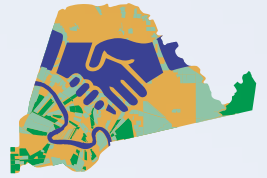

MAY 2019

ASCENSION PARISH MASTER LAND USE PLAN



The following resolution was offered and moved for adoption by Commissioner Julio Dumas and seconded by Commissioner Morrie Bishop:

**RESOLUTION OF THE ASCENSION PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION TO ADOPT
THE 2019 ASCENSION PARISH MASTER LAND USE PLAN**

WHEREAS, Chapter 17, Section 17-1 of the Ascension Parish Code of Ordinances creates the Ascension Parish Planning Commission and vests said commission with the responsibilities delineated in Louisiana Revised Statutes, Section 33:101 *et seq.*; and

WHEREAS, Article IV, Section 4-18 of the Ascension Parish Home Rule Charter references the adoption, amendment, and extension of an official plan for the physical development of the unincorporated areas of the parish and further provides for the creation of a planning commission to enact said plan in accordance with the laws of the State of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana Revised Statutes, Section 33:106 specifically grants a parish planning commission the authority to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of a parish; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan is intended to capture the vision of Ascension's citizens and translate that vision into reality through the adoption and implementation of strategies that will guide future development; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan includes eleven (11) chapters which set forth and include, but is not strictly limited to: the vision forward concerning land use in Ascension Parish; a current profile of the parish; land use designation considerations; housing and neighborhood service recommendations; transportation and mobility assessments and recommendations; drainage, floodplain management, and wastewater assessments and recommendations; recreation and open space recommendations; economic development and redevelopment recommendations; and a strategic implementation plan; and

WHEREAS, the Ascension Parish Planning Commission, assisted by Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX), has held numerous community meetings to obtain public input in the creation of said plan; and

WHEREAS, it is the intention of the Ascension Parish Planning Commission that the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan replace any prior existing Master Land Use Plans adopted by Ascension Parish; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute 33:108, a public hearing was properly noticed and held on May 29, 2019, and at such time the Ascension Parish Planning

Commission received comments from the public with regard to the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Ascension Parish Planning Commission, that it does hereby adopt the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan with all attachments, maps and reference made therein; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Ascension Parish Planning Commission Chairman is hereby authorized to file a copy of the 2019 Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan with the Office of the Ascension Parish Council, the governing authority for the Parish of Ascension, to record same with the Ascension Parish Clerk of Court, and to effectuate any other requirements set forth within Louisiana Revised Statutes, Section 33:101 *et seq.* as said requirements relate to the procedure for adopting and enacting a master plan.

This resolution having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: Julio Dumas, Morrie Bishop, Matthew Pryor, Anthony Christy, Aaron Chaisson, Wade Schexnaydre

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Ken Firmin

And the resolution was declared adopted on this, the 29th day of May, 2019.



MATTHEW PRYOR, CHAIRMAN
ASCENSION PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ascension Parish sincerely thanks each individual who contributed to the creation of the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*. Hundreds of people participated in the planning process and shared their thoughts on the future of Ascension Parish. In particular, the parish would like to acknowledge several contributors.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Residents and businesspeople of Ascension Parish who gave their time and input to the plan

ASCENSION PARISH COUNCIL

Parish President Kenny Matassa	Bill Dawson	Todd Lambert
John Cagnolatti	Benny Johnson	Aaron Lawler
Teri Casso	Oliver Joseph	Daniel Satterlee
Randy Cloutre	Dempsey Lambert	Travis Turner

ASCENSION PARISH PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Morrie Bishop	Anthony Christy	Ken Firmin	Wade Schexnaydre
Aaron Chaisson Jr.	Julio Dumas	Matthew Pryor	

ASCENSION PARISH MASTER LAND USE PLAN STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

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Barney Arceneaux	Barker Dirmann	Chad Lynch	Jodi Sheets
Wanda August	Dale Doty	Kate MacArthur	Clay Stafford
Jackie Baumann	Julio Dumas	Lee Melancon	Leroy Sullivan
Robert Burgess	Stacey Chiasson Gautreau	Juanita Pearley	Beth Templet
John Cagnolatti	A. Denise Graves	Matthew Pryor	Mike Toney
Kenneth Campbell	Joyy Joseph	Alyce Robinson	
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The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* was adopted by the Ascension Parish Planning Commission on May 29, 2019.

This plan was prepared for Ascension Parish by Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) and Fregonese Associates, with DRW Planning Studio and CSRS. The planning team coordinated with HNTB, consultant to Ascension Parish on its Master Transportation Plan and Master Drainage Plan.

All images are courtesy of CPEX unless otherwise noted.

Front Cover Photo Credit: Ascension Parish

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Ascension Parish's character is largely defined by its strong neighborhoods and economy and a network of sensitive wetland areas. A primary aim of this plan is to provide guidance so that growth is managed and directed in a manner that preserves existing assets, builds upon them, and improves the overall quality of life in the parish. Ascension Parish's rapid growth over the past several decades has had mixed impacts. The parish has a variety of attractive, desirable neighborhoods, highly ranked schools, and retail, service, and commercial businesses to serve daily needs. The parish has also seen a growth in job opportunities—from retail and service jobs to executive-level employment with major industries. In addition, many residents have taken advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities resulting from this growth to build new businesses. While much of the parish has developed in a suburban land use pattern, residents desiring a more rural lifestyle continue to have the opportunity to live on acreage in pastoral settings.

Because of the rapid growth, the area requires infrastructure improvements, such as drainage, sewer management, and road conditions. Ascension Parish leaders have recognized the

urgency of these issues. To address the concerns, they have initiated comprehensive transportation and drainage plans; established plans for targeted sewer service, which ultimately will serve the entire parish; and initiated Move Ascension, a program that funds Quick Start Projects to build needed transportation infrastructure.

Recognizing the need for coordinated planning, parish leaders commissioned the Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan to coordinate needed improvements and to provide a framework for future parish investments over the next 20 to 25 years. This plan in itself does not attract growth. However, based on trends and land availability, it is likely that the parish will continue to grow in the coming two or three decades. This plan is designed to assist parish leaders in managing growth that occurs, with the intent of ensuring infrastructure improvements are more closely aligned with growth as it occurs. This plan provides guidance for the orderly transition from what was once a rural parish to a more suburban, self-sustaining community. As Ascension Parish's population increases, parish leaders and stakeholders want to ensure that the parish keeps its high quality of life and stability, while gaining more good jobs and diverse housing options to retain the community's young workers.

The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* (the Plan) is intended to capture the vision of Ascension’s citizens and translate that vision into reality through the adoption and implementation of strategies that will guide future development. The Plan’s successful implementation will take a concerted effort by parish leaders, area businesses, community leaders, residents, and investors, working together to ensure that Ascension Parish continues to be a high-quality environment where future generations continue to choose to live, work, and recreate.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

This master land use plan should be considered the parish’s blueprint for long-term development. It includes goals and strategies in map and text form to direct future decision-making.

This plan, in itself, is not a regulatory document. Instead, once adopted, the Plan will be used to guide parish development decisions in the unincorporated area of the parish. State law requires that “the governing authority of [a] parish or municipality shall consider [an] adopted master plan before adopting, approving, or promulgating any local laws, ordinances, or regulations.” In this case, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Parish Council must use the adopted *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* in their decision-making processes. The master land use plan is based on guiding principles that reflect citizens’ core values. These principles were created through citizen input that informed this plan’s recommended actions.

This plan incorporates and aligns with concurrent ongoing transportation and drainage studies. To the extent possible, the Plan encompasses the recommendations of these studies.



Credit: Ascension Parish Tourism Commission

SUMMARY OF PAST PLANS

This master land use plan is built on previously adopted plans including the Ascension Parish *Master Plan and Land Use Plan*, adopted in 1998 (1998 *Master Plan*). That plan presented the Planning Commission's recommendations for the development of Ascension Parish from 2001 to 2003 and was revised in 2003 and 2009. The plan considered:

1. the parish's transportation system, including railroads, highways, streets, bridges, and waterways;
2. the parish's recreation system, including playgrounds, squares, parks, and other public ways, grounds, and open spaces;
3. public buildings, schools, and other public property;
4. affordable housing and the planning of blighted areas; and
5. public and private utilities for water, light, sanitation, communication, power, and transportation.

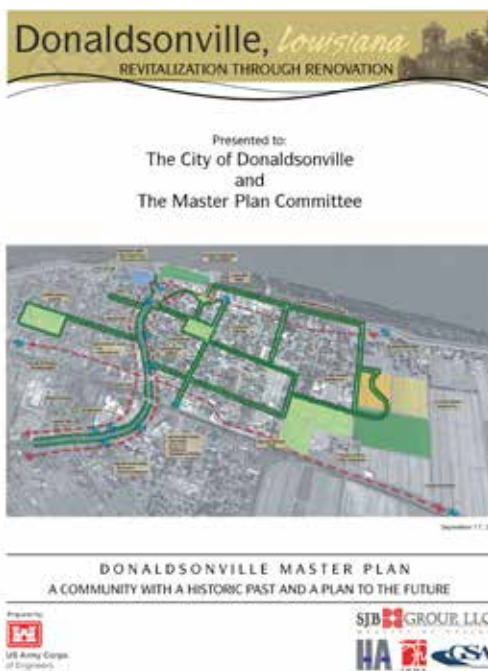
The 1998 *Master Plan's* guiding principles are listed below.

1. Protect public safety and property.
2. Manage growth.
3. Preserve the rural character of the parish.
4. Encourage compact commercial centers.
5. Keep the process simple and open.
6. Use flexible performance zones.
7. Discourage development in the 100-year floodplain.
8. Support development where future infrastructure is likely.
9. Use floodplain overlay zones.
10. Discourage strip commercial development along rural roads.
11. Establish a truck route between industrial plants and Interstate 10.
12. Create high-quality business development zones.

COORDINATION WITH ASCENSION PARISH MUNICIPALITIES

The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*'s jurisdiction includes the parish's unincorporated areas. The Plan does not cover the municipalities of Donaldsonville, Gonzales, or Sorrento. However, every effort was made to coordinate with the municipalities to ensure that the Plan is aligned with their plans and policies.

In 2007, the *Donaldsonville Master Plan* was created for the City of Donaldsonville. In 2017, Donaldsonville completed the *City of Donaldsonville Revitalization Plan*, focusing on community and economic development. The mission of the Revitalization Plan is to "revitalize and preserve historic Donaldsonville as a center of transportation, commerce, and healthy citizens in order to make Donaldsonville a desired place to work, be educated, live, and retire."



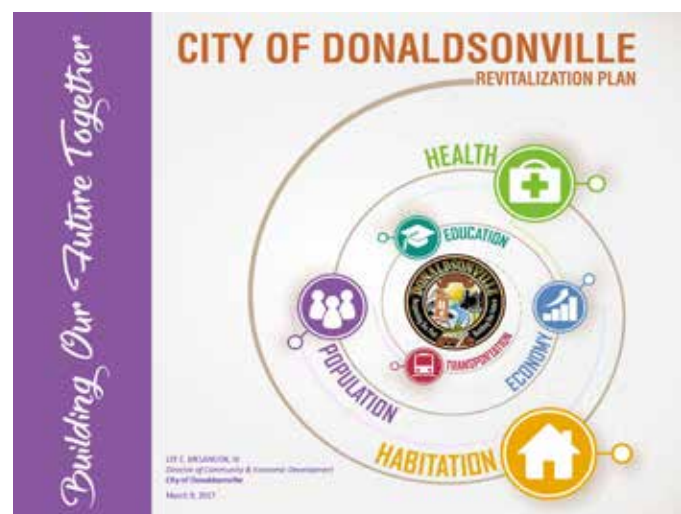
The 2007 *Donaldsonville Master Plan*

The City of Gonzales adopted the *Gonzales Comprehensive Plan* in 2015. This plan focuses on the city's long-term development and includes goals and actions that guide decision-making for the coming decades. The plan expresses Gonzales citizens' vision for the future and how the city will provide a livable, resilient community for all residents.

The Town of Sorrento does not have a comprehensive master plan; however, the town recently updated their subdivision ordinance and is in the process of updating their zoning ordinance.



The 2015 *Gonzales Comprehensive Plan*



The 2017 *City of Donaldsonville Revitalization Plan*

PLAN CHAPTER SUMMARY

This plan is divided into 12 chapters.

CHAPTER 1: The **Introduction** provides the Plan’s purpose, how it’s intended to be used, a summary of the previous plan, and what topic areas are covered in this plan.

CHAPTER 2: The **Ascension Parish Vision** serves as this plan’s executive summary, describes the guiding principles, and summarizes how residents and stakeholders envision the future to look and feel. In addition, top strategic actions that should be addressed immediately, or initiated in the next one to three years, are described.

CHAPTER 3: The **Parish Profile** provides a short history of Ascension Parish and summarizes demographics and economic trends. Population, housing, and employment forecasts that drive the land use, transportation, housing, and infrastructure recommendations are also included.

CHAPTER 4: Creating the Plan describes how the Plan was developed and the public engagement and input that was essential to the process.

CHAPTERS 5 THROUGH 10: The fifth through tenth chapters contain the Plan’s detailed background, goals, and implementation measures for **Land Use; Housing and Neighborhood Services; Transportation and Mobility; Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater; Recreation and Open Space; and Economic Development and Redevelopment**. These six chapters have the same format. Each includes the sections “Where We Are Now,” which describes current circumstances, “Planning for the Future,” which outlines implementation, and “Goals and Strategies,” which specifies desired goals and strategies needed to achieve the citizens’ shared vision.

CHAPTER 11: The **Strategic Implementation Plan** provides a matrix with outcomes, goals, and actions listed for each item. The item’s time frame is identified, and coordinating department and status will be updated as implementation proceeds.



2

ASCENSION PARISH VISION

ASCENSION PARISH IN THE FUTURE

Through the visioning process, a picture of Ascension Parish's future over the next 20 to 25 years came into focus. Feedback and input from parish residents and businesses laid out **a vision for Ascension Parish to be a parish that...**

Aligns Infrastructure with Land Use Objectives

For comprehensive long-range plans, one of the primary functions is to provide clear direction so that growth can be accommodated efficiently and effectively. Ascension Parish's Vision and land use policies will clearly direct growth into areas where it is most desired and limit growth and change in more sensitive areas that the community prefers to remain in their current state. To support these desired development patterns and characteristics, the parish will use infrastructure investment strategically and assist orderly growth through fiscally sound, coordinated capital planning efforts. This approach will also help to address the impacts of growth, such as traffic congestion and drainage challenges. Infrastructure development will also support desired development characteristics by using context-sensitive approaches to transportation projects as well as best practices for building infrastructure in environmentally sensitive lands.

Supports and Enhances Residential Neighborhoods and Expands Housing Options

Neighborhoods will be maintained and enhanced so that Ascension Parish will keep its reputation of having desirable neighborhoods that provide safe, attractive housing options for the region. New neighborhoods and mixed-use areas will be developed so that they respect existing development by providing appropriate transitions in size and scale.

During the planning process, the lack of compatible housing options was noted as a key challenge to attract and retain a young population after they completed school. In addition, teachers, service workers, and others are often not able to find housing in the parish due to the cost of housing and the lack of rental units in the parish. To address this challenge, the housing stock will further be diversified so that the high quality of life afforded in Ascension Parish is accessible to families and

individuals from a variety of age and income levels. Seniors and retirees will live side by side with the younger population, enriching everyone's quality of life.

Preserves and Uses Open Space and Natural Areas as a Defining Characteristic

To maintain the appeal of its natural character, the parish will use green infrastructure, support a robust park and trail system, and ensure sensitive development of environmental areas—all of which provide a sense of open space and access to nature. This integrated set of natural systems will also provide environmental benefits by improving flood management, protecting water quality, and improving air quality. Using the parish's abundant natural assets will support active lifestyles and contribute to the residents' health and well-being. Trails along the Mississippi River, or along bayous or other water bodies, will connect neighborhoods and districts throughout the parish, which will increase recreational opportunities as well as provide for alternate means of traveling in the area. Combined—the sense of open space, the enhanced connectivity, and improved environmental conditions—all contribute to Ascension Parish's strengthened identity as a desirable place to live and work.

Sustains Vibrant Corridors and Compact Commercial Hubs

Interstate 10 is a primary artery for commercial activity, and Airline Highway will evolve into a twenty-first century Main Street with a combination of mixed-use development and commercial centers that serve the parish and other regional users. Other key corridors will be attractive centers for commercial activity, particularly along LA 44 and LA 73. Significant intersections along the parish's east and west banks will offer important prospects for neighborhood services, which will be close to residents and developed to provide walkable, mixed-use opportunities.

Fully Capitalizes on Economic Activity along the Mississippi River

Along with access to a high-quality workforce, the Mississippi River and its deep-water port will be an economic engine driving Ascension's employment growth. The parish will continue to seek additional opportunities for economic growth that can serve regional employment needs and serve as a strong economic driver for the parish, with a focus west of Interstate 10 and on the West Bank. The parish will continue to support a business-friendly environment that encourages preferred economic activity and supports desired development. People will visit Ascension Parish to experience Louisiana's culture and history.

Proactively Encourages Desired Development and Associated Services on the West Bank

Growth on the West Bank has historically lagged behind the remainder of the parish. By building upon the unique sense of community and character that exists on the West Bank and in historic Donaldsonville, the balance of development and economic activity between the East and West Banks will be improved. The planned LA 3127 extension will improve access to industrial and employment areas. In addition, West Bank residents will have improved retail options and services in the next few years. For example, quality daycare for working parents, activities for youth, and shopping and services that fulfill residents' needs will be located close to neighborhoods. The parish will unlock development opportunities by strategically investing in infrastructure and encouraging private development of catalytic sites along the Mississippi River. Infrastructure will be upgraded to improve access to and from the West Bank so that it is better connected to the East Bank.

Majestic live oaks frame a parish roadway.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Plan's guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. Clearly understanding these values ensures that the recommendations in this plan reflect and support residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and provides assurance that the Plan will move the parish toward these collective goals. The following guiding principles were established through citizen and stakeholder input. They are grouped into four topic areas: Livable Community; Transportation and Infrastructure; Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment; and Economy and Education.

Livable Community

- Plan for and provide infrastructure to serve existing and future growth.
- Protect and maintain existing neighborhoods.
- Influence how the parish grows and what the parish will look like in the future by updating ordinances and development standards aligned with the Ascension Parish *Master Land Use Plan*.
- Focus on attracting new housing and jobs to areas that are already developed and already served by infrastructure.
- Create vibrant housing, shopping, and arts and entertainment centers to attract and retain youth and serve existing and future residents.
- Encourage mixed-use compact development, served by multiple transportation options, at strategically located neighborhood hubs to alleviate vehicle traffic and create new employment opportunities.
- Provide a wider range of housing options—both in style and size—to retain and attract youth to the parish and to accommodate a variety of housing types and locations for people at all life stages and income levels.
- Preserve the rural character of the parish.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure improvements, including improved roads, drainage, stormwater management, and wetlands protection.
- Plan for a public sewer system to prevent and reduce regulation of discharge into waterways.
- Continue to implement the parish's hazard mitigation plan to prepare for natural disasters, such as flooding and storm events.
- Direct new development toward areas where there are adequate roads to accommodate growth, and scale new streets to fit their surroundings to promote safety and attractiveness.
- Provide convenient access to housing, stores, and services from all areas of the parish.
- Provide transportation facilities and services to ensure that workers have easy access to jobs.
- Over the long term, provide a transportation option for people without cars.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Preserve natural floodplain and wetland areas to provide for stormwater management, recreational use, and natural beauty.
- Conserve and protect areas of open green space from increased density and development to maintain natural resources and parks and recreational facilities as well as to facilitate sustainable development.
- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.
- Increase and diversify recreational opportunities, including sports fields, play space, skate parks, passive recreational areas, walking trails, and natural areas.
- Provide more walkable connections, trails, and bike paths that connect people to recreational areas and open space.

- Preserve the natural beauty of the parish and its assets through the use of incentives and conservation development practices such as greenbelts and cluster development.

