forces greatly influence which development and revitalization strategies will be appropriate for Opelousas. Understanding how local changes compare to regional, state, and national trends can help predict how Opelousas might change in the future. These forces will affect downtown Opelousas' transportation, housing, and economy, and they also serve as indicators of what kinds of strategies will be most effective in creating economic opportunity within the District.

Improving relationships with highways

The District encompasses several major highways, the most notable of which are Landry and Vine Streets, serving as the primary east-west corridors, and Union and Main Streets, serving as the primary north-south corridors. While these roadways offer opportunities to carry travelers from Interstate 49 and other regional routes to downtown, they also pose a challenge for creating a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetic environment. In addition, they all carry one-way traffic, which contributes to higher speed traffic and potentially lower visibility for downtown businesses.

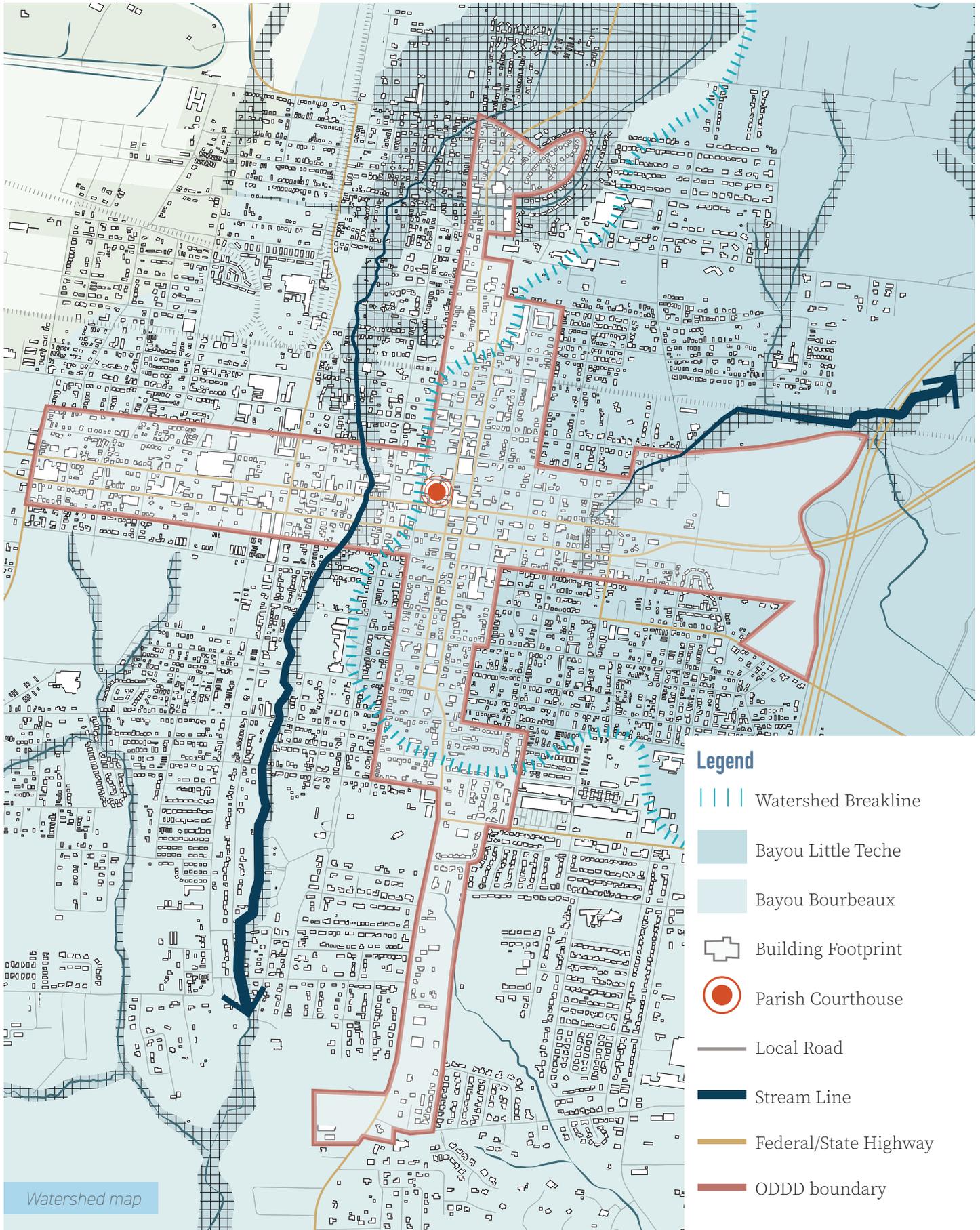
Integrating environmental sustainability

Within the ODDD sits the watershed break-line separating the Bayou Bordeaux watershed and the Bayou Little Teche watershed. Historic streams that once flowed naturally have been altered from their natural state or filled in to make room for development. While the streams may no longer flow in these areas, their natural floodplains remain,

leaving behind developed areas that are prone to flooding.

The current conditions of the ODDD provide few stormwater interventions, relying on aging grey infrastructure to manage excess water runoff. As rain falls, stormwater runoff is directed toward the street, where most of the water is conveyed until it is deposited to large concrete channels. This method of managing stormwater has several negative impacts on the environment around Opelousas, on the city itself, and on its residents.

The environmental impacts include contaminated stormwater runoff, loss of biodiversity, higher rates of soil erosion, increased velocity of water, and more. Visible impacts to the city can be observed through recurrent flooding, water undercutting or eroding around critical infrastructure, increased vulnerability during extreme weather events, high levels of contaminants concentrated, and more.





Le Vieux Village, a cultural asset and tourist center



Downtown vacancies on Main Street



Typical downtown street condition (Bellevue Street)



Channelized drainage feature



Historic structures on Court Street

Zoning Insights

The city of Opelousas Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2007, is used to regulate and control land within Opelousas to promote orderly, responsible land use within the city, protect the character and stability of different areas, preserve and enhance scenic and environmental integrity, encourage compatibility among different land uses, and protect the scale and character of existing development from incompatible uses. The ordinance regulates allowed uses, as well as the form and location of buildings within the districts.

The Zoning Ordinance includes lists of permitted land uses for each zoning district, in addition to height limits, setback requirements, urban design standards, operational rules and other regulations. Zoning districts within the Downtown Development District include Downtown Mixed-use, Neighborhood Mixed-use, General Commercial, and Single-Family Residential. A brief summary of each of these zoning districts is described below.

The **Downtown Mixed-Use District (DMU)** addresses the needs of the existing downtown area as well as future development within and adjacent to the existing downtown area by promoting a pedestrian friendly environment and acknowledging a development pattern established prior to the influence of the automobile.

The **Neighborhood Mixed-Use District (NMU)** provides for areas with a mixture of residential and commercial uses that meet the daily shopping and service needs of the residents of the neighborhood; encourages pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled construction designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character; preserves the desirable character of these mixed use neighborhoods; protects them from intrusion that may cause deterioration; and provides for adequate light, ventilation, quiet, and

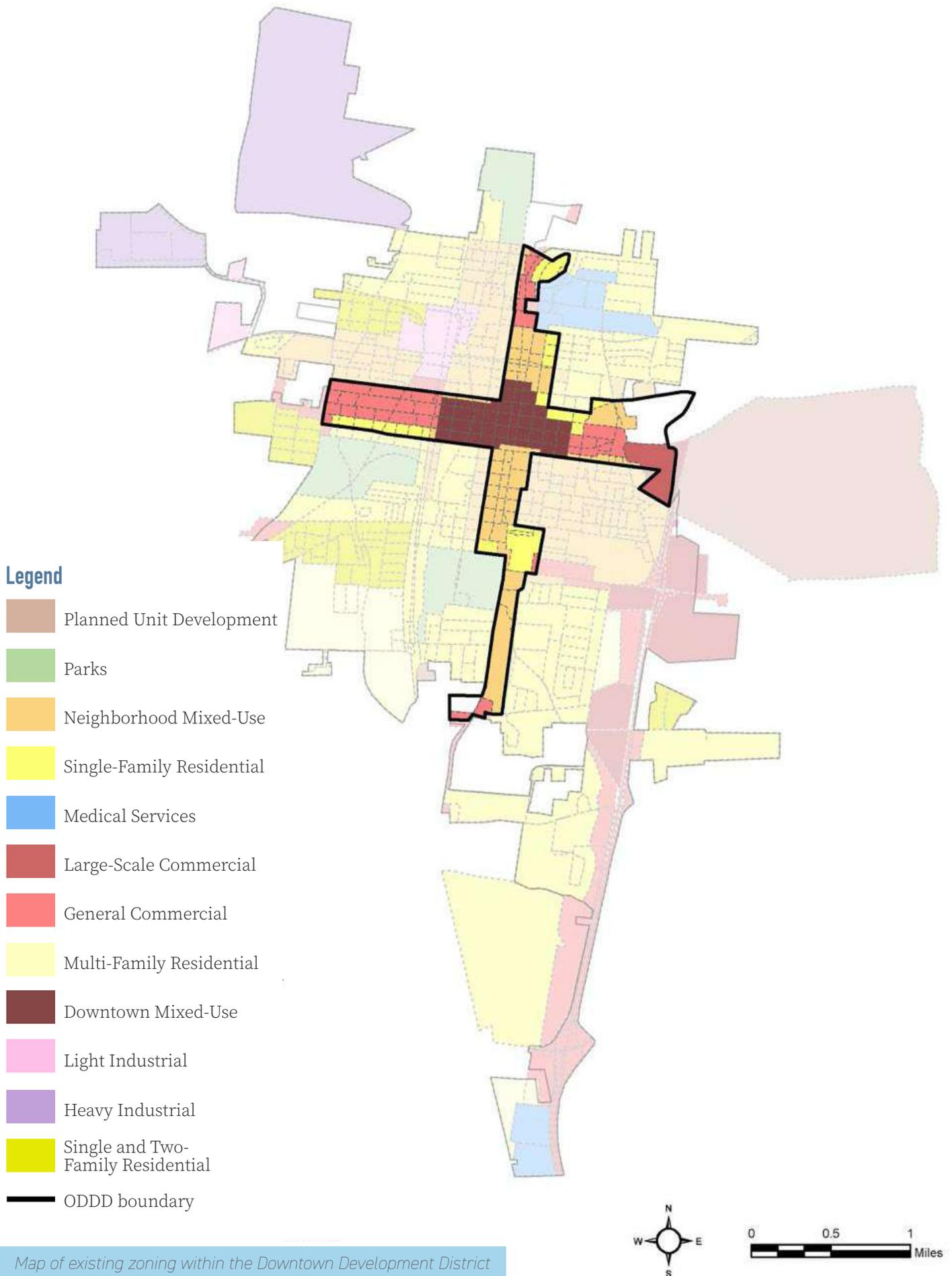
privacy for neighborhood residents.

The **General Commercial District (C-1)** provides areas appropriate for most commercial, retail, office and service businesses, typically located on arterial corridors.

The **Single-Family Residential District (R-1)** provides single family neighborhoods for residents who prefer larger lot sizes and generally do not desire to live in close proximity to other types of uses, preserves the desirable character of existing low-density neighborhoods, protects such neighborhoods from change and intrusion that may cause deterioration, and provides for adequate light, ventilation, quiet, and privacy for neighborhood residents.

Zoning ordinances should be transparent and easy to use. Potential investors and developers should be able to easily understand required development regulations. While comprehensive, Opelousas' zoning ordinance is much more detailed and complicated than typically found in cities its size. In addition, in some areas, it is not easy to determine what can be built. A review of the zoning ordinance to streamline and update certain sections to ensure that the zoning ordinance does not deter investment would be warranted. Issues that should be considered include:

- » Streamlining uses and the use chart
- » Updating the parking chapter to comply with *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* (June 18, 2015)
- » Slightly reducing downtown parking requirements (in conjunction with the implementation of a parking plan)
- » Clarifying and simplifying development standards
- » Identifying and removing requirements that may deter reinvestment



Map of existing zoning within the Downtown Development District

Downtown Historic District

Opelousas' Historic District was adopted in 2001 to preserve and protect historic structures and neighborhoods which serve as visible reminders of the history and heritage of the city, region, state, and nation. This Historic District ordinance is also intended to strengthen Opelousas' economy by stabilizing and improving property values in historic areas, encouraging responsible economic development, and recognizing Opelousas' unique heritage.

The Historic District Ordinance spells out the review process for development of new buildings as well as the alteration or addition to existing structures. The ordinance also creates the Opelousas Historic District Commission which oversees development within the District and reviews requests for Certificate of Approvals.

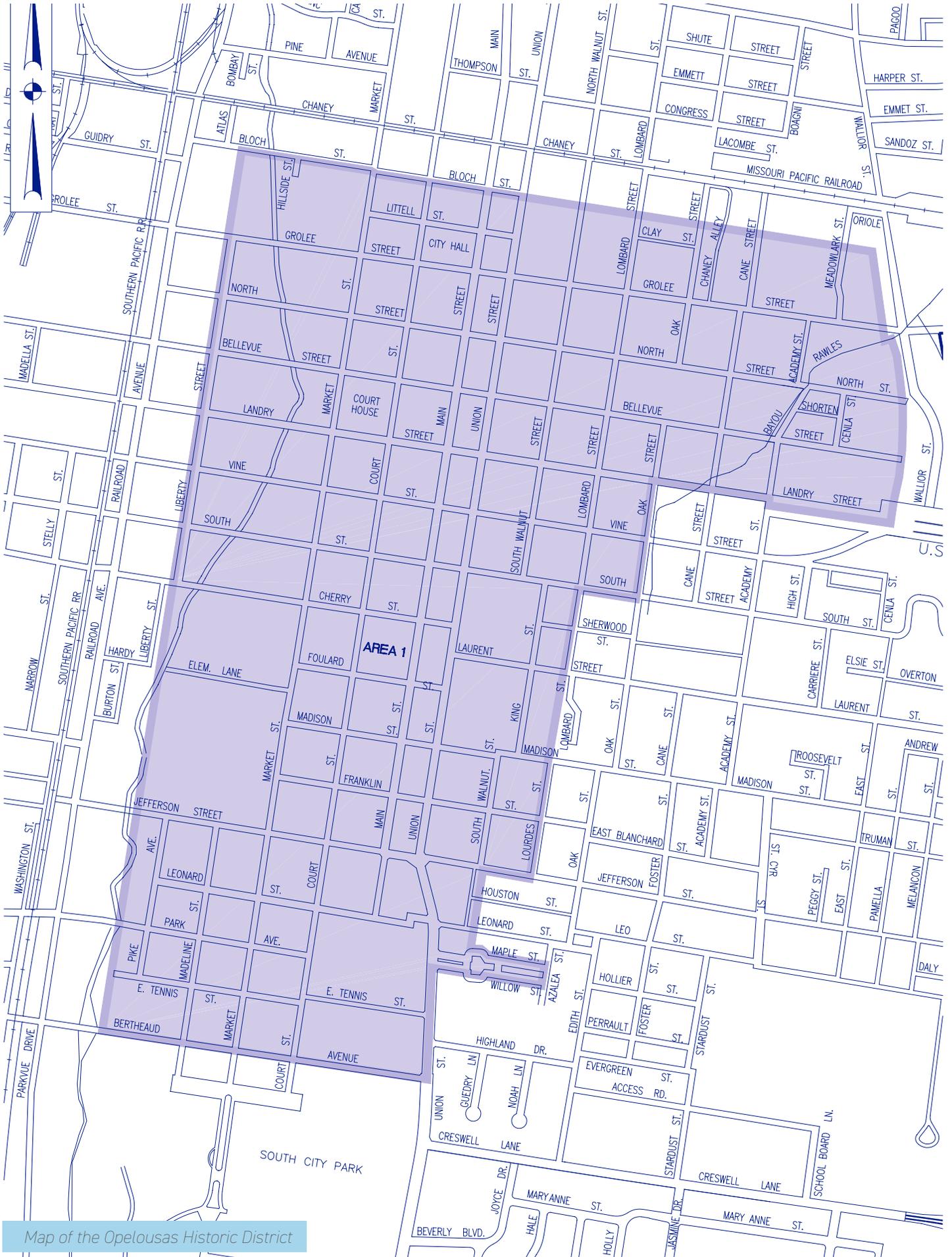
Designated historic structures and districts are eligible for state and federal historic tax credits. These tax credit programs are successfully used throughout the country to incentivize revitalization of historic downtowns.

A review and update of Opelousas' Historic District ordinance would help ensure that the regulations provide the stability and predictability needed for continued investment in the historic downtown. In addition, the ordinance needs to be reviewed to ensure that there is a process in place to address buildings that are determined to be in "demolition by neglect" status. There are several communities that have effective ordinances that have helped drive economic growth and should be used as potential models for review, including Hammond, Louisiana.

Code Enforcement

Participants in community meetings expressed concern about vacant buildings not being maintained, increasing the perception of neglect and risk, likely inhibiting some potential investors. The city is currently limited in its ability to address vacant and blighted properties. The existing process should be reviewed and modified to give the city more tools to address vacant properties that are not being maintained. These include:

- » Inventorying properties and maintaining a database of properties
- » Ensuring that regulations are not conflicting and are all working to efficiently address the specific issues of these vacant and abandoned buildings
- » Convening municipal attorneys and planners at the local and state levels to explore potential tools, focusing on communities with innovative approaches that can serve as examples
- » Exploring implementation of tools such as the enforcement of housing and building codes, tax adjudication, property acquisition, and land banking
- » Establishing the ability to place liens on these structures and enforce the liens
- » Creating a mayor's court for administrative hearing in nuisance abatement
- » Ensuring that proceeds from tax liens and other collections from blighted properties are placed in a fund to support code enforcement actions



Map of the Opelasas Historic District





The Vision

2

During our engagement efforts throughout the course of this planning process, several themes emerged. Building renovations, street improvements, historic preservation, commercial development, additional programming—we heard consistent demand for these kinds of improvements. The Downtown Plan vision statement incorporates these themes and serves as the foundations for the recommendations that follow.

Opelousas is one of the best small cities in Louisiana and is a model for downtown revitalization. Opelousas' downtown economy retains and recruits new residents and businesses, drawing people from across Acadiana, the state, and the region. Downtown Opelousas is walkable and vibrant, reflecting its rich culture and history while looking to its future as a destination for residents and visitors to live, work, and play.

DOWNTOWN OPELOUSAS

- » Is the heart of economic, cultural, and civic life in the city
- » Features a vibrant mix of commerce, open space, active streets, and housing options that serve adjacent neighborhoods and beyond
- » Has buildings, streets, public space, and programming that are inclusive and inviting, providing opportunities for future generations to live healthy, productive lives
- » Demonstrates environmental stewardship that will ensure Downtown remains a destination for generations

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of this plan reflect Opelousas residents’ and stakeholders’ core values. Reaching a shared understanding of these values ensures that the recommendations and actions in this plan reflect and support residents’ and stakeholders’ desires for the future and provides assurance that, if implemented, the plan will move the city toward collective goals. The following guiding principles were established through resident and stakeholder input.

POSITION OPELOUSAS AS A REGIONAL DESTINATION FOR COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

“Training centers; job preparation”

“Integrate our natural and cultural resources; for example: cattle, processing plants, meat products, food service, etc.”

“Downtown needs food, clothing, and entertainment”

DEVELOP A VIBRANT NETWORK OF PUBLIC SPACE AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

“Bring more community events downtown to enhance quality of life which will make residents want to stay downtown all the time”

“Infrastructure, sidewalks, roads, foot traffic”

“Walking paths to provide access to downtown businesses”

INTEGRATE SUSTAINABILITY INTO DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

“Better drainage on roads and off ramps around Highway 190”

“A land manager is needed to oversee and maintain properties that of the community that are untended”

“Road upgrades, water supply infrastructure, safe access – traffic on two major thruways”

CELEBRATE THE CULTURAL ASSETS AND HISTORIC CHARACTER OF DOWNTOWN OPELOUSAS

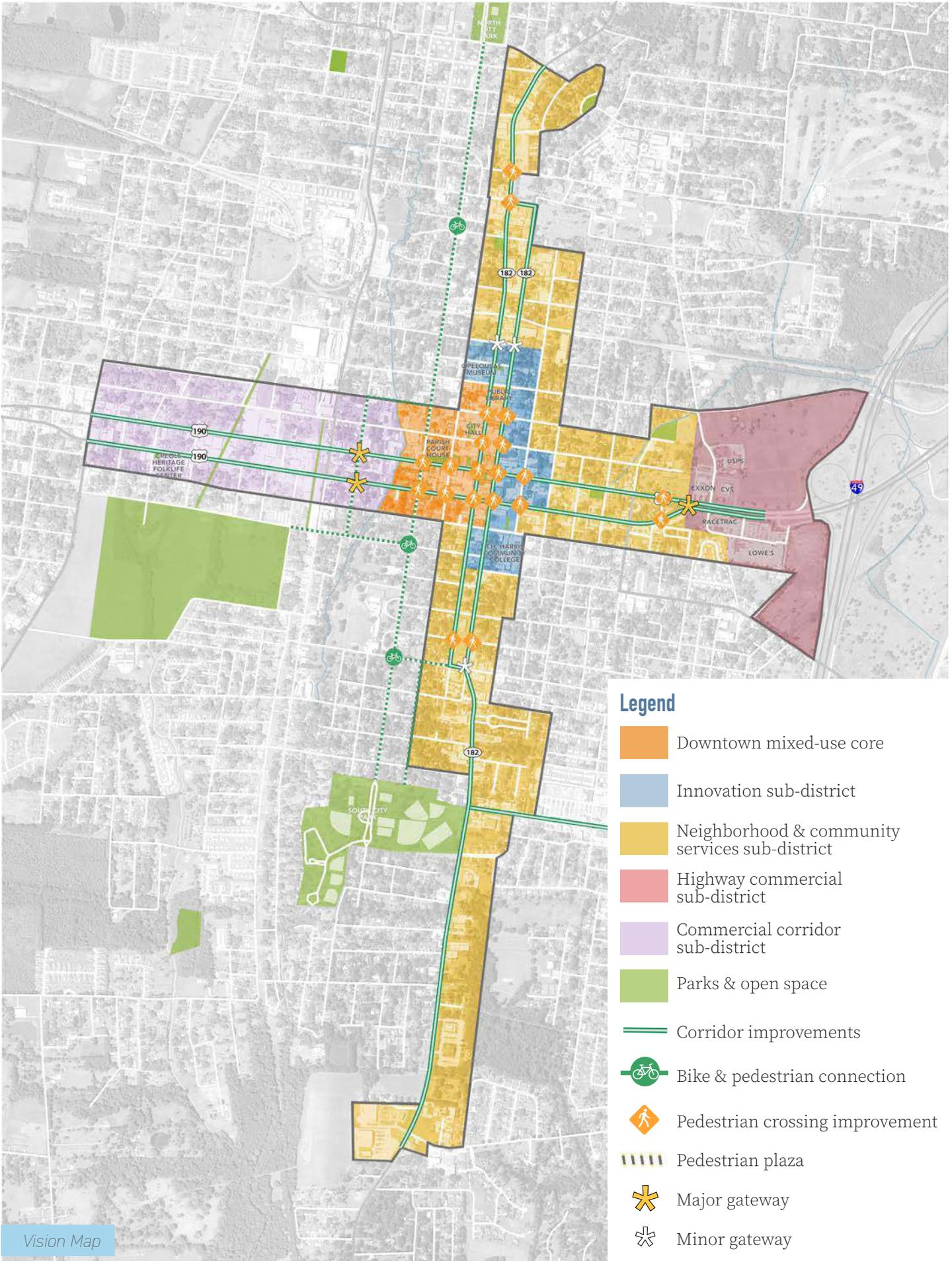
“Downtown has built-in culture—this is where it is real; there is a lot here to build on”

“Preservation of historic venues and placing them back into commerce”

“Diverse history; tell every story; focus on unique culture”



Public input at Community Visioning Workshop #2



Legend

- Downtown mixed-use core
- Innovation sub-district
- Neighborhood & community services sub-district
- Highway commercial sub-district
- Commercial corridor sub-district
- Parks & open space
- Corridor improvements
- 🚲 Bike & pedestrian connection
- 🚶 Pedestrian crossing improvement
- Pedestrian plaza
- ✦ Major gateway
- ✦ Minor gateway

Vision Map



A blue-tinted photograph of a residential street scene. In the foreground, a white pickup truck is parked on the street. To the left, there is a house with a porch and a railing. In the background, there are trees and a street sign on a pole. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn.

Overall Recommendations

3

This section of the plan identifies recommendations that are relevant throughout the Opelousas Downtown Development District. These recommendations reflect the input of the many Opelousas residents and business owners who attended public meetings, Opelousas High School students, city and parish staff, and elected and appointed officials.

The overall recommendations will create a unified greater downtown area that is cohesive, well connected

A. URBAN DESIGN

The Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD) encompasses many diverse areas, each with a unique urban character. This character ranges from small-scale historic brick buildings featuring inviting storefronts along comfortable sidewalks in the downtown core to larger parcels near the interstate that accommodate large-scale commerce and travel. Urban design plays a critical role in giving the District a cohesive, recognizable identity.

The Mixed-Use Downtown Core Subdistrict anchors the ODDD, and the vibrancy of the Core extends into surrounding areas. The ODDD's overall trajectory of revitalization will require an investment in adaptive reuse and redevelopment projects on underutilized sites throughout the District. There is significant capacity to accommodate growth within the areas of the District that have already been developed. Protecting and enhancing historic character, visual distinctiveness, and pedestrian friendliness is paramount through the entire District, and will require the cooperation of public and private partners.

The following recommendations apply to the entire District and are intended to build a coordinated, place-specific character by guiding urban design practices.

and attractive to existing and future residents and business owners. If implemented, the results of these recommendations will create a vibrant downtown as described in the shared vision.

The overall recommendations are organized into the following categories: Urban Design, Mobility, Economic Development, Arts and Culture, Sustainability, and Adaptive Reuse.