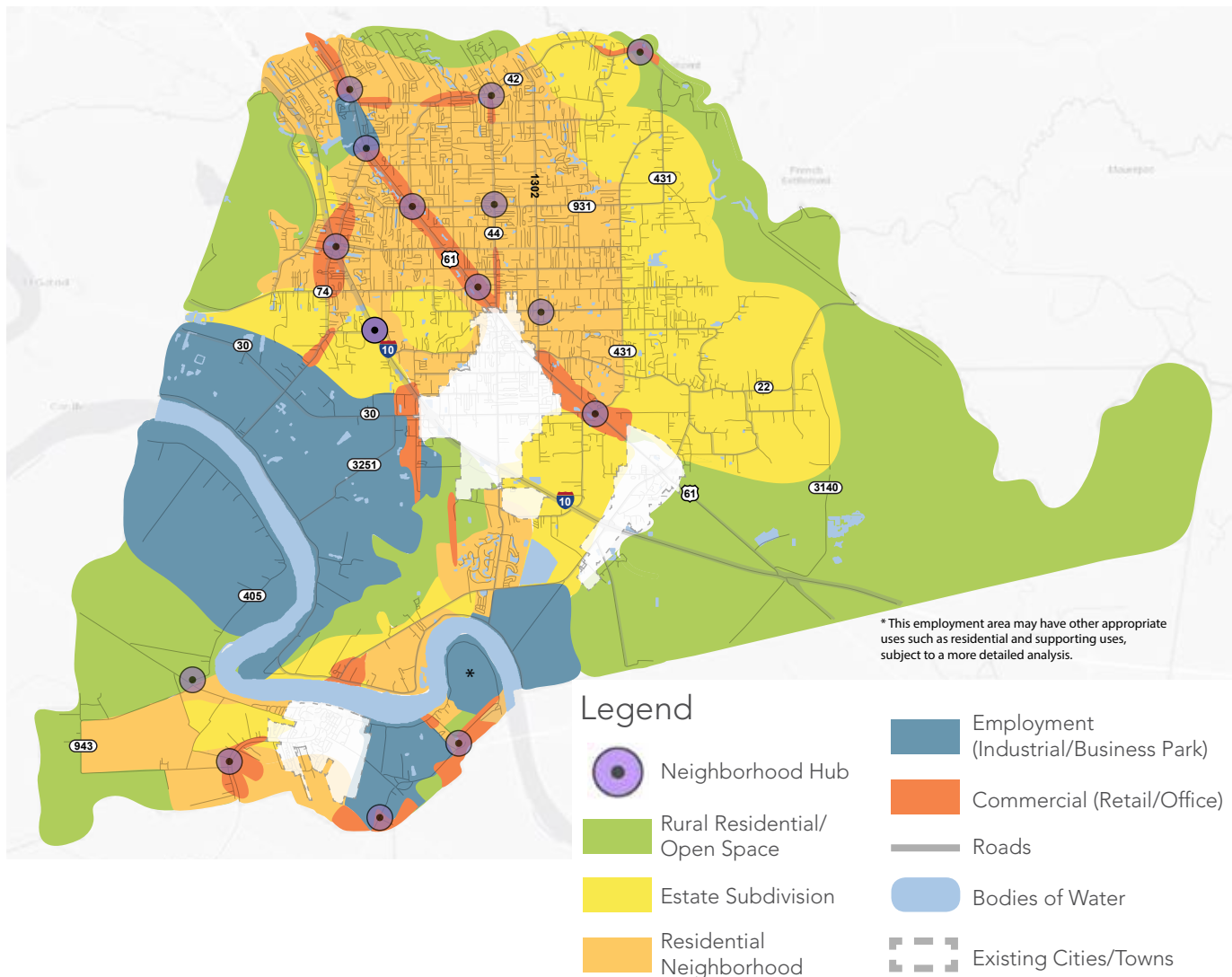
Economy and Education

- Maintain the parish's excellent educational system to provide consistent quality educational opportunities in all areas of the parish and at all levels, from preschool to job training and higher education.
- Coordinate with the school district on the location of schools in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.
- Support historic preservation and tourism across the parish.
- Promote new economic development in the parish, especially on the West Bank, along the Mississippi River, and in areas west of I-10.
- Work with existing industry, schools, and colleges to provide educational opportunities and technical training programs to build a workforce with skills that match future employment demands.
- Maintain a transparent land use planning and management process.
- Develop updated, clear, objective land use regulations that implement the Plan and provide predictability.
- Promote the development of high-quality business parks to support economic development opportunities within the region. Situate business development zones along highway corridors and near compatible industrial zones.
- Target new businesses that are related to industries that have potential for growth in the parish such as industrial servicing, health care, and logistics.
- Promote Ascension Parish's developable land, friendly business climate, water and rail access, and energy resources to encourage industrial development.

VISION MAP AND MAP INTERPRETATION

Orderly land development and efficient use of infrastructure require a clear picture of where and how the community is growing. The Vision Map provides a picture of what Ascension Parish could look like in the next 20 years and more. It was developed and vetted through a process based upon citizen input, robust analytical tools, and exploration of various development scenarios in order to provide a guide for decision-making that impacts the built environment. It provides a road map as to how best to direct and shape growth that is anticipated to occur and to do so in a manner where appropriate infrastructure can be planned for and developed.

Figure 2.1. Vision Map



VISION DEVELOPMENT TYPES

The Vision for Ascension Parish is represented by an array of development types that represent different combinations of land use as well as variations in development character and scale.

Rural Residential/Open Space

Rural residential areas are usually located in wetlands and floodplains and have a minimum of five acre lots per unit. Camps and established neighborhoods may have smaller lots in areas that are currently served by existing infrastructure. These residences support farming, agriculture,

and tourism industries. Rural residential housing is carefully placed and designed to have minimal impact on sensitive lands. In addition, this development type may provide open space buffers between residential uses and employment areas. Retail and commercial uses that support farming and agriculture may also be located at major intersections.

Estate Subdivision

Estate subdivisions have large lots of at least one acre per unit. This housing type may be in a subdivision or independently located to support smaller farming and agricultural lifestyles. Homes are detached and are typically one to two stories. As an option, this development type permits open space development, where homes are located in small lot neighborhoods, with common open space preserved in perpetuity. Estate areas have supporting retail and commercial uses at major intersections.

Residential Neighborhood

Residential neighborhoods continue to be a vital asset in the parish. These neighborhoods consist of a mix of lot sizes—ranging from large lot to medium and small lot, single-family, detached homes. Open space and amenities are integrated into residential neighborhoods, and supporting neighborhood services, retail and commercial uses are located at nearby intersections. Homes are typically one- to two-story buildings. New residential neighborhoods and infill will be in harmony with the character of the existing neighborhoods and adjacent development and appropriate to the context of the location.

Neighborhood Hub

Neighborhood hubs provide parish residents with access to housing as well as many goods and services in a compact area. They are designed to support multimodal transportation systems so that people can drive, walk, or bike where they need to go. Neighborhood hubs include a range of different uses, including office buildings, medical or other employment clusters, neighborhood services, and

retail, entertainment, and recreational facilities. As primarily pedestrian-oriented places, they contain paths and connections that make it easy to walk and bike. Where appropriate, some neighborhood hubs will include mixed-use housing with moderate densities that transition to lower-density areas. Neighborhood hub buildings are typically one to three stories with surface parking located on the side or rear of the buildings. In appropriate locations, buildings may be up to five stories. The areas shown as neighborhood hubs on the map are potentially suited for this type of use but will need to be thoroughly vetted through a rezoning public hearing process to ensure that proposed development is compatible with surrounding uses.

Commercial (Retail/Office)

Commercial/retail areas consist of low- and medium-density service, office, and commercial buildings and are usually positioned near highway corridors or at highly visible intersections. Commercial/retail areas require good access and often have limited pedestrian connectivity. These areas are often one-story buildings but may be multistory, mid-rise buildings with surface parking lots, ideally situated on the side or rear of the buildings.

Employment (Industrial/Business Park)

Employment areas contain low- to mid-rise office, warehousing, light manufacturing and high-tech uses, such as clean manufacturing or information technology, business parks, and heavy industrial. Big-box retail or warehouse retail clubs may be in these areas. Employment areas typically have few residences and have more extensive commercial activity. Employment areas require access to major arterials or interstates, and manufacturing and warehousing uses must be able to accommodate extensive truck traffic. Due to the special transportation requirements and potential adjacency issues, attention to design, screening, and open space buffering is necessary when employment areas are adjacent to residential uses.

WHAT DOES THE VISION MAP DO?

The Vision Map is not a regulatory document, but it provides a long-term reference for elected and appointed officials and citizens to offer guidance in development decisions. As zoning and subdivision requests are made, the Vision Map is one of several tools that should be used to create recommendations. Ultimately, the Vision Map guides zoning regulations and other programs required to implement the community's vision. The Vision Map includes six development types that make up the parish: Rural Residential/Open Space; Estate Subdivision; Residential Neighborhood; Neighborhood Hub; Commercial; and Employment.

The Vision Map

- identifies future development patterns so that infrastructure can be planned to better accommodate desired growth;
- creates potential opportunities for compact, mixed-use neighborhood centers where residents can live and shop—cutting down on auto trips;
- establishes a strong vision for development on the West Bank with neighborhood centers, retail, services, and employment uses;
- provides a wider range of housing options to meet the changing market demands and provides housing for youth to stay in parish;
- retains open space by incorporating some small-lot housing options; and
- protects areas outside the levee system with recommended large parcel development.

Map Interpretation

When using the Vision Map, several important considerations should be kept in mind.

1. The development types on the map (and detailed on the previous page) show the types of land uses generally appropriate for each area. As zoning cases and subdivision plats are requested, additional contextual analysis of those requests will be made. While the Vision Map is a primary consideration in evaluating zoning cases, other technical evaluations are also required, such as traffic impact studies, drainage impact studies, infrastructure, contextual compatibility, and other parish services.
2. The boundaries between one development type and the next are generalized at the scale in which the map is presented. Boundaries could shift slightly to accommodate such items as geographic features, roadways, wetlands, and existing development.
3. It is unlikely that in the next 20 to 25 years all of the neighborhood centers will be developed. The neighborhood centers are generally shown where there is vacant or redevelopable land and the potential for this type of compact mixed-use development to be appropriate, in coordination with planned roadway improvements.
4. Residential development types include neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses even though those may not be shown on the Vision Map.
5. Lots in the rural development type that are smaller than five acres when zoning is implemented will be permitted to build one structure but will not be able to subdivide to parcels less than five acres.

DETAILED VISION STATEMENTS

Ascension Parish in the future provides infrastructure and services to support existing and planned development; supports and enhances residential neighborhoods and expands housing options; preserves and uses open space and natural areas as a defining characteristic; provides accessible, multipurpose recreational areas; sustains vibrant corridors and compact commercial hubs; fully capitalizes on economic activity along the Mississippi River; and proactively encourages desired neighborhoods services, and employment centers on the West Bank.

Land Use Vision

Land use decisions contribute to Ascension Parish's fiscal stability and move the parish toward the citizens' vision. Ascension Parish's land use is focused on quality neighborhoods, housing options, and jobs that attract families and parish youth and retain aging residents. Compact development that complements existing land uses provides vibrant centers with jobs, retail, and services close to residences.

Housing and Neighborhood Services Vision

Neighborhoods are maintained, stabilized, and strengthened, making them attractive to new residents so that Ascension Parish continues to be the community of choice for residents seeking quality neighborhoods within the Baton Rouge region. Ascension Parish offers an array of housing options that make living in the parish more accessible for households and individuals of all ages, incomes, and household sizes. There are increased opportunities to live close to jobs, services, and amenities, improving the quality of life for all residents.

Transportation and Mobility Vision

Ascension Parish provides needed transportation upgrades, maintenance, and new connections

to provide residents with access to jobs, schools, services, and recreational areas. The parish implements plans to provide access to future growth in a timely manner, focusing on multimodal options where possible.

Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater Vision

Ascension Parish designs, constructs, and maintains a safe, sustainable, and environmentally sound stormwater, floodplain management, and wastewater system that reduces risk and the potential of flooding, protects natural drainage features, and preserves and enhances water quality to meet the current and future needs of parish residents and businesses. New development complements and improves existing drainage within the watershed.

Recreation and Open Space Vision

Ascension Parish residents have convenient access to multifunctional parks and open space facilities, which provide recreational opportunities for all ages and skill levels. The parks facilities enable residents to have healthy lifestyles and share activities with friends and families. Parents can enjoy walking trails and exercise areas while watching children participate in sports and playground activities. Parks are well maintained, and there are opportunities to walk through natural areas, fish off docks, go boating, and enjoy the parish's many environmental amenities.

Economic Development and Redevelopment Vision

Within the parish, residents have diverse, quality employment options concentrated along the Mississippi River, along major transportation corridors, at major intersections, and in neighborhood hubs. The parish will be stronger economically with a more diverse economic base and an improved balance of jobs and housing between the East and West Banks.

PRIORITY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Priority actions are the first steps that the parish should take to address pressing issues. They should be undertaken immediately or initiated in a short period of time—one to three years. When these implementation measures are initiated and ultimately completed, it will clearly show how the parish is moving toward the citizens' vision and will make a significant impact on the quality of life in the parish. Implementation will take significant effort and collaboration by elected and appointed officials, businesses, and residents. Priority actions are in four categories: ordinance, policy, and practices updates; code enforcement programs; public/private implementation; and citizen engagement programs.

Ordinance, Policy, and Practices Updates

Update zoning and subdivision ordinances.

One of the first steps to implement the Master Land Use Plan is to update zoning and subdivision ordinances to align with and implement the Plan. Examples of the types of updates include streamlining the organization of the ordinances; incorporating development standards; adding new districts and uses and updating others; and updating parking and landscape standards.

Update drainage ordinances, policies, and practices.

A review of the drainage regulations indicated a need to eliminate conflicts in ordinances, policies, and practices. In addition, procedures to continually review drainage design regulations to ensure current storm events can be managed are recommended.

Incorporate low-impact development techniques in public and private properties.

Update regulations and practices to incentivize and/or require low-impact development techniques on private properties, such as requiring parking that

exceeds the parish requirements to be a pervious surface. In addition, incorporate these practices in public projects, including parks projects, streets, and facilities.

Code Enforcement Programs

Numerous people mentioned the need to strengthen the existing code enforcement program to proactively enforce zoning and development ordinances, overall property maintenance, and maintenance requirements of ditches and retention areas. These issues are important to sustaining the parish's quality of life, especially as development ages. To implement a proactive code enforcement program, the parish will need to

- Analyze resources and funding dedicated to code enforcement as well as future needs required to identify funding for code enforcement officers.
- Develop educational and code enforcement programs to:
 - provide education on the importance of cleaning ditches and bayous to ensure a working drainage system that can manage water levels and actively enforce drainage-related regulations;
 - ensure development complies with zoning and building requirements;
 - clean up the parish, including cleaning up trash and debris in yards visible from the roadway;
 - continue to educate children and adults about littering and its impacts; and
 - provide anti-littering programs in schools and for residents.
- Consider one-time cleanup programs to place dumpsters in key locations for month-long periods so that property owners can get rid of debris and come into compliance. The expectation is that these properties would then be maintained to code requirements in the future.
- Identify abandoned buildings and develop a

program to require repair or removal of the buildings. Explore implementing a way to proactively repair or remove these buildings and place a tax lien on them.

Interagency and Public/Private Implementation

Implementation of the Master Land Use Plan must be closely coordinated with other parish initiatives including the 2019 *Transportation Master Plan*, development of a parish sewer system, and updated stormwater management ordinances. Implementation of these initiatives will require thoughtful coordination between the parish government, federal and state agencies, adjacent parishes, and the Capital Region Planning Commission. Identifying a sustainable source of funding is a challenge, with a need for intergovernmental coordination as well as creative public/private partnerships to implement these programs.

In addition, coordination with the Ascension Parish School Board is needed to plan for school locations and address potential traffic impacts. Setting up regular communication regarding facility needs and reviewing potential school locations will minimize impacts on both schools and the parish. Continued coordination with the Ascension Parish Sheriff's office is needed to address parishwide safety issues.

Citizen Engagement Programs

Ascension Parish residents can significantly impact the future of the parish by learning more about long-term benefits of maintaining properties, ditches, and other property owner responsibilities. A parish/educational institution partnership could provide a public education program that provides information on the watershed system, the need for property maintenance, ditch and detention area maintenance, best practices for low-risk development, and other pertinent information that

notifies residents on how they can contribute to the parish's quality of life.

This educational initiative could also provide education for homeowners association leadership and members. Topics could include how to have a strong and successful neighborhood association; keeping volunteers active, interested, and productive; common area maintenance responsibilities; and how to get involved in community activities.

Additional engagement activities include initiating an "Adopt a Ditch/Bayou" program to create a structure to develop partnerships with neighborhood associations, nonprofits, academic institutions, merchants, and others to expand existing programs for the removal of litter and other obstructive features that hinder local stormwater conveyance. In addition, this program could also provide the education and framework to facilitate owners, neighborhood associations, and others to maintain nearby culverts, inlets, outlets, and other drainage infrastructure and further increase awareness and public participation in stormwater management.

While Lamar Dixon Expo Center currently has a nonprofit foundation that supports the Lamar Dixon facility, there is not a parks foundation for the remainder of Ascension Parish parks. The park system is generally in need of programming, maintenance, and facility improvements to keep up existing facilities and expand and improve programming for the growing population. This is an initiative that private/nonprofit partnerships could address, which would provide valuable support for the parish's parks, recreational areas, and open space.



EARLY
VOTING
HERE

DONALDSONVILLE
This capital of Louisiana, in
1840, Louisiana was then
January 9 to March 15 and
remained in 1851. In 1848
the 182 State House, located
across from this site, was razed
and its bricks used to construct
masonry of the State's courts.

3

PARISH PROFILE

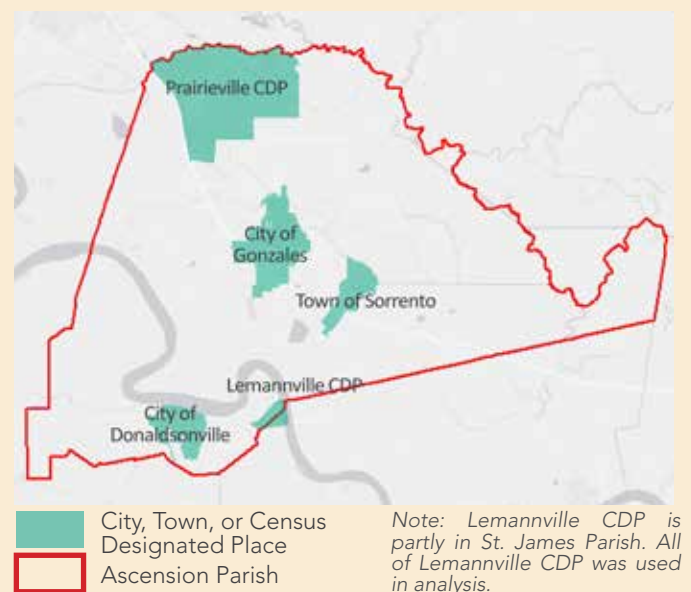
INTRODUCTION

Ascension Parish is located in southern Louisiana at the junction of the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche. The parish is home to 117,009 people, as of 2016.¹ The major employers with 500 or more employees include the Ascension Parish School Board, BASF Corporation, Walmart, Shell Chemicals Geismar, St. Elizabeth Hospital (now Our Lady of the Lake Ascension), and CF Industries.²

Ascension Parish is located approximately 25 miles southeast of Louisiana's capital city, Baton Rouge, and 60 miles west of New Orleans. Interstate 10 and US 61 run parallel through the center of the parish, connecting Baton Rouge, Gonzales, and New Orleans. Ascension Parish contains three incorporated municipalities, the Cities of Donaldsonville and Gonzales and the Town of Sorrento. These three municipalities are not included in the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*. Ascension Parish also contains two Census Designated Places (CDPs), Lemannville and Prairieville, which are concentrations of population

identified by the U. S. Census Bureau but are not incorporated municipalities. Lemannville and Prairieville are included in this plan. The entire Lemannville CDP was used in this analysis, although it spans both Ascension Parish and St. James Parish, as shown in the map below.

Figure 3.1. Municipalities and Census Designated Places in Ascension Parish



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey (5-year estimates)

HISTORY

The area is the ancestral home of the Houma, Chitimacha, and Chahta Yakni (Choctaw) tribes.³ Indigenous peoples continue to live in southern Louisiana today but have a small presence in Ascension Parish. The area's native tribes are part of the Mississippian culture that extended from the Gulf of Mexico to present-day Wisconsin and were at their height between 800 CE and 1600 CE. They are known for building large earthwork platform mounds. They are also known for developing large-scale maize agriculture, which supported urbanization and economic specialization.

Near the year 1200, a geologic event caused the Mississippi River to change course, forming a new outlet to the Gulf of Mexico and leaving behind the stream that is now called Bayou Lafourche, which had been the main channel of the river.⁴ Bayou Lafourche runs through the west bank of Ascension Parish and its parish seat, Donaldsonville.

The area was colonized by Europeans beginning in the early 1500s, first by Spanish settlers, then by French, who founded New Orleans in 1718; Germans arrived in 1721.⁵ During this time, plantation agriculture was established in what would become Ascension Parish. Major crops included food, tobacco, indigo, and in 1795, sugar was formally established. The agricultural labor was borne by enslaved people of African and indigenous ancestry.

Ascension Parish was formally established in 1809 when the Louisiana Purchase Orleans Territory was divided into 19 parishes. In 1812, Louisiana entered the United States as the eighteenth state.

REGION

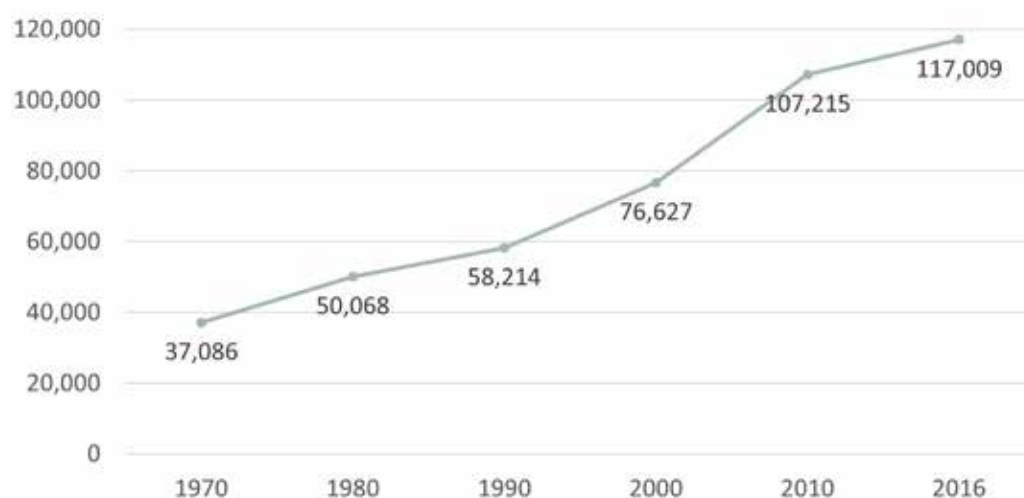
Ascension Parish is in the southern part of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana region and is one of nine parishes that compose the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Data presented for the region include the nine parishes—Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana.

Figure 3.2. Ascension Parish Region



POPULATION PAST AND PRESENT

The population of Ascension Parish has grown quickly over the past 50 years and has been the fastest-growing parish by percentage growth in the state for years. The population in 2016 was 117,009.⁶ The Baton Rouge MSA had a 2016 population of 824,667,⁷ and Ascension Parish represents approximately 14 percent of the region's population.

Figure 3.3. Ascension Parish Population Over Time

Sources: IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System; U.S. Census Bureau, 1970-2010 Decennial Census; and 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) (5-year estimates)

Figure 3.4. 2016 Population

	Population
Baton Rouge MSA	824,667
Ascension Parish	117,009
City of Donaldsonville	7,916
City of Gonzales	10,492
Town of Sorrento	1,669
Lemannville CDP	905
Prairieville CDP	29,732

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Figure 3.5. 2016 Population by Parish in the Region

Parish	Population
Ascension	117,009
East Baton Rouge	445,337
East Feliciana	19,756
Iberville	33,159
Livingston	135,925
Pointe Coupee	22,366
St. Helena	10,714
West Baton Rouge	25,017
West Feliciana	15,384

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

POPULATION FORECAST

The Vision is based on the expected future population growth in Ascension Parish. For this plan, it is estimated that unincorporated Ascension Parish will add approximately 52,000 new residents and 22,500 new housing units⁸ in the next 20 years. The forecast originates from the 2017 travel demand model provided by the Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, which estimates that the parish will gain more than 87,000 people by 2042.⁹ CRPC's base year for the forecast is 2015 and looks ahead to the forecast year 2042. The scenarios used in this planning process use a base year of 2018, which was accomplished by adding three years of growth to the 2015 base-year population. For this plan, it was estimated that the unincorporated areas will see more than 60 percent of overall parish growth in the 2018 – 2042 time frame.

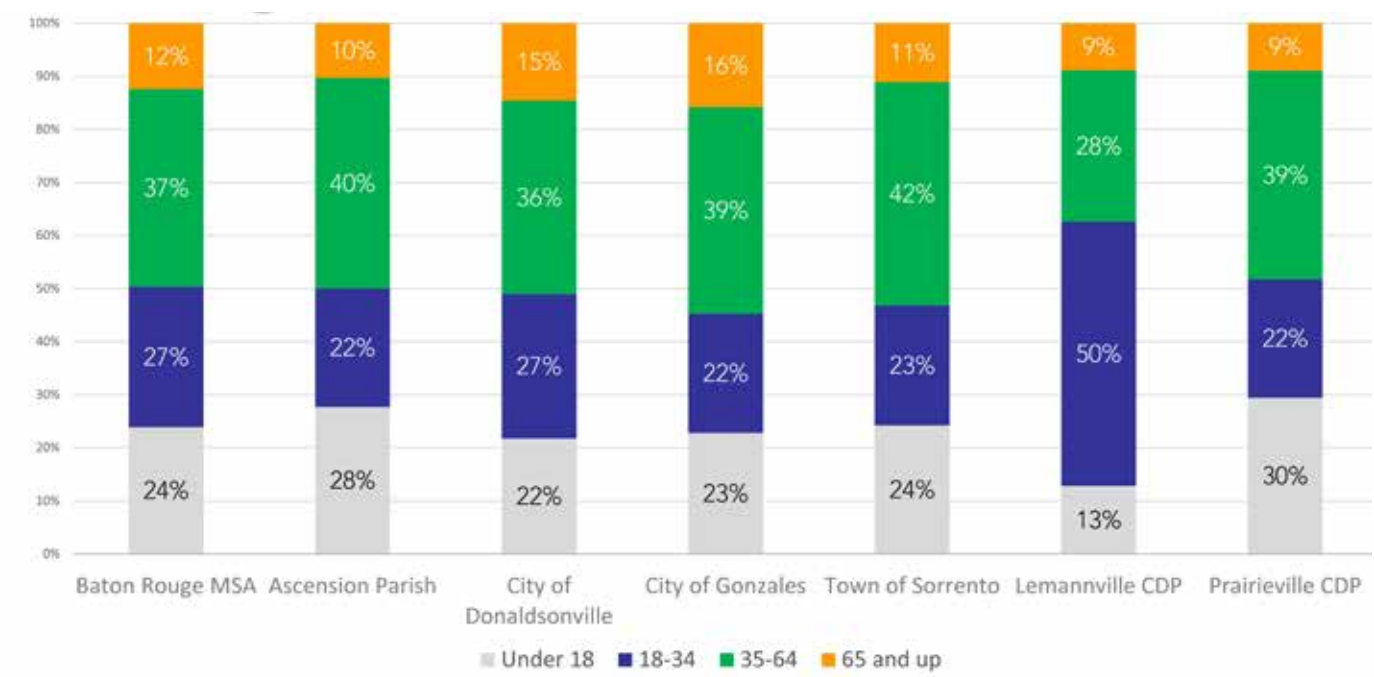
DEMOGRAPHICS

All demographic data in this section come from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2016 (5-year estimates). Most datasets include only unincorporated Ascension Parish, excluding the Cities of Gonzales and Donaldsonville and the Town of Sorrento. When data are available only at the parish level, it is clearly described.

Age

The age profile of the residents of unincorporated Ascension Parish is quite similar to the region as a whole. In unincorporated Ascension Parish, 29 percent of residents are under 18 years old; 22 percent of residents are between 18 and 34; 40 percent of residents are between 35 and 64; and 9 percent are 65 or older. The median age in Ascension Parish is 37.1 years, compared to 34.8 years for the region.

Figure 3.6. Age in Ascension Parish



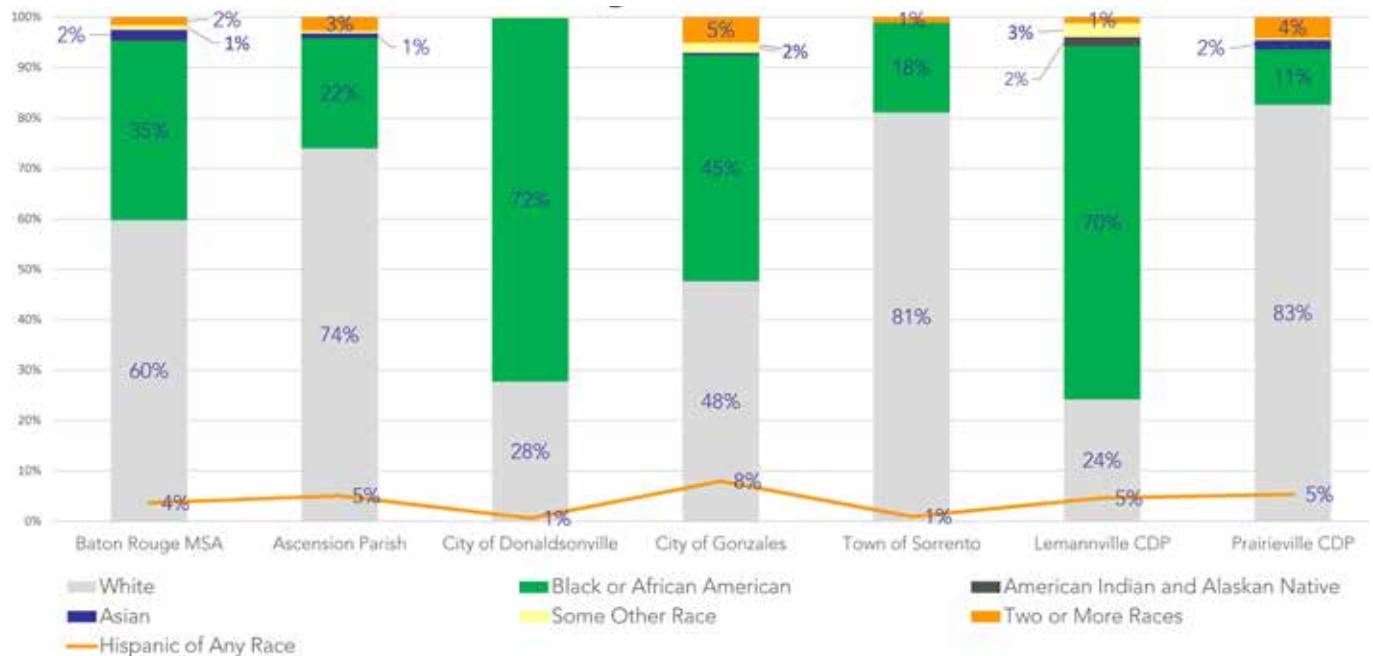
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Race and Ethnicity

Among unincorporated Ascension Parish residents, 80.5 percent identify as white, 15.3 percent as black or African American, 2.8 percent as two or more

racess, and 1.0 percent as Asian. Five percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The parish is less racially diverse than the region as a whole, but the racial composition varies quite a bit by location.

Figure 3.7. Race and Ethnicity in Ascension Parish



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

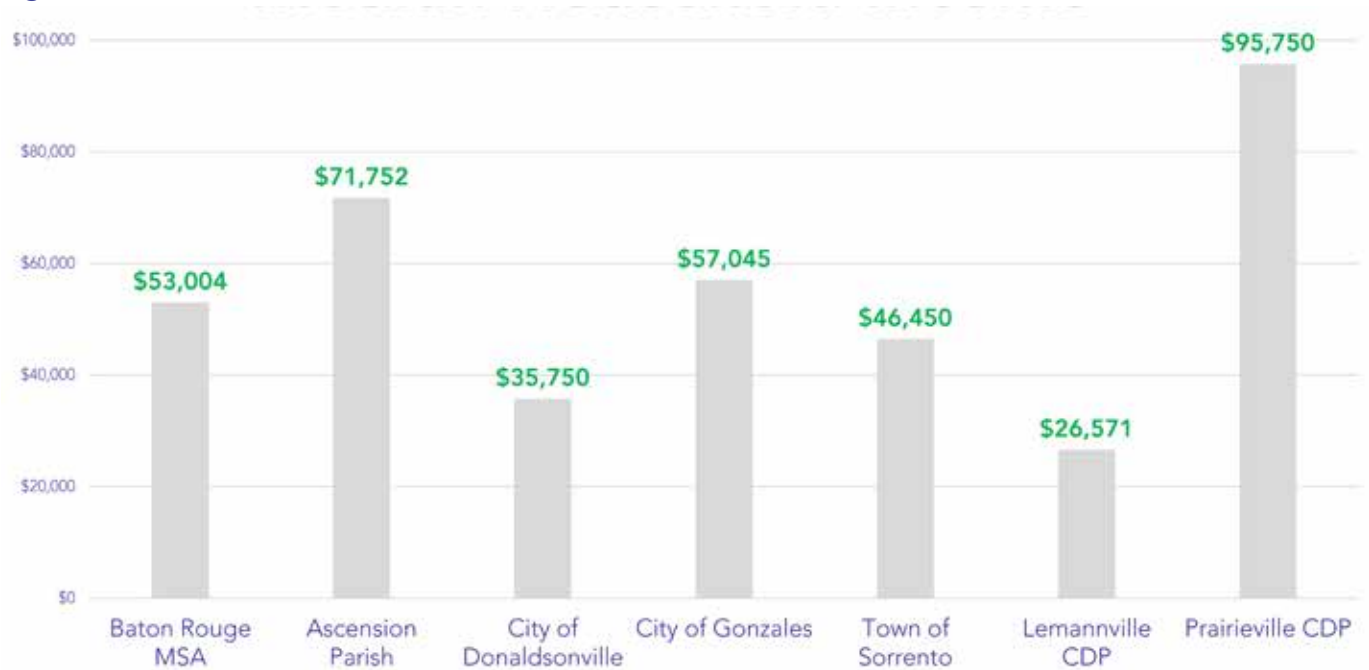
Income

The median household income for residents of all of Ascension Parish—including cities and towns—is \$71,752, which is 35 percent higher than the median household income for the region as a whole. However, there is a major racial disparity in incomes. In places where the population is largely black or African American, incomes are significantly lower

than the parish median and below the regional median as well. The household income brackets and percentages for each municipality and CDP are shown below.

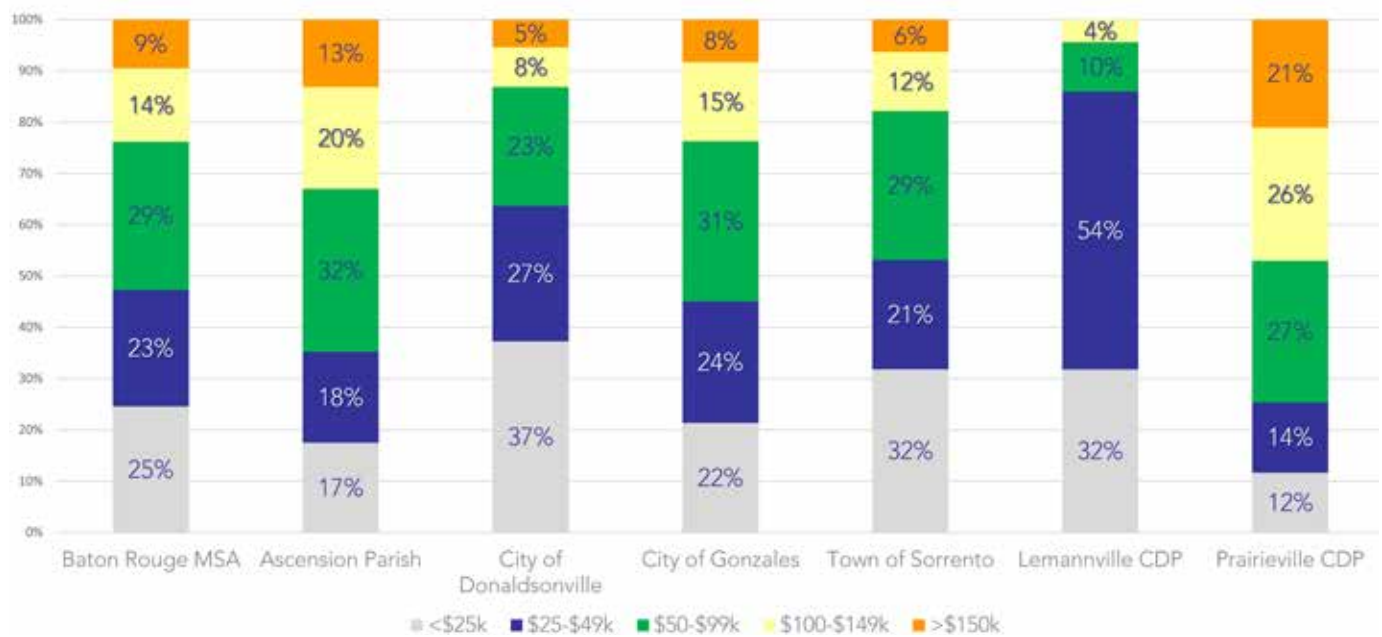
Additional background information on transportation, housing, recreation, economic development, and other topics is presented in each of the relevant chapters.

Figure 3.8. Median Household Income in Ascension Parish



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Figure 3.9. Household Income Brackets in Ascension Parish



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)



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4

CREATING THE PLAN

This chapter describes how the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* was developed and the public engagement and input that was essential to the process.

HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

In 2017, Ascension Parish initiated a comprehensive planning process to guide development in the parish. The parish's location along Interstate 10 between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, its strong public school system, and the strength of its primary industry—chemical processing manufacturing—all contribute to make the parish a desirable location for development. Parish officials wanted a comprehensive plan to better prepare for future growth.

Ascension Parish experienced rapid population growth between 2000 and 2016, at the highest rate in the state. During that time, the population

increased by 53 percent to 117,009, and the parish is estimated to have over 120,000 residents in 2019, if growth trends continue. Development pressures—combined with much of the parish's land being located in flood-prone areas—have revealed issues with land use, housing, wastewater, transportation, and stormwater management systems. The parish separately contracted for a master transportation plan and a master floodplain management plan to address those specific issues. This plan coordinates and incorporates recommendations from those specific plans while also making more comprehensive recommendations, providing a road map for parish officials to use as they make development decisions.

Process and Timeline

The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* is a community-driven, parish-wide planning process that will help direct future growth by asking parish residents and stakeholders to decide what kind of parish they want to live or do business in. Beginning in March 2018 and continuing through mid-2019, the parish and planners gathered ideas and feedback through several public workshops, small group meetings, and interviews with community leaders and stakeholders. The first step in the master plan was to develop a shared vision, based on input gathered from Ascension

residents and stakeholders across the parish. This vision shows how residents and stakeholders want the parish to look and feel in the next 20 to 25 years. Guided by this vision, the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* concentrates on how land is developed or redeveloped, the types of housing available, recreation and open space needs, and how to create a stronger economy with more good jobs. It builds on previous plans and also incorporates recommendations from other plans currently under development, including how to improve transportation and how to better manage stormwater.

Figure 4.1. General Plan Process and Timeline



A flyer advertising a plan public meeting.

PUBLIC INPUT

Meaningful public input is essential to a successful plan that is broadly used and supported by the community and officials. By engaging different groups and viewpoints in different ways, the Plan includes multiple perspectives and is relevant to all of Ascension Parish. The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* process included many avenues of engagement to ensure a representative and effective plan.

Stakeholder Committee

A stakeholder committee was formed at the beginning of the planning process. Members were asked to assist by providing feedback and serving as a sounding board for the planning team. Thirty-one parish residents agreed to serve, representing diverse backgrounds, groups, experiences, and industries. Both in person and via online meetings, the committee met six times over the course of the process to review presentations and concepts and offer comments and suggestions. Committee members also helped publicize public meetings through their networks and attended the sessions.

Interviews

The planning team interviewed individuals and small groups of people who have an interest in or will be affected by the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*. The team interviewed parish staff from various departments, planning commissioners, council members, municipal elected officials, school officials, community stakeholders, business people, and economic development professionals. The interviews allowed the planning team to hear each individual perspective in depth, including challenges and opportunities the Plan can capitalize on. Interview themes have been incorporated with all other public input and are reflected in the Plan's guiding principles and recommendations.

Outreach for Public Input

The goal of the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* outreach process was to engage many different parish residents and stakeholders in ways that were meaningful and convenient to them. To accomplish this, the planning team held four sets of public meetings and open houses—visioning workshops, scenario open houses, draft vision open houses, and draft plan open houses—as well as other opportunities for input, including surveys and online comment forms. For each of the public meetings and open houses, the planning team used physical and digital methods to reach people in different ways.

Yard Signs

A few weeks before each round of public meetings, planning team members placed yard signs around Ascension Parish with the upcoming meeting information. Signs were placed at major intersections and along high-traffic corridors for maximum visibility.