A.1: PRIORITIZE THE DEVELOPMENT OF VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PARCELS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

Rationale

New development in Downtown Opelousas will occur in the form of infill development, which is the addition of new or rehabilitated buildings into existing urban areas. Infill construction and the adaptive reuse of aging structures will take place alongside development of key catalyst sites, such as the New Life Center. Infill development will revitalize downtown by locating new retail, employment, and housing in the downtown core and filling “gaps” in the streetscape.

Creating a strong market for infill development requires substantial planning and coordination between the city of Opelousas and potential developers. It will take innovative partnerships with the development community to educate those familiar with suburban-style development about this different approach. Although growing in popularity, infill projects are still a relatively new concept for many, and lenders and other investors tend to favor more traditional projects because they have a better understanding of how such investments work. This means, like every city that



Conceptual rendering of improvements on Court Street

promotes infill as a growth and development strategy, Opelousas will need to showcase successful early projects to build community wide confidence in how good infill practices can create great financial returns. Clear planning policies, predictable zoning regulations, and the right tools and incentives must be created to make this process simple and encourage reinvestment in the downtown area.

Best practices for downtown infill development include:

- » Buildings built to the street edge to form a consistent frontage along the sidewalk
- » Active uses, such as retail or restaurants, located on the ground floor, and ground floors with a high percentage of their street-facing frontage made up of transparent windows or doors
- » Building main entrances oriented towards the sidewalk. Parking is located next to or behind buildings
- » Sidewalks used for outdoor dining or merchandise display areas to increase activity levels and interest. Sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate pedestrians as well as dining/shopping
- » Streetscape elements that are pedestrian-focused, such as benches, awnings, landscaping, and street trees included with new infill development
- » Low or no off-street parking minimums, or shared parking
- » Develop and maintain a database of vacant and underutilized parcels within the District
- » Provide site-selection assistance to new or relocating businesses to encourage businesses to locate in infill locations by sharing a regularly updated inventory of available commercial spaces as well as suggesting locations and giving site tours to new businesses and existing businesses seeking to expand
- » Assign a city or downtown representative to build relationships with local and regional real estate brokers and developers interested in investing in infill locations to provide personalized assistance to brokers seeking to locate new tenants or developers considering a new project
- » Consider developing a program under which taxes on the improvements to vacant properties gradually increase over a specified time period, allowing time for developers and businesses to generate enough activity to afford the higher tax bill

Partnerships between the Downtown Development District, local government, the development community, financial institutions, and other stakeholders can support infill development and help ensure its success. Maintaining a thorough inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels is a necessary first step in this process. Developing relationships with local and regional real estate brokers can help connect potential investors and tenants with available properties, raising the city’s visibility as a potential location for new businesses and development.

Next steps

A.2: ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE AND INCLUSIVE NETWORK OF PUBLIC SPACES

Rationale

Public spaces bring a wide range of benefits to cities. They contribute to community health, build a sense of place, provide a stage for public life, and anchor community activity. Given the variety of sub-districts and land uses within the Opelousas Downtown Development District, it follows that the character of public spaces within the District will vary, responding to the context and needs of the surrounding community. While larger civic spaces will be more appropriate in the downtown core, where there is a concentration of government and institutional uses, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and greenways will be better suited for other parts of the District.

These public spaces should be distributed throughout the District, allowing convenient access for all residents and visitors. They should also be developed as a network that



fosters safe pedestrian and cycling travel between these spaces.

Next steps

- » Kickstart implementation with public spaces in the downtown core, particularly along highly visible corridors like Landry, Vine, Main, and Union Streets
- » Prioritize investment in flexible public spaces like plazas and pocket parks in the downtown area, along mixed-use streets, and adjacent to higher-intensity residential uses and community facilities
- » Connect public spaces to public District features like neighborhoods, schools, and social services with safe sidewalks and street crossings, linear parks, and trails
- » Invest in the maintenance and diversification of existing public spaces to ensure that they accommodate the recreational needs of all city residents and visitors

A.3: DEVELOP A GATEWAY AND WAYFINDING PROGRAM TO DISTINGUISH CHARACTER AREAS WITHIN THE DISTRICT AND HIGHLIGHT DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Rationale

Wayfinding elements can help visitors locate key landmarks, businesses, and other attractions within the District. An attractive and distinctive system will improve the District's appearance and direct visitors to the area, potentially increasing the number of customers for local businesses. A wayfinding package was developed for the city in 2014, and many of the designated features, attractions, and locations for signage are still relevant; it should be reviewed for design consistency with other District signage.

Gateway features are another important component of navigation and visitor attraction in the District. Gateways

should denote a sense of entry into the city and downtown and should be consistent with the historic nature of Opelousas. They are particularly important at the primary entrances to the District: near the I-49/Highway 190 junction, eastbound on Landry and Vine Streets, and Market and Union Streets. Smaller gateways noting the entry to various sub-districts within the District will also contribute to a distinct sense of place and character.

Next steps

- » Revisit wayfinding package developed in 2014 and approved by DOTD, particularly for locations of proposed wayfinding installations, and update for design consistency with other public realm improvements
- » Establish a District-wide color palette, materials palette, typography standards, etc. to ensure that future improvements within the District are cohesive
- » Incorporate artful gateway installations along key District corridors
- » Consider designing and installing pole banners or other distinctive elements to build character in the District and sub-districts

A.4: ESTABLISH DESIGN GUIDELINES THAT STRENGTHEN THE DISTRICT'S VISUAL IDENTITY AND IMPROVE WALKABILITY

Rationale

Design guidelines for both public and private improvements can be an effective tool to promote a more comprehensive and thoughtful approach to building urban character. Quality design standards should build on Opelousas' existing character, while establishing a consistent and inviting visual identity. Design guidelines aim to enhance the experience of residents and visitors and create connections to the downtown environment by

ensuring that new development is compatible with and complements the character of its surroundings.

Design guidelines typically follow the adoption of a city's downtown plan and elaborate on the recommendations in that plan to guide and regulate both private and public investment in the District. The design guidelines would serve as the document for design review in areas outside of the Historic District, providing a framework for the review process by city staff, design professionals, neighborhood groups, other appropriate reviewers, and the general public. They are intended to guide all development where they would apply and establish a set of expectations, goals, values, and qualities by which projects are evaluated in design review.

Site Layout and Orientation

Guidelines should enhance the walkability of the District and encourage a comfortable and safe pedestrian experience by locating buildings close to the street, limiting parking in front of buildings, and integrating other building features such as having doors and windows facing the street.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment

The District's network of streets and sidewalks should encourage pedestrian access, safety, and comfort by ensuring that sidewalks are maintained and connected by safe crosswalks and have pedestrian amenities such as trees and other shade, lighting, benches, and trash receptacles. A well-connected and clearly designated bicycle network with on-street bicycle lanes where possible, designated low-speed bike-priority streets clearly marked, and off-street bicycle or shared-use trails to connect the District's amenities and nearby neighborhoods. Consistent public art, benches, trash receptacles, and shading devices that celebrate the District's character further attracts residents, visitors, and business owners to the District.

Signs and Lighting

Public and private signage and lighting should be consistently designed and placed throughout the District

to promote its unique character and enhance safety and accessibility.

Landscaping Features

Using materials like street trees, paving, and decorative fences is an effective way to build on the town's existing character, while establishing a strong visual identity. Repetitive use of materials signals to people in town that they have arrived in Opelousas and becomes a wayfinding mechanism for visitors and residents alike. Establishing a material palette for the town can be effective in subtly designating pedestrian zones, parking areas, cultural landmarks, public gathering spaces, recreational amenities, and other town features.

Plant palette

Choosing the right plants for specific uses creates a sense of place in the same way that lighting, park furniture, and paving materials all lend a sense of identity to a place. Especially in a subtropical climate like South Louisiana, it is important to choose the right plant for the right place by using plants that are native or well-adapted species that will perform well. Building height, signage, ground floor use, and the size of buildings along the streets where trees are planted should all be taken into consideration in the selection, pacing, and location of trees and shrubs. A plant palette for the District would address street trees, shrubs, and groundcovers.

Paving and Hardscape Materials

Sidewalks, plazas, crosswalks, accents and special paving areas integrated into the landscaping further promote the District's desirability for future development.

Next steps

- » Develop design guidelines that complement the Historic District and establish a cohesive character throughout the District
- » Incorporate design guidelines into zoning and permitting and processes



B. MOBILITY

Mobility accounts for the ability for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and all other modes of transportation to easily navigate through and access the District. While major highways transect the District, pedestrian-focused public space is also a priority for mobility planning. This emphasis on pedestrians is reflected in the recommendations to develop multimodal corridors, to invest in pedestrian infrastructure, and to improve street design to create safe conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Transportation and parking options are key in determining the vibrancy of the District and how people experience the area. Driving is currently the primary mode of transportation for residents and visitors. The following recommendations are intended to increase the number of people walking and biking while also accommodating those who need a car.

B.1: ESTABLISH VINE, LANDRY, UNION, AND MAIN STREETS AS ACTIVE, MULTIMODAL CORRIDORS

Rationale:

Streets within the District have a substantial impact on the character and vitality of the downtown area—particularly major corridors like Vine, Landry, Union, and Main Streets. These corridors serve as the foundation of the downtown economy and have the potential to generate business activity, provide public space to visitors and residents, and provide a safe way for people to move throughout the District on foot, bicycle, car, or transit. Multimodal corridors are designed to consider various modes of transportation (walking, cycling, automobile, etc.) as well as the connections between those modes.

By reconfiguring these primary corridors to include sufficient space for pedestrians, organized on-street parking, stormwater management features, lanes for cyclists, and lanes for motorists, they provide multiple benefits and maximize the efficiency of the public right-of-way. Street sections are included here to illustrate the

proposed reconfiguration of these streets. All proposals work within the existing right-of-way.

Next steps:

- » Implement the proposed improvements to sidewalks, on-street parking, bike lanes, vehicle travel lanes, and stormwater management features
- » Ensure that any improvements on these streets incorporate design features including sidewalks with designated safe crossing signage at a minimum and, where there is adequate right of way, bicycle lanes (if there is not adequate right-of-way for bicycle facilities, the improvements should include establishing parallel bicycle facilities and signage)

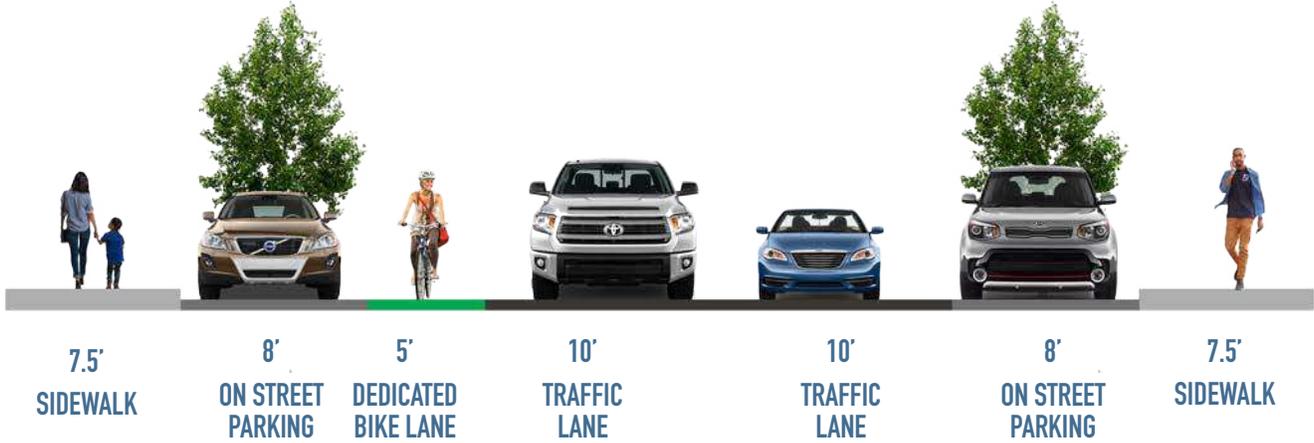
B.2: ESTABLISH A NETWORK OF BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Rationale:

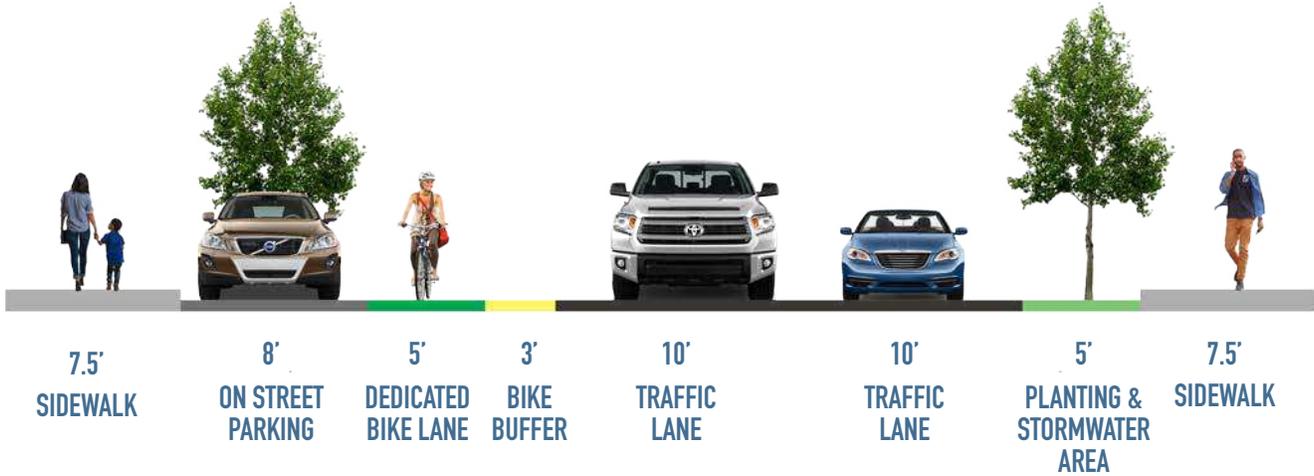
Bicycle and pedestrian networks are critical pieces of Opelousas' transportation infrastructure. While they help reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by providing alternate means of vehicular travel, they also provide outdoor opportunities for activity, encouraging healthy lifestyles and enhancing the quality of life throughout the District.

Improved infrastructure for walking and biking provides many benefits for residents, workers, and visitors. Sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian or shared use paths make walking and biking safer, more attractive options. Traveling to work, school, stores, and other destinations on foot or by bike allows people to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines, which can improve their physical and mental health. There are also benefits for businesses, as many neighborhood-oriented retail and service establishments also see increased sales when customers can easily access their stores by bike or on foot.

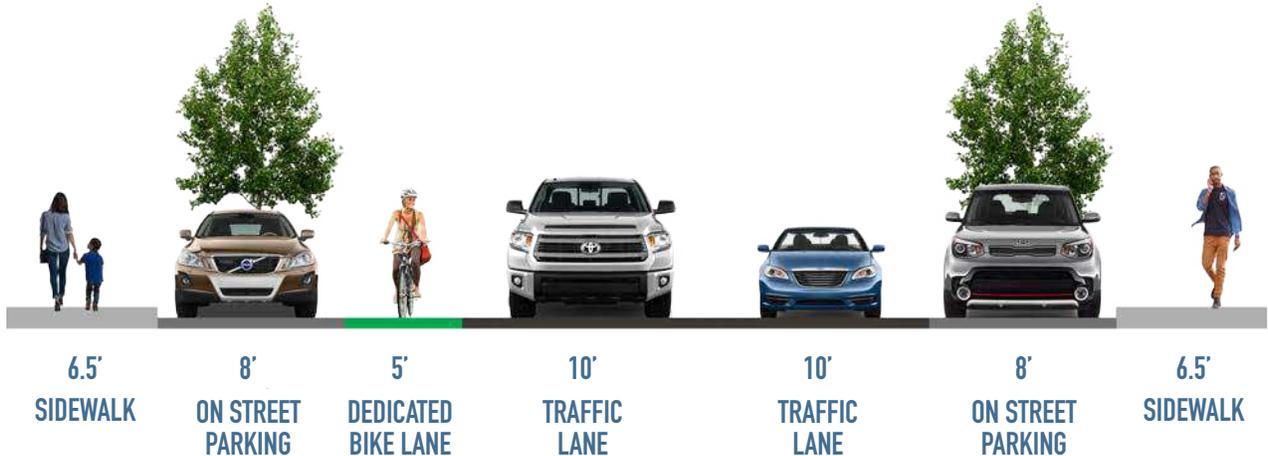
MAIN STREET, OPTION A (56' RIGHT OF WAY)



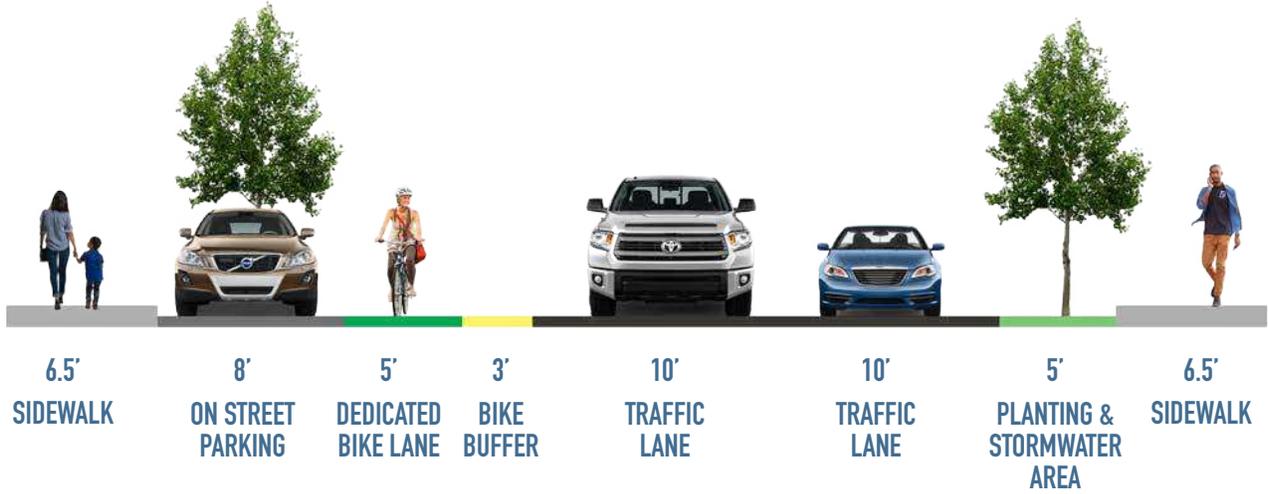
MAIN STREET, OPTION B (56' RIGHT OF WAY)



UNION STREET, OPTION A (54' RIGHT OF WAY)



UNION STREET, OPTION B (54' RIGHT OF WAY)



LANDRY STREET (50' RIGHT OF WAY) (NOT APPLICABLE IN MIXED-USE CORE SUB-DISTRICT)



VINE STREET (40' RIGHT OF WAY)



Next steps:

- » Establish dedicated bike lanes on Landry, Main, and Union Streets
- » Establish shared bike lanes on streets within the District which have adequate right-of-way, including Vine Street
- » Conduct a sidewalk audit to understand where the greatest pedestrian accessibility needs exist
- » Conduct an ADA audit within the District to ensure that all residents and visitors are able to access pedestrian routes and District amenities safely

B.3: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PARKING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE DISTRICT

Rationale:

Throughout the course of this planning process, there were many divergent voices on the issue of parking within the District. While there seems to be an ample supply of surface parking available, conducting a parking study would aid in the development of a comprehensive parking management program for the District. Parking studies determine the location, use, and adequacy of existing parking facilities and help plan for future parking needs.

Parking studies typically include:

- » A detailed inventory of parking supply, identification of the users of the different parking areas, and understanding whether parking supply is located near the parking demand
- » Parking utilization counts
- » Distribution and tabulation of a parking survey
- » Analysis of existing and future parking demands
- » Analysis of land use priorities, policies, and future

trends

- » Evaluation of current parking code requirements and whether parking standards limit the future reuse of historic buildings
- » Assessment of potential parking management techniques and prioritization

A parking management program would include a variety of strategies that encourage more efficient use of existing parking facilities, improve the experience and quality of parking users, and improve parking design. An effective parking management program could address a wide range of transportation issues in Opelousas and help achieve a variety of land use development, economic development, and environmental objectives. Working with stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness, benefits, costs, equity impacts, feasibility and barriers of each potential parking management solution is a critical component of any sustainable program, as it helps generate support and buy-in. An integrated parking program should identify necessary changes in policies and practices, tasks, responsibilities, partnerships, etc.

Next steps:

- » Conduct a parking study
- » Identify strategies to maximize the use of existing parking and plan for future parking facilities
- » Improve access and signage for public parking lots
- » Maximize on-street parking opportunities by restriping and clearly marking available parking spots
- » Consider making Bellevue a two-way street on the block adjacent to the Parish Courthouse to allow easier access to city parking
- » Count on-street parking in parking requirements

B.4: DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS TO SHARE UNDERUTILIZED PRIVATE PARKING LOTS BASED ON A DISTRICT-WIDE PARKING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Rationale:

Shared parking involves parking spaces that are shared among more than one user, allowing parking facilities to be used more efficiently. This parking management strategy takes advantage of the fact that most parking spaces are only used part time by a particular group, and many parking facilities have a significant number of unused spaces, with usage patterns that follow predictable daily, weekly, and annual cycles. The Opelousas Zoning Ordinance provides for shared and remote parking in the mixed use districts to maximize on-street parking and provide flexibility for redevelopment of small sites and for the preservation of historic buildings, which is especially useful in downtown Opelousas given the large number of office and service-oriented buildings located there. These kinds of businesses typically utilize their parking during predictable hours like 8am to 5pm, leaving large periods of time where the lots are largely empty. Efficient sharing of spaces can allow parking requirements to be reduced significantly. Successful reuse

of older structures, in particular, requires creative parking strategies as well as flexible development standards. Creating a plan to maximize shared parking to enable the use of historic structures is key to revitalizing downtown.

Next steps:

- » Develop list of ideal candidates for shared parking facilities in the District
- » Consider whether contractual agreements between adjacent uses or establishing a parking management district is a more appropriate avenue for maximizing the use of shared parking
- » Evaluate the number of “reserved” parking spaces and whether those inhibit flexible parking
- » Develop and enforce design standards for shared parking lots to improve walkability



C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To ensure that the District is vibrant and economically strong for generations to come, it is necessary to develop a healthy mix of business and employment opportunities. Throughout the course of this planning process, stakeholders and the public have consistently ranked business support and workforce development as top concerns for the District. An obvious barrier to establishing an economically productive downtown is the frequency of vacant and/or abandoned properties downtown. Thus, this section focuses on attracting potential residents and employers to the District, fostering entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, developing robust, sustainable programming, and strategic recruitment and approval of new uses within the District.

C.1: IMPROVE THE DISTRICT'S PERCEPTION TO PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS, EMPLOYERS, AND RESIDENTS

Rationale:

Local high school students who participated in a focus group on Opelousas' future expressed concern about the trash and dumping that exists along roadways and identified the need to improve how the city looks, especially along the roads leading into the District. The occurrence of dumping makes the District less inviting to the public, and the existence of litter can contribute to further neglect of properties, eroding local aesthetic and creating safety concerns. In addition to its quality of life and health impacts, litter can have substantial negative economic impacts, including the direct costs of cleaning up litter to businesses, city staff, etc., who spend time collecting trash. Litter and dumping also incur indirect costs; for instance, litter can make an area less attractive to visitors and tourists, resulting in direct and indirect sales and tax revenue losses.

Rehabilitating vacant or blighted properties throughout

the District can clean up environmental hazards and make these locations more attractive to investors and residents. A coordinated rehabilitation program could include reviewing and revising existing codes to more explicitly address the code violation issues in the community, preparing community code enforcement guidelines or protocols so that community members are clear about what they can do to report code violations to the city, and developing a website or other tools for reporting and tracking progress resolving complaints.

Next steps:

- » Develop educational programs to address litter in the city, including cleaning up trash and debris in yards and around commercial buildings, educating children and adults about littering and its impacts
- » Support code enforcement by developing avenues for community members to get involved in reporting and tracking violations
- » Institute a quarterly cleanup program to place public dumpsters in key locations for a 2-week period so that property owners can come into compliance and get rid of debris on their property with the expectation would be that these properties would then be maintained to code requirements in the future
- » Implement proactive programs to address vacant and abandoned buildings including ways to enforce housing and building codes, tax adjudication, property acquisition and land banking; establishing the ability to place liens on these structures and enforce the liens; and creating a mayor's court for administrative hearing in nuisance abatement
- » Encourage residents to maintain their street frontages, such as edging and removing grass and debris from the sidewalks and curbs, through education and code enforcement

C.2: MAINTAIN AND EXPAND EXISTING PROGRAMMING TO BRING PEOPLE TO THE DISTRICT

Rationale:

Robust event programming is an effective short-term strategy for catalyzing revitalization efforts within the District. While frequent, recurring events like the weekly farmers market provide a consistent influx of residents and visitors to the District, larger seasonal or annual events help to punctuate the District's programming calendar and boost local businesses. A diverse and full programming lineup also helps develop an authentic cultural connection and a distinct sense of place, encouraging people to return to the District. Furthermore, potential investors and employers consider these quality-of-life concerns when choosing the location for their business expansion. Competition for this investment requires positioning Opelousas as an attractive and easy place to live, visit, and work, and lively event programming within the District plays a huge role in this effort.

Next steps:

- » Create a unified calendar of District events to inform local businesses and potential customers with a designated point person to ask businesses and nonprofits about upcoming events and update the calendar weekly or monthly
- » Partner with regional cultural organizations and local businesses to align and build on the popularity of community events, such as Downtown Alive/Live After 5, Festival International, Acadiana Center for the Arts, and local markets or cook offs, and feature those events in the District
- » Develop or revive a marquee festival held annually within the District

C.3: STRENGTHEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Rationale:

The demand for additional jobs and new businesses within the District was consistent throughout engagement over the course of this planning effort. Improving the business-friendly culture of the District will help meet both of these demands. Encouraging entrepreneurs to start businesses within the District also gives Opelousas residents and investors an opportunity to build wealth in their own communities. Small business development would not only directly support the development of a diverse, complete local economy within the District, but it would also provide more services that might attract additional employers and residents.