A yard sign advertising a plan public meeting.

Flyers

The team also distributed paper flyers before each round of public meetings. Flyers were posted at establishments including churches, grocery stores, banks, convenience stores, post offices, libraries, motor vehicle offices, chambers of commerce,

senior centers, courthouses, city halls, and parish offices. Flyers were electronically distributed to the parish's public schools through their Peachjar electronic flyer system and included in school communications to teachers and staff.



A flyer inviting the public to the June 2018 visioning workshops.



A flyer inviting the public to the November 2018 draft vision open houses.



A flyer inviting the public to the September 2018 scenario open houses.



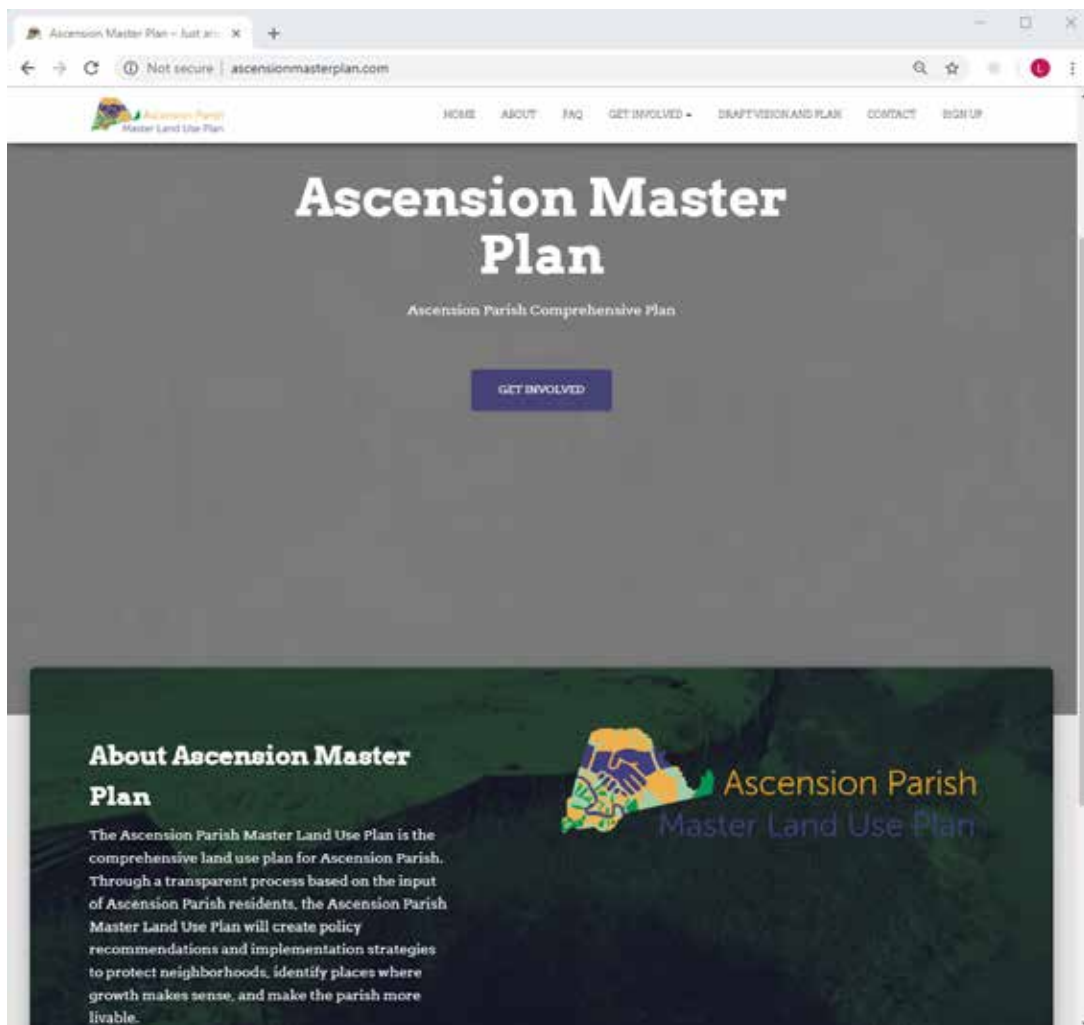
A flyer inviting the public to the April/May 2019 draft plan open houses.

Social Media and Media

Public meetings were advertised on social media using Ascension Parish's official Facebook page, www.facebook.com/AscensionGov, which as of early 2019 had more than 3,400 followers. In Spring 2018, at the beginning of the planning process, the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* was featured on the parish's governmental access television channel, Ascension 21. Public meetings were added to online event calendars, including listings on the *Advocate*, the *Gonzales Weekly Citizen*, and the *Donaldsonville Chief*, as well as posted on the parish's website, www.ascensionparish.net. Prior to each round of public meetings, press releases were provided to local media outlets, and each round of public meetings had press coverage from publications, such as the *Advocate* and the *Gonzales Weekly Citizen*.

Plan Website and Email Blasts

To provide a central location for all information about the Plan, the team created a plan website, www.ascensionmasterplan.com. Launched in early Spring 2018 and maintained by Ascension Parish, the website includes an explanation of the planning process, frequently asked questions, a summary of each public meeting along with meeting materials, information about upcoming meetings, drafts of the Vision and plan document, a comment form, and a place to sign up for email updates. Individuals who signed up for the updates received periodic emails with information regarding the Plan and upcoming public meeting reminders.



Home page for the Plan's website.

Visioning Workshops

On June 4, 5, and 6, 2018, more than 150 Ascension Parish residents attended community visioning workshops for the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*. Workshops were held at Oak Grove Primary School in Prairieville, Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, and Lowery Elementary School in Donaldsonville.

During the workshops, residents learned about the parish's expected growth rates and current development trends throughout the US. The core of the workshop centered on a map exercise in which residents gathered in small groups to discuss issues such as infrastructure improvements and goals for land use planning. They were asked to consider what type of development they envisioned for the future of Ascension. Using representative stickers or "chips," residents placed potential development types on the map as well as indicated areas to preserve and where transportation infrastructure is needed. Each table then presented their maps to the larger group, identifying their group's priorities for growth and improvement and the reasoning behind their chip placements.

Chip placement varied, with some tables placing a variety of development types across the parish, other tables concentrating development in certain areas, especially the West Bank, and one table placing no chips. The six maps on the opposite page are examples of how tables placed their chips from the total of 22 tables.



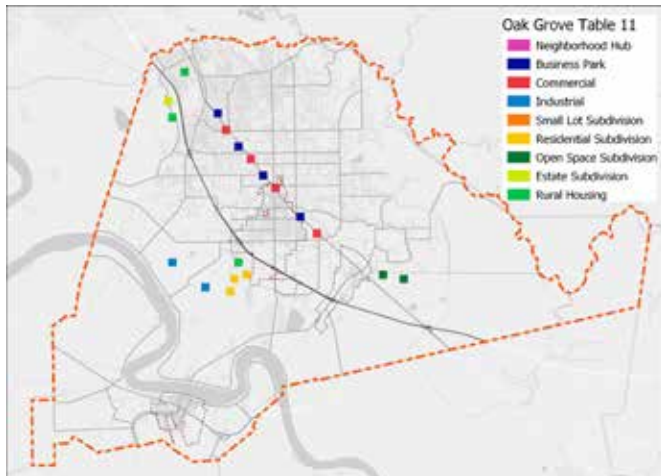
June 4, 2018 Visioning Workshop at Oak Grove Primary School.



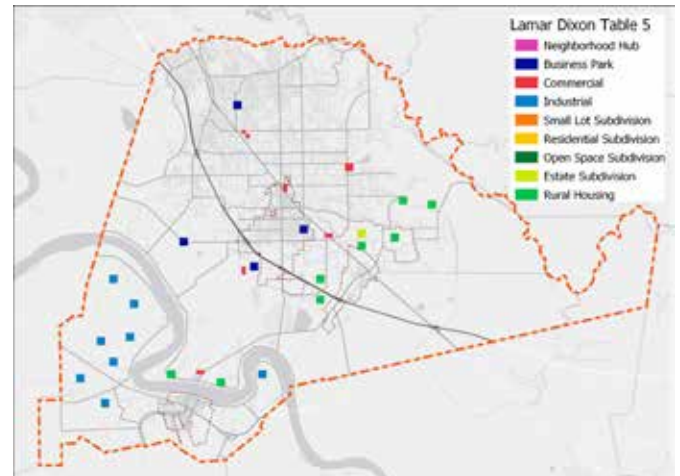
June 5, 2018 Visioning Workshop at Lamar Dixon Expo Center.



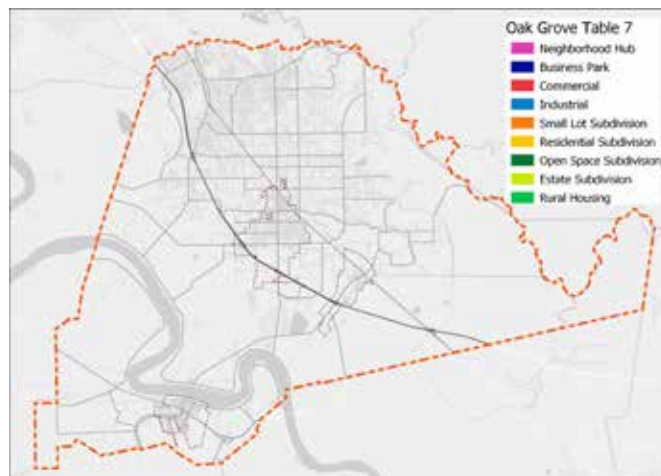
June 6, 2018 Visioning Workshop at Lowery Elementary School.



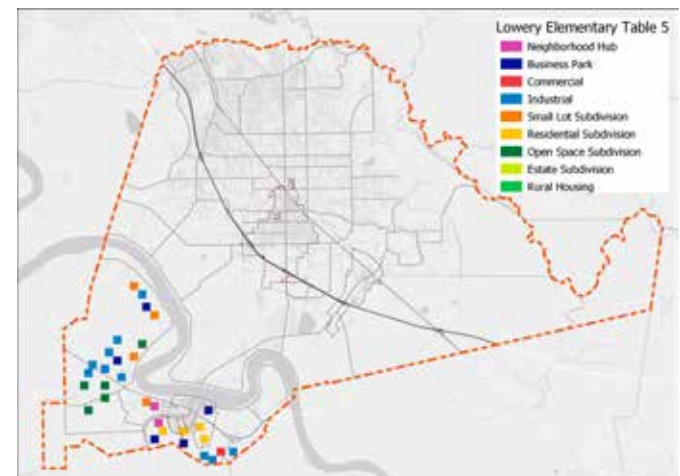
A digitized map of chips placed by Table 11 at Oak Grove Primary School.



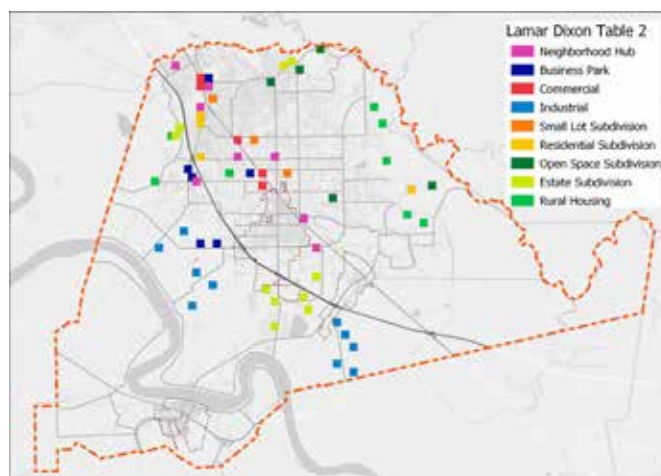
A digitized map of chips placed by Table 5 at Lamar Dixon Expo Center.



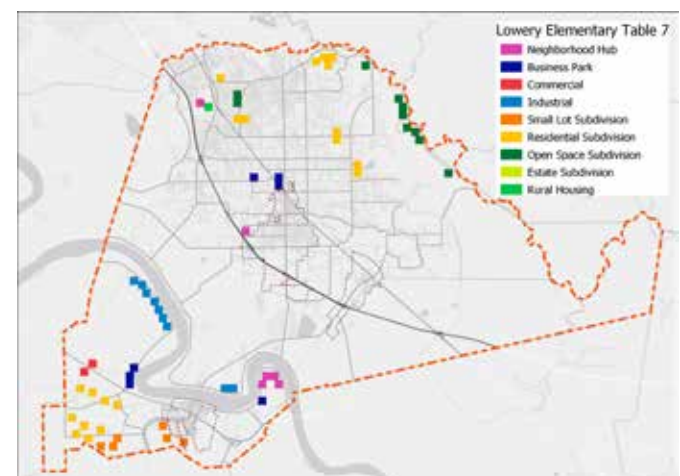
A digitized map of chips placed by Table 7 at Oak Grove Primary School.



A digitized map of chips placed by Table 5 at Lowery Elementary School.



A digitized map of chips placed by Table 2 at Lamar Dixon Expo Center.



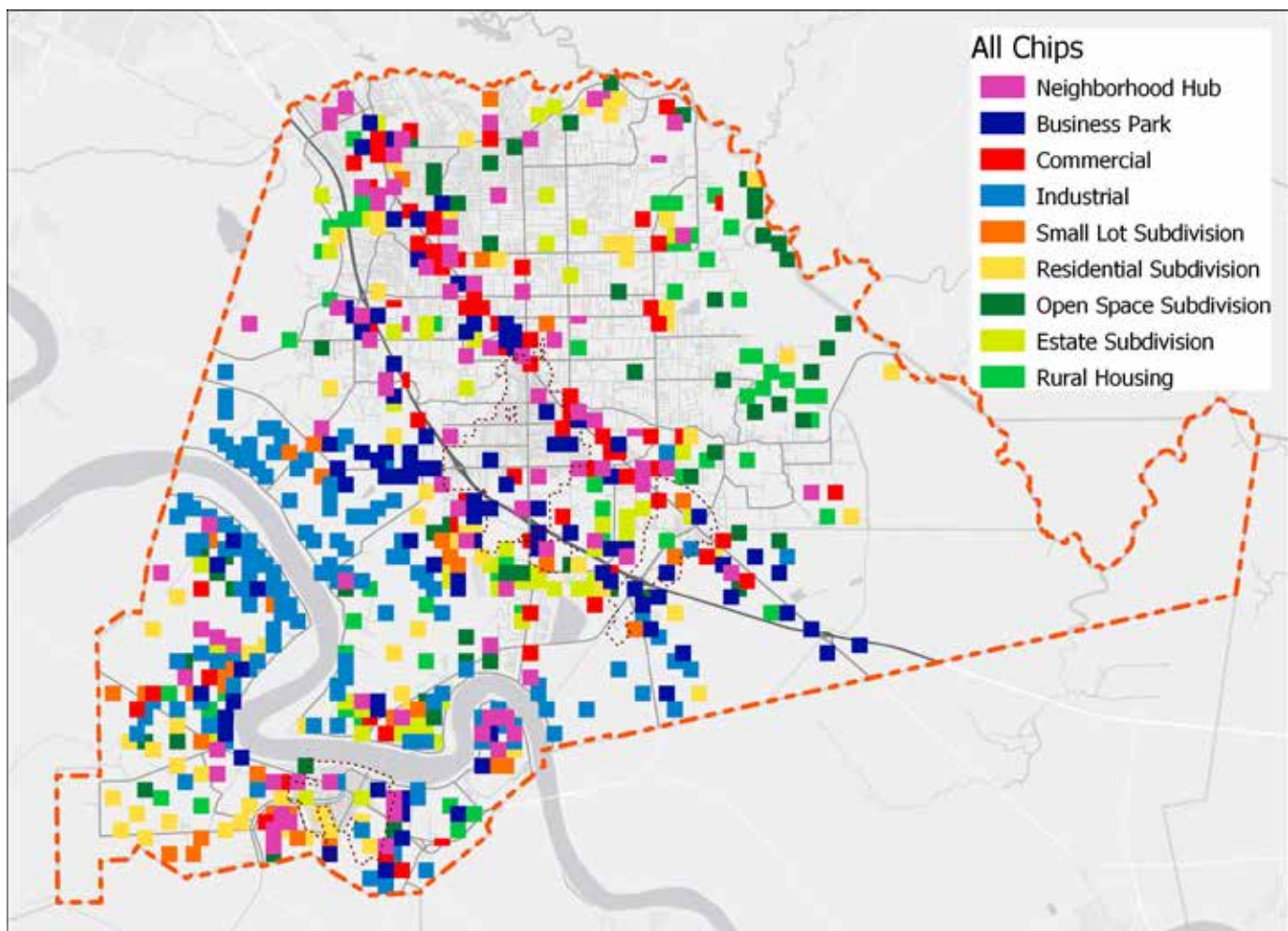
A digitized map of chips placed by Table 7 at Lowery Elementary School.

Common discussion themes across all tables included drainage, sewage, outdoor recreation, natural area preservation, infrastructure disrepair, and insufficient functionality issues. More specific themes also emerged at each meeting location. At Oak Grove Primary, participants noted on their maps drainage/stormwater issues, wetland protection, nature/multiuse path access, and connectivity challenges and discussed issues with road disrepair, concerns about new development/density, and preferences for small lot subdivisions. At Lamar Dixon, participants noted on their maps development concerns and desire for supportive infrastructure, preservation of natural areas, and improvement of infrastructure and discussed widening highways, adding more and new industries to bolster jobs and taxes, and increasing

new development in Donaldsonville. At Lowery Elementary, participants noted on their maps a desire for facilities that cater to children (daycare/schools/activities), for developable land on the West Bank, and for amenities and services and discussed separating industrial and residential land uses, connecting the West Bank to the rest of the parish, and encouraging infill development in Donaldsonville.

All resulting maps from the visioning workshops were digitized, and common chip placement locations and comment themes were identified, shown in the composite map below. These common elements were used to create a set of scenarios for the master land use plan.

Figure 4.2. A composite digitized map of all chips placed during visioning workshops



Scenario Open Houses

On September 26 and 27, 2018, Ascension Parish hosted two public open houses—one at the Gonzales Civic Center in Gonzales and one at Lowery Elementary in Donaldsonville. More than 130 parish residents attended.

During the open houses, residents were presented with the digitized results from the June workshops,

and they reviewed key themes emphasized by workshop participants such as infrastructure issues, drainage, sewage, outdoor recreation, and wetland preservation. Open house attendees then analyzed and commented on several display posters that highlighted four scenarios showing different types of growth and measurable indicators. Scenario planning allows residents to view development with a range of potential futures and discuss their preferences.



September 26, 2018 Scenario Open House at Gonzales Civic Center.



September 27, 2018 Scenario Open House at Lowery Elementary School.



September 26, 2018 Scenario Open House at Gonzales Civic Center.



September 27, 2018 Scenario Open House at Lowery Elementary School.

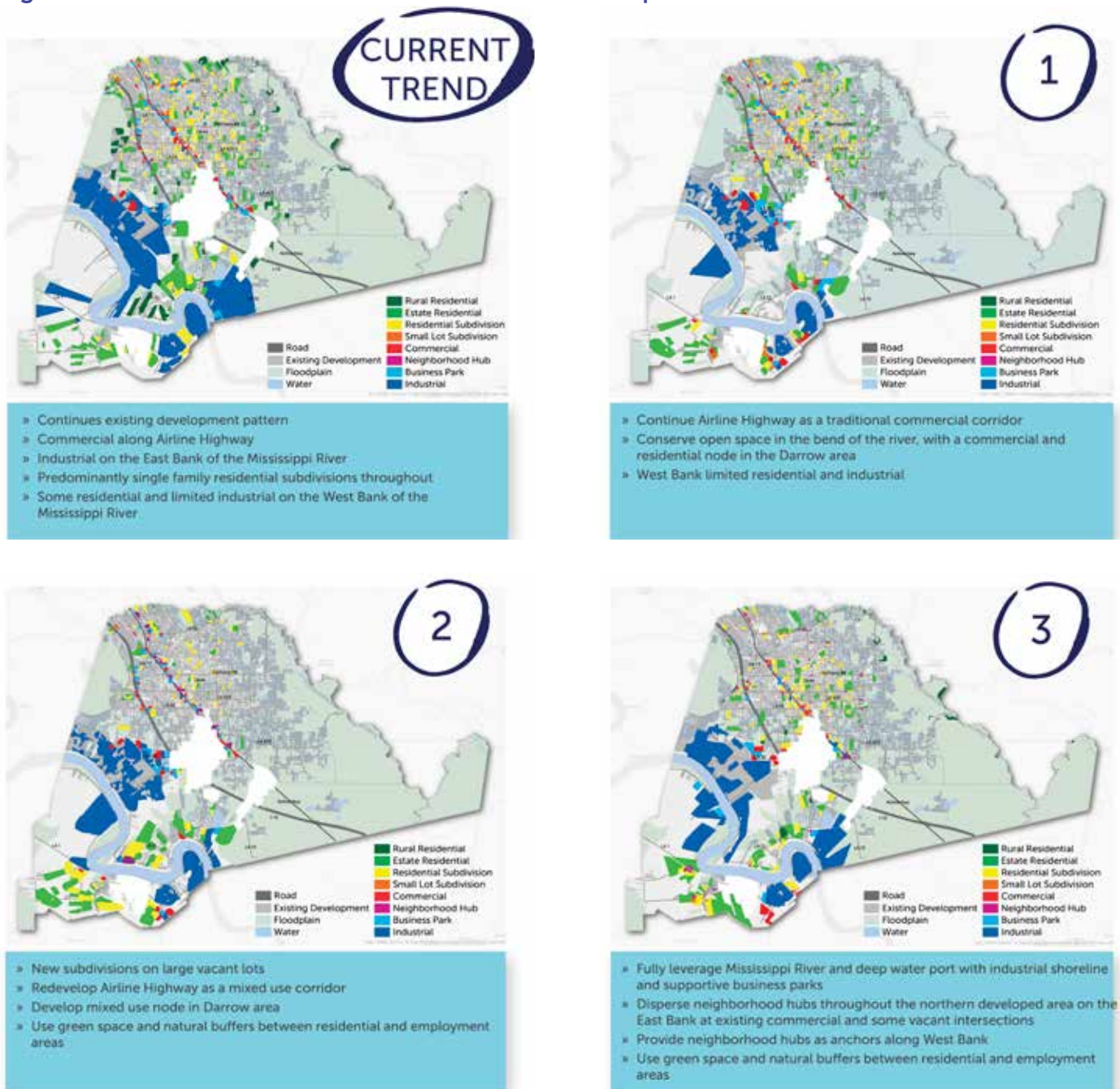
Scenarios and Indicators

The four scenarios presented four different possibilities for development in Ascension Parish over the next 20 to 25 years. Each scenario accommodated the same amount of additional population, housing units, and jobs and showed different ways of accommodating that growth. The aim of presenting four different scenarios was not to ask meeting participants to choose a favorite

but to serve as a starting point for discussion about what respondents like and dislike about different types of development. The four scenarios, with bullets describing the main points of each, are shown below.

Indicators are characteristics that can be used to show varying outcomes from different growth patterns. Several different indicators are shown

Figure 4.3. The four scenarios as shown at the Scenario Open Houses



below that allow people to compare scenarios to each other and measure the expected impact of development decisions. Several more indicators

are shown below that allow people to compare scenarios to each other and measure the expected impact of development decisions.

Figure 4.4. Indicators comparing the four scenarios, as shown at the Scenario Open Houses

SCENARIO INDICATORS

What are Indicators?

An indicator is a measurable characteristic. Indicators can help show differences in how the parish could grow.



High School Scenario Input

People who are teenagers now will be in their thirties or early forties by the end of this document’s planning horizon in 20 to 25 years and, over the life

of the Plan, will be deciding where to live, work, and raise their families. To gain the perspectives of some younger residents, during the week of the scenario open houses, the planning team visited students

Figure 4.5. Indicators comparing the four scenarios, as shown at the Scenario Open Houses

SCENARIO INDICATORS

What are Indicators?

An indicator is a measurable characteristic. Indicators can help show differences in how the parish could grow.




at the parish's four public high schools. Students in Advanced Placement Government and Politics and Advanced Math classes received presentations similar to the adult residents' sessions and provided their input on the same four scenarios and indicators that were presented at the open houses. They also gave input on different types of development.

Scenario and Guiding Principle Results

At the scenario open houses, residents shared what they liked and disliked about each scenario by leaving comments on the display boards and completing a survey about the scenarios and guiding principles. For a period of time after the open houses, the surveys were also available to complete online or print and mail in.

Guiding principles answer the question “What should Ascension Parish be in the future?” and are used to evaluate development scenarios, guide the development of strategies, and make sure that implementation measures are aligned with stakeholder and public goals. Guiding principles are listed in the Vision section of the Plan on pages 10 and 11.

The planning team identified major themes using




Guiding Principles Survey

Please give us your input on the draft guiding principles for the **Kanawha Scenic** project. Your input will be used to develop the final guiding principles. We will be holding a public meeting on the draft guiding principles on **Monday, November 15, 2010, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM** at the **Kanawha Scenic Project Meeting Room, 1000 West 10th Street, Suite 100, Salt Lake City, UT 84119**. We will be holding a public meeting on the draft guiding principles on **Monday, November 15, 2010, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM** at the **Kanawha Scenic Project Meeting Room, 1000 West 10th Street, Suite 100, Salt Lake City, UT 84119**.

LIVABLE COMMUNITY (Please mark your top 3 priorities)

- ☐ Promote and increase existing neighborhood.
- ☐ Plan for and provide infrastructure to meet existing and future growth.
- ☐ Encourage and support development that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- ☐ Focus on attracting new housing and jobs to areas that are already developed.
- ☐ Provide a wider range of housing options, both in style and size, to meet the needs of the community.
- ☐ Create vibrant housing, shopping, and entertainment centers to increase existing and future investment.
- ☐ Enhance both the public space and the private sector to create a vibrant and sustainable community.
- ☐ Other: _____



Scenario Survey

Thank you for taking time to fill out this short survey. We are interested in your input about the **Kanawha Scenic** project. Your input will be used to develop the final guiding principles. We will be holding a public meeting on the draft guiding principles on **Monday, November 15, 2010, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM** at the **Kanawha Scenic Project Meeting Room, 1000 West 10th Street, Suite 100, Salt Lake City, UT 84119**.

What I like and dislike about the Current Road:

What I like and dislike about Scenario 1:

What I like and dislike about Scenario 2:

What I like and dislike about Scenario 3:

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE (Please mark your top 3 priorities)

- ☐ Provide convenient access to housing, stores, and services from all areas.
- ☐ Provide transportation facilities and services to increase the amount of travel.
- ☐ Support a variety of transportation modes, including walking, biking, and public transit.
- ☐ Plan for a public transit system to provide and reduce the need for cars.
- ☐ Encourage development around areas where transit is available and to create new transit routes to meet the needs of the community.
- ☐ Continue to improve the public transit system to provide a safe and reliable mode of travel.
- ☐ Other: _____

Other:

www.floridadepartmentoftransportation.com

Florida Department of Transportation

all comments from scenario open house attendees, survey respondents, and high school students. These major themes are shown below and were used along with the guiding principles to create a draft vision.

Community Comment Themes

- Concern that there is not enough infrastructure to support current and new development
- Concern with higher density given lack of sewage and drainage
- Transportation network needs to support existing development. Needed road improvements include road conditions, access, traffic reduction, and subdivision connectivity.
- Desire for more development on the West Bank
- Desire for more neighborhood hubs
- Desire to preserve green/open space and rural feel
- Need to follow plans and enforce ordinances

High School Comment Themes

- Concern about traffic and flooding
- Desire for more things to do in the parish for youth and families
- Desire for a broad range of housing choices, from large lot to cottage homes, townhomes, and apartments
- Support for neighborhood hubs and places to walk and bike
- Desire for more natural open space, recreational areas, and environmental protection
- Support for more development on the West Bank with more housing, jobs, and activities

Guiding Principles and Scenario Surveys

Draft Vision Open Houses

On November 28 and 29, 2018, Ascension Parish hosted two public open houses. With one on the East Bank at the Gonzales Civic Center and one on the West Bank at Lowery Elementary, the planning team was able to hear from approximately 85 parish residents from both sides of the river.

During the open houses, attendees were presented with a draft vision and the guiding principles prioritized earlier in the planning process. They learned what the Plan will do to address land use and development patterns, drainage and stormwater management, and transportation and mobility. Preliminary solutions from the *Ascension Parish*

Transportation Master Plan, developed by HNTB under a separate initiative, were also available for review. Comments on the transportation solutions were provided to HNTB, and the final transportation recommendations from that transportation master plan have been incorporated into the Transportation and Mobility section of this plan.

The draft vision open houses asked attendees to review and comment on a draft vision, and like the scenario open houses in September 2018, used indicators to compare the draft vision development pattern to the current development trend. The draft vision illustrated a preliminary pattern for the parish's development over the next 20 to 25 years. Both the draft vision and the current development



November 28, 2018 Draft Vision Open House at Gonzales Civic Center.



November 29, 2018 Draft Vision Open House at Lowery Elementary School.



November 28, 2018 Draft Vision Open House at Gonzales Civic Center.



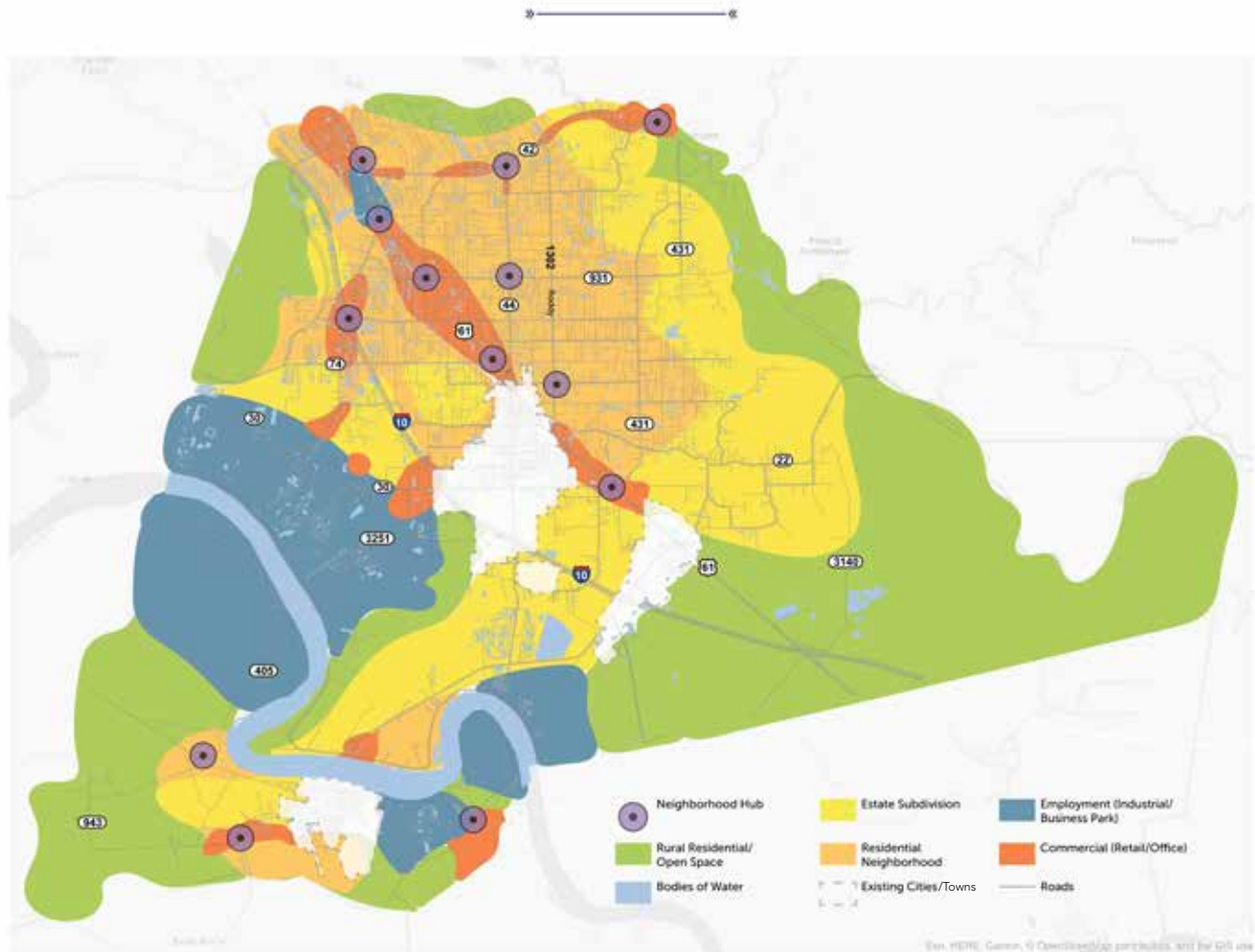
November 29, 2018 Draft Vision Open House at Lowery Elementary School.

trend scenario accommodated the same amount of additional population, housing units, and jobs and showed different ways of accommodating that

growth. The draft vision presented in November 2018, with bullets describing what the Vision will accomplish, is shown below.

Figure 4.6. The Draft Vision as presented at the Draft Vision Open Houses

DRAFT VISION MAP

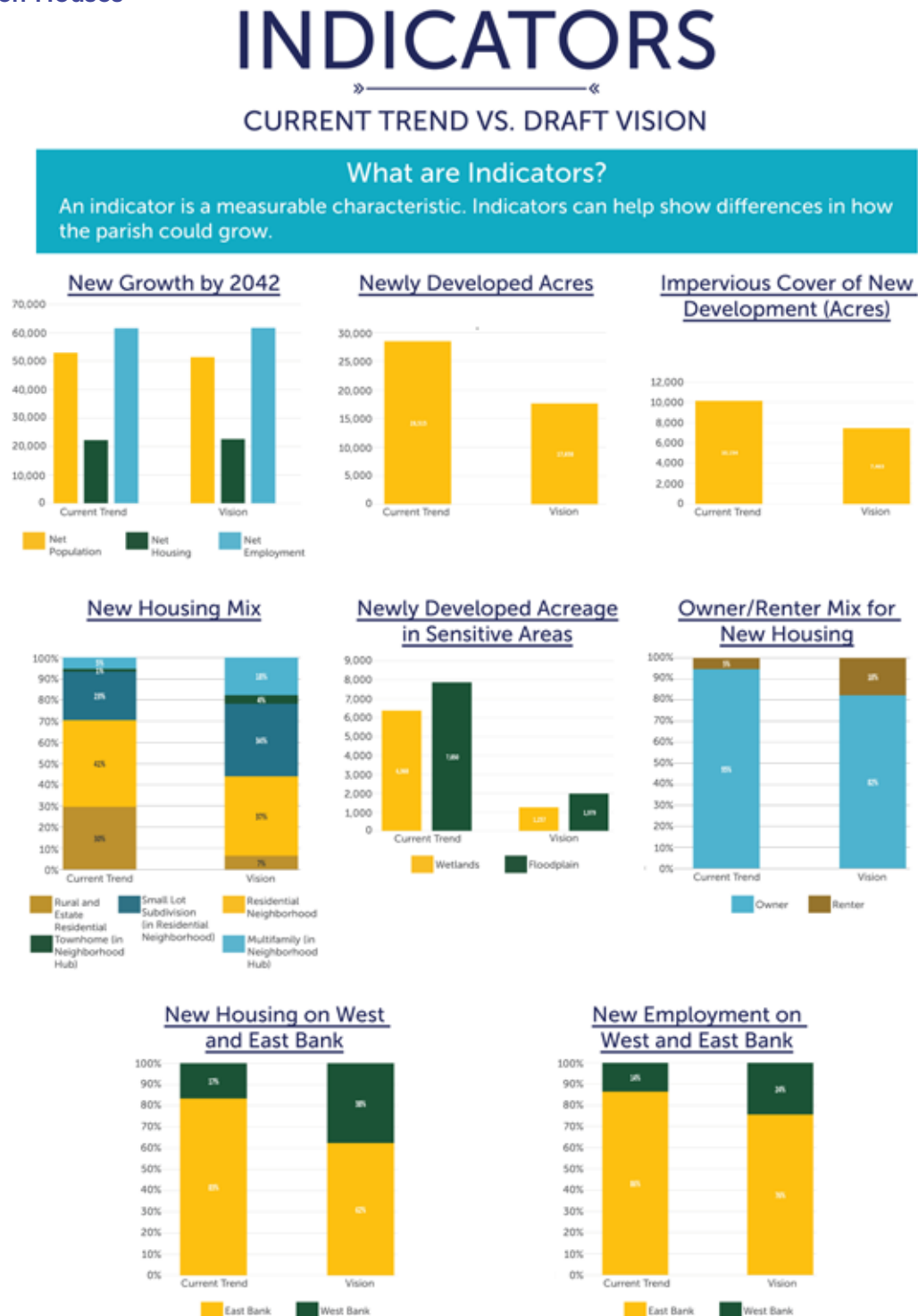


WHAT DOES THIS VISION DO?

- » Creates potential opportunities for mixed-use neighborhood centers where residents can live and shop – cutting down on auto trips
- » Provides a wider range of housing options to meet the changing market demands and provides housing for youth to stay in parish
- » Establishes a strong vision for development on West Bank with neighborhood centers, retail, services, and employment uses
- » Retains open space by incorporating some smaller lot housing options
- » Protects areas outside the levee system with recommended development at 1 unit per 5 acres

Indicators are characteristics that can be used to show varying outcomes from different growth patterns. Several different indicators are shown below that allow people to compare the draft vision and the current development trend scenario to each other and measure the expected impact of development decisions. At the draft vision open houses, attendees shared what they liked and disliked about the draft vision by leaving comments on the display boards. The draft vision was refined based on comments received, and the final version is shown in the Vision section of this plan.

Figure 4.7. Indicators comparing the Current Trend and Draft Vision, as presented at the Draft Vision Open Houses



Draft Plan Open Houses

On April 30 and May 1, 2019, Ascension Parish hosted the final set of open houses for this planning process to present the draft plan to the public. A total of 65 people signed in at the two open houses at the Gonzales Civic Center and Lowery Elementary.

At the open house the team presented an overview of the planning process, the updated vision, a description of the draft plan's organization and a summary of the plan's content. Attendees provided comments on the vision and plan chapters. Copies of the draft plan were available to review at the meeting and online. Printed reference copies were also placed in all parish libraries, at the Ascension

Parish Governmental Center and at the Ascension Parish Courthouse in Donaldsonville.

Attendees were provided information on how to provide comments on the draft plan over the next month through the plan website, email and mail.

All comments received at the open houses and during the next month before the Planning Commission hearing on May 29, 2019 were logged in and posted on the plan website. A variety of comments were received - from very specific changes to the vision map and roadways to broader input about the entire plan.



Handout provided at Draft Plan Open Houses



May 1, 2019 Draft Plan Open House at Lowery Elementary School.



April 30, 2019 Draft Plan Open House at Gonzales Civic Center.



May 1, 2019 Draft Plan Open House at Lowery Elementary School.