Next steps:

- » Form an economic development task force with representatives from the public and private sectors (representatives from the business community could include business owners, property owners and developers, or leaders from the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups) in the District to discuss how the city could better facilitate economic development
- » Develop a comprehensive small business plan based on the District's economic assets, focusing on businesses poised for growth and businesses associated with the city's economic development plan and strong clusters
- » Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to create a guide for starting and growing a business that outlines local resources, permitting and zoning processes, tax policies, and steps to get business loans

- » Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to develop mentorship programs that connect experienced business owners with new ones
- » Create a program to provide local businesses with technical assistance in marketing, accounting, or finance, and low-interest loans to fund improvements to landscaping, signs, or building façades

C.4: PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION TO GROW TALENT, INCLUDING STRONG ADULT EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

Rationale:

Developing a diverse, skilled workforce is a key element in ensuring that the economic growth of the District is sustainable and long-lived. Providing workers with an opportunity to educate themselves and train for more skilled jobs helps them compete for jobs in the community now and in the future. A workforce with a valuable mix of skills and education is an important asset for attracting new industries. Building partnerships between District

officials, local high school representatives, community college representatives, adult education outreach organizations, and the local chamber of commerce would help build an understanding of the education and skill levels of their local workforce, the interests and skills of the local workforce pipeline, and the skills that potential growth industries need. This collaboration might result in goals tailored to different industries and types of advanced education and workforce training, including community and four-year colleges and job training programs that teach both job-specific technical skills and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management.

Next steps:

- » Develop a working group including representatives from the District, secondary education, community college, other adult education advocates, and the local chamber of commerce
- » Design workforce programs for small businesses to help them efficiently recruit employees from non-traditional pipelines and train employees
- » Offer local government internships for high school or college students to learn from and assist city staff

RESOURCES FOR FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As Opelousas seeks opportunities to grow innovation within its local economy, it should consider that Louisiana has one of the strongest incentive programs for Digital Interactive Media and Software. Additionally, T.H. Harris offers two degrees in digital media. **Louisiana Economic Development's Digital Interactive Media and Software Program:**

- » Provides a 25% tax credit on qualified payroll for in-state labor and 18% for qualified production expenditures

- » Has no cap and no minimum requirement
- » Allows tax credit to be applied to state income tax liability and the state will refund any overages OR applicants can opt for 85% of the value earned as a rebate any time during the year

The **Louisiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette** provides support to businesses seeking government contracts. The Center works with both small and large businesses to assist them in marketing to government agencies, preparing proposals, and resolving problems/issues that arise in the contracting process.

C.5: ASSESS AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES THAT ARE IN DEMAND AND UNDER REPRESENTED

Rationale:

For Opelousas, location at the intersection of major regional highways offer competitive connectivity, a major asset for employers. Thoughtful, long-range planning can capitalize to turn assets into competitive advantages. Protecting existing businesses means understanding and responding to local business needs through the establishment of business retention and expansion programs to explore diversification of employment and occupations. Engaging and supporting current businesses provides a strong foundation for other approaches aimed at bringing in new companies, investment, and talent.

Collaborating with existing public-private partnerships and educational institutions can increase and connect innovation among existing companies and across industries to make Opelousas competitive with other cities and establish it as a hub for business in St. Landry Parish.

According to a 2019 Market Study conducted by Louisiana Main Street, there are several retail segments in which trade area demand exceeds trade area supply. Those retail specialties are listed in the following table.

Next steps:

- » Proactively pursue retail, hospitality, restaurant, and neighborhood services to build on the character of Downtown Opelousas, serve new and future residents, and attract patrons from outside the area
- » Coordinate workforce development efforts and training programs so that they complement and build upon one another and offer a wide range of

IN-DEMAND BUSINESSES IN OPELOUSAS RETAIL AREA
Automobile Dealers
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers
Home Furnishings Stores
Electronics and Appliance Stores
Building Materials and Supplies Dealers
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores
Clothing Stores
Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Goods Stores
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instrument Stores
Book, Periodical, and Music Stores
Department Stores Excluding Leased Departments
Other General Merchandise Stores
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers
Florists
Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores
Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses
Vending Machine Operators
Direct Selling Establishments
Restaurant/Other Eating Places

job skills to attract new business and retain existing businesses

- » Maintain relationships with property owners, resident groups and local developers and spotlight the best development opportunities
- » Align zoning, public policy, and regulatory practices to target existing and emerging industry clusters
- » Support efforts to attract and retain business in target cluster industries, which provide good wages and are expected to grow nationally



D. ARTS AND CULTURE

Celebrating the arts and culture of Opelousas is a major opportunity throughout the District and can serve as a significant driver of the economy. This section focuses on supporting and improving arts and culture organizations such as museums, galleries, and performance spaces and adds creative businesses such as film and media companies, design firms, venues, performance artists, musicians, makers, and other creative entrepreneurs.

Diverse artists and entrepreneurs can help tell the story of Opelousas' past and the hopes for its future. Opportunities abound to leverage art in future development, both public and private, in innovative ways. Creative residents and cultural organizations are key to decision and policy making, adding to the District's community and economy. Fostering an environment in which cultural assets are valued and showcased helps to attract residents and employers seeking character and quality of life as well as visitors seeking distinctive cultural experiences. This section offers recommendations for highlighting cultural heritage in the District's built environment and supporting arts and culture institutions within the community.

D.1: SUPPORT COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND BETTER INTEGRATE THEM INTO THE PUBLIC REALM

Rationale:

Community arts and culture assets are both physical and knowledge-based, such as local programs, facilities, artists, galleries, venues, organizations, and community groups. Taking stock of existing arts and culture resources allows the public to better understand the total reach of creative activity and integrate culture into city-building both economically and socially. Each different form of arts and culture has certain functional needs. When looking at these uses and ways to encourage their growth, it is important to understand what each type of arts and culture needs to be successful. Providing or encouraging the development of

an arts and culture infrastructure is essential in nurturing. Showcasing these resources in the public realm can have a multitude of benefits and be used as a revitalization tool—a catalyst to create active, vibrant environments and neighborhoods, helping municipalities to increase tax revenues, property values, retail activity, and job creation. Collaborative relationships can develop between arts and culture activities and local businesses, as well as aid in the attraction of visitor spending and help generate a tourist economy.

Next steps:

- » Conduct an inventory of existing arts and cultural resources within the District, noting any gaps
- » Using the inventory as a guide, aid in the development of additional artist resources like studio, exhibition, performance, and maker spaces by connecting arts and culture representatives with available properties within the District

D.2: PROMOTE INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN THE DISTRICT

Rationale:

Creative placemaking involves community stakeholders, artists, local arts and culture organizations, developers, and others implementing arts and cultural strategies to create community-led change. This approach aims to increase vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and build capacity among residents to take ownership of their communities. Successful creative placemaking highlights unique community characteristics. Projects can focus on connecting local history with the present, bringing cultural influences into the spotlight and creating new traditions. It builds connections between people and places by encouraging collaboration and visualization. Public art has been recognized as a vital community asset; yet, many of

its benefits seem intangible or difficult to measure, so it is often treated as a low priority, especially during challenging economic times. By prioritizing public art, the ODDD will have an opportunity to build community engagement and strengthen social cohesion within the District.

Forming cross-sector partnerships, including artists, community members, and public- and private-sector organizations can help support the development, implementation, and maintenance of placemaking initiatives. Having local community organizations engaged is key along with the involvement of local government, philanthropy, and other nonprofit partners.

Incorporating art into larger, multi-benefit projects can be an effective way to fund public art and demonstrate that it can function as a powerful catalyst for change. Some cities have committed one percent of their general fund in their Capital Improvement Programs for the solicitation of artists, the procurement, installation and maintenance of current and future pieces of public art. Establishing a dedicated funding stream like this can help ensure that the arts are being integrated consistently into city improvement projects.

Next steps:

- » Kickoff placemaking initiatives with temporary installations and community events to generate excitement, visibility, and buy-in
- » Encourage community groups and organizations to develop public artworks that enhance the city's public realm by building their capacity and simplifying approval processes
- » Consider a Cities "Percent for Art" program, which mandates that a portion of the budget for city-funded construction projects is used to fund and install public art
- » For private development projects, consider

establishing, by ordinance, a one percent set-aside for public art enhancement

- » Consider a program to address abandoned homes and visual blight with grassroots initiatives that use art to revitalize and repurpose vacant lots throughout the city

D.3: SHOWCASE KEY CULTURAL AND HISTORIC ASSETS WITHIN THE DISTRICT

Rationale:

Many of Opelousas' most significant historic landmarks reside within the District. Additionally, the District contains several distinct neighborhoods with their own history, character, and assets. To showcase these assets to residents and visitors alike, the District should develop a comprehensive wayfinding network. Wayfinding programs can announce neighborhood character, increasing awareness of the culture, history, and amenities in these distinct areas. In addition to helping people find destinations, wayfinding programs can also be used for branding, business development and placemaking. A well designed wayfinding system makes destinations more accessible and can help residents and visitors connect with a community's culture.

Next steps:

- » Develop inventory of existing wayfinding signage to understand community attractions and where signage is currently displayed and missing
- » Establish landmark signage at sites, buildings, businesses, or landscapes to describe their historical significance
- » Invest in the integration of public art by working with local artists to develop unique, culturally specific street signage and other infrastructure

D.4: FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES TO RECOGNIZE AND PASS ON THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Rationale:

A core component of every creative placemaking effort is to listen to and gather stories, to find the storytellers and to seek out shared narratives. Creating a cultural identity, through art and cultural activities, enhances and stabilizes communities. Connecting individuals and organizations within the community, art and cultural activities encourages investment in public spaces. Creative places also provide positive branding and image for the larger Opelousas community. Invite residents to share their talents in the culinary, literary, performing, and visual arts.

Next steps:

- » Establish regular programming of events and opportunities to bring residents and visitors to culture venues within the District
- » Work with schools, the library, non-profits, or local arts associations to develop a program to collect stories, photos, audio, text and video from Opelousas residents, which can be showcased in museums and at local festivals
- » Build on “Stories Captured” oral history project by establishing an event series in public spaces such as parks or the library where older residents share stories of the community’s history to younger generations



E. SUSTAINABILITY

The District contains some of the most heavily trafficked corridors and commercial destinations in Opelousas. This makes it especially important to plan for the long-term viability of future development. As investments in development and redevelopment become more of a priority, it is critical that public and private developments incorporate sustainable design principles and that the city implement forward-looking land use guidance.

Investments in public infrastructure like roads, water and sewage maintenance, and stormwater management should also take into consideration the long-term vision for the District and should be coordinated with the Plan. Throughout the course of public engagement there were many comments about the inadequate condition of existing streets, pipes, and facilities. In addition, many areas of the District are subject to frequent flooding during rain events—intentional planning and strategic investment in infrastructure upgrades are crucial to the continued vibrancy and success of the District. This section recommends actions that will address persistent environmental stressors and prepare the District for sustainable future growth.

E.1: ENHANCE THE DISTRICT'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE RAIN AND FLOOD EVENTS BY IMPLEMENTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Rationale:

Impervious surfaces such as buildings, roads, parking lots, and driveways cover a majority of the Opelousas Downtown Development District. When it rains, impervious surfaces contribute to fast-moving, high-volume runoff water flows. As the climate changes, stormwater volumes and flow rates are expected to increase, raising the risk of flooding streets and homes. Green infrastructure can improve water quality, reduce flooding risk, save public and private funds, and protect public health through improved air quality and green spaces, among other benefits. Developing a plan to

incorporate green infrastructure into the District can help achieve multiple environmental, public health, social, and economic goals.

Redevelopment provides many positive benefits, including increased economic opportunities along with opportunities to update architecture, reduce energy use, and minimize stormwater runoff. Redevelopment can also have negative impacts. Land disturbance affects soils, vegetation, and water management. Failure to plan for the preservation and integration of green space in redeveloped areas can result in the loss of tree canopy and its many environmental benefits. Loss of green space also increases stormwater runoff and associated water pollution, creates heat islands, and contributes to a loss of wildlife habitat and plants.

To pay for green infrastructure, the District can charge new development projects one-time fees to defray the costs of expanding public services. These fees are typically collected on a pay-as-you-go basis and used to cover one-time capital investments rather than ongoing operations and maintenance.

Next steps:

- » Work with a landscape architect and civil engineer to reduce impervious surfaces within the District boundary, beginning within the city's right-of-way
- » Require new development to employ Low Impact Development strategies and manage stormwater on-site
- » Coordinate drainage improvements with the St. Landry Parish Hazard Mitigation Plan
- » Create a one-stop community resource to enable developers, businesses, and residents to easily find information related to environmental programs in the city
- » Establish a program to acquire floodplain property or easements, converting them to riparian buffers and wetlands

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

Sustainable stormwater management in the public realm captures water closer to the source, reducing ponding, roadway inundation, and the concentration of contaminants. In the process, rainwater becomes an asset to improve the existing urban ecology, microclimates, air quality, and the aesthetic quality of the public realm. This includes street right-of-way public parks, and city owned properties.

Tools for Streets and Roadways

Flow-Through Planters

Flow-through planters are appropriate for high-density urban areas, or where water infiltration is not favorable. Flow-through planters treat water by allowing runoff to filter through a soil base and into an underdrain system. While flow-through planters are effective, they are costlier than other stormwater tools and should be used sparingly.



Curb Cuts

Curb cuts are inexpensive techniques to divert water out of the roadway by modifying existing infrastructure to move runoff from streets and retain it for treatment in a bioswale, cistern, or rain garden. Curb cuts are a highly recommended tool for the city.



Permeable Paving

Permeable paving allows stormwater runoff to infiltrate where landscape-based strategies are not feasible. It has many applications (sidewalks, entire roadways, etc.), and a wide variety of materials are available, from loose gravel to pre-made pavers. For use in the right-of-way, pre-made porous pavers should be used to meet ADA requirements. While permeable pavement is effective, it is also costly to install and maintain.



Bioswales

Bioswales are shallow, vegetated depressions intended to capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff as it moves downstream. Bioswales are highly effective at slowing runoff velocity and cleansing water while recharging groundwater. They have flexible siting and size allowances, making them one of the most effective and cost-efficient tools in the toolkit for managing stormwater. In most cases, bioswales can be added to existing ditches or medians in a roadway with slight modifications and planting enhancements. Many places within the ODDD boundary are suitable for bioswales.



Curb Extensions/Stormwater Bump-Outs

Curb extensions narrow the roadway, creating safer and shorter crossings for pedestrians while increasing the available space for street elements such as plantings, street trees, and furnishings. They have multiple applications and are suitable for higher density areas and residential areas. With minimal infrastructure required, curb extensions are suitable for the city to begin implementing within the downtown mixed use core, especially at corners, gateways, mid-block crossings, and other pinch points.



Filter Strips

Filter strips are long, linear landscaped areas that capture and slow runoff, while filtering out sediment and other pollutants. Depending on the underlying subsurface soil conditions, they can provide some infiltration, but less than bioswales. Filter strips offer an inexpensive initial step in urban stormwater management.



Weirs

Weirs are intentional obstructions placed in a channel to regulate water flow and prevent flash flooding downstream. By slowly releasing manageable amounts of stormwater, existing infrastructure can better function during large storm events. Weirs also help detain water for longer

periods of time, allowing stormwater to infiltrate into the ground and replenish the water table.



Tools for Parks and Open Space

Rain Gardens

A rain garden is a depression or low point in the landscape filled with native shrubs and perennials. It is designed to temporarily hold stormwater runoff that flows from roofs, parking lots, roads, or other impervious surfaces. Rain gardens can remove up to 90% of nutrients and chemicals and up to 80% of sediments from runoff. Like bioswales, rain gardens can be scaled up or down depending on available space. With little infrastructure required, rain gardens can easily be implemented throughout the city in vacant lots, parking lots, or parks.



Riparian Buffer

Buffers are a simple, inexpensive way to protect and improve water quality through local plant communities, removing pollutants before they reach waterways. Buffer width is based on surrounding context, soil type, size and slope of catchment area, and vegetative cover.

TOOLS FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT

This includes new development and re-development of areas where developers can implement LID, low impact development, strategies into a project to manage stormwater on-site before being discharged. The goal of LID is to sustain a site's pre-development hydrologic regime by using techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, and evaporate stormwater runoff close to its source. Contrary to conventional "pipe-and-pond" conveyance infrastructure that channels runoff elsewhere through pipes, catchment basins, and curbs and gutters, LID remediates polluted runoff through a network of distributed treatment landscapes.

Roof Materials



- » Green Roofs (best): Collect rain on-site and slow the release of water, allowing the drainage system to maintain proper function during large rain events. By adding an extra layer onto an existing building, green roofs help reduce heating and cooling cost.
- » Metal Roofs: Stormwater runoff from a metal roof has very low pollutant levels and excellent rainwater harvesting potential.
- » Wood Shingle: Depending on the treatment of the wood shingles, toxins may be contained in runoff, making it potentially hazardous to handle.
- » Membrane System: Petroleum based membranes have high levels of pollutants in runoff.
- » Asphalt Shingles (worst): Contains high levels of pollutants and sediment; potentially harmful to collect stormwater for reuse.

Cisterns

- » Above Ground: Easier to install without extensive sitework. Cisterns reduce runoff volume and peak flows, allowing water to be stored on-site. Cisterns are a great tool for reducing potable water for irrigation by reclaiming rainwater. Typical cisterns are modular units that can be easily connected, increasing the storage capacity.
- » Underground: Store and slowly release runoff into the LID network. Some systems can infiltrate stormwater if the soil beneath is permeable. Underground storage is an option for areas where available surface area storage is limited.



Parking Lots



- » Bioswales
- » Detention Ponds
- » Underground Cisterns
- » Permeable Paving

- » Filter Strips
- » Rain Gardens



Green Walls

A green wall is an extension of the building envelope that is encased with vegetation. This can be a vine that grows vertically or a more intensive structure that holds individual plants and their growing medium. Green walls help regulate building temperatures and reduce the urban heat island effect, reducing overall energy consumption.



ESTABLISHING A PLANT PALETTE

Selecting plant species that are appropriate for the urban conditions of the District is a critical part of successful green infrastructure installation. The following matrix includes a selection of plants that are generally well-suited to the environmental conditions in the Opelousas area. The information listed for each plant will help city

representatives and private developers determine the best fit for trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers. This is a small selection of plants that are suitable for conditions in Opelousas. However, there are other species that are also appropriate. When looking for plants that meet specific needs, this chart demonstrates some plant characteristics to keep in mind.

SUN/SHADE						
	Full sun	Partial sun	Shade			
SUITABLE CONDITIONS						
	Wind tolerant	Drought tolerant	Wet soil tolerant	Erosion control	Inundation tolerant	Salt tolerant
GROWTH RATE						
	Fast	Moderate	Slow			
FOLIAGE/PERENNIAL						
	Evergreen	Deciduous	Perennial			



GRASSES AND PERENNIALS

sun/shade	suitable conditions	evergreen/deciduous/ perennial	growth rate (slow, moderate, fast)	appropriate uses	mature size (H' x W')	common name	scientific name	native	picture number
				Tolerant of multiple soil types	2' x 2'	Autumn fern	<i>Dryopteris erythrosora</i>		1
				Attractive pink color in fall	3' x 3'	Gulf Coast Muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	✓	2
				Wet areas	2' x 2'	Soft Rush	<i>Juncus inflexus</i> 'Blue arrows'		3
				Good for mass plantings on slopes	3' - 4'	Northern Sea Oats	<i>Chasmanthium latifolium</i>	✓	4
				Adaptable and forms dense clumps	5' x 2'	Royal Fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>		5
				Good groundcover foliage for shade in the hot Southeast	3' x 3'	Southern Wood Fern	<i>Dryopteris</i>	✓	6
				Bayous, ditches, continually wet spot	2' x 2'	Spider Lily	<i>Hymenocallis liriosome</i>	✓	7
				Groundcover or low maintenance bed filler	1.5' x 1'	Cherokee Sedge	<i>Carex cherokeensis</i>	✓	8
				Urban tolerant	4' x 1'	Giant Blue Iris	<i>Iris giganticaerulea</i>	✓	9
				Wet, clay soils	3' x 1'	Copper Iris	<i>Iris fulva</i>	✓	10



SHRUBS

sun/shade	suitable conditions	evergreen/deciduous/ perennial	growth rate (slow, moderate, fast)	appropriate uses	mature size (H' x W')	common name	scientific name	native	picture number
				Rounded form with berries and seeds	6' x 6'	Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	✓	1
				Bright green foliage and flowers 3/4 seasons	5' x 5'	Native Red Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>	✓	2
				Salt, drought tolerant	6' x 4'	Inkberry	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	✓	3
				Open, spreading form with spring flowers	8' x 10'	Buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	✓	4
				Spreading small shrub, showy in spring, fall leaf color	5' x 4'	Virginia Sweetspire	<i>Itea virginica</i>	✓	5
				Dense cluster of fronds	8' x 6'	Dwarf Palmetto	<i>Sabal minor</i>	✓	6

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS



TREES

sun/shade	suitable conditions	evergreen/deciduous/ perennial	growth rate (slow, moderate, fast)	appropriate uses	mature size (H' x W')	common name	scientific name	native	picture number
				Long lived and good wind barrier, seasonal color	50' x 25'	Bald Cypress	<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	✓	1
				Extremely tough and urban tolerant, poorly drained areas	50' x 45'	Green Spring Overcup	<i>Quercus lyrata</i> 'dahlonega'	✓	2
				Prefers acidic soils, thrives with wet feet	40' x 30'	Sunbreaker Swamp White Oak	<i>Quercus bicolor</i> 'Green Nova'	✓	3
				Well-drained soil, messy and not to be placed near pavement	75' x 40'	Sycamore	<i>Plantanus occidentalis</i>	✓	4
				Long-lived swamp tree	60' x 40'	Water Tupelo	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	✓	5
				Smaller cypress tree without knees	40' x 25'	Pond Cypress	<i>Taxodium ascendens</i>	✓	6
				Highly adaptive, fragrant flowers in spring	40' x 30'	Sweetbay Magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	✓	7
					20' x 12'	Swamp Titi	<i>Cyrilla racemiflora</i>	✓	8

E.2: STRENGTHEN VISUAL AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TO FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Rationale:

Communities, people, and the natural and built environments within which they live are inextricably linked. Opelousas is no exception, and protecting and celebrating the natural resources within the District is a great way to instill a sense of place and encourage people to spend time outside. Features like waterways and native plant communities help anchor the District in its geographic context and tell a story about the Opelousas landscape, and that is worth highlighting.

Fostering connections between people and the natural environment can begin with simple interventions like installing signage near streets that tells them what watershed the area belongs to or reminds them that a street drain drains to a nearby waterway. Planting native plant communities in the public realm is another simple way that the District can reference its natural environment. A more long-term project would include naturalizing all or part of the Bayou Tesson to include walking and biking trails with educational signage, transforming this channelized waterway into a multi-beneficial public amenity.

Integrating environmental stewardship into the built environment of the District is another important strategy. A green building incentive program for downtowns and other infill locations could reduce pollution, water use, and energy use while also reducing ongoing maintenance and operation costs. This program could include an expedited permitting process, reduced building and permit fees, and/or tax credits for developers of green buildings in key locations. Street improvements should also incorporate natural methods to filter stormwater, slow runoff, and replenish the underground water table by incorporating

stormwater planters, vegetated swales, detention basins, permeable pavers and other green infrastructure techniques.

Next steps:

- » Install signage at intersections with waterways identifying the waterway
- » Work with a landscape architect to install native plant communities in the public right of way
- » Consider naturalizing part of Bayou Tesson and making it a public amenity, including recreational trails and educational signage
- » Provide information and assistance to residents on natural landscaping techniques, including rain garden installation and creation of pollinator habitats
- » Recognize individuals, businesses, and nonprofits for outstanding stewardship behaviors and practices
- » Create and fund an annual city-wide restoration event

E.3: MAINTAIN AND EXPAND THE DISTRICT'S TREE CANOPY

Rationale:

Improving the urban tree canopy within the District has numerous benefits, including reducing summer peak temperatures and air pollution, enhancing property values, providing wildlife habitat, and providing aesthetic benefits. Trees, especially the historic live oaks, also add to the overall ambiance of the District and provide canopy for pedestrians against extreme weather conditions. A robust tree canopy can also help create a sense of place that attracts businesses and residents. However, urban conditions are often inhospitable to tree growth, and the amount of tree canopy coverage is a reflection of a variety

of factors—including intentional planning and investment.

Maintaining the existing tree canopy within the District is critical. The many mature native species present throughout the District provide many benefits to residents and visitors, and care should be taken to preserve them. Tree planting campaigns to expand the tree canopy are also important and can work in tandem with preservation efforts to build a robust, healthy urban canopy.

Next steps:

- » Conduct a tree canopy assessment to measure, monitor, and improve tree cover over time
- » Consider adopting a tree protection ordinance to preserve healthy specimen trees that help define the character of the District
- » Increase street tree planting areas along with new planting in greenways, park space, and other green infrastructure
- » Consider regulations and incentives to preserve mature trees during commercial and residential redevelopment
- » Increase tree canopy in areas with low coverage, high heat vulnerability (nonresidential areas, high impervious surface coverage), and areas exposed to more vehicle exhaust

E.4: COORDINATE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS WITH MASTER PLAN PRIORITIES

Rationale:

Improvements to public infrastructure like roads, drainage, and bridges were a common request throughout the public

engagement associated with this planning effort. These kinds of improvements are critical to the sustainability of the community, and their design should incorporate the holistic, multi-benefit priorities of this Master Plan. For instance, wherever possible, improvements to walking and biking facilities should be included as part of larger infrastructure investments. Aside from the community benefits of this more integrated infrastructure approach, encouraging coordinated infrastructure investments that reflect the priorities of the Master Plan will help to reduce redundant tasks and save money. This process could include establishing an interdepartmental or multijurisdictional working group, inventorying planned infrastructure improvements and identifying areas of overlap, and prioritizing projects and funding sources based on shared infrastructure requirements.

On all transportation improvements, incorporate the following to the extent possible:

- » Pedestrian enhancements including street trees, sidewalk improvements, directional signage, traffic calming and crosswalk upgrades
- » Improved ADA accessibility
- » Installation of gateways and signage consistent with District signage

Next steps:

- » Develop infrastructure project criteria that helps prioritize projects that support the Opelousas Downtown Development Plan's goals
- » Prioritize public and private projects that support the Master Plan recommendations while also meeting technical requirements of infrastructure needs



Conceptual rendering of Bayou Tesson naturalization

F. ADAPTIVE REUSE

The historic building stock in the Downtown Mixed-Use Core is one of the District's greatest assets. Across the country, adaptive reuse has been successfully used to convert warehouses, schools, hotels, and department stores into apartment, office, and commercial spaces. Maintaining and/or returning these structures to commerce eliminates the need for demolition, promotes sustainability and preservation, reduces urban sprawl and environmental impacts, leverages the use of existing public infrastructure, and helps revitalize existing neighborhoods. All of these benefits make adaptive reuse a powerful tool in the redevelopment toolkit for Opelousas.

However, adapting older buildings for new uses can require changes to existing zoning as well as education and incentives for the developer community. This section outlines priorities for the ODDD to maximize the redevelopment potential of adaptive reuse.

APA defines Adaptive reuse as “the process of converting buildings that have outlived their original purpose to accommodate new uses.”

- » Increasing costs have created a renewed interest in adaptive reuse (labor, demolition, materials, etc.)
- » Adaptive reuse strategy
 - Dependent on age, quality, variety, vacancy rate, and the demand for uses
 - Informed by development trends, building stock, employment forecasts
 - Identifies any financial, physical, or regulatory constraints
 - Update planning documents to provide direction for any needed regulatory changes and community support for adaptive reuse
- » Adaptive reuse can be used for any buildings that may be underused, abandoned, vacant, dilapidated, or functionally obsolete (empty warehouses, former schools, abandoned department stores, large historic homes, strip malls)

F.1: INVENTORY BUILDINGS WITHIN THE DISTRICT THAT ARE AVAILABLE FOR POTENTIAL REUSE

Rationale:

Taking stock of the existing building inventory and maintaining a database of structures within the District that are available for adaptive reuse is an important first step in getting these properties back into commerce. The list should aid builders and developers in narrowing their search for promising investment opportunities and could be linked to the online interactive map used to access assessor data. Highlighted parcels that have been identified as a redevelopment priority can link to the developer toolkit offering technical details that will help developers plan a strategy.

A site's suitability for adaptive reuse is dependent on both site-specific and external factors. Site-specific factors involve building characteristics: age, quality, lot size, and location. Demolition may be a more cost-effective option for older buildings that have not been well-maintained over time. Site location and access to amenities will factor in the long-term success of the project. External factors include an area's vacancy rate, demand for uses, demographic and market trends, and local regulations. Planners, developers, and other project stakeholders need to work collaboratively to identify both site-specific and external factors when prioritizing adaptive reuse projects.

Next steps:

- » Develop and make public an inventory of buildings in the District that may be good candidates for adaptive reuse

F.2: ESTABLISH GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND ATTRACT INVESTORS

Rationale:

To preserve the unique character of the District, it is important for the community to maintain the places and institutions that make it special—particularly its historic buildings. These places, along with attractive streetscapes and storefronts, contribute to a sense of place and neighborhood identity, which help retain existing residents and could attract new residents and businesses. Focusing on rehabilitation in the Historic District results in benefits from property improvement, blight removal, and increased occupancy of buildings in the historic center of the community.

Development standards and building codes designed for new construction often make rehabilitating older, historic buildings prohibitively expensive. It should be a priority to review and revise development standards, zoning, building, and safety codes to allow adaptive reuse of existing buildings in the District, encouraging infill development and reducing the environmental impacts of new construction. Changes to allow adaptive reuse could include reducing minimum residential unit sizes and commercial or residential parking requirements or grandfathering in nonconforming building heights; setbacks; floor plans; and electrical, mechanical, fire, and life safety requirements.

Potential parking issues are typical of many adaptive reuse sites that were built prior to current parking regulations, or have had their parking diminished over the years because of required right-of-way dedication. For instance, if an old garage becomes a restaurant, different parking requirements may apply, and existing parking may not

be adequate for the new use. The long-term benefits of attracting new development can outweigh the short-term impacts on neighborhood parking. Flexible zoning codes are needed to remove barriers that could potentially discourage investment in the neighborhood.

Next steps:

- » Amend the Zoning Ordinance to provide flexibility to allow for adaptive reuse, particularly in the case where the use of the building is changed
- » Streamline the Historic District Certificate of Approval review process
- » Contact owners of potential infill development sites to determine why new or redevelopment is not occurring and how the city could encourage it
- » City staff can connect property owners with real estate brokers and developers, work with property owners to change permitted uses, or conduct a market study to help owners understand potential uses

F.3: DEVELOP USER FRIENDLY MATERIALS EXPLAINING DEVELOPMENT CODES

Rationale:

Building codes change over time, and applying new building code requirements to existing buildings can be a major drawback for builders and developers. Building code clarification programs can help owners and developers understand what to expect in bringing an older building up to code for a new use. Some strategies to facilitate investment include streamlining the development process, providing technical assistance, and creating informational guides.

Next steps:

- » Make an easy-to-understand zoning handout available online and at City Hall, providing a simple explanation of what is allowed and contact information for further questions
- » Develop programs to assist building owners and developers in understanding the most recent building codes and navigating the code compliance process for building reuse
- » Consider developing a “code team” that brings together code officials, firefighters, engineers, and zoning staff to meet with new or expanding developers at the business site to clarify requirements

Next steps:

- » Publish a developer financing toolkit that links the inventory/management of vacant buildings prioritized for development with case studies and available funding options
- » Develop a building reuse resource that catalogs successful regional projects, particularly those involving historic buildings, including details related to building selection, securing financing, overcoming barriers, and lessons learned
- » Identify opportunities to maximize use of State and Federal tax credits and Opportunity Zone incentives to attract rehabilitation of designated structures and structures within the designated Historic District

RECOMMENDATION F.4: PROMOTE AVAILABLE FINANCING OPTIONS

Rationale:

Financing is a critical component of bringing any adaptive reuse project to fruition. Several financing options are available, such as small business loans, federal opportunity zones, possible tax credits, and storefront grants or loans to improve the aesthetics of the proposed project. A strategic package of several financing strategies can go a long way to inspire local property owners and interested regional developers alike.

Acadiana is full of success stories of adaptive reuse that can be used as a model for revitalization in Opelousas. Creating a catalog of financing opportunities for Opelousas will aid local property owners, entrepreneurs, and regional developers to connect with architects and contractors experienced in reuse in the region and to communicate these ideas to the public early in the process to garner support and enthusiasm.



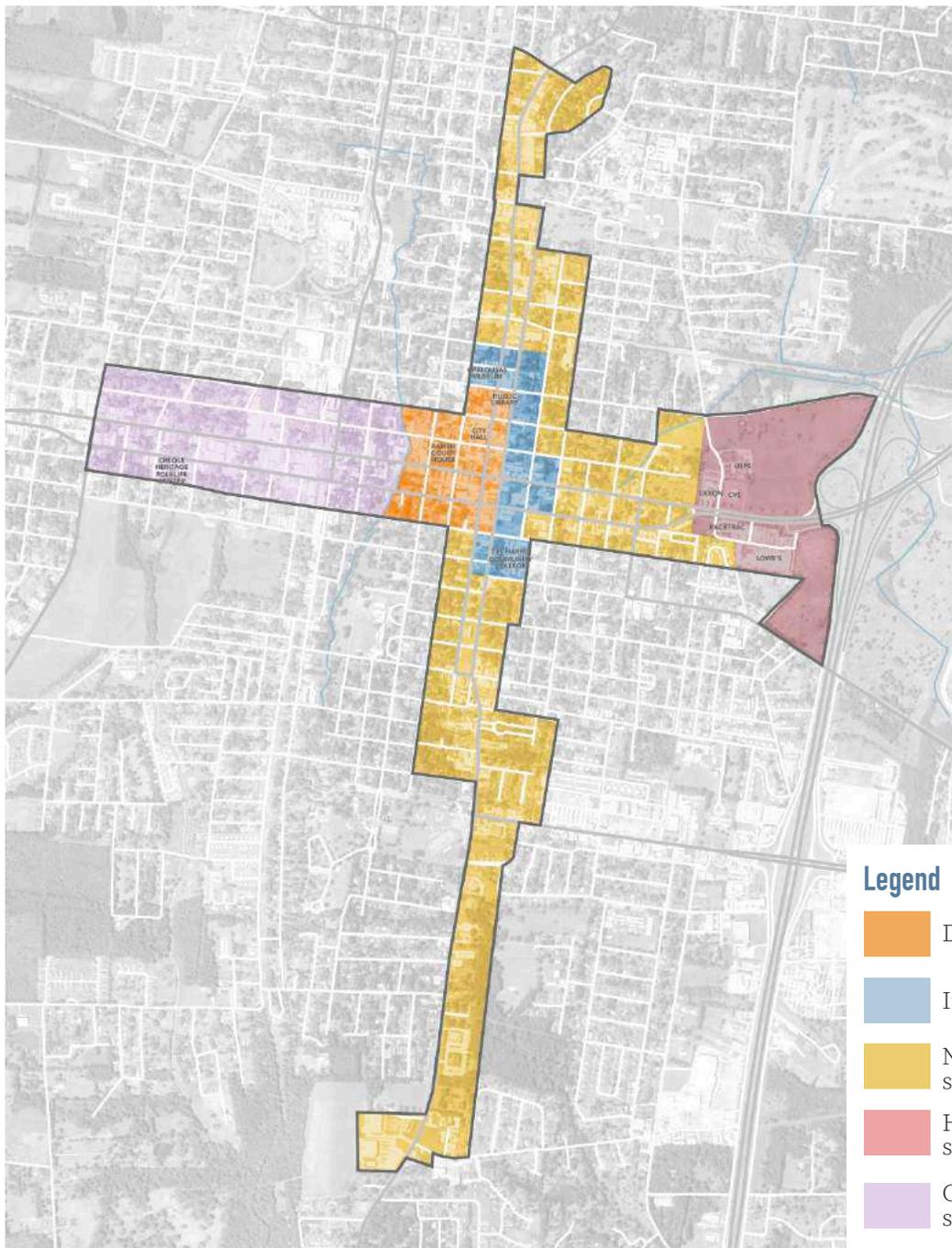


Sub-District Recommendations

4

INTRODUCTION

The Opelousas Downtown Development District encompasses a wide range of use types, building densities, architectural styles, and other development characteristics. To translate the vision identified for downtown Opelousas into these different areas, the Plan establishes five character areas within the Downtown Development District. These character areas were inspired by the existing conditions of downtown Opelousas today, but they are also visionary in their framing. They take cues from the form and use of existing buildings, but with an eye toward how these areas can each grow and contribute to a vibrant downtown environment.



Legend

- Downtown mixed-use core
- Innovation sub-district
- Neighborhood & community services sub-district
- Highway commercial sub-district
- Commercial corridor sub-district

DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE CORE



INNOVATION SUB-DISTRICT



NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMUNITY SERVICES SUB-DISTRICT



HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL SUB-DISTRICT



COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR SUB-DISTRICT

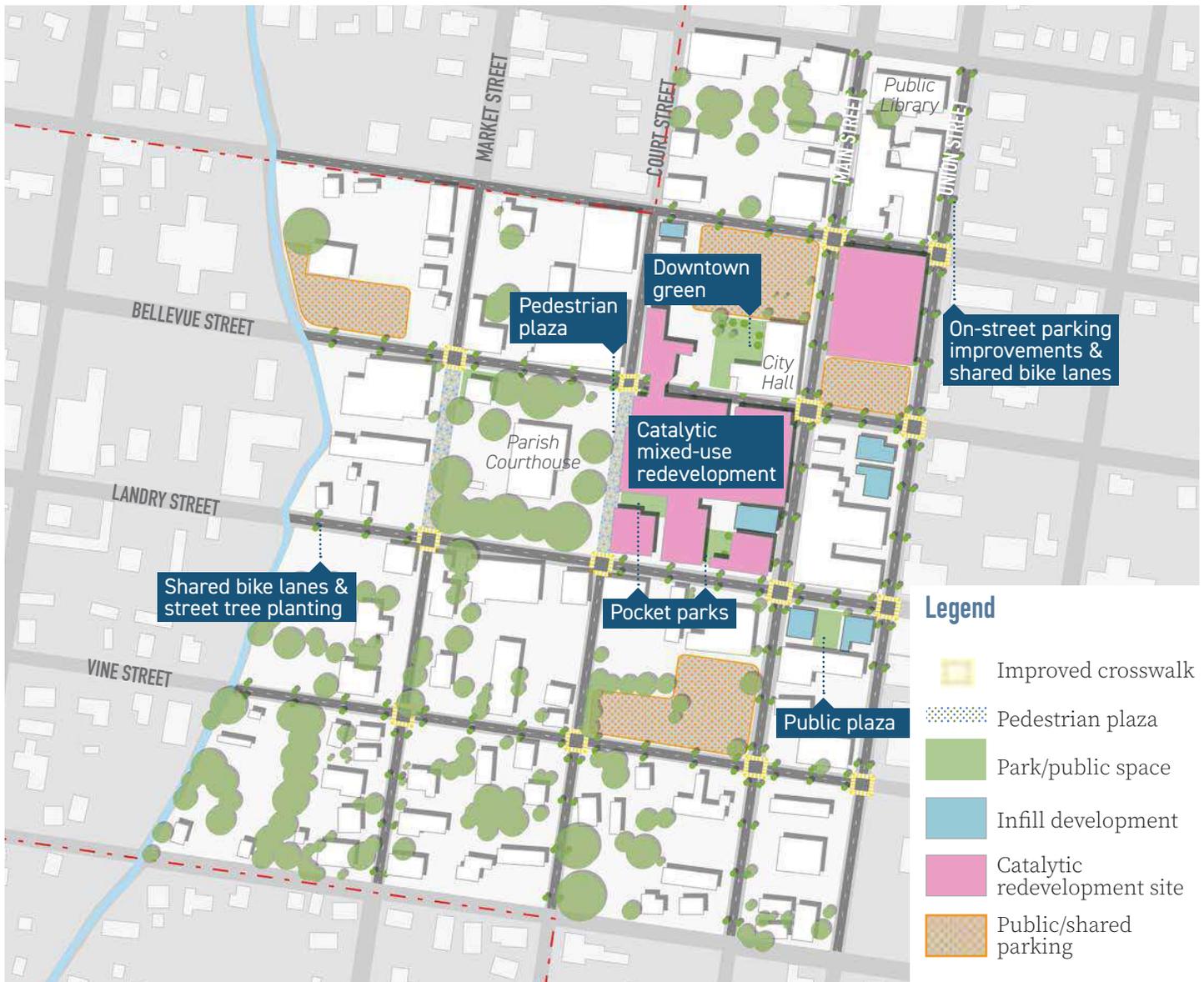


DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE CORE SUB-DISTRICT

This sub-district consists of higher density mixed-use buildings that accommodate retail, offices, government, civic, and public buildings, along with a mix of housing types including small lot housing, townhomes, and multifamily units. This urban center has a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, street trees, and buildings set close to the sidewalks to encourage activity. Human-scale physical improvements and a quality downtown environment encourage lingering. Cities should provide

small and large public gathering spaces downtown to encourage such activities. Streets and sidewalks should be connected and pedestrian friendly, and storefronts should be inviting and connect indoor users with street-level activities. Downtown should be a comfortable and safe environment for people to live, shop, play, and work.

Fostering a mix of uses will be essential—these activities reinforce each other and bring life to the downtown. Housing provides the residential population to patronize



and augment demand for downtown businesses, and downtown residents help create a safe and lived-in atmosphere. Professional offices provide the lunchtime crowd for downtown restaurants, and entertainment venues attract people from all over the region to the downtown. Retail uses give people a reason to go downtown on the weekends when offices are closed. A mixture of downtown land uses creates symbiotic relationships that positively reinforce each other and generate momentum within the downtown.

Downtown Opelousas already has the bones for a vibrant

mixed use core. Its rich inventory of historic buildings, minimal building setbacks, extensive on-street parking, and existing sidewalk network are all great assets. Strategic investments in catalytic developments in this sub-district will be an essential component of reinvigorating the downtown core, maintaining urban density, and alleviating the burden of vacant and blighted properties. The prominence of Landry Street and Vine Street running through the heart of downtown holds both opportunities and challenges as it brings significant traffic through the area.

DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE ZONING

The Downtown Mixed-Use Zone (DMU) is a form-based zone intended to promote a pedestrian friendly environment and acknowledge a development pattern established prior to the influence of the automobile. This is accomplished through no or reduced parking requirements, smaller maximum building footprints, historic preservation measures, and building envelope standards (BES). BES requirements differ based on the location within downtown, whether on a core, avenue, or local frontage. DMU regulations and standards are guided by several basic principles, including:

- » Buildings are aligned and close to the street
- » The street is a coherent space, with consistent building forms on both sides of the street
- » Buildings have active frontages
- » Property lines defined by buildings or street walls
- » Buildings designed for a small urban environment
- » Ground floor retail adds interest and activity
- » Garbage and machinery are shielded from street view
- » Parking is shared by multiple users and kept away from the street
- » Historic structures are preserved, or their elements are incorporated into redevelopment

PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. Strategically invest in projects to catalyze downtown redevelopment

Rationale:

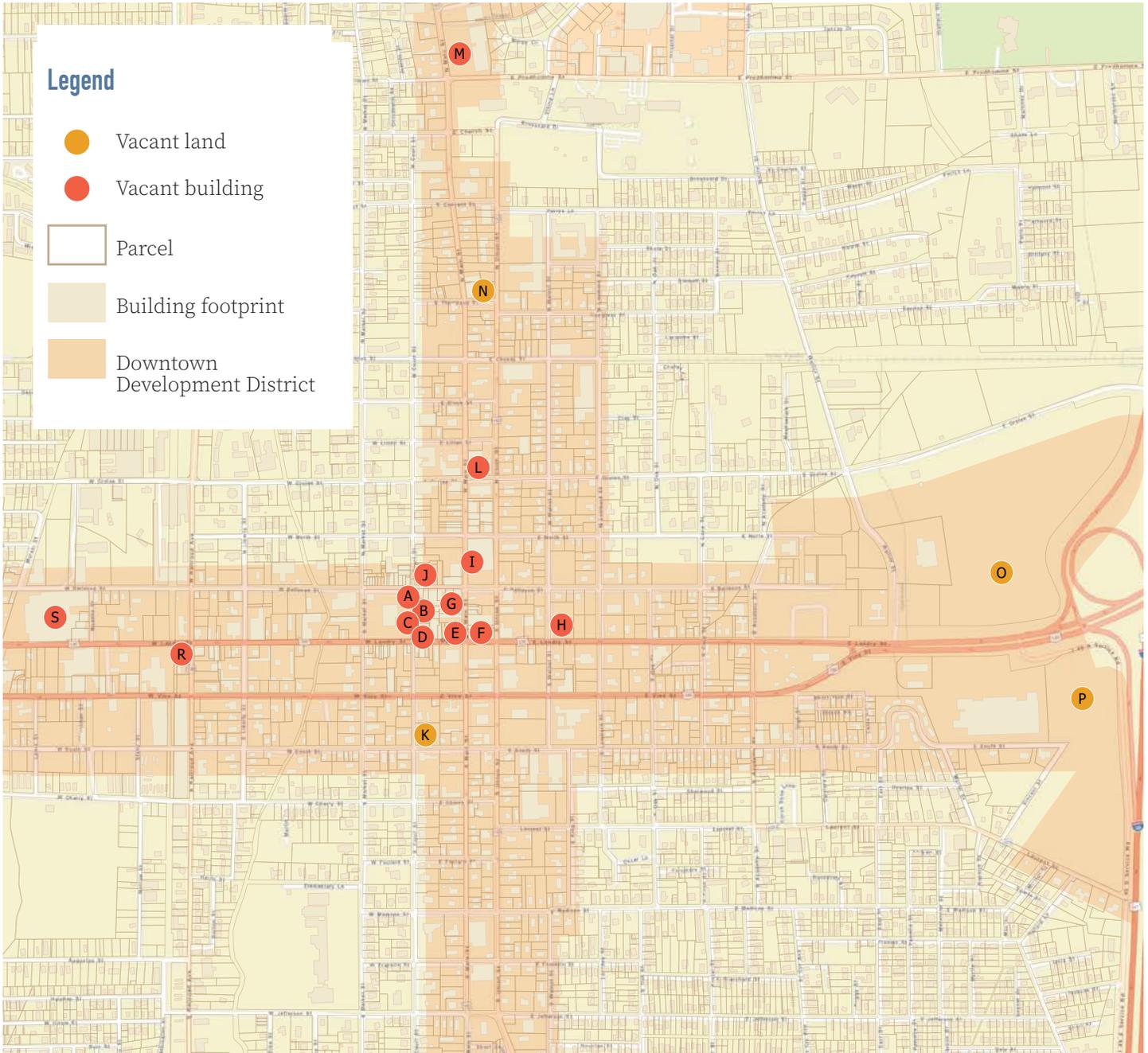
Identifying priority projects for initial investment is an effective way to spur revitalization efforts downtown. The mixed-use downtown core is an ideal place for catalytic development, as it has a foundation of physical and cultural assets upon which to build. This type of development is less about finding one massive project to generate immediate economic changes, but change happens one building at a time to advance a flexible strategy recognizing that the return on investment may be beyond five years. Catalytic development needs to be coordinated with infrastructure improvements and local programming to amplify the effects and capitalize on local public investment. When coordinated with office space for entry level employment, affordable housing, and local cultural and entertainment draws, catalytic development has the potential to make a major impact on placemaking and drive changes that build healthier more vibrant communities.

Developing destination anchors like public facilities are expensive projects usually undertaken one at a time. Opelousas may fund such projects through municipal bonding, either in the form of general obligation bonds (for projects that do not generate revenue) or revenue bonds for revenue-generating projects such as convention centers and sports facilities. Opelousas would need to stagger these over a longer period and include them in a multi year capital improvement plan. Public-private partnerships can also be used to share the cost of getting such projects implemented. In such cases, the public sector often acquires the property and prepares the site to make it shovel-ready for redevelopment. Local governments may also provide loan guarantees to make it possible for private developers

to obtain high-risk loans from financial institutions.

In the course of the Community Visioning Workshops, the stakeholder interviews, and the developer interviews conducted during this planning process, Opelousas residents and stakeholders were asked to share their ideas for redevelopment priorities. They noted both vacant buildings and empty lots that should be prioritized for potential catalytic redevelopment sites. The following sites have been prioritized as near-term development sites based on prime location and site readiness for redevelopment.

Several of the candidate sites have been further identified as potential catalyst sites with characteristics that favor high-quality redevelopment in the near term. Many of these are projects that could be under way within two to five years and would help prove the viability of the redevelopment market in Opelousas. This could trigger a series of new developments on nearby sites. The city of Opelousas can support these efforts by assisting with needed infrastructure that encourages redevelopment in targeted areas near catalytic sites. While the remaining candidate sites still offer significant redevelopment potential, they are less likely to spur redevelopment on adjacent sites within the next five years.



Legend

- Vacant land
- Vacant building
- Parcel
- Building footprint
- Downtown Development District

SITE ID	NAME	ADDRESS
A	Loan Duplex	124 S Court Street
B	Rexall Drugs	128 S Court Street
C	JW Low	121A S Court Street
D	Old Federal Building	131 S Court Street
E	St. Landry Bank & Trust	170 E Landry Street
F	Dress for Less	135 S Main Street
G	Abdallah's Building	112 S Main Street
H	New Life Center	411 E Landry Street
I	Bordelon Motors	118 N Main Street

J	First National Bank	103 E Bellevue Street
K	Oak Lot on Court	325 S Court Street
L	JB Sandoz Building	312 N Main Street
M	Main Square	1106 N Main Street
N	Toyota Parts Lot	706 N Main Street
O	I49 Exchange Lot	976 E Landry Street
P	ODDD Site	1222 E Landry Street
Q	Union Lot	425 S Union Street
R	Railroad Gas Station	206 S Railroad Ave
S	ACG Building	710 W Landry Street

PRIORITIZED SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE



FORMER ABDALLAH'S BUILDING

Technical Specifications

- » Lot size: 45,900ft²
- » Address: 112 South Main Street
- » Assessed Value: \$16,550
- » Existing Building:
 - Owner: Main Street Mall LLC

- For Lease
- » Zoning: Downtown Mixed Use (DMU); Core Site BES
 - Building Height: 2 to 5 stories
 - Setbacks: Street façade shall be built to at least 75% of overall RBL. There are no required side lot lines.
 - Buildable Area: At least 15% of the buildable area shall be maintained as open contiguous lot area.
- » Design Standards:

- Fenestration:
 - The ground story RBL facade shall have between 60 and 90% fenestration measured as a percentage of the facade that is between 2 and 10 feet above the finish floor. Awnings and overhangs are encouraged.
 - Upper story RBL facades shall have between 30 and 70% fenestration measured as a percentage of the facade that is between 3 and 9 feet above the finished floor.
- Additional architectural standards are required to ensure a coherent downtown aesthetic. These standards regulate building materials, configurations, and techniques for walls, roofs and parapets, windows and doors, signage, awnings/overhangs, lighting, and mechanical equipment.