5

LAND USE

LAND USE VISION

Land use decisions contribute to Ascension Parish's fiscal stability and move the parish toward the citizens' vision. Ascension Parish's land use is focused on quality neighborhoods, housing options, and jobs that attract families and parish youth and retain aging residents. Compact development that complements existing land uses provides vibrant centers with jobs, retail, and services close to residences.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *LAND USE*

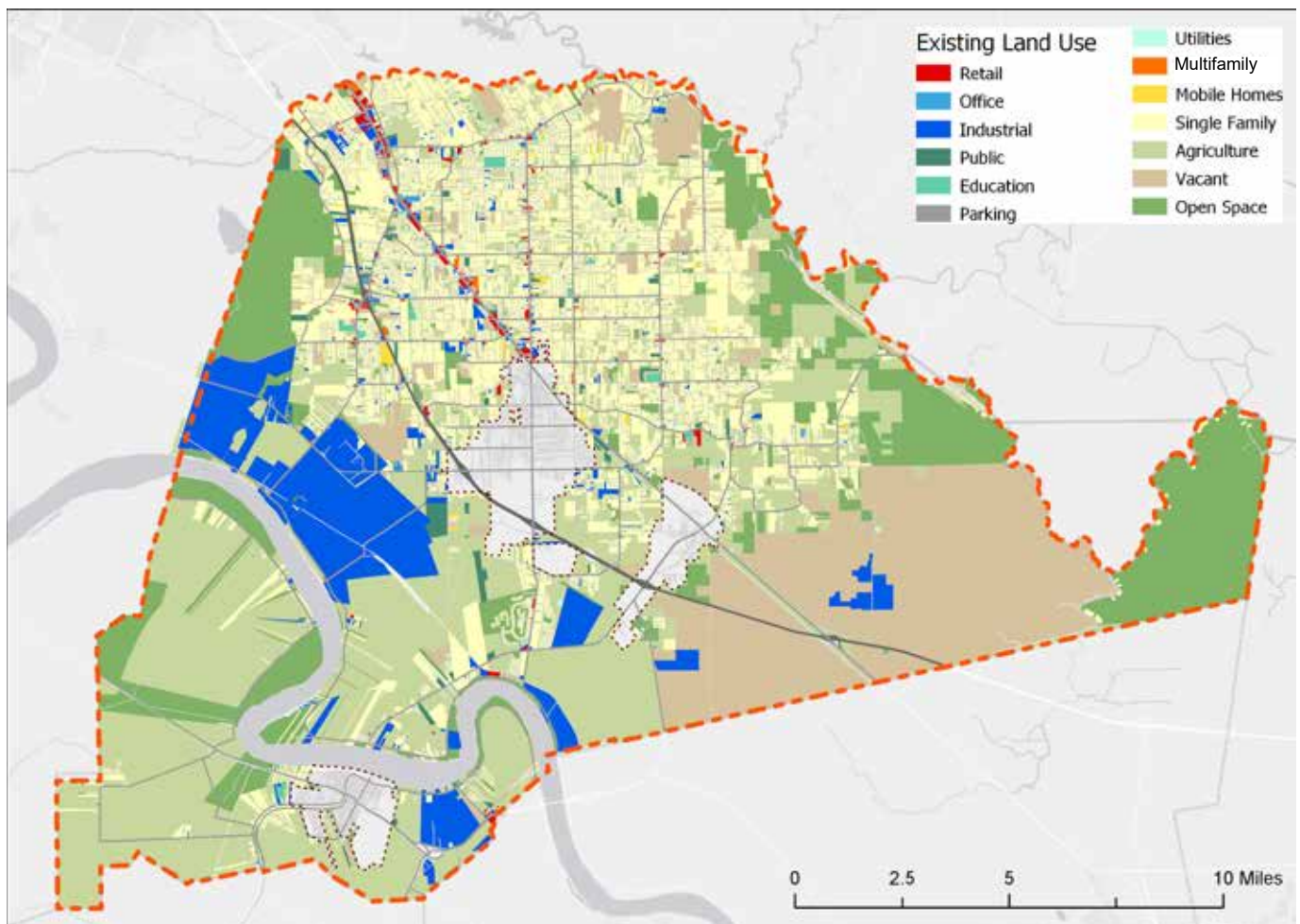
Recognized as Louisiana’s fastest growing parish, Ascension has developed into an integral component of the Baton Rouge metropolitan area. The area’s road network, which includes access to Interstate 10, has significantly influenced the parish’s development pattern. Throughout the parish, there are attractive neighborhoods, high-performing schools, beautiful natural amenities, and vibrant commercial nodes, which serve local residents and nearby communities. Tracts of vacant land provide opportunities for future housing and business growth, and a system of bayous and wetlands offer residents and visitors the chance to experience the area’s unique environment. How the parish plans to grow—working with its current built and natural physical assets—can enhance the community’s traditions and character.

LAND USE PATTERNS TODAY

Now a destination community, Ascension Parish possesses a diverse population and workforce, quality neighborhoods, and great opportunities for expansion and sustainable growth. Parish land area encompasses roughly 170,000 acres, of which 56 percent is in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). Approximately 65 percent of the parish is developed. Of the 111,000 acres of developed land, approximately 38 percent is devoted to residential uses and 48 percent to agricultural uses, Ascension's predominant land use. The next largest parish use is industrial, comprising more than 13,000 acres, or 12 percent of the developed

land. Industry situated along the Mississippi River represents some of the most intensive parish land development. Today, there are industrial corridors along River Road and large industrial businesses on LA 3140, LA 22, and LA 30. Commercial development along the Interstate 10, Airline Highway and along LA 30 corridors take up about one percent of the parish's developed land, with the remaining one percent in educational uses. During the past three decades, Prairieville and Gonzales have had the most concentrated development on the parish's east bank while communities, including the historic parish seat of Donaldsonville, on the west bank have not experienced as much growth.

Figure 5.1. Existing Land Use Development Pattern



Sources: CPEX and Fregonese Associates

Residential

Ascension Parish has experienced intense residential growth over the past 30 years and can expect continued growth over the next several decades. This plan projects a potential increase of approximately 52,000 residents in the next 20 to 25 years, which is slightly less than the Capital Region Planning Commission's forecast. To put this 52,000 projected growth into perspective, if spread evenly across a 20-year time frame, the population increase would result in approximately 2,600 people per year, which is close to the number of parish's public and private high school students graduating annually.

Currently, residential uses are overwhelmingly single family, comprising nearly 25 percent of the parish's total land and more than 35 percent of its developed land. There is a minimal number of multifamily and mobile/manufactured homes.

Figure 5.2. Existing Land Use Acreages in Ascension Parish

Land Use	Acres	%
Agriculture	52,958	31.23%
Single Family	40,912	24.12%
Multifamily	127	0.07%
Mobile, Manufactured Homes	470	0.28%
Office, Retail, Commercial, Hotel, Parking	1,124	0.66%
Industrial	13,338	7.86%
Education	390	0.23%
Public, Road, Utility, ROW	1,711	1.01%
Open Space	28,657	16.90%
Vacant	29,911	17.64%
TOTAL	169,598	100.00%

Sources: CPEX and Fregonese Associates

Interstate 10

Recent development near Interstate 10 has brought regional retail opportunities and associated development, such as the Tanger Outlet Mall and multiple hotels in Gonzales as well as commercial development in the parish. As unincorporated residential areas continue to build out along I-10—as well as LA 73 and LA 44—there will be a need for more retail, service, and commercial development.

Airline Highway

The Airline Highway corridor is a main route for workers traveling to their jobs and an area where many stores, businesses, and services are located. Along this approximately 12-mile corridor through the parish and the City of Gonzales, some development is new on formerly vacant land, while others are near the end of their life cycles and may be suitable for redevelopment. Some properties along Airline Highway have been transformed through adaptive reuse and reinvestment. In unincorporated areas where development has occurred, nearby land use has grown exponentially over time. This corridor serves as a foundational element that contributes to the parish's economic vitality. If additional sustainable transportation options become available—such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and mass transit—this could further catalyze investment and increase job, retail, and service opportunities.

East Bank

Land development patterns concentrated most of the parish's residential density east of I-10 and created a suburban, auto-oriented environment. Around the I-10 and Airline Highway corridors are housing, commercial, and retail areas located adjacent to each other. Near the parish boundary lines are primarily low-density, single-family residential and conservation areas. If existing development patterns continue, this could lead to increases in inefficient growth, such as low-density sprawl and street and utility systems that may be difficult to access and maintain. Throughout

this plan's process, residents and stakeholders expressed their wish to manage growth and preserve the parish's existing character while accommodating new development.

Prairieville

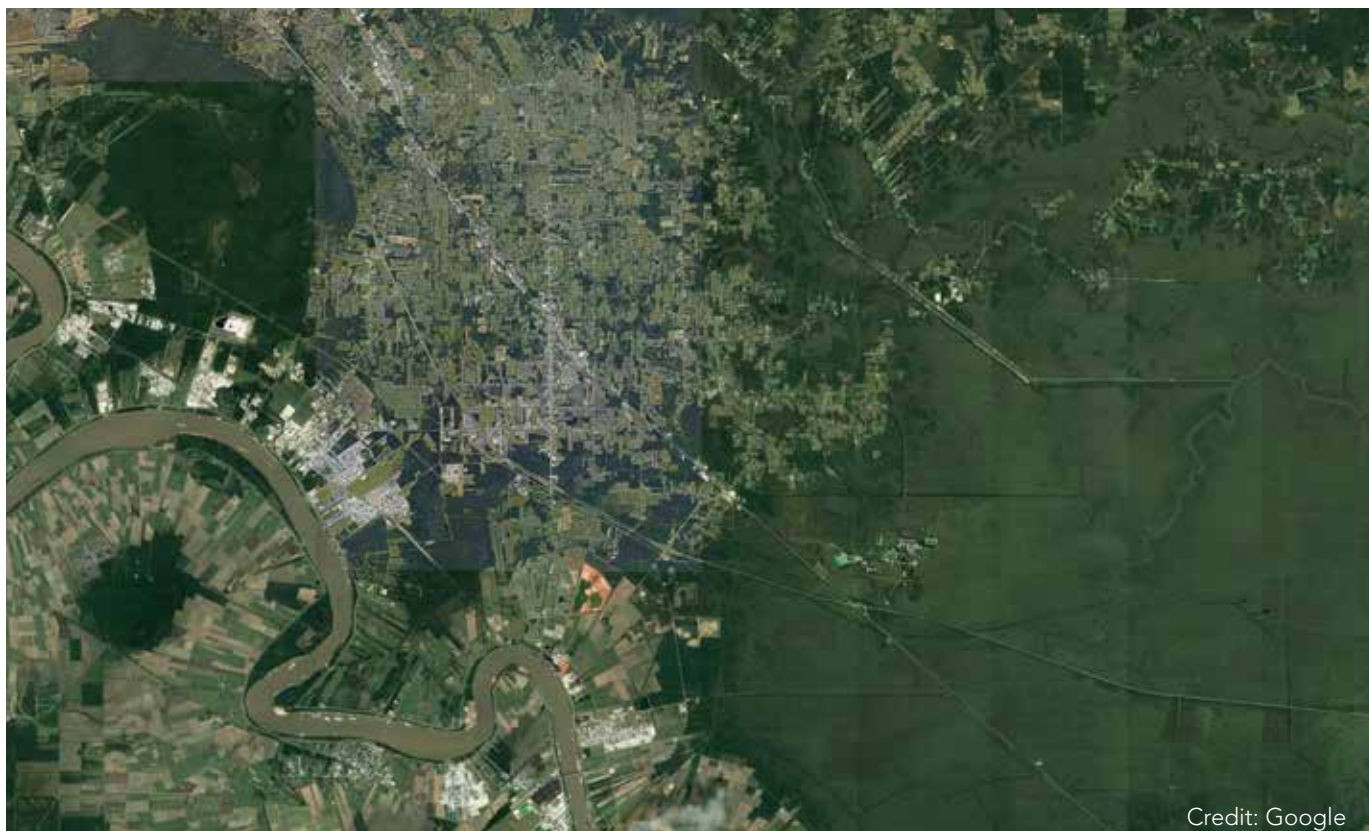
Because of Prairieville's proximity to Baton Rouge jobs, the northern part of the parish has experienced expansive growth in recent decades. In 2016, Prairieville, one of two Census Designated Places (CDPs) in the parish, comprised 31 percent of the parish's residents living in unincorporated areas. Prairieville's predominant land use consists of single-family homes in large, residential subdivisions, which have limited connections to major streets and often have a large number of lots with only one access point. Heavy commercial uses, including heavy equipment sales and light manufacturing facilities, are located north of commercial nodes along Airline Highway. During the planning process, residents expressed frustration with the lack of transportation facilities and increasing roadway congestion.

West Bank

The Sunshine Bridge, completed in 1963, connects the parish's east and west sides, which are separated by the Mississippi River. Land uses on the West Bank are comprised of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Vacant and agricultural lands account for the majority of the West Bank's area. Ascension Parish's seat and a focal point of the West Bank, the historic City of Donaldsonville, has its downtown located near the Mississippi River. CF Industries has a large industrial plant in the southern part of the parish adjacent to the Mississippi River.

Donaldsonville

Trading along the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche influenced the City of Donaldsonville's layout and development. The city's historic core, located on a high point, is built on a grid and has pedestrian-friendly streets, which create a charming community full of character. The city, with 10,492 residents in 2016, has numerous historic structures,



Credit: Google

A Google Earth image of Ascension Parish

a number of which have been rehabilitated in recent years. The downtown area includes a mix of civic, institutional, recreational, commercial, and residential uses. Donaldsonville has several notable artists and chefs, quaint bed and breakfasts and hotels, and cultural attractions, including the Historic Donaldsonville General Store & Museum and the River Road African American Museum.

Lemannville

Lemannville, one of the parish's two Census Designated Places (CDPs), is located on the west bank, just north of the Sunshine Bridge. In 2016, Lemannville had 905 residents who live in approximately 135 homes. The small community also has an adjacent park and playground. Many of the homes in Lemannville are in need of repair.

NATURAL FEATURES AFFECTING LAND USE

Wetlands

In the continental US, Louisiana contains 40 percent of the country's coastal wetlands.¹⁰ Within Ascension Parish, approximately 43 percent of total parish land—about 84,000 acres—is designated wetland.¹¹ However, the state and parish are losing wetland areas because of several causes. Along with natural degradation processes in the Mississippi River delta plain, rising sea levels, canal dredging, channelization, and flood control levees contribute to wetland loss. Agricultural practices and forced drainage from developed areas are also factors in wetland deterioration. Work is currently underway to restore and rebuild wetlands in the Mississippi River Delta through projects in the state's Coastal Master Plan, including sediment diversions and marsh creation. Restoring and protecting wetlands on both the parish's east and west banks is vital for reducing saltwater intrusion into wetlands. Increased salinity in freshwater areas causes vegetation deterioration, which can result in increased land loss thereby increasing flood risk.¹²

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed a series of Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for Ascension Parish that identify local flood zone areas. These areas include land that has an estimated one percent probability of being inundated by floodwaters in any given year, commonly referred to as a 100-year flood. Throughout Ascension is an expansive network of wetlands, streams, canals, and ditches, with approximately 56 percent of the parish located within a designated FEMA floodplain.

Waterways

Mississippi River

Ascension's most prominent natural feature is the Mississippi River, which has historical significance and provides a geological feature that divides the parish into east and west regions. One of world's major river systems in size, habitat diversity, and biological productivity and most important commercial waterways, the Mississippi River is also one of North America's great migration routes for both birds and fish. Donaldsonville is the only municipality in Ascension Parish that has frontage along the river's batture and levee system.

Bayou Lafourche

Although there is currently one boat launching site at Bayou Lafourche's headwaters in the City of Donaldsonville, and the city is in the process of creating a Bayou Lafourche park development that will include bayou access and amenities, the bayou otherwise has limited access. Commercial and residential development has been allowed on the bayou's banks, and this practice has hindered visibility of the waterway, diminished access to historic areas, and reduced the opportunity for recreation development.

Currently, the Mississippi River Reintroduction into Bayou Lafourche (MRRBL) project is underway, which is intended to prevent upstream movement of saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico during the

bayou's low-flow periods. The MRRBL Project has an overall goal to increase capacity of fresh water from the Mississippi River into Bayou Lafourche. In 2011, the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District completed a dredging project that increased water flow for nearly six miles of Bayou Lafourche between Donaldsonville and Belle Rose. MRRBL Phase 2 picks up where Phase 1 dredging ended just north of the LA 998 bridge in Belle Rose. The project will remove vegetation and sediment in the 8.3 miles between Belle Rose and Napoleonville. The increased conveyance capacity will allow for more fresh water to enhance the water quality in the bayou, which serves as the main source of drinking water for more than 300,000 people and is the primary water source for offshore oil and gas activity in the Gulf of Mexico.¹³

CURRENT TOOLS TO MANAGE LAND USE

Ascension Parish Unified Land Development Code

The Ascension Parish Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) consolidates development-related regulations including zoning requirements, subdivision and drainage regulations, development standards, the master transportation plan, and review procedures into one document. In addition, the ULDC includes the *1998 Master Plan*. Having development regulations in one document avoids overlapping, conflicting, or inconsistent requirements by providing one source for all standards and approval procedures. The following provides information on several relevant components of the ULDC.

1998 Master Plan

Appendix III of the ULDC, titled "Master Plan and Land Use Plan," was initially adopted by the Parish Council in 1998 and readopted in 2003 and 2009. The *1998 Master Plan* "presents the recommendations of the Parish Planning Commission for the development of Ascension Parish from 2001 to 2003" and applies to the unincorporated areas of the parish. The *1998 Master Plan* is available from the parish Department of Planning and Development and online.¹⁴



Roadside signs identify the Bayou Lafourche watershed.

Development Code

Appendix II of the ULDC contains the zoning regulations, overlay zones, and other development-related standards in the development code.

Zoning

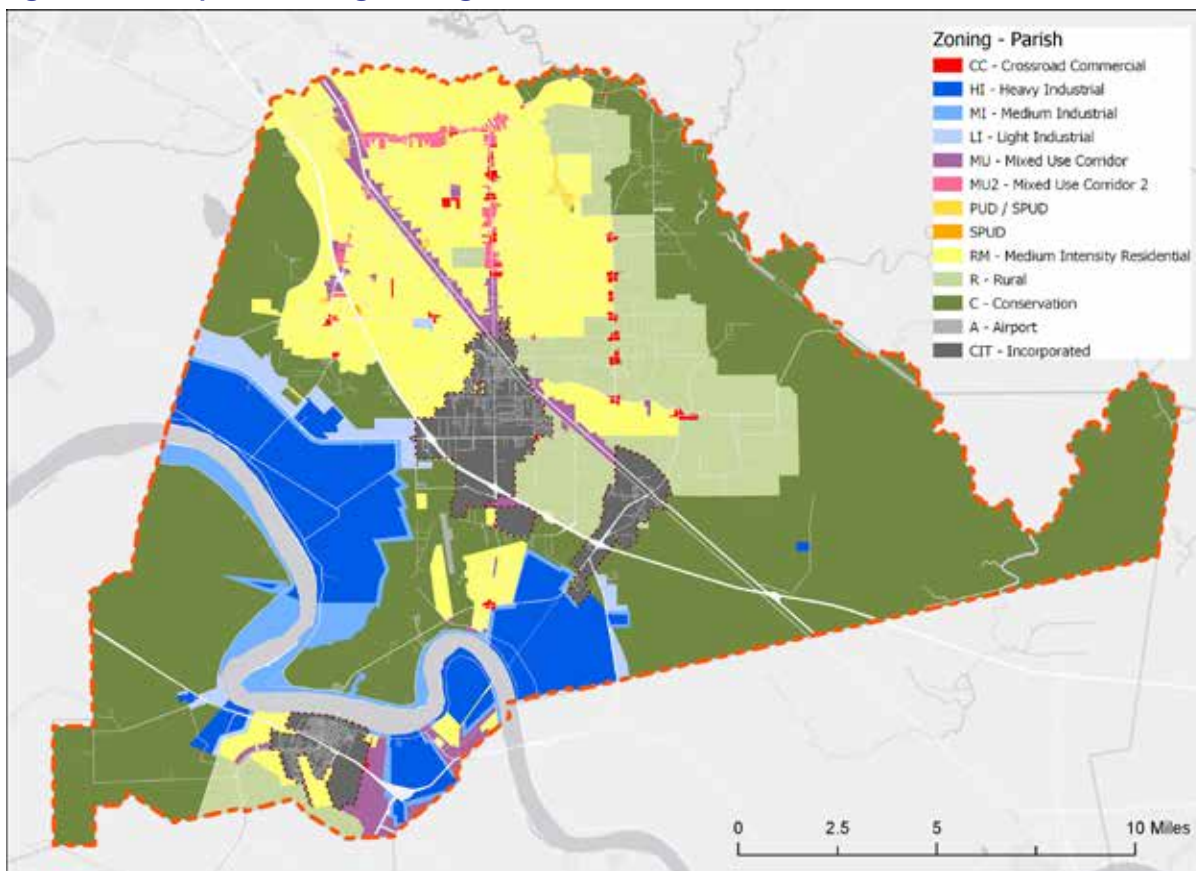
Zoning is the division of land into districts. Zoning districts have uniform regulations regarding permitted land use, height, setbacks, lot size, and density. Property owners must have the appropriate zoning before building on their land. The Development Code has 13 zoning districts.

- Three residential districts including Conservation, which allows one unit per acre; Rural, which allows two units per acre and Medium Intensity Residential, which allows three units per acre. These residential districts make up 81 percent of the parish.
- Three mixed-use districts including MU and MU2, Mixed-Use Corridors; and Crossroad Commercial. These districts allow a range

of residential densities up to 20 units per acre and a range of commercial uses in each district. The mixed-use districts make up about three percent of the parish.

- Three industrial districts—light, medium, and heavy industrial—which make up 15.5 percent of the parish.
- Two planned unit development districts (PUD and SPUD), which make up two-tenths of a percent of the parish's land area. These districts are customized zoning districts that are intended to encourage flexible and creative concepts, preserve natural areas, and provide an efficient, amenity-rich, and more desirable development than would be built using other available zoning districts.
- The airport district, which makes up one-tenth of a percent of the parish's land area.
- The Traditional Neighborhood Development District (TND) has not been used in the parish.