Neighborhood Characteristics

- » Centrally located in downtown next to restaurants, shopping, the Parish Courthouse, and City Hall.
- » Located in a Designated Cultural Arts District
- » Located in an opportunity zone

Development Opportunities

- » Suitable development types: mixed use apartment and retail, mixed use office and retail, flex employment and office
- » Community engagement results:
 - Interest in preserving the area’s historic buildings and restoring historic elements like signs
 - Promoting existing businesses
 - Providing housing, commercial, and office space downtown
 - Interest in breweries, event and art spaces, antique malls

Funding Sources

- » Opportunity Zone Incentives
- » New Markets Tax Credit Program
- » Louisiana Enterprise Zone
- » PILOT Program
- » Tax Increment Financing
- » Angel Investor Tax Credits
- » State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- » Restoration Tax Abatement
- » Quality Jobs
- » Digital Interactive Media and Software Program

Case Studies

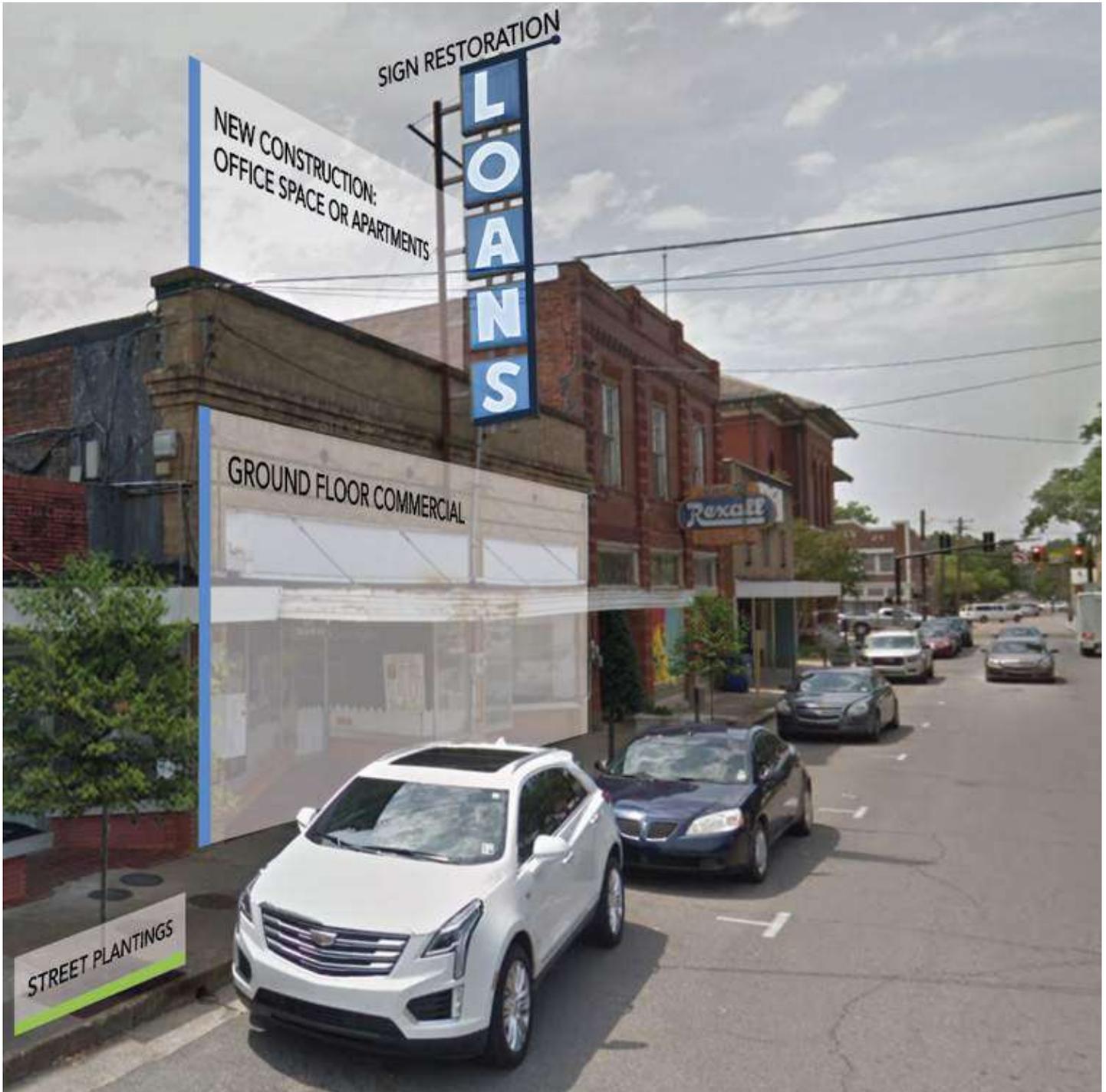
Acadiana Center for the Arts Theater

In 2010, the Acadiana Arts Council completed a 46,000ft² adaptive reuse and new construction project, converting a former bank building into a theater. The theater seats 300 people and is used for dance, drama, music, and more.

Rock’n’Bowl Downtown Lafayette

After becoming a successful establishment in New Orleans, the Rock’n’Bowl owner, Johnny Blanchard decided to open a second location in Lafayette. In 2016, he purchased the 56,000 square foot building previously occupied by the Whitney Bank five-story for \$2.5 million. The project has catalyzed further development in the area including the Spoonbill Watering Hole & Restaurant.

SOUTH COURT STREET BLOCK



Technical Specifications

- » Old Loan Duplex (Site B), 124 South Court Street
 - Assessed value: \$17,850
 - Owner: HHW Street Landry Properties
 - Features: two commercial and two office units
- » Former Rexall Drug (Site C), 128 South Court Street
 - Assessed value: \$7,830
 - Owner: William J McCarthy Jr
 - Features: unique tin ceilings
- » Former JW Low Store (Site D), 121A South Court Street
 - Assessed value: \$18,820
 - Owner: Low Storage LLC
- » Former State of Louisiana Court of Appeals (Site E), 131 South Court Street
 - Assessed value: \$55,300
 - Lot size: 14,375ft²
 - Owner: Fandal Enterprises LLC
- » Former St. Landry Bank and Trust (Site F), 170 East Landry Street
 - Assessed value: \$38,570
 - Owner: Opelousas Downtown Development
- » Dress for Less (Site G), 135 South Main Street
 - Assessed value: \$71,420
 - Owner: CPCI Inc.
- » Zoning: Downtown Mixed Use (DMU); Core Site BES
- » Building Height: 2 to 5 stories
- » Setbacks: Street façade shall be built to at least 75% of overall RBL. There are no required side lot lines.
- » Buildable Area: At least 15% of the buildable area shall be maintained as open contiguous lot area.

- » Design Standards:
 - Fenestration:
 - The ground story RBL facade shall have between 60 and 90% fenestration measured as a percentage of the facade that is between 2 and 10 feet above the finish floor. Awnings and overhangs are encouraged.
 - Upper story RBL facades shall have between 30 and 70% fenestration measured as a percentage of the facade that is between 3 and 9 feet above the finished floor.
 - Additional architectural standards are required to ensure a coherent downtown aesthetic. These standards regulate building materials, configurations, and techniques for walls, roofs and parapets, windows and doors, signage, awnings/overhangs, lighting, and mechanical equipment.

Neighborhood Characteristics

- » All sites are in a Designated Cultural Arts District
- » Sites B-E are in a National Register Historic District
- » Centrally located in downtown next to restaurants, shopping, the Parish Courthouse, and City Hall.
- » Located in an opportunity zone

Development Opportunities

- » Suitable development types: mixed use apartment and retail, mixed use office and retail, flex employment and office
- » Community engagement results:
 - Interest in preserving the area's historic buildings and restoring historic elements like signs
 - Promoting existing businesses
 - Providing housing, commercial, and office

space downtown

- Interest in breweries, event and art spaces, antique malls

Funding Sources

- » Opportunity Zone Incentives
- » New Markets Tax Credit Program
- » Louisiana Enterprise Zone
- » PILOT Program
- » Tax Increment Financing
- » Angel Investor Tax Credits
- » State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- » Restoration Tax Abatement
- » Quality Jobs
- » Digital Interactive Media and Software Program

Case Studies

Buck and Johnny's Pizzeria (Breaux Bridge, LA)

The owners of Buck and Johnny's Pizzeria saw potential in an old auto dealership on the corner of W Bridge Street and Berard Street in Breaux Bridge. The adaptive reuse project by Angelle Architects turned the old Domingue's Motors building into Buck and Johnny's, a pizzeria with live music and outdoor dining. The building is a mix of old elements, including a salvaged service door, and new construction.

Ritz Theater (Hammond, LA)

The 1905 Baltzell Opera House has been converted into a parking garage and luxury residential spaces. The building retained its exterior brickwork and neon sign, but the interior was modified due to years of neglect.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Building Prototype Evaluation

The Envision Tomorrow Prototype Builder is a planner-friendly Return on Investment (ROI) model anticipating the type of analysis that developers will use to evaluate the financial feasibility of potential projects. For Opelousas, the Prototype Builder was used to analyze the market feasibility of a range of building types. It helps determine whether zoning and development codes will result in desired development outcomes given current and future market conditions. It was also used to identify how various policy changes affect building type feasibility and how much funding may be needed to make desired development types "pencil out." This can include direct subsidies for individual projects as well as investments in public amenities that tend to increase average rents in a community and create new development opportunities.

For each building, two versions are shown. The difference between the two is listed in the last table column. Both prototype 1 and 2 are consistent with current zoning, however the prototype 2 has subtle changes such as a reduction in parking and landscaping requirements. In general, increasing height and density allowances and reducing landscaping and commercial parking requirements resulted in more cost-effective projects (both for developers and renters).

The rents and sales prices of the residential units were set to a level that would be required to meet a minimum accepted level of financial return (10% IRR for rental; 20% ROI for for-sale). As such, the rental rates and sales prices shown may far exceed what is likely to be accepted in the current marketplace, particularly for prototype 1 – and thus would not be considered a viable project today. This underscores why there has been very limited, if any, new investment in these product types within the downtown core and emphasizes the importance of public amenities, policy changes, and funding incentives to encourage development in downtown Opelousas.

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Mixed Use Apartment and Retail



SITE CHARACTERISTICS	PROTOTYPE 1	PROTOTYPE 2	CHANGE
Lot Size (Sq Ft)	20,000	20,000	0%
Max Land Cost (/Sq Ft)	\$23	\$25	9%
Height (Stories)	3	3	0%
Parking Spaces	30 (1 per Unit)	28 (1 per Unit)	-6%
Units on Site	14	20	43%
Density (Net)	30 DU / Acre	44 DU / Acre	46%
Floor Area Ratio	0.95	1.17	23%
Landscaping	15%	10%	-50%
Project Value	\$3.7 Million	\$4.5 Million	22%
Average Unit Size	775 sq ft	655 sq ft	-15%
Unit Rent	\$1,473/month (\$1.90/sq ft)	\$1,211/month (\$1.85/sq ft)	-18%
Affordability (%AMI) 100% AMI for family of 2: \$44,800	131%	108%	-18%

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Mid Rise Apartment



SITE CHARACTERISTICS	PROTOTYPE 1	PROTOTYPE 2	CHANGE
Lot Size (Sq Ft)	10,000	10,000	0%
Max Land Cost (/Sq Ft)	\$16	\$25	56%
Height (Stories)	2	3	50%
Parking Spaces	4 (1 per Unit)	14 (1 per Unit)	250%
Units on Site	4	14	250%
Density (Net)	19 DU / Acre	61 DU / Acre	221%
Floor Area Ratio	0.53	1.04	96%
Landscaping	55% (because of density caps)	15%	-73%
Project Value	\$1 Million	\$2 Million	100%
Average Unit Size	1000 sq ft	630 sq ft	-37%
Unit Rent	\$1,750/month (\$1.75/sq ft)	\$1,072/month (\$1.70/sq ft)	-39%
Affordability (%AMI) 100% AMI for family of 2: \$44,800	156%	96%	-38%

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Mixed Use Office and Retail



SITE CHARACTERISTICS	PROTOTYPE 1	PROTOTYPE 2	CHANGE
Lot Size (Sq Ft)	20,000	20,000	0%
Max Land Cost (/Sq Ft)	\$10	\$25	150%
Height (Stories)	3	3	0%
Parking Spaces	34 (1.5 per 1000 sq ft)	33 (1.67 per 1000 sq ft)	-3%
Density (Net)	60 Emp / Acre	78 Emp / Acre	30%
Floor Area Ratio	0.75	0.98	31%
Landscaping	15%	10%	-50%
Project Value	\$2.8 Million	\$3.9 Million	39%

DEVELOPMENT TYPES

Flex Employment and Office



SITE CHARACTERISTICS	PROTOTYPE 1	PROTOTYPE 2	CHANGE
Lot Size (Sq Ft)	10,000	10,000	0%
Max Land Cost (/Sq Ft)	\$22	\$23	150%
Height (Stories)	2	2	0%
Parking Spaces	14 (2 per 1000)	15 (2 per 1000)	7%
Density (Net)	69 Emp / Acre	74 Emp / Acre	7%
Floor Area Ratio	0.72	0.76	6%
Landscaping	15%	10%	-33%
Project Value	\$1.5 Million	\$1.6 Million	7%

Developer Cost Summary

Developers were interviewed to determine regional cost ranges for residential, office, commercial, and refurbished older buildings. A summary of findings is included below.

Developers reported construction cost ranges per square foot in the area for the following development types.

DEVELOPMENT TYPE	COST/SQUARE FOOT
Residential	\$100/ft ² - \$150/ft ²
Office	\$160/ft ²
Commercial	\$130/ft ² - \$225/ft ²
Adaptive Reuse	\$55/ft ² - \$75/ft ²

Potential funding sources for catalytic developments in the sub-district are detailed in Chapter 5.

Next steps:

- » Actively pursue the redevelopment of high-visibility sites with frontage near Landry, Vine, Main, and Union Streets with relatively dense mixed-use projects
- » Update development codes and processes to make regulations easier to understand, processes more transparent, and to make it easier to develop to attract desired growth
- » Market the use of tax credits and other incentives for adaptive reuse



2. Offer a diverse range of housing options

Rationale:

Establishing a downtown residential core is key to the long-term vitality of downtown Opelousas. Greater residential density in and around downtown will contribute significantly to the customer base for local merchants, as residents within walking distance of retail are significantly more likely to patronize those establishments. Downtown residential real estate is important from a non-economic perspective as well, as it shapes and defines the character of downtown, and provides an opportunity to accommodate a wide variety of demographics and residential types which might not fit in the District's traditional single family neighborhoods.

The downtown district should offer a broader range of housing types and price points to create a viable thriving neighborhood that offers diversity and affordability. Young professionals and “empty nester” population groups are pre-children and post-retirement households, for whom large houses and yards, typical of single-family residential development, are often an unwanted burden. Downtown living is also attractive to artists who prefer live-work units that enable them to work from home, students, and downtown workers. The success of downtown housing depends on a variety of factors: the downtown must provide an environment in which people want to live, there must be an investment motive for home ownership downtown, and downtown housing development must be attractive to real estate developers. The downtown must be perceived as a safe place that provides a mix of amenities that people need, and it must also be seen as a good investment.

Next steps:

- » Survey current sub-district business owners and employees to find out what conditions would attract them to live in the Downtown mixed use core
- » Include residential units in the sub-district's catalytic mixed-use projects

- » Develop a critical mass on high-visibility blocks adjacent to Landry and Main Streets to enhance activities levels and attract residents and visitors
- » Consider incentivizing a variety of housing types, including housing that attracts young adults, local workforce, artists, and others interested in mixed use housing
- » Consider financing incentives like setting up revolving loan funds, providing forgivable loans and grants, issuing low-interest loans, and using tax increment financing to decrease the cost of private investment, particularly in residential development involving historic rehabilitations

3. Make downtown more inviting by implementing guidelines for pedestrian amenities and investing in public spaces

Rationale:

Establishing a consistent character for downtown Opelousas begins with its right of way and other public spaces. Effective guidelines should specify implementation standards for amenities that attract pedestrians and make them feel safe and comfortable—things like generous sidewalks, street trees, awnings, shade, benches, etc. Generally, these guidelines should encourage the development of projects that are mixed-use and pedestrian oriented, the incorporation of green infrastructure, the optimization of on-street and on-site parking, and the development of engaging public space. While these improvements are important throughout the sub-district, this effort should begin with a pilot project that focuses on enhancing several blocks near the Parish Courthouse on Landry, Court, Vine, and Main Streets to showcase pedestrian lighting, street furniture, and street and parking design.

Creating and maintaining quality public spaces is another essential component of a welcoming, vibrant downtown.

Currently, the Courthouse Square is the only green space in the downtown core, and while it is an important downtown anchor, it provides limited programming opportunities. Downtown needs additional public space that allows a range of use types—a public green, plazas, and pocket parks. More information on the potential locations of these spaces is located in Recommendation A.2.

Next steps:

- » Organize a pilot improvement project targeting blocks adjacent to Landry, Court, Vine, and Main Streets
- » Consider offering incentives for private investment in facade improvements to complement public realm investment

- » Kickstart implementation of public space improvements with a temporary pocket park installation to gain public interest and support
- » Develop a design standards guide for public and private spaces downtown; it could be a voluntary guideline, it could be tied to incentives, or it could be incorporated into the city’s development standards as requirements for development in downtown

4. Revitalize or establish iconic community events and festivals downtown

Rationale:

Events are a relatively low-cost approach for Opelousas to reintroduce people to downtown, showcase the sub-



Legend

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1: Crosswalk | | Bike lane |
| 2: Bioswale | | Surface water flow |
| 3: Rain garden | | Subsurface water flow |
| 4: Permeable paving | | |
| 5: Underground cisterns | | |

Conceptual rendering of Landry and Main intersection with mobility and sustainability principles applied

district's unique assets, and increase foot traffic for downtown businesses. While some event programming already exists downtown, bolstering the events calendar with regularly-occurring events in the Mixed-Use Downtown Core will help center downtown as the heart of public life in Opelousas. Some types of events, like art walks, outdoor performances, concerts, and film screenings, are great events that can recurrently take place downtown. Programming like antique car shows, Christmas lighting ceremonies, holiday parades, and music on the square are examples of special events that get people to visit downtown seasonally. The more events downtown, the more effective they will be in increasing foot traffic and selling the qualities of the downtown to both residents and visitors alike.

While downtown events should aim to attract residents from across the city as well as visitors, there are also groups within the sub-district that can be targeted for more involvement downtown. For instance, downtown employees may not have a relationship with downtown outside the context of their work environment—events just after work can help capture this audience. Along with programming events at different times throughout the day to attract different audiences, programming should also utilize a range of existing venues and build on existing resources within the sub-district like the Delta Grand Theatre.

Next steps:

- » Develop an Events Committee to support the ODDD in organizing and marketing downtown programming
- » Create a regularly occurring public event that showcases downtown businesses
- » Aim to host at least one event per month downtown

5. Develop a system for managing and promoting the use of vacant properties Downtown

Rationale:

Addressing the many vacant properties in the heart of downtown is a critical priority for the sub-district. While investing in catalytic redevelopment projects is one part of the solution, establishing a system for managing vacant properties and getting them back into commerce as quickly as possible can also help minimize the negative effects of vacancies in the downtown core. Such a system would require a thorough inventory of all properties in the downtown core to develop a database of information about their physical condition, ownership status, tax status, tenancy, etc. An effective system would also involve the implementation of blight-elimination efforts, starting with active code enforcement.

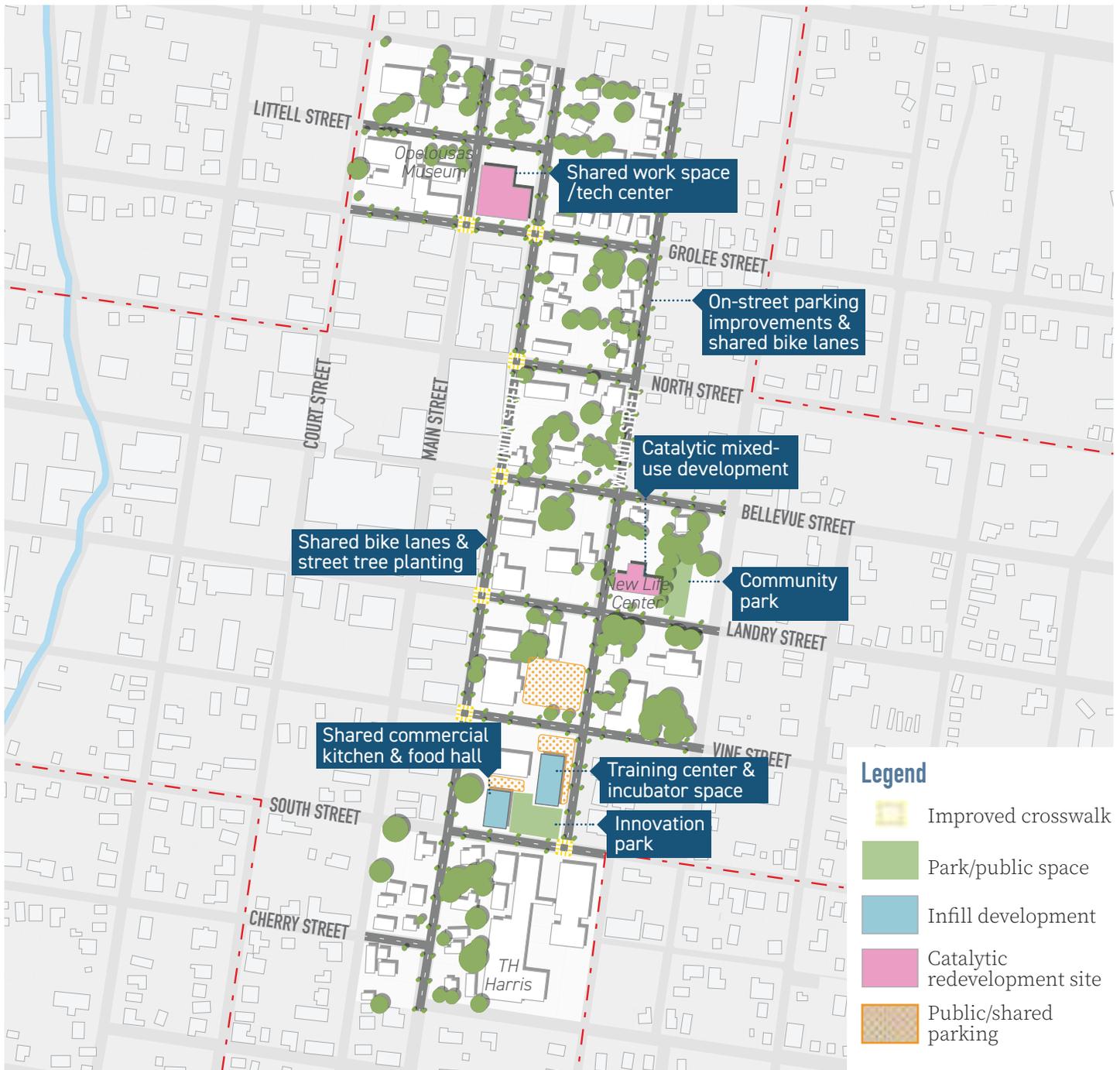
Next steps:

- » Develop an inventory of all the downtown buildings with information that helps encourage private investment, including physical characteristics, rental rates, ownership, and identification of tax-delinquent properties and those near foreclosure
- » Coordinate ongoing management of this system among involved parties, including the ODDD, the City, the Parish Assessor, and others
- » Develop relationships with local real estate agents to establish a marketing pipeline for filling downtown vacancies efficiently
- » Consider initiating a rental assistance program for businesses that locate within the downtown core

INNOVATION SUB-DISTRICT

Innovation districts are intended to support urban economies by growing jobs in ways that leverage their distinct economic conditions and can be a tool to help connect residents to employment and educational opportunities. Innovation districts can take different forms

and often include mixed-use development, supportive services such as training programs and networking events for emerging businesses, and design features such as common areas and pedestrian-friendly elements that encourage skilled individuals to interact on a regular



basis. They may also contain support for entrepreneurs such as incubators for start-up businesses and commercial kitchens.

The innovation sub-district is adjacent to the mixed use core and capitalizes on existing community resources within the area, most notably T.H. Harris Community College. By encouraging the development of entrepreneurial ventures, technological infrastructure, and shared workspace alongside education and workforce support services, this sub-district is intended to help foster collaborative endeavors and economic opportunity.

The innovation sub-district already has some assets that can be improved and leveraged to help define this area. The South Louisiana Community College T.H. Harris Campus within the sub-district offers technical training to students and the Opelousas Public Library, approximately five blocks walking distance away, is a resource that can support students and young professionals. Several buildings, including the New Life Center, have been identified as suitable sites to be adapted and renovated into uses to support this area, such as developing business incubator space, training centers, and mentorship programs.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop shared spaces like business incubators and training centers to spur workforce development

Rationale:

Incubators are collaborative settings that provide space for pre-revenue startup businesses as well as networking opportunities so young entrepreneurs can develop their ideas in a supportive and nurturing environment. Experienced entrepreneurs usually provide mentorship to direct startups to financing opportunities, develop business plans, explore the market potential for the product, and eventually prototype the product and launch the business. Incubator spaces vary in what they provide, but basic services are a work space and wifi access. The

key attraction of incubator spaces is the very affordable rent, meeting rooms, etc. Offering spaces with shared work equipment (shared commercial kitchen, workshop, etc.) can reduce the initial investment required to test out a business idea and encourage entrepreneurship. This can be further supported by training centers and access to startup mentors.

Next steps:

- » Review and potentially revise zoning ordinance to accommodate small businesses that would like to locate in the ODDD
- » Eliminate regulatory barriers to building renovation and occupancy
- » Prioritize redevelopment of the New Life Center to meet the needs of the incubator program
- » Ensure activity around incubator spaces are supportive and attractive to young entrepreneurs

PRIORITIZED SITE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE INNOVATION SUB-DISTRICT

NEW LIFE CENTER

Technical Specifications

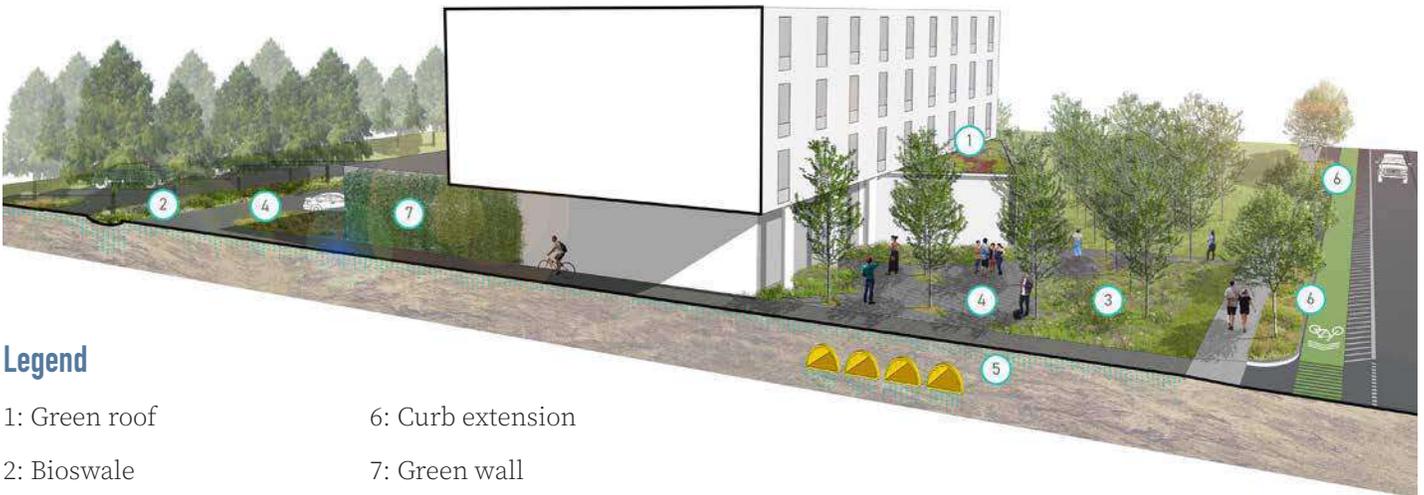
- » Lot size: 46,000ft²
- » Existing Building:
 - Built in 1958
 - 36,000ft², 4-story building
 - Operated as a women’s shelter, providing childcare, lodging, meals, and other social services
 - Owned by City of Opelousas
- » Zoning: Downtown Mixed Use (DMU); Avenue Site BES
 - Building Height: 1 to 3.5 stories
 - Setbacks: Building must be built to at least 50% of lot frontage along the Required Building Line (RBL). There are no required side lot line

setbacks.

- Buildable Area: At least 30% of the buildable area shall be maintained as open contiguous lot area.
- Maximum Building Footprint: 30,000 square feet

» Design Standards:

- Fenestration:
 - Each story RBL facade shall have between 30 and 70% fenestration measured as a percentage of the facade that is between 3 and 9 feet above the finish floor. Awnings and overhangs are encouraged.
 - Additional architectural standards are required to ensure a coherent downtown aesthetic. These standards regulate building materials, configurations, and techniques for walls, roofs and parapets, windows and doors, signage, awnings/



Legend

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1: Green roof | 6: Curb extension |
| 2: Bioswale | 7: Green wall |
| 3: Rain garden | Bike lane |
| 4: Permeable paving | Subsurface water flow |
| 5: Underground cisterns | |

Conceptual rendering of New Life Center development with mobility and sustainability principles applied

overhangs, lighting, and mechanical equipment.

- Additional architectural standards are required to ensure a coherent downtown aesthetic. These standards regulate building materials, configurations, and techniques for walls, roofs and parapets, windows and doors, signage, awnings/overhangs, lighting, and mechanical equipment.
- » Phase I Targeted Brownfield Environmental Site Assessment was completed in September 2019
- » Estimated adaptive reuse cost: \$1.98 Million - \$2.7 Million (\$55-\$75/ft²)

Neighborhood Characteristics

- » Located in a Designated Cultural District
- » Blocks from the Parish Courthouse and City Hall
- » On the edge of an existing residential area
- » Walking distance to restaurants and shopping
- » Located on US HWY 190, approximately ½ mile from Interstate 49
- » Located in an opportunity zone

Development Opportunities

- » Redevelopment as a mixed residential/commercial development is supported by the City and community
- » Suitable development types: mixed use apartment and retail, mid-rise apartment

Funding Sources

- » New Life Center is receiving funding from the Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance award.
- » Opportunity Zone Incentives
- » EPA Brownfield Program
- » New Markets Tax Credit Program

- » Louisiana Enterprise Zone
- » PILOT Program
- » Tax Increment Financing
- » Angel Investor Tax Credits
- » State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- » Restoration Tax Abatement
- » Quality Jobs
- » Digital Interactive Media and Software Program

Case Studies

Uptown Lofts

The Uptown Lofts were designed to provide a mixed demographic housing development near downtown Lafayette. The development includes live-work units, restaurants, and office space. The 2015 cost estimate for the development was \$18 million.

Bottle Art Loft Lafayette

HRI Communities is in the process of completing an adaptive re-use project on the former Coca-Cola bottling facility site. The project will include loft-style apartments and leasing preference for artists. The project is estimated to cost \$16 million and includes the use of historic and low-income tax credit programs. Project partners include: IBERIA Civic Impact Partners, JP Morgan Chase, State of Louisiana Office of Community Development, Louisiana Housing Corporation, City of Lafayette, Acadiana Planning Commission, Enhanced Capital.

2. Prioritize pedestrian improvements, particularly near community spaces like schools, training centers, and commercial hubs

Rationale:

Pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, benches, and public space encourage people to walk between destinations within the sub-district, encouraging collaboration and partnerships. A comprehensive pedestrian improvement program would include enhanced streetscapes with street trees, planted areas to help manage stormwater, and enhanced safety features like lighting.

3. Invest in the technology infrastructure required for the proposed sub-district uses

Rationale:

Developing a network of technology infrastructure is critical to fostering entrepreneurship and innovative workforce development initiatives. High speed internet access throughout the sub-district will be especially important, as it is an irreplaceable piece of infrastructure for twenty-first century small businesses. Providing public wireless internet in the sub-district is another priority, and its benefits include economic development potential, the attractiveness of free Wi-Fi to tourists, the fact that having this kind of amenity signals to outsiders that a town is forward thinking, and, finally, the opportunity for those who might otherwise not be able to have the internet at home (whether this is because there is no option for a fast connection, or whether they simply cannot afford one) to access the internet from a broad area.

Next steps:

- » Contract with an experienced technician to identify the types of equipment and appropriate location of the desired tech infrastructure

- » Designate a City staff person to manage and moderate Wi-Fi zones and serve as the first point of contact for community members with questions
- » Pursue internet funding provided in the 2021 COVID-19 Relief Bill for communities with nearby higher education facilities

4. Develop mixed-use housing stock for students and young professionals

Rationale:

Providing attractive and convenient housing options is a critical step in developing and retaining a skilled workforce, and the sub-district should offer a variety of housing options to suit the needs of those working in or around it. These options could include mixed-use developments as well as apartments, and there are several existing structures and available properties in the sub-district that could support this kind of housing development.

Next steps:

- » Conduct a housing study to analyze the viability of mixed-use housing in the sub-district
- » Identify opportunities within the sub-district for infill and redevelopment to take advantage of existing infrastructure and minimize the need for new facilities
- » Provide regulatory flexibility to zoning provisions such as parking, building height, density, setback and other provisions for mixed-use developments
- » Provide financial and regulatory incentives to mixed-use developers, such as permit fee reductions, tax abatements, expedited development approval processes
- » Identify a pilot project and partner with a developer to implement

SAMPLE GUIDELINES

Walkable Areas

- » Modify site design of auto-oriented areas to enhance the pedestrian experience, such as less parking in front of buildings and additional pedestrian oriented landscaping.
- » Orient primary building entrances to the front of the street
- » Street frontage should have 50% or more of the buildings within 65 feet of the front of the property line
- » A minimum of 30% of buildings on the street block should have ground floor transparency

Buildings in Walkable Areas

- » No more than one double loaded row of parking spaces should be placed in the front of a building
- » 50% of the street frontage should have buildings within 65 feet of the front property line or not greater than the setbacks of adjacent buildings, if less than 65 feet
- » The ground story of buildings should have 30% transparency at the front and 25% transparency on the side street
- » Building entrance ways should have their primary orientation toward the street rather than the parking area
- » Prominent primary building entrances should be visible from street
- » Pedestrian entrances and storefronts should be oriented to the street
- » Residential garage doors should be no more than 40% of the total building frontage
- » Setbacks of adjacent buildings should be the maximum permissible setback for new residential development

Landscaping and Screening in Walkable Areas

- » A minimum of 25% of required landscaping should be provided within the front yard setback
- » Points or credits should be given for use of green infrastructure and green-wall systems

Fencing and Screening in Walkable Areas

- » The materials used for fencing or screening should include vinyl, wood, wrought iron, masonry or steel materials
- » Utility areas should be screened using materials that are visually integrated with the surrounding area and are located in the side or rear yard.

- » Loading docks should not be visible from the street
- » Loading docks should not be accessed directly from the street

Parking and Transportation in Walkable Areas

- » Pedestrian level reduced parking standards should be required
- » Parking should be limited to 20% over the minimum requirement
- » To reduce parking lots add additional tools, such as on-street parking, participation in public parking districts, and transportation demand management to reduce parking demand
- » Require bicycle parking
- » Sidewalk waivers should not be granted except for in rural areas
- » New streets should connect to existing stub-outs on adjacent properties and provide stub-outs to surrounding vacant or undeveloped tracts.
- » Provide pedestrian access of all uses by linking to adjacent sidewalk(s), multi-use path(s), or public transportation stops.
- » Clearly mark pedestrian paths to buildings from parking lots

Pedestrian Amenities in Walkable Areas

- » Provide pedestrian lighting at one light per 75 feet of street frontage
- » Pedestrian access points should be illuminated as focal points from public view at street
- » Pedestrian amenities should be allowed in right of way by permit
- » Mid-block pedestrian passages should be required when block perimeter exceeds 1,600 feet
- » Developments exceeding 50% of a block face should be required to provide at least one street feature: reduced block length, bump-outs, indented parking, parallel parking

Signs and Lighting in Walkable Areas

- » Only monument and building signs should be permitted
- » Monument sign height should be a maximum of 15 feet
- » Lighting should be fully shielded
- » Lighting fixtures should be no more than 20 feet in height
- » Pedestrian access points should be illuminated from public view at street frontage

5. Forge partnerships between schools, employers, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations within the District

Rationale:

Given that a hallmark of the innovation sub-district is its focus on workforce development and entrepreneurship, partnerships between several local educational, civic, and business entities will be integral for the sub-district's success. For instance, a high-quality public education system supports the local economy by helping to ensure the community has workers with needed skills and better preparing students for jobs. The city can work more closely with local school districts to support school programs and build connections between government and the education sector. Avenues of exploration might include developing science, technology, engineering, and math curricula in Opelousas schools or creating a mentorship program for high school students to teach them about different educational opportunities and professions and better prepare them to enter the workforce.

T.H. Harris is a valuable asset within the sub-district, and partnering with them to create a career resource center to better connect residents seeking employment with local businesses could be a great asset to the community. The center could maintain a listing of available jobs and residents seeking employment; connect residents with

appropriate education and training programs, including financial aid resources; host regular career fairs; connect residents and businesses with resources from regional or state economic development agencies, such as on-the job training or workforce screening programs; and provide one-on-one career counseling on dedicated days each week or month. Establishing these kinds of relationships between educational institutions, employers, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations facilitates innovative partnerships and programs to develop a skilled workforce and quality jobs.

Next steps:

- » Convene a group of representatives from the St. Landry Parish School Board, South Louisiana Community College T.H. Harris campus, and major employers in Opelousas to review curriculum and employer needs to help connect students to employment opportunities
- » Incentivize employers to establish internship programs which provide students with on the job training to help prepare them for the workforce
- » Establish a career resource center that provides resources for job opportunities, technical training, career counseling, resume assistance and interview preparation

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR SUB-DISTRICT

The Landry and Vine Street commercial corridor defines this sub-district. The Commercial Corridor sub-district promotes the adaptive reuse or redevelopment of vacant, underutilized, obsolete, or structurally-deteriorated industrial and commercial properties. The area will include new commercial offerings as well as updated and emerging light industrial uses.

Landry and Vine Streets are the primary East-West corridors through the city and carry significant traffic loads to and from larger industrial corridors like Interstate 49 and Highway 190. There are several opportunities to improve

Landry and Vine Streets to better support vibrant economic activity and greater patronage. They are also home to several businesses that have helped build Opelousas' legacy as a culinary and cultural destination. This sub-district is characterized by large parcels, many of which are vacant or blighted, and while these conditions currently overwhelm the sub-district, they present significant opportunities for placemaking efforts.



PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

1. Improve Vine and Landry Streets to encourage economic activity

Rationale:

Vine and Landry Streets are the primary corridors in this sub-district, and they are home to many local businesses. However, the current configuration of these roadways is not very conducive to vibrant economic activity, as there are no pedestrian amenities, and the one-way couplets make some business destinations difficult to reach. Reconfigured street sections are proposed in Recommendation B.1 and feature sidewalks, street trees, bike lanes, and planted areas to make the corridor more welcoming to pedestrians and motorists alike. Improving crosswalks at key intersections is another important piece of making this area safe for pedestrians and more inviting.

While improvements like street trees, planting areas, and sidewalks will help to build the aesthetic of the corridor and enliven it, enforcing consistent standards related to signage and parking will also help to manage visual character.

Next steps:

- » Implement right-of-way improvements including sidewalk installation, street tree planting, bike lane marking, and planted area installation along the corridor
- » Require compliance with commercial signage and parking regulations along the corridor

2. Incentivize infill development within the sub-district

Rationale:

There are several vacant lots and buildings in this area, and these empty properties have a negative impact on the corridor. Encouraging the reuse of existing structures or developing vacant lots will help fill gaps along Landry

and Vine Streets and will diversify the offerings along the corridor. Increasing the commercial density in this sub-district will make it a more vibrant and sustainable commercial destination. However, the economic incentive for investors to redevelop properties in the sub-district may need some augmentation by the local government or ODDD. Strategies like providing incentives for redevelopment and infill development areas primed for development and creating flexible zoning, site, and building regulations can promote infill development.

While developing a robust infill development program will take time, there are interim strategies that can help activate vacant spaces along the corridor. These include utilizing empty lots for temporary outdoor gathering spaces for customers or the general public. Converting these eyesores to public amenities is an effective way to build momentum around the corridor while longer-term commercial infill prospects materialize.

Next steps:

- » Establish an infill incentive program aimed at local retailers and services like restaurants, cafes, and complementary businesses
- » Utilize vacant lots for creative placemaking such as outdoor gathering spaces for business patrons equipped with public art, cafe tables and chairs, and other amenities

3. Establish gateways to signify entry to this sub-district

Building character within the sub-district will contribute to a distinct sense of place and better connect it to the rest of the Downtown Development District. Defining gateways can be an effective way to establish that character—they are the major entry points to the sub-district and can be used to convey a positive identity as well as establish boundaries and orient visitors, residents, and potential investors. Gateway projects can also be used to create a good first impression of the sub-district and downtown area so that it is not defined by vacant properties or blighted buildings.

These gateways should highlight the assets of the sub-district—perhaps the city’s legacy of food production and services—and generate interest in the commercial establishments along the corridor.

Landscaping is another important gateway element; a row of street trees or planted median with native plant materials can help define the corridor’s character. Landscape improvements can also provide a sense of pedestrian scale and enclosure that marks a transition into the sub-district. Moving utility lines underground, improving street lighting, and providing sidewalks can also contribute to the overall image of the corridor.

Next steps:

- » Develop a gateway installation at the western entry of the sub-district that highlights the commercial corridor and is in accordance with sign design guidelines
- » Include aesthetic and pedestrian-oriented improvements in any planned construction on Landry and Vine Streets

4. Develop a public art campaign to activate the corridor

Rationale:

Public art has many potential benefits for this commercial corridor and includes sculpture, painting, murals, creative signage, pavement design, street furniture, and other forms of artistic expression. It fosters vibrant communities, engages both children and adults, showcases local talent, and fosters emotional and mental health. The large building footprints and industrial materials within this sub-district make them ideal candidates for murals and other public art installations, contributing to a stronger sense of identity and welcoming more pedestrian and commercial activity. A mural program can bring public art to the community and enhance the local sense of place. Sculpture, street art, and artful pedestrian amenities are also powerful modes of public art and have a place in the sub-district’s public art

strategy. Organized public art campaigns should engage the community to receive input on the proposed installations, then artists work with the city to obtain permits and manage other administrative requirements.

Next steps:

- » Implement a diverse range of public art installations that showcase local artists
- » Consider building capacity to manage grant funding to implement street art at major intersections such as West Vine Street and South Court Street to enhance the sub-district’s character and slow traffic

5. Provide screening of outdoor storage, utility, and parking areas within the sub-district

Rationale:

Currently, there is little or no screening between different uses within the sub-district, and this can be an eyesore to pedestrians and motorists. The open storage, work, and utility areas lend a more industrial character to this commercial corridor, discouraging the corridor from meeting its potential as a vibrant, successful commercial district. Though some uses within the sub-district may require specialized utilities or outdoor workspace needs, these should be screened so they do not detract from the character of the sub-district or distract from adjacent uses.

Next steps:

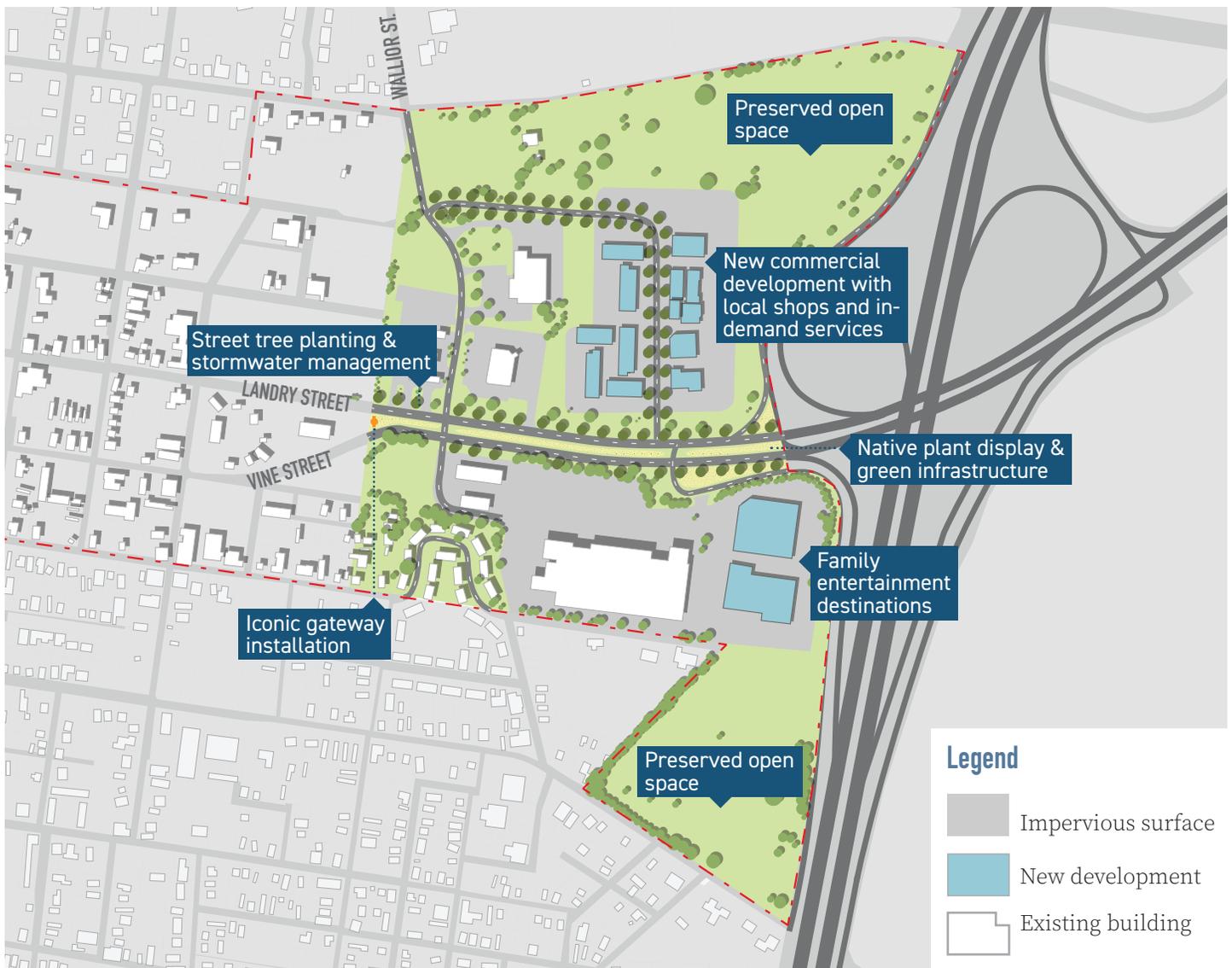
- » Enforce zoning restrictions on storage and loading areas, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, etc. visible from the public right-of-way
- » Develop design guidelines for design and materials that can be used for screening

HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL SUB-DISTRICT

The Highway Commercial sub-district features establishments, accommodations, supplies, and services to motorists. Uses in this area serve the entire city and its trading area while also supporting the central business and neighborhood districts. Providing convenient services to motorists is a key opportunity for those parcels within the district that are adjacent to Interstate 49 and Highway 190, two busy commercial corridors. While this sub-district is well-suited for larger retailers that may have a city-wide or regional customer draw, the high visibility of this sub-district presents opportunities to elevate local businesses

and other character institutions that will draw visitors further into the District.

Given the prominent location of this area, aesthetic considerations are important in this sub-district. Gateway elements like attractive native landscaping and public art elements should be hallmarks of this area. Lots in this sub-district are typically larger than many others in the district, but they should incorporate design elements that feel cohesive with the rest of the downtown area, further contributing to its role as an effective gateway to welcome visitors to the downtown core.



PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

1. Participate in and implement the recommendations from the I-49 Midway Corridor Strategic Growth Initiative

Rationale:

The I-49 Midway Corridor Strategic Growth Initiative, conducted by St. Landry Economic Development and the Acadiana Planning Commission in 2020, is a multi-jurisdictional effort that looks at the future of the I-49 Corridor, beginning at the I-10 –I-49 intersection and proceeding north to Exit 27 in St. Landry Parish, including the interchange located in this sub-district. The scope of the project includes the identification of stakeholders and project champions, inventory of existing corridor assets, integration of smart growth self-assessments, execution of intergovernmental agreement for coordination throughout the corridor, facilitation of a SWOT analysis meeting, and development of community profiles. While the plan has many objectives, some of the objectives most relevant to the future of this sub-district are included below:

- » Take a comprehensive look at each major intersection on the I-49 Corridor
- » Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities associated with each interchange
- » Identify the needs for infrastructure improvement at each interchange, put a cost on the improvement and prioritize the need
- » Evaluate the frontage roads through the entire geographic study area
- » Evaluate blighted, or eyesore priorities that should be addressed. Provide an assessment on highest and best use of available frontage property

During the corridor visioning process described in the Initiative report, the following priorities were set for the future of the corridor.

- » Leverage the corridor’s strengths
- » More robust health services
- » Coordination of events and festivals
- » A possible event center
- » More parks
- » Fiber
- » Continued access to decision makers

Actively participating in and leading implementation of this plan will help establish Opelousas as a champion and leader of development in the I-49 Midway Corridor and will help coordinate future development in this sub-district with that of adjacent municipalities.

Next steps:

- » Implement any land use and zoning recommendations that result from the study
- » Advocate for prime Corridor improvements and features identified in the plan to be located within this sub-district

2. Showcase regional businesses in this high-visibility area to attract highway travelers

Rationale:

Prioritizing local and regional entrepreneurs in this highly trafficked area will highlight homegrown talent, build community wealth, and create local employment opportunities. Encouraging the establishment of local businesses in this visible area also encourages visitors to explore more of the District by exposing them to the

character of Opelousas and will help connect this sub-district to the rest of the Downtown Development District, rather than marketing it as a separate destination.

Next steps:

- » Consider offering incentives or exemptions to local businesses for locating within a certain proximity of the highway
- » Work with the local Chamber of Commerce to identify good candidates and build capacity within local businesses that can fill in market gaps in this sub-district

3. Invest in beautification efforts that encourage visitors and residents to explore the District

Rationale:

Many visitors form their first impressions of downtown Opelousas in this sub-district; investments in landscaping, litter abatement, and placemaking can help generate

activity downtown.