Figure 5.3. Map of Existing Zoning in Ascension Parish



Sources: Ascension Parish GIS, CPEX, and Fregonese Associates

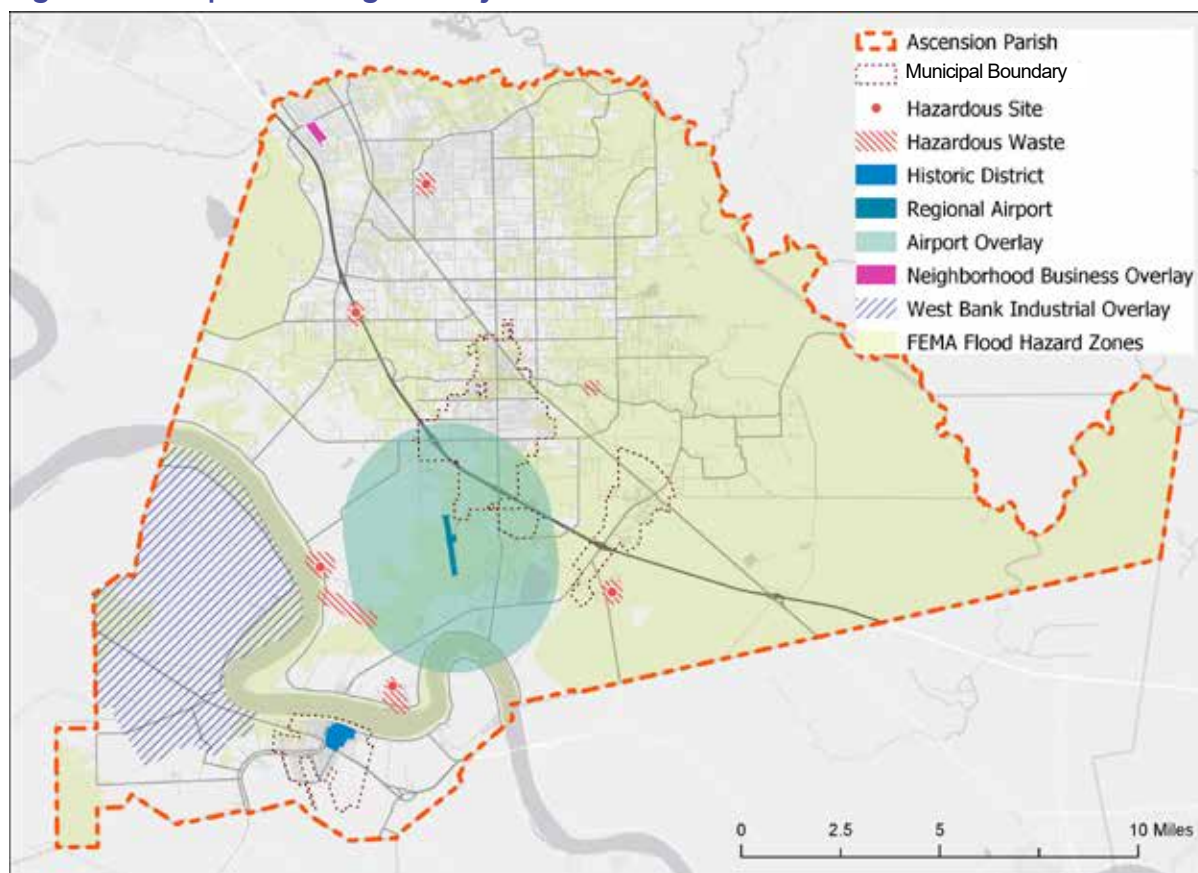
Overlay Zones

Overlay zones impose a set of regulations on a special area. These problems are geographically localized and cannot be completely addressed by the underlying district regulations. Overlay zones provide an additional regulatory structure and may also provide more flexibility over designated areas. The overlay zones are applied in addition to the base zoning districts. The parish has adopted eight overlay zones.

- Flood Hazard Overlay Zone
- Designation of Waste Sites
- Historic Site Overlay Zone
- Scenic Rural Highways Overlay Zone
- Neighborhood Business Overlay Zone
- Chemical Emergency Overlay Zone
- Airport Overlay Zone
- Industrial Designation Overlay Zone

Waste Sites, Historic Sites, Neighborhood Business, Flood Hazard, Airport, and Industrial overlay zones are shown on the map below. The Flood Hazard Overlay Zone can be found on current FIRMs available from FEMA. Scenic Rural Highways and Chemical Emergency overlay zones have been reserved by ordinance but not mapped.

Figure 5.4. Map of Existing Overlay Zones in Ascension Parish



Sources: Ascension Parish GIS, CPEX, and Fregonese Associates

Subdivision Regulations and Subdivision Construction Specifications

The Ascension Parish subdivision ordinance was approved in October 2007 and has been continuously updated, amending regulations and procedures. Before a parcel of land can be divided into two or more lots, a subdivision plat must be approved with right-of-way and easement dedications and any other requirements fulfilled.

Prior to the filing applications, developers must submit plans. If they are requesting development on more than 20 lots, they must also submit drainage impact studies and traffic impact studies that address any adverse impacts the construction will have in those two areas. The plats must adhere to all regulations established in the development code, such as street sections and widths. Grades must conform to the major street plans. Subdivisions should have more than one exit street, preferably on different streets or in different directions. The street network should facilitate the separation of local and through traffic.

The parish recently adopted Subdivision Construction Specifications, which set out requirements for improvements such as the construction of proposed streets, traffic control signs, street lights, pedestrian circulation systems, and tree landscaping. In addition, the design of streets must comply with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Geometric Design of Highways and Streets.

Additional Land Management Tools

FEMA Base Flood Elevations

Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) are the computed elevation to which floodwater is anticipated to rise during the base flood. The base flood, also called the 100-year flood, is a flood having a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year (or once every hundred years.) The base flood is the national standard used by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and all federal agencies for the purposes of requiring flood insurance and regulating new development. BFEs are shown on FIRMs and on the flood profiles. The BFE is the regulatory requirement for the elevation or floodproofing of structures.

Ascension Parish's building requirement has a Base Flood Elevation +1;¹⁵ which means that any structure in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) has to elevate one foot above the determined base flood elevation as shown on the FIRM.

NFIP Program and CRS program

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides federally underwritten private flood insurance to homeowners. Typically, property owners in a FEMA-designated floodplain—the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)—are required to have flood insurance in order to secure a mortgage. About 56 percent of Ascension Parish is in the SFHA.¹⁶ NFIP premiums rise and fall with risk: a house outside of the SFHA will pay lower premiums than one in it; a structure in the SFHA that is built with its first floor higher than the BFE will pay lower premiums than one built at grade.

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a FEMA program designed to offset NFIP premiums, including recent increases. CRS can lower property owners' NFIP premiums across an entire jurisdiction by between five percent and 45 percent.¹⁷ Ascension participates in CRS and is currently rated a Class 8, which reduces flood insurance premiums by 10

percent for policyholders. Additional information on the NFIP and CRS programs is provided in Chapter 8, Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater.

State Uniform Construction Code

Ascension Parish uses the Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code, which establishes consistent standards for the construction of buildings and other structures that provide for the citizens' public health, safety, and welfare. The code also governs the construction, reconstruction, alteration, and repair of buildings and other structures as well as the installation of mechanical devices and equipment.

In addition to the requirements of state uniform construction code, developers must adhere to all state and federal laws regulating grading, drainage, and flood control and must obtain all required permits. Agencies who may have jurisdiction include

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Coast Guard—jurisdictional wetlands; navigable streams,
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (permits obtained from the parish)—construction of structures within flood zones; encroachment on floodways,
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ)—stormwater runoff (Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES),
- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD)—project and driveway permits, and
- Pontchartrain Levee District—construction on or adjacent to the Mississippi River levees.

Impact Studies

When an impact study is required for a development, the developer or builder must explain how project design decisions have met local, state, and/or federal requirements for drainage provisions, flood mitigation measures, and traffic impact. The proposed mitigation actions to reduce impacts on the natural and built environments must be provided in the impact study. The parish's Drainage Impact Study Policy establishes the minimum submittal requirements for a Drainage Impact Study and provides that if no construction has begun within 24 months following the acceptance of the drainage impact study, a new Drainage Impact Study must be submitted for review. A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) is required for all subdivisions and developments except for an individual single-family residence. A residential subdivision of two or more lots must provide a TIA.

Impact and Development Fees

Ascension Parish currently has transportation impact fees and sewer development fees. These fees provide an economic relationship between those paying for and those receiving development benefits. They are one-time charges for new projects in order to generate revenue for funding new or expanded capital improvements, necessitated by that particular new project and others within a specific geographical district. The cost of projects needed to support growth is financed with impact and development fees based on the measurement of a development's impact on future needs. Funds collected through impact and development fees must be used to finance a public or state interest that is directly related to the development being assessed and may not exceed that development's fair share of the cost of the improvements. Impact and development fees collected from one district may be spent for improvements in an adjacent impact/development fee district if the proposed capital improvements will provide capacity that will benefit properties in both districts.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *LAND USE*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to land use and land development are listed here. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the land use vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

LAND USE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Livable Community

- Plan for and provide infrastructure to serve existing and future growth.
- Protect and maintain existing neighborhoods.
- Influence how the parish grows and what the parish will look like in the future by updating ordinances and development standards aligned with the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*.
- Focus on attracting new housing and jobs to areas that are already developed and already served by infrastructure.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure improvements, including improved roads, drainage, stormwater management, and wetlands protection.
- Plan for a public sewer system to prevent and reduce regulation of discharge into waterways.
- Continue to implement the parish's hazard mitigation plan to prepare for natural disasters, such as flooding and storm events.
- Direct new development toward areas where there are adequate roads to accommodate growth and scale new streets to fit their surroundings to promote safety and attractiveness.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Preserve natural floodplain and wetland areas to provide for stormwater management, recreational use, and natural beauty.
- Conserve and protect areas of open green space from increased density and development to maintain natural resources,

preserve parks and recreational facilities, and assist sustainable development.

- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.
- Increase and diversify recreational opportunities, including sports fields, play space, skate parks, passive recreational areas, walking trails, and natural areas.

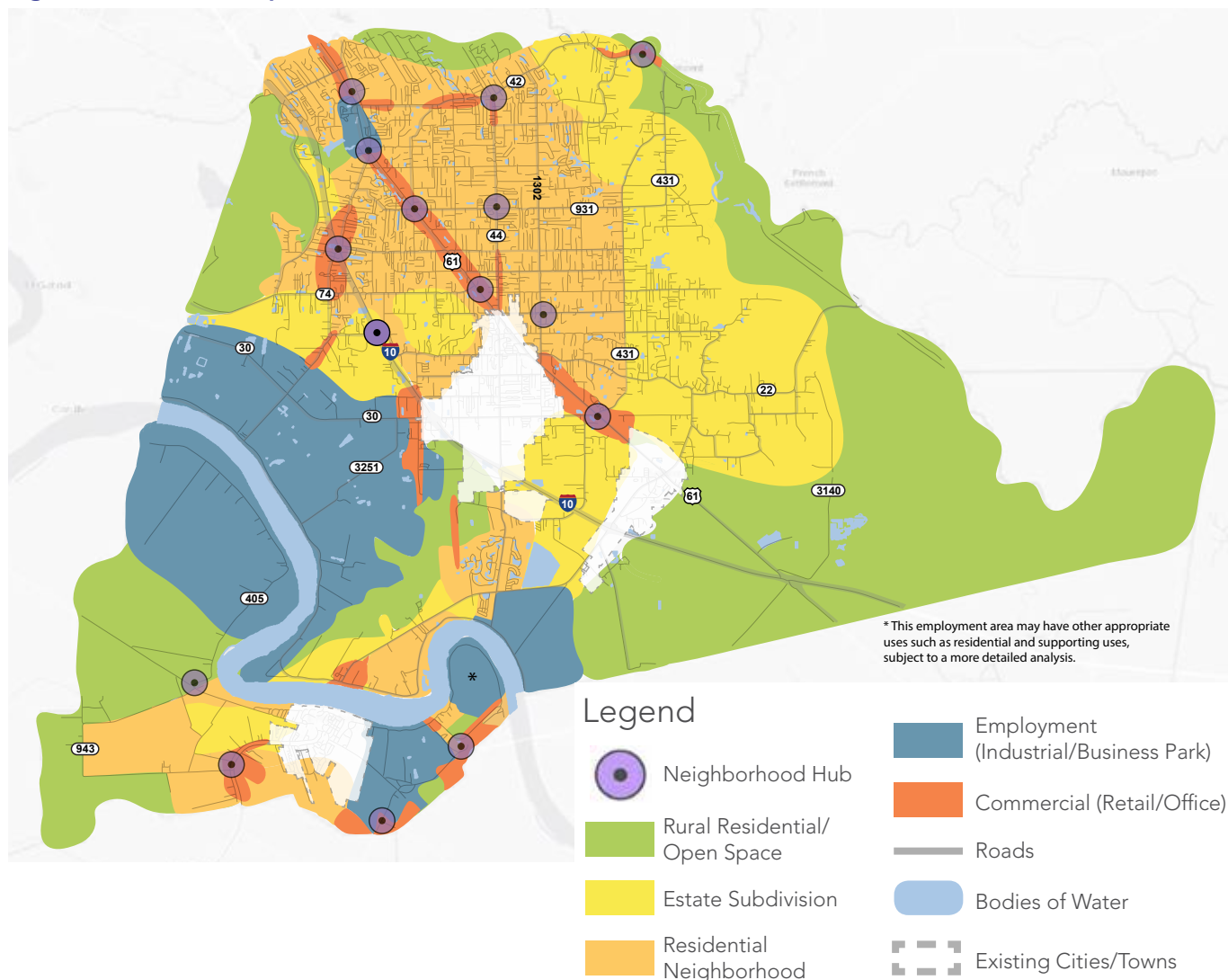
Economy and Education

- Maintain the parish's educational system to provide consistent quality educational opportunities in all areas of the parish and at all levels, from preschool to job training and higher education.
- Coordinate with the school district on the location of schools in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.
- Support historic preservation and tourism across the parish.
- Promote new economic development in the parish, especially on the West Bank and in areas west of I-10.
- Work with existing industry, schools, and colleges to provide educational opportunities and technical training programs to build a workforce with skills that match future employment demands.

LAND USE VISION AND DEVELOPMENT TYPE DESCRIPTIONS

The Vision Map and development types below are repeated here and are also found in the Vision chapter on pages 12 and 13 of this document.

Figure 5.5. Vision Map



VISION DEVELOPMENT TYPES

The Vision for Ascension Parish is represented by an array of development types that represent different combinations of land use as well as variations in development character and scale.

Rural Residential/Open Space

Rural residential areas are usually located in wetlands and floodplains and have a minimum of five acre lots per unit. Camps and established neighborhoods may have smaller lots in areas that are currently served by existing infrastructure. These residences support farming, agriculture,

and tourism industries. Rural residential housing is carefully placed and designed to have minimal impact on sensitive lands. In addition, this development type may provide open space buffers between residential uses and employment areas. Retail and commercial uses that support farming and agriculture may also be located at major intersections.

Estate Subdivision

Estate subdivisions have large lots of at least one acre per unit. This housing type may be in a subdivision or independently located to support smaller farming and agricultural lifestyles. Homes are detached and are typically one to two stories. As an option, this development type permits open space development, where homes are located in small lot neighborhoods, with common open space preserved in perpetuity. Estate areas have supporting retail and commercial uses at major intersections.

Residential Neighborhood

Residential neighborhoods continue to be a vital asset in the parish. These neighborhoods consist of a mix of lot sizes—ranging from large lot to medium and small lot, single-family, detached homes. Open space and amenities are integrated into residential neighborhoods, and supporting neighborhood services, retail and commercial uses are located at nearby intersections. Homes are typically one- to two-story buildings. New residential neighborhoods and infill will be in harmony with the character of the existing neighborhoods and adjacent development and appropriate to the context of the location.

Neighborhood Hub

Neighborhood hubs provide parish residents with access to housing as well as many goods and services in a compact area. They are designed to support multimodal transportation systems so that people can drive, walk, or bike where they need to go. Neighborhood hubs include a range of different uses, including office buildings, medical or other employment clusters, neighborhood services, and

retail, entertainment, and recreational facilities. As primarily pedestrian-oriented places, they contain paths and connections that make it easy to walk and bike. Where appropriate, some neighborhood hubs will include mixed-use housing with moderate densities that transition to lower-density areas. Neighborhood hub buildings are typically one to three stories with surface parking located on the side or rear of the buildings. In appropriate locations, buildings may be up to five stories. The areas shown as neighborhood hubs on the map are potentially suited for this type of use but will need to be thoroughly vetted through a rezoning public hearing process to ensure that proposed development is compatible with surrounding uses.

Commercial (Retail/Office)

Commercial/retail areas consist of low- and medium-density service, office, and commercial buildings and are usually positioned near highway corridors or at highly visible intersections. Commercial/retail areas require good access and often have limited pedestrian connectivity. These areas are often one-story buildings but may be multistory, mid-rise buildings with surface parking lots, ideally situated on the side or rear of the buildings.

Employment (Industrial/Business Park)

Employment areas contain low- to mid-rise office, warehousing, light manufacturing and high-tech uses, such as clean manufacturing or information technology, business parks, and heavy industrial. Big-box retail or warehouse retail clubs may be in these areas. Employment areas typically have few residences and have more extensive commercial activity. Employment areas require access to major arterials or interstates, and manufacturing and warehousing uses must be able to accommodate extensive truck traffic. Due to the special transportation requirements and potential adjacency issues, attention to design, screening, and open space buffering is necessary when employment areas are adjacent to residential uses.

LAND USE ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Limit Impact upon Infrastructure

Where, how, and how much a community grows all help determine the parish's infrastructure needs. Land use scenario indicators, evaluated as part of this planning process, demonstrate that different development types and patterns, even with equal growth levels, can have varying impacts on issues such as demands for transportation, conditions that affect stormwater runoff, and consumption of open space.

Developing and managing growth in a manner that improves bikeability and walkability can provide viable alternatives to automobile travel for certain short trips, which will take cars off the roads. Connecting developments through multiple roads instead of channeling all traffic back to main arterials and highways can provide congestion relief to primary roads throughout the parish. Dispersing neighborhood services and retail options at well-placed neighborhood hubs close to the populations that use them can shorten car trips or make other means of travel to these destinations more viable, thus reducing congestion. Integrating stormwater management techniques into street and private development designs that reduces the volume and rate of stormwater runoff lessens the burden on existing storm drainage infrastructure and decreases the need for new infrastructure. Similarly, maintaining sensitive environmental areas that serve a hydrological function can help to better manage stormwater and reduce the need for improved or enlarged storm drainage systems.

Low impact development (LID) uses natural processes and green infrastructure to manage stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated habitat and reduces the impact of stormwater. Green infrastructure refers to the management of wet weather drainage through use of natural systems to preserve, restore, and create green space using soils, vegetation, and

rainwater harvest techniques. LID is an approach to land development and redevelopment that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features, minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product.

Maintain the Parish's Unique Character

In areas experiencing growth pressures, one of the common concerns is that the fundamental qualities that define the area's character could be lost if development occurs without careful planning. Part of what draws people to Ascension Parish and keeps them there is the balance between its areas of rural charm and access to high-quality housing and schools as well as metropolitan amenities within the Baton Rouge region. As growth and development continues, retaining pockets of this rural character is important to maintain this historic characteristic of the parish.

Ascension has abundant natural amenities. The wetlands that comprise 43 percent of Ascension's land area, the presence of the Mississippi and Amite Rivers, and the bayous that lace through the parish all contribute to a natural backdrop that not



The parish's natural features have played a critical role in shaping its unique character.

only defines the area's character but also shapes a way of life. Maintaining environmentally sensitive areas through a combination of preservation and respectful, sensitive development will be a large contributor toward keeping a sense of openness.

Additionally, the quality and character of neighborhoods are often cited as two of the most desirable characteristics that continues to draw people to the parish. New neighborhoods must also integrate or provide connections to open space amenities and environmental features so that developed areas also have a strong connection to nature. New development adjacent to neighborhoods should respect the community feel and scale that is already in place. Road right-of-ways also play a role in establishing and maintaining character. As road projects are developed and constructed, they should be designed to be sensitive to this context.

Create a Complete Community on the West Bank

Discussions throughout the planning process highlighted both the desire and challenges to rebalancing development patterns between the East and West Banks. Estimates made for this planning process show that if current trends continue, only about 17 percent of housing growth and 14 percent of job growth in the parish over the next 20 to 25 years would occur on the West Bank. This vision reflects citizens' desire to shift this balance so that the West Bank captures a larger portion of the new housing and jobs. Currently, transportation challenges—primarily limited access across the Mississippi—isolate West Bank residents from jobs and services in the parish's eastern region and diminish opportunities to draw economic growth to the west.

In addition to solving transportation issues, the West Bank vision has a balance of housing, employment, and social amenities needed to support desired growth. This development must be more self-

sustaining so the employers and residents are less reliant upon access across the river for their daily needs. In the long term, access across the river must be solved in order for the parish and the region to more fully benefit from opportunities along the West Bank.