Next steps:

- » Develop program to plant trees and other native vegetation along Landry and Vine Streets near the I-49 junction
- » Develop and enforce design standards for businesses, including parking lot and signage requirements
- » Identify public art opportunities that enliven transportation infrastructure

4. Establish the sub-district as a gateway to downtown, complete with wayfinding

Rationale:

Since I-49 and US 190 converge here, this sub-district is a primary entrance to the downtown. It should celebrate the character of Opelousas and feature clear identification

SAMPLE GUIDELINES

Buildings

- » Building garage doors shall be restricted to 40% of the total building frontage
- » Front loading garages shall be set back 10' from the primary façade, unless set back 30' from face of building

Fencing & Screening

- » The following materials shall be permitted for use in fencing and screening: vinyl coated chain link, vinyl, wood, wrought iron, masonry, or steel materials

Pedestrian Amenities (benches, trash receptacles, galleries, arcades, awnings, outdoor seating)

- » Pedestrian amenities shall be encouraged in right-of-way with a permit

Landscaping

- » A minimum of 25% of all required landscape must be provided within the front yard setback
- » Within parking lots, one landscape island (240 SF) must be provided for every 12 vehicular spaces

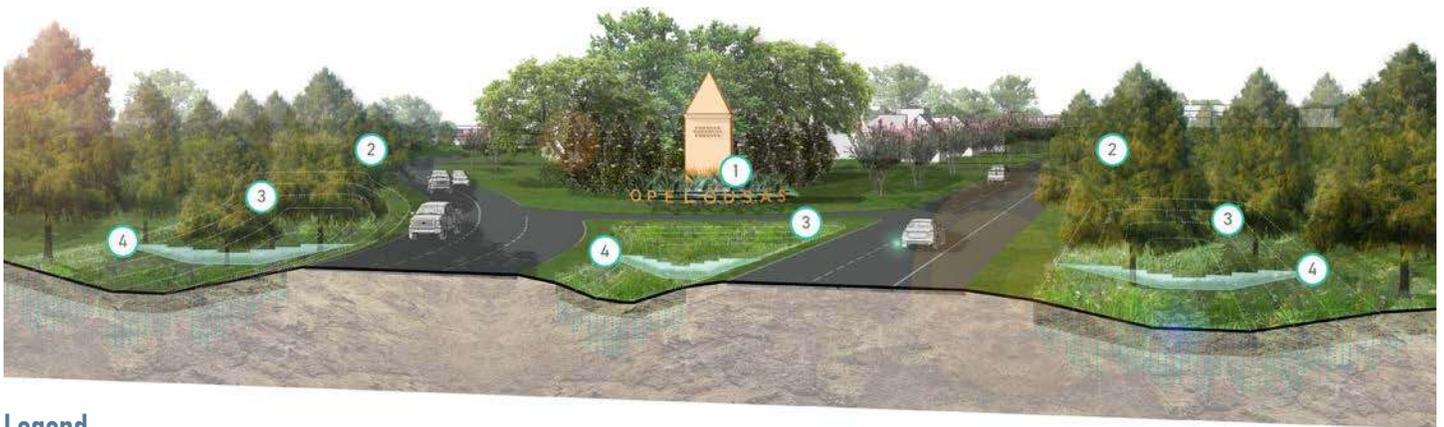
Parking and Transportation

- » Encourage or require cross access where feasible
- » New streets shall connect to existing stub-outs on adjacent properties and provide stub-outs to surrounding vacant or undeveloped tracts
- » Provide pedestrian access by linking to any adjacent sidewalk(s) multi-use path(s), or public transportation stop.
- » Pedestrian paths to buildings from parking lots shall be clearly marked

of landmarks and attractions within the Downtown Development District. Given the high volume of traffic on these two highways, especially the area adjacent to I-49, it is critical that this area offer an immediate sense of place and alert drivers to the cultural and commercial opportunities available through a short drive to downtown.

Next steps:

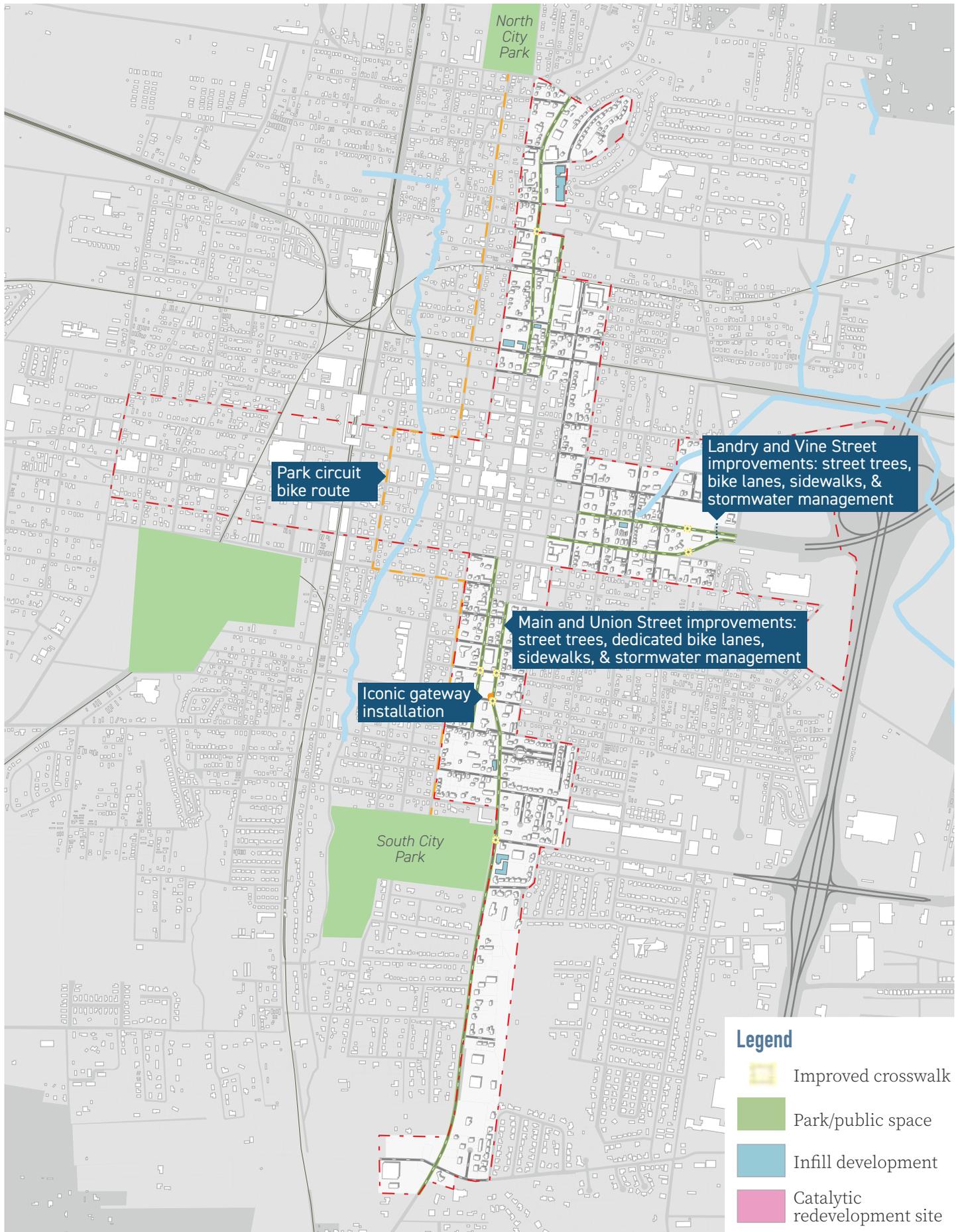
- » Build on “Welcome to Opelousas” signage with planting, art installations, and more robust wayfinding to develop an iconic gateway near the Farmer’s Market Pavilion/Vieux Village
- » Develop “Historic Downtown” wayfinding signage to place near I-49 exits



Legend

- 1: Green roof
- 2: Bioswale
- 3: Rain garden
- 4: Weir structure
- Subsurface water flow

Conceptual rendering of New Life Center development with sustainability and urban design principles applied



NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SUB-DISTRICT

Opelousas' residents are the lifeblood of the city. Given the proximity of residential neighborhoods to the downtown core, their wellbeing is essential to the long-term viability of downtown Opelousas as a whole. Similarly, local commercial establishments and community services are critical components of a healthy, livable environment, and neighborhoods flourish when adjacent to these kinds of amenities. Main and Union Streets are critical corridors in this sub-district, playing an important role in defining its character.

Neighborhoods thrive when they are supported by shared public spaces and the services and amenities needed for daily life. Healthy neighborhoods are safe and accessible and have infrastructure like connected roadways, bike paths, green space, and sidewalks that improve connectivity to people, recreation, and jobs, increase home values, market the community, create standards for property improvements, and forge connections among residents.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

1. Incentivize new residential development on vacant lots to bolster existing neighborhoods

Rationale:

The presence of vacant and blighted lots is taxing on neighborhoods, including those in the District. Incentives to build or rehabilitate housing on these existing lots rather than building new communities reduces the strain on city infrastructure and helps build a stronger sense of community. High-quality, centrally located residential neighborhoods with homes appropriate for a range of income levels and family types make it possible for people to live near their jobs and help residents stay in the same neighborhood even if their income or lifestyle changes. Neighborhoods with neglected or blighted homes may make it more difficult to attract workers and businesses. At the same time, if lower-income residents cannot afford

homes, they might be forced to leave the District, removing workers and customers from the local economy. Therefore, a mix of different housing types (e.g., rental and for sale, multifamily and detached, and large and small) can accommodate people in different life phases, from starting out in the workforce to raising a family to retiring.

Next steps:

- » Consider offering fee waivers or other incentives for renovations of existing structures or new construction on vacant lots within existing neighborhoods
- » Prioritize code enforcement to encourage owners of blighted properties to bring their properties into compliance
- » Consider amending the minimum lot size for residential development to encourage the development of more diverse and affordable housing types

2. Enhance commercial and other non-residential uses within the sub-district to complement adjacent neighborhoods

Rationale:

Having convenient access to shops and other establishments that meet daily needs and essential services is vital to the livelihood of the neighborhoods within the District. However, non-residential uses that are adjacent to neighborhoods within the District should be buffered if they have undesirable impacts on the neighborhood or are found incompatible with the adjacent residential uses. Non-residential uses should complement the neighborhood character and contribute to a strong sense of community. Undesirable impacts could include visual impacts of outdoor work or storage areas, non-compliant signage, large parking areas adjacent to the right-of-way, along

with any other feature that detract from the neighborhood character of the sub-district.

Next steps:

- » Attract businesses and services that actively support community development
- » Support commercial developments that fill existing market gaps within the sub-district
- » Develop and enforce design standards for commercial development within the sub-district, including screening/buffering and signage requirements

3. Establish Union and Main Streets as pedestrian-friendly neighborhood corridors

Rationale:

As Union and Main Streets are the primary north-south commercial corridors through the District, future development should offer a full range of community services and business offerings, with pedestrian amenities to activate these corridors. Reconfigured street sections for Union and Main Streets are provided in Recommendation B.1 and include consistent sidewalks, on-street parking and stormwater management planted areas where there is space, as well as bike lanes. These improvements to the right-of-way will help build connectivity between neighborhoods by increasing pedestrian safety, crafting a more enjoyable motorist experience, and accommodating safe bicycle travel. These corridors can also help establish a sense of place and orient residents and visitors by recognizing the adjacent residential neighborhoods with character and wayfinding signage.

Next steps:

- » Prioritize sidewalk improvements and crosswalks to achieve a safe, continuous path for pedestrians
- » Establish shared bike lanes along Union and Main Streets to allow safe bicycle travel through the

District

- » Install signage along the corridors to recognize various neighborhoods within sub-district
- » Prioritize code enforcement to ensure that development along these streets is appropriately scaled and encourages pedestrian activity

4. Provide convenient access to recreation opportunities

Rationale:

Convenient access to outdoor recreation is a hallmark of livable neighborhoods. Open space, parks, and recreation are important to residents' physical and mental health. Trails, paths, and on-street bike routes that connect neighborhoods to employment centers could improve access to jobs and reduce driving as workers are more likely to walk or bike to work if it is safe and convenient. Open space and public gathering spaces, including playgrounds and parks, can raise property values in residential areas and attract new residents and workers.

Throughout the course of public engagement for this planning effort, improving existing open space at North and South City Parks was a consistent demand. Maintenance and improvement of existing recreational space, including those programmed for sports events like Donald Gardner Stadium, is essential. Establishing new open spaces was also a common comment, as the two existing primary park spaces are distributed at far sides of the community. This sub-district should provide safe routes to existing amenities like North and South City Parks as well as other bike and walking trails. The city should also develop the property on Cherry Street as a passive public park that offers additional recreation opportunities to all residents.

Next steps:

- » Design trail connections to link open space, parks, recreation facilities and other public places (schools, libraries) into an integrated system

- » Utilize existing natural or manmade corridors (drainageways, utility corridors) to support connections where feasible
- » Develop a plan for making the city-owned property on Cherry Street a recreational amenity for the public

5. Develop resources for homeowner and neighborhood support

Rationale:

Homeownership is a stabilizing force in residential communities. The city can encourage homeownership by developing programs to connect prospective homeowners to available resources for financing. A mortgage payment can sometimes be less expensive than monthly rent, but many people are unable to meet down payment requirements. Developing a program to educate would-be homebuyers about real estate financing and offering grants for the down payment can be an effective way to support neighborhoods. Financial resources for such a program are often available from federal agencies like HUD.

To address maintenance issues related to rental properties, a landlord education program can help property owners learn best practices in property management. The program could educate landlords on complying with codes, applicant screening, fair housing rules, lease agreements, the eviction process, and other relevant information. Program benefits could include better property maintenance, safer homes, a more stable tenant base, and lower city costs for code enforcement.

Resources for neighborhoods to plan and fund various improvements also helps build safe, stable communities throughout the sub-district. Neighborhood organizations often need assistance when starting out. To take advantage of existing resources and experience, connect neighborhood associations with other local neighborhood associations or with organizations active in the community, such as churches, service organizations, and nonprofit organizations.

For neighborhoods in need of particular assistance, consider working with the state to designate an area as a Community Revitalization Strategy Area would bring many benefits, including the ability to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money more flexibly for housing and economic development. The program can help transform a specific area by coordinating resources for comprehensive community revitalization.

Next steps:

- » Develop a program connecting prospective homeowners with information about available properties and financing assistance
- » Develop a landlord education program to promote best practices among rental properties in the sub-district
- » Consider requiring licenses for residential landlords to ensure safe, high-quality homes and generate revenues from license fees to be used to help fund code enforcement or small improvements in the neighborhood
- » Support the development of neighborhood or civic associations throughout the sub-district





Implementation + Financing

5

This Plan guides private and public improvements and future development and should be used as a tool to encourage desired changes in the District. This Implementation and Financing Chapter describes how the recommendations in the Plan should be carried out.

IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Many of the Plan’s strategies and actions will require the input and coordination of public, nonprofit, and private sector groups. For this reason, it will be important for the Downtown Development District and the city of Opelousas to continue engaging in strategic partnerships with key stakeholders including other governmental agencies, business and neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, and many more. This culture of collaboration will position downtown Opelousas to become the thriving center described in the vision.

ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Priority Strategic Actions and the Implementation Matrix provide a roadmap to implement the Plan. Priority Strategic Actions are the first steps that the ODDD and the city should take to address pressing issues. They should be undertaken immediately and completed in a short period of time – one to two years. When these implementation measures are initiated and ultimately completed, it will clearly show how the District is moving toward the vision and will demonstrate the potential for investment in the area.

The following implementation matrix provides the plan’s recommended actions, timing, responsibility and potential funding sources. The implementation matrix is designed to be maintained and updated by the ODDD and city to monitor implementation progress.

Plan Implementation Actions

- » Establish an implementation taskforce and appoint a lead entity charged with facilitating the implementation of the Opelousas Downtown Development District Plan
- » Create and maintain a website that serves as a

communication, educational, and monitoring tool for downtown improvements

- » Prepare periodic reports of plan implementation progress and present key implementation outcomes to ODDD, the city and public
- » Review and make necessary updates to the plan at 5-year intervals or as needed, based on the achievement of major implementation milestones or changing market conditions
- » Conduct and sponsor demonstration projects to field test and gauge community support for new land use and design elements

Priority Strategic Actions

Priority actions are the first steps that the ODDD and city should take to address pressing issues. Implementation will take significant effort and collaboration by the ODDD, the city’s elected and appointed officials, developers, businesses, and residents. Priority actions include:

- 1. Create a detailed inventory of buildings available for renovation/adaptive reuse, complete with property contacts**
- 2. Increase programming of events downtown to draw residents and visitors into the core. Work with other providers to activate the downtown area weekly through markets, music, food, and art events**
- 3. Review enforcement procedures for code violations for vacant buildings and incorporate more tools into the city’s toolbox to address vacant and abandoned buildings**
- 4. Review development ordinances to streamline and simplify the zoning and development processes and requirements**
- 5. Create a sidewalk improvement program to enhance sidewalks and create safe, continuous paths**
- 6. Develop a program to empower local entrepreneurs and foster innovative business endeavors downtown**

7. Develop a program to educate and facilitate the clean up of downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to provide a more inviting environment for investment

Potential Funding Sources

The following funding sources include both state and federal resources designed to either stimulate development through incentives available for local developers or to bolster development and attract residents and employers to the area through local improvement measures undertaken by city agencies. Many are designed to work in tandem to make different aspects of development and redevelopment more feasible or to capitalize on existing development opportunities.

Federal Funding Opportunities

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Established by Congress in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to stimulate job creation and economic development in low-income communities. The opportunity zones incentivize private investment by providing certain capital gains tax incentives. For example, “an investor can defer tax on any prior eligible gain to the extent that a corresponding amount is timely invested in a Qualified Opportunity Fund (QOF). The deferral lasts until the earlier of the dates on which the investment in the QOF is sold or exchanged, or December 31, 2026.” Opportunity Zones can be used in combination with other incentives.

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

Local Foods, Local Places was launched in 2014 to address health and environmental concerns at the local level. The program is sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The award has been used for a variety of local food initiatives including improving access to grocery stores, starting farmers markets, and funding food-related business enterprises.

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

The New Markets Tax Credit Program was established in 2000 to help low-income communities attract investment and spur job growth. The program supports a variety of businesses including childcare, education, energy,

and food. The program is competitive; Community Development Entities (CDEs), financial intermediaries, must be certified to receive tax credit authority from the US Department of Treasury. In exchange for federal income tax credits, investors make equity investments into the CDE.

EPA BROWNFIELDS AND LAND REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The program was started in 1995 to help communities and government entities work together to clean up contaminated properties. The program provides grants for environmental assessments, cleanup, research, community outreach, and more. This program would be particularly helpful to offset the cost of environmental remediation often associated with demolition or redevelopment of deteriorating older buildings or lots previously used for industrial purposes.

State Funding Opportunities

RESTORATION TAX ABATEMENT

The Restoration Tax Abatement program provides up to a ten-year ad valorem property tax abatement on renovations and improvements made on existing commercial buildings and owner-occupied residences located in economic development districts, downtown development districts, historic districts, and opportunity zones. Eligible expenses include building and materials, machinery and equipment which is an integral part of the structure, and labor and engineering.

LOUISIANA ENTERPRISE ZONE

The Enterprise Zone is an incentive program that provides tax credits and rebates for businesses that create permanent, net new full-time jobs and hire at least 50% of the jobs from four target groups: residents living in the Enterprise Zone, people receiving an approved form of public assistance, people lacking basic skills, or people unemployable by traditional standards.

PILOT PROGRAM

Louisiana’s payment-in-lieu of taxes (PILOT) program in which the property in question is titled to a political entity, such as a parish, city, or industrial development board. Because these political entities are tax exempt, no ad valorem taxes will be due on the subject property.

The property owner would then negotiate a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes with the political entity. PILOT payments are negotiated for the term of the agreement but may not exceed the cost of total ad valorem taxation across the agreement period.

ANGEL INVESTOR TAX CREDITS

The Angel Investor Tax Credit provides a 25% tax credit on investments in small, early-stage, wealth-creating businesses in Louisiana for startup and expansion capital. Investments must be made by an accredited investor, and may be used for capital improvements, plant equipment, research and development, or working capital. This program sunsets on July 1, 2021.

STATE HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT

The State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit provides a 20% state commercial tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings in Downtown Development Districts or certified Cultural Districts. Projects must exceed \$10,000 in qualified rehabilitation expenses and improvements must be made in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. This program sunsets on December 31, 2025.

QUALITY JOBS REBATE

The Quality Jobs program provides up to a 6% rebate on annual payroll expenses for up to ten years, along with either a state sales tax or use tax rebate on capital expenses or a 1.5% project facility expense rebate for qualifying expenses. Eligibility is typically only open to businesses within certain employment sectors, those doing at least 50% of their business out of state, or those located in a parish that is within the lowest 25% of parishes in per capita income. However, this has been expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic to include impacted retail, restaurant, and hotel business with less than 50 employees.

DIGITAL INTERACTIVE MEDIA AND SOFTWARE PROGRAM

The incentive program is open to companies that produce digital interactive media products or platforms in Louisiana including digital media and games, web-based apps, software, and more. The program provides a 25% tax credit on qualified payroll for in-state labor and 18% for qualified production expenses.

LOUISIANA MAIN STREET RESTORATION GRANT

Louisiana Main Street Restoration Grants provide matching funds to encourage the revitalization of historic downtown commercial properties located in designated Louisiana Main Street districts. The Louisiana Main Street Restoration Grants serve as an effort to promote community revitalization and stimulate economic growth and vitality, in addition to enriching cultural tourism. Grant funding and the number of grants awarded are dependent on state budgets and the amount of funding appropriated by the legislature each year. This grant requires a dollar-for-dollar monetary match toward hard costs.

Local Funding Opportunities

BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT (BIG) PROGRAM

The BIG program is a reimbursement grant program that gives business and property owners an incentive to renovate and rehabilitate buildings located within the Opelousas Downtown Development District. Preference is given to applications for buildings located within the Main Street District. The program will set \$10,000 in funds aside to fund approved projects. The minimum amount that can be applied for is \$500, and the maximum amount is \$2500. Grant award amounts must be matched dollar for dollar by the recipient.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

Tax increment financing is a local incentive program used to stimulate economic development in a designated geographic area, typically neighborhoods in need of reinvestment or large tracts of land ripe for redevelopment. When a TIF district is created, the existing "base" property tax is recorded. As the area develops and improves over time, property values rise, resulting in property tax receipts above the previously measured base. This "extra" tax can be used to reimburse investors, pay bonds, or fund other projects. TIF funds can be used by local governments for land acquisition, infrastructure upgrades, and park construction.

		TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
URBAN DESIGN			
REC A.1	PRIORITIZE THE DEVELOPMENT OF VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PARCELS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT		
Action A.1.1	Develop and maintain a database of vacant and underutilized parcels within the District	Short-term	City, Parish Tax Assessor's Office
Action A.1.2	Provide site-selection assistance to new or relocating businesses to encourage businesses to locate in infill locations by sharing a regularly updated inventory of available commercial spaces as well as suggesting locations and giving site tours to new businesses and existing businesses seeking to expand	Short-term	City, Chamber of Commerce, Local realtors
Action A.1.3	Assign a city or downtown representative to build relationships with local and regional real estate brokers and developers interested in investing in infill locations to provide personalized assistance to brokers seeking to locate new tenants or developers considering a new project	Short-term	City, Local realtors
Action A.1.4	Consider developing a program under which taxes on the improvements to vacant properties gradually increase over a specified time period, allowing time for developers and businesses to generate enough activity to afford the higher tax bill	Medium-term	City
REC A.2	ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE AND INCLUSIVE NETWORK OF PUBLIC SPACES		
Action A.2.1	Kickstart implementation with public spaces in the downtown core, particularly along highly visible corridors like Landry, Vine, Main, and Union Streets	Short-term	City, DOTD, Opelousas Tourism
Action A.2.2	Prioritize investment in flexible public spaces like plazas and pocket parks in the downtown area, along mixed-use streets, and adjacent to higher-intensity residential uses and community facilities	Medium-term	City
Action A.2.3	Connect public spaces to public District features like neighborhoods, schools, and social services with safe sidewalks and street crossings, linear parks, and trails	Medium-term	City
Action A.2.4	Invest in the maintenance and diversification of existing public spaces to ensure that they accommodate the recreational needs of all city residents and visitors	Short-term	Opelousas Parks
REC A.3	DEVELOP A GATEWAY AND WAYFINDING PROGRAM TO DISTINGUISH CHARACTER AREAS WITHIN THE DISTRICT AND HIGHLIGHT DISTINCTIVE FEATURES		
Action A.3.1	Revisit wayfinding package developed in 2014 and approved by DOTD, particularly for locations of proposed wayfinding installations, and update for design consistency with other public realm improvements	Short-term	Opelousas Historic District, DOTD
Action A.3.2	Establish a District-wide color palette, materials palette, typography standards, etc. to ensure that future improvements within the District are cohesive	Short-term	City
Action A.3.3	Incorporate artful gateway installations along key District corridors	Medium-term	City, Opelousas Main Street, arts and culture organizations
Action A.3.4	Consider designing and installing pole banners or other distinctive elements to build character in the District and sub-districts	Short-term	City, DOTD, Opelousas Main Street
REC A.4	ESTABLISH DESIGN GUIDELINES THAT STRENGTHEN THE DISTRICT'S VISUAL IDENTITY AND IMPROVE WALKABILITY		
Action A.4.1	Develop design guidelines that complement the Historic District and establish a cohesive character throughout the District	Medium-term	City, Opelousas Historic District
Action A.4.2	Incorporate design guidelines into zoning and permitting and processes	Medium-term	City

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RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
MOBILITY			
REC B.1	ESTABLISH VINE, LANDRY, UNION, AND MAIN STREETS AS ACTIVE, MULTIMODAL CORRIDORS		
Action B.1.1	Implement the proposed improvements to sidewalks, on-street parking, bike lanes, vehicle travel lanes, and stormwater management features	Medium-term	City, DOTD
Action B.1.3	Ensure that any improvements on these streets incorporate design features including sidewalks with designated safe crossing signage at a minimum and, where there is adequate right of way, bicycle lanes (if there is not adequate right-of-way for bicycle facilities, the improvements should include establishing parallel bicycle facilities and signage)	Medium-term	City, DOTD, Opelousas Main Street
REC B.2	ESTABLISH A NETWORK OF BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES		
Action B.2.1	Establish dedicated bike lanes on Landry, Main, and Union Streets	Medium-term	City, DOTD
Action B.2.2	Establish shared bike lanes on streets within the District which have adequate right-of-way, including Vine Street	Short-term	City, DOTD
Action B.2.3	Conduct a sidewalk audit to understand where the greatest pedestrian accessibility needs exist	Short-term	City, DOTD
Action B.2.4	Conduct an ADA audit within the District to ensure that all residents and visitors are able to access pedestrian routes and District amenities safely	Short-term	City
REC B.3	DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PARKING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE DISTRICT		
Action B.3.1	Conduct a parking study	Short-term	City, Opelousas Main Street
Action B.3.2	Identify strategies to maximize the use of existing parking and plan for future parking facilities	Medium-term	City, District businesses
Action B.3.3	Improve access and signage for public parking lots	Short-term	City
Action B.3.4	Maximize on-street parking opportunities by restriping and clearly marking available parking spots	Short-term	City, DOTD
Action B.3.5	Consider making Bellevue a two-way street on the block adjacent to the Parish Courthouse to allow easier access to city parking	Short-term	City
Action B.3.6	Count on-street parking in parking requirements	Short-term	City
REC B.4	DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS TO SHARE UNDERUTILIZED PRIVATE PARKING LOTS BASED ON A DISTRICT-WIDE PARKING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM		
Action B.4.1	Develop list of ideal candidates for shared parking facilities in the District	Short-term	City, District businesses
Action B.4.2	Consider whether contractual agreements between adjacent uses or establishing a parking management district is a more appropriate avenue for maximizing the use of shared parking	Short-term	City, District businesses
Action B.4.3	Evaluate the number of "reserved" parking spaces and whether those inhibit flexible parking	Short-term	City, District businesses
Action B.4.4	Develop and enforce design standards for shared parking lots to improve walkability	Medium-term	City, District businesses
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT			
REC C.1	IMPROVE THE DISTRICT'S PERCEPTION TO PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS, EMPLOYERS, AND RESIDENTS		
Action C.1.1	Develop educational programs to address litter in the city, including cleaning up trash and debris in yards and around commercial buildings, educating children and adults about littering and its impacts	Medium-term	City
Action C.1.2	Support code enforcement by developing avenues for community members to get involved in reporting and tracking violations	Short-term	City

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RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
Action C.1.3	Institute a quarterly cleanup program to place public dumpsters in key locations for a 2-week period so that property owners can come into compliance and get rid of debris on their property with the expectation would be that these properties would then be maintained to code requirements in the future	Short-term	City
Action C.1.4	Implement proactive programs to address vacant and abandoned buildings including ways to enforce housing and building codes, tax adjudication, property acquisition and land banking; establishing the ability to place liens on these structures and enforce the liens; and creating a mayor’s court for administrative hearing in nuisance abatement	Short-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
Action C.1.5	Encourage residents to maintain their street frontages, such as edging and removing grass and debris from the sidewalks and curbs, through education and code enforcement	Short-term	City
REC C.2	MAINTAIN AND EXPAND EXISTING PROGRAMMING TO BRING PEOPLE TO THE DISTRICT		
Action C.2.1	Create a unified calendar of District events to inform local businesses and potential customers with a designated point person to ask businesses and nonprofits about upcoming events and update the calendar weekly or monthly	Short-term	City, District businesses, Opelousas Tourism
Action C.2.2	Partner with regional cultural organizations and local businesses to align and build on the popularity of community events, such as Downtown Alive/Live After 5, Festival International, Acadiana Center for the Arts, and local markets or cook offs, and feature those events in the District	Medium-term	City, District businesses, Opelousas Tourism
Action C.2.3	Develop or revive a marquee festival held annually within the District	Medium-term	City, District businesses, Opelousas Tourism
REC C.3	STRENGTHEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP		
Action C.3.1	Form an economic development task force with representatives from the public and private sectors (representatives from the business community could include business owners, property owners and developers, or leaders from the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups) in the District to discuss how the city could better facilitate economic development	Short-term	City, District businesses, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.3.2	Develop a comprehensive small business plan based on the District’s economic assets, focusing on businesses poised for growth and businesses associated with the city’s economic development plan and strong clusters	Medium-term	City, District businesses, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.3.3	Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to create a guide for starting and growing a business that outlines local resources, permitting and zoning processes, tax policies, and steps to get business loans	Short-term	City, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.3.4	Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to develop mentorship programs that connect experienced business owners with new ones	Short-term	City, District businesses, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.3.5	Create a program to provide local businesses with technical assistance in marketing, accounting, or finance, and low-interest loans to fund improvements to landscaping, signs, or building façades	Medium-term	City, District businesses
REC C.4	PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION TO GROW TALENT, INCLUDING STRONG ADULT EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL PROGRAMS		
Action C.4.1	Develop a working group including representatives from the District, secondary education, community college, other adult education advocates, and the local chamber of commerce	Short-term	SLCC, Local high schools, non-profit organizations, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.4.2	Design workforce programs for small businesses to help them efficiently recruit employees from non-traditional pipelines and train employees	Medium-term	City, District businesses, Chamber of Commerce

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RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
Action C.4.3	Offer local government internships for high school or college students to learn from and assist city staff	Medium-term	City, Local high schools
REC C.5	ASSESS AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES THAT ARE IN DEMAND AND UNDER REPRESENTED		
Action C.5.1	Proactively pursue retail, hospitality, restaurant, and neighborhood services to build on the character of Downtown Opelousas, serve new and future residents, and attract patrons from outside the area	Medium-term	City, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.5.2	Coordinate workforce development efforts and training programs so that they complement and build upon one another and offer a wide range of job skills to attract new business and retain existing businesses	Long-term	SLCC, Local high schools, non-profit organizations, Chamber of Commerce
Action C.5.3	Maintain relationships with property owners, resident groups and local developers and spotlight the best development opportunities	Short-term	City, Local realtors
Action C.5.4	Align zoning, public policy, and regulatory practices to target existing and emerging industry clusters	Short-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
Action C.5.5	Support efforts to attract and retain business in target cluster industries, which provide good wages and are expected to grow nationally	Medium-term	City, Chamber of Commerce, St. Landry Economic Development
ARTS AND CULTURE			
REC D.1	SUPPORT COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND BETTER INTEGRATE THEM INTO THE PUBLIC REALM		
Action D.1.1	Conduct an inventory of existing arts and cultural resources within the District, noting any gaps	Short-term	Local arts and culture organizations, Opelousas Historic District, Opelousas Tourism
Action D.1.2	Using the inventory as a guide, aid in the development of additional artist resources like studio, exhibition, performance, and maker spaces by connecting arts and culture representatives with available properties within the District	Medium-term	Local arts and culture organizations, Local realtors
REC D.2	PROMOTE INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN THE DISTRICT		
Action D.2.1	Kickoff placemaking initiatives with temporary installations and community events to generate excitement, visibility, and buy-in	Short-term	Local arts and culture organizations, Opelousas Historic District, Opelousas Tourism
Action D.2.2	Encourage community groups and organizations to develop public artworks that enhance the city's public realm by building their capacity and simplifying approval processes	Short-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
Action D.2.3	Consider a Cities "Percent for Art" program, which mandates that a portion of the budget for city-funded construction projects is used to fund and install public art	Medium-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
Action D.2.4	For private development projects, consider establishing, by ordinance, a one percent set-aside for public art enhancement	Medium-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
Action D.2.5	Consider a program to address abandoned homes and visual blight with grassroots initiatives that use art to revitalize and repurpose vacant lots throughout the city	Medium-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
REC D.3	SHOWCASE KEY CULTURAL AND HISTORIC ASSETS WITHIN THE DISTRICT		
Action D.3.1	Develop inventory of existing wayfinding signage to understand community attractions and where signage is currently displayed and missing	Short-term	Opelousas Historic District

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RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
Action D.3.2	Establish landmark signage at sites, buildings, businesses, or landscapes to describe their historical significance	Short-term	Opelousas Tourism, Historic District
Action D.3.3	Invest in the integration of public art by working with local artists to develop unique, culturally specific street signage and other infrastructure	Medium-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
REC D.4	FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES TO RECOGNIZE AND PASS ON THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE		
Action D.4.1	Establish regular programming of events and opportunities to bring residents and visitors to culture venues within the District	Short-term	City, Main Street District
Action D.4.2	Work with schools, the library, non-profits, or local arts associations to develop a program to collect stories, photos, audio, text and video from Opelousas residents, which can be showcased in museums and at local festivals	Short-term	Opelousas Museum, Library
Action D.4.3	Build on "Stories Captured" oral history project by establishing an event series in public spaces such as parks or the library where older residents share stories of the community's history to younger generations	Short-term	Opelousas Museum, Library
SUSTAINABILITY			
REC E.1	ENHANCE THE DISTRICT'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE RAIN AND FLOOD EVENTS BY IMPLEMENTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE		
Action E.1.1	Work with a landscape architect and civil engineer to reduce impervious surfaces within the District boundary, beginning within the city's right-of-way	Long-term	DOTD
Action E.1.2	Require new development to employ Low Impact Development strategies and manage stormwater on-site	Medium-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
Action E.1.3	Coordinate drainage improvements with the St. Landry Parish Hazard Mitigation Plan	Short-term	St. Landry Parish, DOTD
Action E.1.4	Create a one-stop community resource to enable developers, businesses, and residents to easily find information related to environmental programs in the city	Medium-term	City
Action E.1.5	Establish a program to acquire floodplain property or easements, converting them to riparian buffers and wetlands	Long-term	City
REC E.2	STRENGTHEN VISUAL AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TO FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP		
Action E.2.1	Install signage at intersections with waterways identifying the waterway	Short-term	DOTD
Action E.2.2	Work with a landscape architect to install native plant communities in the public right of way	Short-term	City
Action E.2.3	Consider naturalizing part of Bayou Tesson and making it a public amenity, including recreational trails and educational signage	Long-term	
Action E.2.4	Provide information and assistance to residents on natural landscaping techniques, including rain garden installation and creation of pollinator habitats	Medium-term	
Action E.2.5	Recognize individuals, businesses, and nonprofits for outstanding stewardship behaviors and practices	Short-term	City, Acadiana Native Plant Project
Action E.2.6	Create and fund an annual city-wide restoration event	Medium-term	City, Walking Ladies
REC E.3	MAINTAIN AND EXPAND THE DISTRICT'S TREE CANOPY		
Action E.3.1	Conduct a tree canopy assessment to measure, monitor, and improve tree cover over time	Short-term	City, Local university program
Action E.3.2	Consider adopting a tree protection ordinance to preserve healthy specimen trees that help define the character of the District	Short-term	City
Action E.3.3	Increase street tree planting areas along with new planting in greenways, park space, and other green infrastructure	Medium-term	City, Acadiana Native Plant Project
Action E.3.4	Consider regulations and incentives to preserve mature trees during commercial and residential redevelopment	Medium-term	City

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RECOMMENDATION/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
Action E.3.5	Increase tree canopy in areas with low coverage, high heat vulnerability (nonresidential areas, high impervious surface coverage), and areas exposed to more vehicle exhaust	Long-term	City, Acadiana Native Plant Project
REC E.4	COORDINATE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS WITH MASTER PLAN PRIORITIES		
Action E.4.1	Develop infrastructure project criteria that helps prioritize projects that support the Opelousas Downtown Development Plan's goals	Short-term	City
Action E.4.2	Prioritize public and private projects that support the Master Plan recommendations while also meeting technical requirements of infrastructure needs	Short-term	City
ADAPTIVE REUSE			
REC F.1	INVENTORY BUILDINGS WITHIN THE DISTRICT THAT ARE AVAILABLE FOR POTENTIAL REUSE		
Action F.1.1	Develop and make public an inventory of buildings in the District that may be good candidates for adaptive reuse	Short-term	City, Parish Assessor, Opelousas Main Street
REC F.2	ESTABLISH GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND ATTRACT INVESTORS		
Action F.2.1	Amend the Zoning Ordinance to provide flexibility to allow for adaptive reuse, particularly in the case where the use of the building is changed	Short-term	City
Action F.2.2	Streamline the Historic District Certificate of Approval review process	Short-term	City, Opelousas Historic District
Action F.2.3	Contact owners of potential infill development sites to determine why new or redevelopment is not occurring and how the city could encourage it	Short-term	Local property owners, Local developers
Action F.2.4	City staff can connect property owners with real estate brokers and developers, work with property owners to change permitted uses, or conduct a market study to help owners understand potential uses	Short-term	City, Local property owners, Local realtors, Local developers
REC F.3	DEVELOP USER FRIENDLY MATERIALS EXPLAINING DEVELOPMENT CODES		
Action F.3.1	Make an easy-to-understand zoning handout available online and at City Hall, providing a simple explanation of what is allowed and contact information for further questions	Short-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
Action F.3.2	Develop programs to assist building owners and developers in understanding the most recent building codes and navigating the code compliance process for building reuse	Medium-term	City, Local developers, Local realtors
Action F.3.3	Consider developing a "code team" that brings together code officials, firefighters, engineers, and zoning staff to meet with new or expanding developers at the business site to clarify requirements	Medium-term	City, Local building inspectors
REC F.4	PROMOTE AVAILABLE FINANCING OPTIONS		
Action F.4.1	Publish a developer financing toolkit that links the inventory/management of vacant buildings prioritized for development with case studies and available funding options	Short-term	City, Parish Assessor
Action F.4.2	Develop a building reuse resource that catalogs successful regional projects, particularly those involving historic buildings, including details related to building selection, securing financing, overcoming barriers, and lessons learned	Short-term	Opelousas Historic District
Action F.4.3	Identify opportunities to maximize use of State and Federal tax credits and Opportunity Zone incentives to attract rehabilitation of designated structures and structures within the designated Historic District	Medium-term	City

		TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
PRIORITY ACTION/ NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
DOWNTOWN MIXED-USE CORE SUB-DISTRICT			
P.A. 1	STRATEGICALLY INVEST IN PROJECTS TO CATALYZE DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT		
1.1	Actively pursue the redevelopment of high-visibility sites with frontage near Landry, Vine, Main, and Union Streets with relatively dense mixed-use projects	Short-term	City, Local realtors, Local property owners, Local developers
1.2	Update development codes and processes to make regulations easier to understand, processes more transparent, and to make it easier to develop to attract desired growth	Medium-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
1.3	Market the use of tax credits and other incentives for adaptive reuse	Short-term	City, Opelousas Historic District, Opelousas Main Street
P.A. 2	OFFER A DIVERSE RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS		
2.1	Survey current sub-district business owners and employees to find out what conditions would attract them to live in the Downtown mixed use core	Short-term	Sub-district businesses
2.2	Include residential units in the sub-district’s catalytic mixed-use projects	Short-term	City, Local developers
2.3	Develop a critical mass on high-visibility blocks adjacent to Landry and Main Streets to enhance activities levels and attract residents and visitors	Long-term	City, Sub-district property owners, Local developers
2.4	Consider incentivizing a variety of housing types, including housing that attracts young adults, local workforce, artists, and others interested in mixed use housing	Long-term	City
2.5	Consider financing incentives like setting up revolving loan funds, providing forgivable loans and grants, issuing low-interest loans, and using tax increment financing to decrease the cost of private investment, particularly in residential development involving historic rehabilitations	Medium-term	City, Opelousas Historic District
P.A. 3	MAKE DOWNTOWN MORE INVITING BY IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES FOR PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES AND INVESTING IN PUBLIC SPACES		
3.1	Organize a pilot improvement project targeting blocks adjacent to Landry, Court, Vine, and Main Streets	Short-term	DOTD, Opelousas Main Street
3.2	Consider offering incentives for private investment in facade improvements to complement public realm investment	Short-term	City, Opelousas Main Street
3.3	Kickstart implementation of public space improvements with a temporary pocket park installation to gain public interest and support	Short-term	City, Opelousas Main Street
3.4	Develop a design standards guide for public and private spaces downtown; it could be a voluntary guideline, it could be tied to incentives, or it could be incorporated into the city’s development standards as requirements for development in downtown	Medium-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
P.A. 4	REVITALIZE OR ESTABLISH ICONIC COMMUNITY EVENTS AND FESTIVALS DOWNTOWN		
4.1	Develop an Events Committee to support the ODDD in organizing and marketing downtown programming	Short-term	Opelousas Tourism
4.2	Create a regularly occurring public event that showcases downtown businesses	Short-term	Opelousas Tourism, Opelousas Main Street
4.3	Aim to host at least one event per month downtown	Short-term	Sub-district businesses
P.A. 5	DEVELOP A SYSTEM FOR MANAGING AND PROMOTING THE USE OF VACANT PROPERTIES DOWNTOWN		
5.1	Develop an inventory of all the downtown buildings with information that helps encourage private investment, including physical characteristics, rental rates, ownership, and identification of tax-delinquent properties and those near foreclosure	Short-term	City, Parish Assessor, Opelousas Main Street

PRIORITY ACTION/ NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
		TIMING	PARTNERS
5.2	Coordinate ongoing management of this system among involved parties, including the ODDD, the City, the Parish Assessor, and others	Short-term	City, Parish Assessor, Opelousas Main Street
5.3	Develop relationships with local real estate agents to establish a marketing pipeline for filling downtown vacancies efficiently	Short-term	Local realtors
5.4	Consider initiating a rental assistance program for businesses that locate within the downtown core	Medium-term	City
INNOVATION SUB-DISTRICT			
P.A. 1	DEVELOP SHARED SPACES LIKE BUSINESS INCUBATORS AND TRAINING CENTERS TO SPUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT		
1.1	Review and potentially revise zoning ordinance to accommodate small businesses that would like to locate in the ODDD	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
1.2	Eliminate regulatory barriers to building renovation and occupancy	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
1.3	Prioritize redevelopment of the New Life Center to meet the needs of the incubator program	Short-term	City, Opelousas Main Street
1.4	Ensure activity around incubator spaces are supportive and attractive to young entrepreneurs	Medium-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement, Opelousas Main Street
P.A. 2	PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS, PARTICULARLY NEAR COMMUNITY SPACES LIKE SCHOOLS, TRAINING CENTERS, AND COMMERCIAL HUBS		
P.A. 3	INVEST IN THE TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED FOR THE PROPOSED SUB-DISTRICT USES		
3.1	Contract with an experienced technician to identify the types of equipment and appropriate location of the desired tech infrastructure	Medium-term	City
3.2	Designate a City staff person to manage and moderate Wi-Fi zones and serve as the first point of contact for community members with questions	Medium-term	City
3.3	Pursue internet funding provided in the 2021 COVID-19 Relief Bill for communities with nearby higher education facilities	Short-term	City
P.A. 4	DEVELOP MIXED-USE HOUSING STOCK FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS		
4.1	Conduct a housing study to analyze the viability of mixed-use housing in the sub-district	Short-term	Local University program
4.2	Identify opportunities within the sub-district for infill and redevelopment to take advantage of existing infrastructure and minimize the need for new facilities	Short-term	City, Parish Assessor
4.3	Provide regulatory flexibility to zoning provisions such as parking, building height, density, setback and other provisions for mixed-use developments	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
4.4	Provide financial and regulatory incentives to mixed-use developers, such as permit fee reductions, tax abatements, expedited development approval processes	Medium-term	City, Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
4.5	Identify a pilot project and partner with a developer to implement	Short-term	Local developers
P.A. 5	FORGE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE DISTRICT		
5.1	Convene a group of representatives from the St. Landry Parish School Board, South Louisiana Community College T.H. Harris campus, and major employers in Opelousas to review curriculum and employer needs to help connect students to employment opportunities	Short-term	SLCC, Local high schools, non-profit organizations, Chamber of Commerce
5.2	Incentivize employers to establish internship programs which provide students with on the job training to help prepare them for the workforce	Medium-term	SLCC, Local high schools, non-profit organizations, Local businesses

		TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
PRIORITY ACTION/ NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	PARTNERS
5.3	Establish a career resource center that provides resources for job opportunities, technical training, career counseling, resume assistance and interview preparation	Medium-term	SLCC, Local high schools, non-profit organizations
COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR SUB-DISTRICT			
P.A. 1	IMPROVE VINE AND LANDRY STREETS TO ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY		
1.1	Implement right-of-way improvements including sidewalk installation, street tree planting, bike lane marking, and planted area installation along the corridor	Medium-term	City, DOTD
1.2	Require compliance with commercial signage and parking regulations along the corridor	Short-term	City Zoning & Code Enforcement
P.A. 2	INCENTIVIZE INFILL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE SUB-DISTRICT		
2.1	Establish an infill incentive program aimed at local retailers and services like restaurants, cafes, and complementary businesses	Short-term	City, Chamber of Commerce
2.2	Utilize vacant lots for creative placemaking such as outdoor gathering spaces for business patrons equipped with public art, cafe tables and chairs, and other amenities	Short-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
P.A. 3	ESTABLISH GATEWAYS TO SIGNIFY ENTRY TO THIS SUB-DISTRICT		
3.1	Develop a gateway installation at the western entry of the sub-district that highlights the commercial corridor and is in accordance with sign design guidelines	Short-term	City, DOTD, Opelousas Main Street
3.2	Include aesthetic and pedestrian-oriented improvements in any planned construction on Landry and Vine Streets	Medium-term	City, DOTD
P.A. 4	DEVELOP A PUBLIC ART CAMPAIGN TO ACTIVATE THE CORRIDOR		
4.1	Implement a diverse range of public art installations that showcase local artists	Medium-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
4.2	Consider building capacity to manage grant funding to implement street art at major intersections such as West Vine Street and South Court Street to enhance the sub-district's character and slow traffic	Short-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
P.A. 5	PROVIDE SCREENING OF OUTDOOR STORAGE, UTILITY, AND PARKING AREAS WITHIN THE SUB-DISTRICT		
5.1	Enforce zoning restrictions on storage and loading areas, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, etc. visible from the public right-of-way	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement, Sub-district businesses
5.2	Develop design guidelines for design and materials that can be used for screening	Medium-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL SUB-DISTRICT			
P.A. 1	PARTICIPATE IN AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE I-49 MIDWAY CORRIDOR STRATEGIC GROWTH INITIATIVE		
1.1	Implement any land use and zoning recommendations that result from the study	Medium-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
1.2	Advocate for prime Corridor improvements and features identified in the plan to be located within this sub-district	Short-term	City, St. Landry Economic Development
P.A. 2	SHOWCASE REGIONAL BUSINESSES IN THIS HIGH-VISIBILITY AREA TO ATTRACT HIGHWAY TRAVELERS		
2.1	Consider offering incentives or exemptions to local businesses for locating within a certain proximity of the highway	Medium-term	City, District businesses
2.2	Work with the local Chamber of Commerce to identify good candidates and build capacity within local businesses that can fill in market gaps in this sub-district	Short-term	City, Chamber of Commerce, District businesses

PRIORITY ACTION/ NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
		TIMING	PARTNERS
P.A. 3	INVEST IN BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS THAT ENCOURAGE VISITORS AND RESIDENTS TO EXPLORE THE DISTRICT		
3.1	Develop program to plant trees and other native vegetation along Landry and Vine Streets near the I-49 junction	Short-term	City, Acadiana Native Plant Project
3.2	Develop and enforce design standards for businesses, including parking lot and signage requirements	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
3.3	Identify public art opportunities that enliven transportation infrastructure	Short-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations
P.A. 4	ESTABLISH THE SUB-DISTRICT AS A GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN, COMPLETE WITH WAYFINDING		
4.1	Build on "Welcome to Opelousas" signage with planting, art installations, and more robust wayfinding to develop an iconic gateway near the Farmer's Market Pavilion/Vieux Village	Short-term	City, Local arts and culture organizations, Opelousas Tourism
4.2	Develop "Historic Downtown" wayfinding signage to place near I-49 exits	Short-term	DOTD
NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SUB-DISTRICT			
P.A. 1	INCENTIVIZE NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON VACANT LOTS TO BOLSTER EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS		
1.1	Consider offering fee waivers or other incentives for renovations of existing structures or new construction on vacant lots within existing neighborhoods	Short-term	City
1.2	Prioritize code enforcement to encourage owners of blighted properties to bring their properties into compliance	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
1.3	Consider amending the minimum lot size for residential development to encourage the development of more diverse and affordable housing types	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
P.A. 2	ENHANCE COMMERCIAL AND OTHER NON-RESIDENTIAL USES WITHIN THE SUB-DISTRICT TO COMPLEMENT ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS		
2.1	Attract businesses and services that actively support community development	Medium-term	City
2.2	Support commercial developments that fill existing market gaps within the sub-district	Medium-term	City, Chamber of Commerce
2.3	Develop and enforce design standards for commercial development within the sub-district, including screening/buffering and signage requirements	Medium-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
P.A. 3	ESTABLISH UNION AND MAIN STREETS AS PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD CORRIDORS		
3.1	Prioritize sidewalk improvements and crosswalks to achieve a safe, continuous path for pedestrians	Medium-term	City
3.2	Establish shared bike lanes along Union and Main Streets to allow safe bicycle travel through the District	Short-term	City, DOTD
3.3	Install signage along the corridors to recognize various neighborhoods within sub-district	Short-term	City,
3.4	Prioritize code enforcement to ensure that development along these streets is appropriately scaled and encourages pedestrian activity	Short-term	Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
P.A. 4	PROVIDE CONVENIENT ACCESS TO RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES		
4.1	Design trail connections to link open space, parks, recreation facilities and other public places (schools, libraries) into an integrated system	Medium-term	City
4.2	Utilize existing natural or manmade corridors (drainageways, utility corridors) to support connections where feasible	Medium-term	City
4.3	Develop a plan for making the city-owned property on Cherry Street a recreational amenity for the public	Medium-term	City

PRIORITY ACTION/ NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
		TIMING	PARTNERS
P.A. 5	DEVELOP RESOURCES FOR HOMEOWNER AND NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORT		
5.1	Develop a program connecting prospective homeowners with information about available properties and financing assistance	Short-term	Local realtors
5.2	Develop a landlord education program to promote best practices among rental properties in the sub-district	Medium-term	City, Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
5.3	Consider requiring licenses for residential landlords to ensure safe, high-quality homes and generate revenues from license fees to be used to help fund code enforcement or small improvements in the neighborhood	Long-term	City, Opelousas Zoning & Code Enforcement
5.4	Support the development of neighborhood or civic associations throughout the sub-district	Short-term	