Reduce Development Impacts in Low-Lying Areas

As flooding events get more severe over time, it is desirable to reduce risk by identifying ways to reduce potential impacts on floodplains. As of 2017, Ascension Parish has 261 repetitive loss and severe repetitive loss structures, 12 elevation projects, and nine acquisition projects.¹⁸ This means that there are a number of structures experiencing repeated flooding in the parish. There are several ways to lessen the risk of flooding, including reducing the amount of development in the parish's flood plains, especially outside of the levee system; using "green infrastructure" techniques or natural systems that can absorb rainwater, mitigate flooding, and reduce the impact of storms by holding and filtering water; and creating park and open space facilities that can also serve to absorb and filter water in high rain events. Other methods of reducing development impacts include managing the amount of fill permitted; adopting higher floodplain management standards, such as a higher freeboard; maintaining rigorous enforcement of floodplain development; and promoting and planning for open space areas.

Capital Improvement Plan

A capital improvement plan that uses the Vision Map to guide infrastructure improvements provides direction in prioritizing infrastructure improvements, allows for improved support for existing development, and adds predictability to private and public investments. By knowing the location, type, and intensity of development that is desired throughout the parish, investment decisions regarding transportation, water, sewer, and drainage improvements can be evaluated and planned for in a systematic and logical way.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *LAND USE*

This section is organized into a land use vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The land use vision captures citizen's input on how the parish should look and feel in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

Land Use Vision

Land use decisions contribute to Ascension Parish's fiscal stability and move the parish toward the citizens' vision. Ascension Parish's land use is focused on quality neighborhoods, housing options, and jobs that attract families and parish youth and retain aging residents. Compact development that complements existing land uses provides vibrant centers with jobs, retail, and services close to residences.

GOAL 1: MAKE LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE DECISIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE VISION MAP TO IMPROVE ASCENSION PARISH'S FISCAL STABILITY AND IMPLEMENT THE CITIZENS' VISION.

- ▶ **Strategy 1.1:** Mix land uses to create a balanced and sustainable economy.
 - » Promote the unique characteristics of neighborhoods as key to the parish's long-term health and vitality.
 - » Support a variety of nonresidential uses, including office, office warehouse, commercial, industrial and industrial research, and retail uses.
 - » Obtain a wider variety of jobs in the parish, with the potential for jobs with higher wages, by diversifying types of businesses in Ascension Parish.
 - » Provide more housing choices, such as townhomes, smaller units, and affordable housing for youth, public and retail workers, and retirees and seniors.
- ▶ **Strategy 1.2:** Guide land use decisions and long-term growth using the Vision Map.
 - » Use the Vision Map to evaluate zoning, platting, and other development-related requests.
 - » Use the Vision and Vision Map to provide broad direction in guiding development decisions, while also acknowledging the importance of

locational analysis and consistency with the goals and strategies in making development determinations.

- ▶ **Strategy 1.3:** Guide infrastructure investment decisions using the Vision Map.
 - » Use the Vision Map to determine areas of and plan for anticipated development.
 - » Use the Vision Map to evaluate required transportation, water, sewer, and drainage improvements and to inform the parish's capital improvement program.
 - » Prioritize the placement of public services such as schools, libraries, and parks using the Vision Map as one data source to minimize negative impacts on desired service levels.
- ▶ **Strategy 1.4:** Revisit and update the Vision, the Vision Map, and priority strategies every five years.
 - » Evaluate and adjust the Vision to reflect community preferences and economic conditions.
 - » Update the Strategic Implementation Plan to identify needed high-priority actions to be implemented through both public and private entities.
 - » Monitor and evaluate the Vision's implementation and ensure that any necessary adjustments reflect long-term economic conditions and opportunities, or large shifts in community priorities.

GOAL 2: ALIGN THE ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCES WITH THIS PLAN TO ACHIEVE DESIRED DEVELOPMENT.

- ▶ **Strategy 2.1:** Develop clear and objective standards for making land use planning decisions.
 - » Review and amend ordinances as needed to ensure that they are easily understood, using

language that has unambiguous meaning.

- » To the extent possible, use standards that can be measured and evaluated using data that are reliable and can be replicated.
- **Strategy 2.2:** Review and update the zoning and subdivision regulations to promote desired development.
 - » Review and update the zoning and subdivision ordinances—including district regulations, uses, and definitions—and ensure consistency in standards.
 - » Incorporate a wider range of housing types in the development code and develop design standards where appropriate.
 - » Identify barriers to desired development in the development code and introduce development standards where appropriate.
 - » Review landscape and buffer standards.
 - » Review off-street parking standards to reflect actual market demand.
 - » In appropriate areas, implement design standards to facilitate the development of more pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environments to promote a sense of identity and safety, to encourage walking, and to foster cultural and civic pride.
 - » Review the subdivision regulations to ensure that desired types of mixed-use and single-family attached housing are permitted and encouraged.
 - » Rezone all or most of the area outside of the levees in the rural development type to require five-acre minimum lots. Lots that are smaller than five acres when zoning is implemented will be permitted to build one structure but will not be able to subdivide to parcels less than five acres.
- **Strategy 2.3:** Review zoning changes and other development requests for consistency with the Vision and the Plan's goals and

policies in order to ensure that development will:

- » Maintain a healthy balance of jobs and households.
- » Protect and stabilize neighborhoods.
- » Establish sustainable new neighborhoods with expanded housing choices and amenities such as walking trails and connections to services.
- » Plan for neighborhoods to be served by and accessible to neighborhood commercial areas, parks, cultural areas, open space, libraries, and schools.
- » Emphasize mixed-use development in neighborhood hubs.
- » Protect existing employment centers.

GOAL 3: PROTECT ASCENSION PARISH'S CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

- **Strategy 3.1:** Reinforce regulations that maintain rural atmosphere and quality of life where consistent with the Vision Map.
 - » Consider expanding criteria and requirements for Scenic Rural Highway Overlay Zones.
 - » Develop street design standards for rural streets.
 - » Adopt rural commercial standards in rural residential/open space development type areas.
 - » Review setback requirements and development standards for rural residential/open space development type areas to promote a more rural atmosphere.
 - » Maintain an updated inventory of historic assets; continually evaluate for potential threats, needed protections, and incentives that would encourage their reuse, such as parking reductions.
- **Strategy 3.2:** Maintain and strengthen neighborhoods, making them attractive to current and new residents.

- » Ensure appropriate development transitions adjacent to neighborhoods.
 - » Require new development to be sensitive to its surroundings in density, form, and size, particularly when adjacent to existing residential areas and historic assets.
 - » Require parking lot location, configuration, access points, and screening to offset any negative impacts.
 - » Provide buffers between residential and employment uses through landscape and screening standards.
 - » Encourage applicants for zoning changes to meet with neighborhood organizations and resident groups prior to the zoning review process.
- **Strategy 3.3:** Continue to support a robust employment sector that provides jobs for parish residents.
- » Protect employment areas from incompatible new residential development.
 - » Ensure that adequate access routes exist to support employment sector.
 - » In employment areas, consider the context of the area when developing public improvements and prioritize streets to be compatible with truck traffic.
- **Strategy 4.2:** Continue to actively market Louisiana Economic Development's seven Development-Ready Certified Sites on the West Bank.
- » Support Ascension Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) efforts to identify and attract appropriate industrial development to the West Bank.
- **Strategy 4.3:** Encourage housing growth on the West Bank.
- » Plan for and encourage a variety of housing choices and neighborhoods that appeal to a range of ages and family types.
 - » Update the zoning ordinance to accommodate alternative housing types, such as cottage housing and small-scale multifamily.
 - » Allow for and integrate live-work units into mixed-use centers and corridors.
- **Strategy 4.4:** As industrial development occurs in adjacent parishes and creates a demand for West Bank housing and supporting services, plan for quality, appropriately located development.
- » Prepare a small-area plan for the Donaldsonville area to provide predictability for potential developers and investors. The plan should identify development goals, appropriate development, incentives, and standards.
 - » Coordinate planning with the City of Donaldsonville.
 - » Ensure that proposed development is appropriate and meets the development standards consistent with development throughout the entire parish.
- **Strategy 4.5:** Continue to coordinate with the City of Donaldsonville to maximize benefits to both the city and parish.
- » Support Donaldsonville's efforts to improve tourism and enhance existing development.
 - » Partner with the city to support service provision and amenities for all residents.

GOAL 4: BRING A BALANCED MIX OF DEVELOPMENT TO THE WEST BANK, WHICH, OVER THE LONG TERM, ENHANCES AND SUPPORTS DONALDSONVILLE AND CREATES A SELF-SUSTAINING COMMUNITY.

- **Strategy 4.1:** Encourage growth and development on the West Bank.
- » Support and improve educational opportunities on the West Bank.
 - » Look at long-range transportation alternatives to improve access across the Mississippi River.
 - » Incentivize employment opportunities.

GOAL 5: CREATE COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD HUBS AND VIBRANT COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS.

- ▶ **Strategy 5.1:** Establish standards that create a pedestrian-friendly environment and encourage a mix of uses.
 - » Review zoning standards to promote compact, walkable development in appropriate districts and areas.
 - » Provide block and streetscape standards that ensure higher connectivity and improved pedestrian comfort.
 - » Adjust parking standards for mixed-use districts that promote shared parking and establishes design criteria that minimizes the impact of vehicles on pedestrian areas.
 - » Incorporate public areas into neighborhood hubs—places that people can walk to and that can host cultural and arts events, such as food fairs and farmers’ markets.
 - » Incorporate standards for building designs oriented toward sidewalks rather than parking lots. Minimize the amount of parking between building fronts and streets.
- ▶ **Strategy 5.2:** Invest in streets, trails, and sidewalks to improve multimodal connections to neighborhood hubs and commercial corridors.
 - » Create a needs inventory of necessary infrastructure enhancements to improve bike and pedestrian connections.
 - » Develop a trails and open space master plan with the objective of improving connections between residential areas and community amenities, such as neighborhood services, schools, and other civic destinations.
- ▶ **Strategy 5.3:** Plan for and encourage redevelopment of aging commercial centers.
 - » Identify potential market opportunities for redevelopment.

- » Create redevelopment strategies for high-priority commercial sites.
- » Identify and proactively rezone commercial centers in neighborhood hubs desired for mixed-use redevelopment.
- » Invest in supportive infrastructure to improve multimodal access to centers.
- » Introduce incremental changes, such as sidewalks and building placement, to transform selected aging commercial strips into mixed-use main streets.

GOAL 6: REDUCE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON DRAINAGE.

- ▶ **Strategy 6.1:** Promote Low-Impact Development (LID).
 - » Integrate LID principles into zoning and subdivision regulations, including requiring the use of alternative landscape methods and materials that are appropriate to geologic, hydrologic, and climatic conditions.
 - » Use LID best practices on public capital projects funded by the parish.
- ▶ **Strategy 6.2:** Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas.
 - » Revise the zoning ordinance to include a district with five-acre minimum parcel sizes that would be allowed in environmentally sensitive areas, especially those outside the levee system.
 - » Develop an open space zoning category that allows for limited development within wetlands if certain development conditions are met.
 - » Require redevelopment and infrastructure projects that impact wetlands and other sensitive areas to use building and site design techniques and materials so that they improve watershed conditions.

GOAL 7: COLLABORATE WITH THE ASCENSION PARISH SCHOOL BOARD.

- ▶ **Strategy 7.1:** Continue to brief the school board on the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* recommendations to ensure that future educational facilities are aligned with projected growth.
 - » Host biannual coordination meetings to discuss growth and potential school development needs.
 - » Discuss impact mitigation for traffic impacts.
 - » Work with school board to develop traffic control plans for each school.
- ▶ **Strategy 7.2:** Improve accessibility and provide safe, direct routes—such as sidewalks, pathways, and adequate signage—for schoolchildren and their parents.
 - » Minimize walking distances and conflicts with traffic by providing sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails or other off-street connections to schools.
 - » Adopt measures to reduce traffic speed in school areas.
- ▶ **Strategy 7.3:** Coordinate with the school district on the location of schools in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.

limit nonresidential traffic movement through residential areas. Establish truck routes for high impact industrial areas.

- » Require green buffers around industrial areas that include stormwater management features.
- » When reviewing zoning changes and development requests that are adjacent to municipal boundaries, consideration should be given to compatibility with adjacent uses in Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento.

GOAL 8: ADDRESS INCOMPATIBLE LAND USES AND MANAGE DEVELOPMENT TRANSITIONS

- ▶ **Strategy 8.1:** Review and enforce buffering and compatibility standards to protect the natural landscape and abutting development.
 - » Review buffering and screening requirements and enforcement.
 - » Survey existing buffers and screening and evaluate the need for development code revisions.
 - » Include traffic controls and street design that

EXAMPLE OF ISSUES TO ADDRESS IN ORDINANCE UPDATE

Goal 2, “Align the zoning and subdivision ordinances with this plan to achieve desired development,” recommends updates to the zoning and subdivision regulations to improve consistency, update or streamline regulations, reflect current best practices, and align the regulations with the *Ascension Parish Land Use Master Plan* recommendations. Following are examples of the types of issues that should be addressed. During the update process, additional needed changes are likely to become apparent as well. The following is not a complete list, and additional analysis is required in consultation with parish staff and legal counsel.

Figure 5.6. Zoning and Subdivision Recommendation Summary

Topic	Recommendation Summary
General Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve consistency in organization of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) among zoning district regulations, overlay zone regulations, and development standards (e.g., LI is the only district with development standards; not all uses have use regulations) to increase the ease of understanding and administering the ULDC. • Streamline and update uses and use definitions in the ULDC to better align with current best practices. • Add new uses to reflect desired development types, such as live-work units, cottage housing, accessory dwelling units, and senior housing. • Consolidate all administrative procedures and fee requirements that are contained throughout the ULDC into the administrative and enforcement section to ensure consistency and clarity of development processes, including conditional use procedures. • Relocate development standards more appropriately located in the development code, such as those for townhouse uses, from the Subdivision Regulations.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the Scenic Rural Highways Overlay Zone to add specific regulations and requirements relating to signs and trees and consider including additional setback, landscape buffering, and screening requirements to preserve rural character. • Review uses requiring approval as conditional uses. • Consider additional zoning districts to accommodate walkable, mixed-use development; smaller lot, single-family development; and environmentally sensitive development. • Eliminate single family as a permitted use in industrial districts. • Define a set of landscape standards that apply to new development or significant redevelopments and incorporate tree requirements from the Subdivision Regulations. • Consider creating a companion development guide to consolidate information about key processes.

Land Use, continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider including farmers markets and supporting commercial and retail uses to support farming operations. • Incorporate zoning standards to allow clustering units on tracts that maintain open space on remaining land area. • Review lighting and noise standards.
Housing and Neighborhood Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand residential uses to include cottage housing, senior housing, accessory dwelling units, and live-work units. • Add provisions in the ULDC to create development incentives for workforce housing (defined on page 79 of this document), expanding the incentive included in the Traditional Neighborhood Development Zoning District (TND District). • Expand amenity and design requirements for multifamily developments. • Consolidate all requirements relating to residential adjacency. Include provisions that limit building height within close proximity to residential property; limit outdoor speaker use; control lighting direction; add screening and fencing requirements for certain uses or activities (such as dumpsters, grease traps, mechanical equipment, outside storage, parking, etc.). The Neighborhood Business Overlay has some similar requirements that could be amended and expanded.
Transportation and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Complete Streets cross sections to the Street Requirements outlined in the Subdivision Regulations of the ULDC and the <i>Transportation Master Plan</i>. • Include additional block perimeter, neighborhood access, and street layout requirements to promote walkability in appropriate places; use TND District regulations as a guide.
Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify restrictions and requirements in the Flood Hazard Overlay Zone to encourage Low Impact Development and follow best practices relating to development within flood prone areas. • Expand Off Street Parking Requirements to encourage LID techniques for parking and landscape design. • Add building coverage and impervious coverage maximums to zoning districts.
Economic Development and Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market test amendments to the ULDC to ensure that they are buildable. • Add short-term rental requirements through expanded use standards to accommodate alternative lodging in a manner that preserves and protects the integrity of neighborhoods. • Amend the Historic Site Overlay to add opportunities for locally designated historic assets with appropriate protections and encourage reinvestment and appropriate adaptive reuse. Expand opportunities to designate commercial buildings as historic sites, allow for overlay zones to have appropriate architectural and development standards tailored to the specific needs of the historic site, and adjust the review and approval process to better align with best practices. • Identify any issues that need to be addressed in the West Bank Industrial Overlay Zone's next review and adoption cycle; this zone's requirements are readopted every two years.



6

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES VISION

Neighborhoods are maintained, stabilized, and strengthened, making them attractive to new residents so that Ascension Parish continues to be the community of choice for residents seeking quality neighborhoods within the Baton Rouge region. Ascension Parish offers an array of housing options that make living in the parish more accessible for households and individuals of all ages, incomes, and household sizes. There are increased opportunities to live close to jobs, services, and amenities, improving the quality of life for all residents.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES*

Ascension Parish is known for its high-quality, attractive neighborhoods, which are supported by highly performing schools. Neighborhoods are supported by beautiful natural amenities and vibrant commercial nodes, which serve local residents and nearby communities. Tracts of vacant land throughout the east bank of the parish provide opportunities for future housing. The west bank has a significant amount of land available for residential growth. While Ascension Parish has the highest growth rate in the state, almost all of the housing growth has been in large lot suburban subdivisions on the East Bank. However, there are still homes on acreage, especially in the eastern parts of the parish. In addition, mobile homes provide over 20 percent of the parish's housing. Most of Ascension's housing is ownership-based; limited rental options are available for young residents.

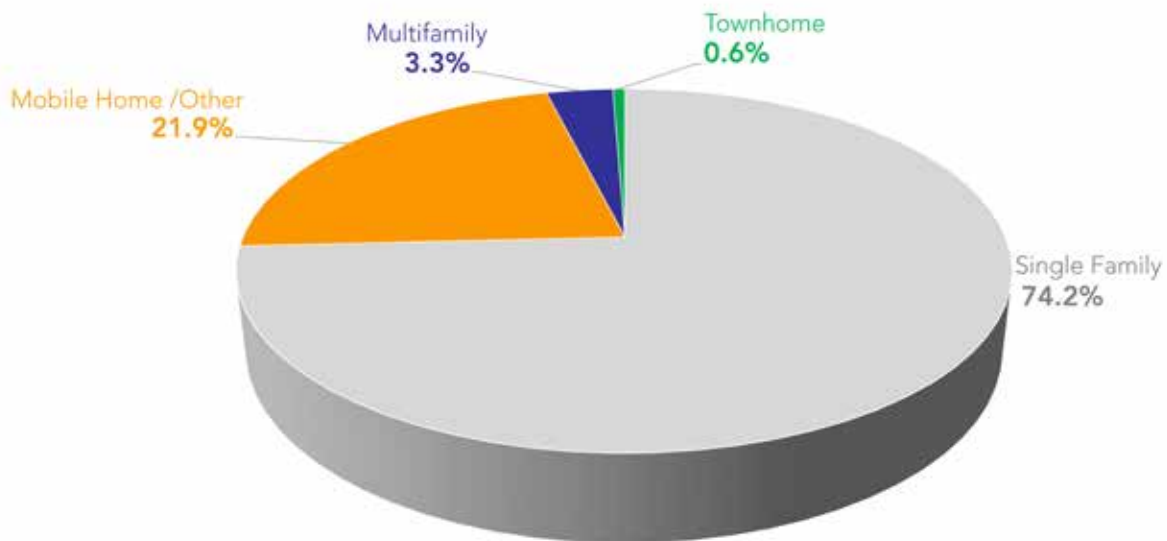
EXISTING HOUSING

All demographic data in this section come from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2016 (5-year estimates) and include only unincorporated Ascension Parish, excluding the Cities of Gonzales and Donaldsonville and the Town of Sorrento. There are currently approximately 33,500 housing units in unincorporated Ascension Parish. Just under three-quarters of this housing is single-family homes (74.2 percent); mobile homes make up 21.9 percent; multifamily housing makes up 3.3 percent; and townhomes are 0.6 percent.

Tenure

The majority of unincorporated Ascension Parish residents are homeowners, with 83 percent of residents owning and 17 percent renting their homes. Residents are most likely to live in single-family homes, with 81 percent of owners and 42 percent of renters living in single-family homes, accounting for more than three-quarters of unincorporated Ascension Parish residents. Five percent of residents live in multifamily housing, and 93 percent of those residents rent. The remaining seven percent of multifamily housing residents own their units. Mobile homes account for 22 percent of all housing in the unincorporated parish, where 69 percent are homeowners and 31 percent rent. Townhomes account for 0.6 percent of overall housing today, with 82 percent of these residents as owners.

Figure 6.1. Housing Types



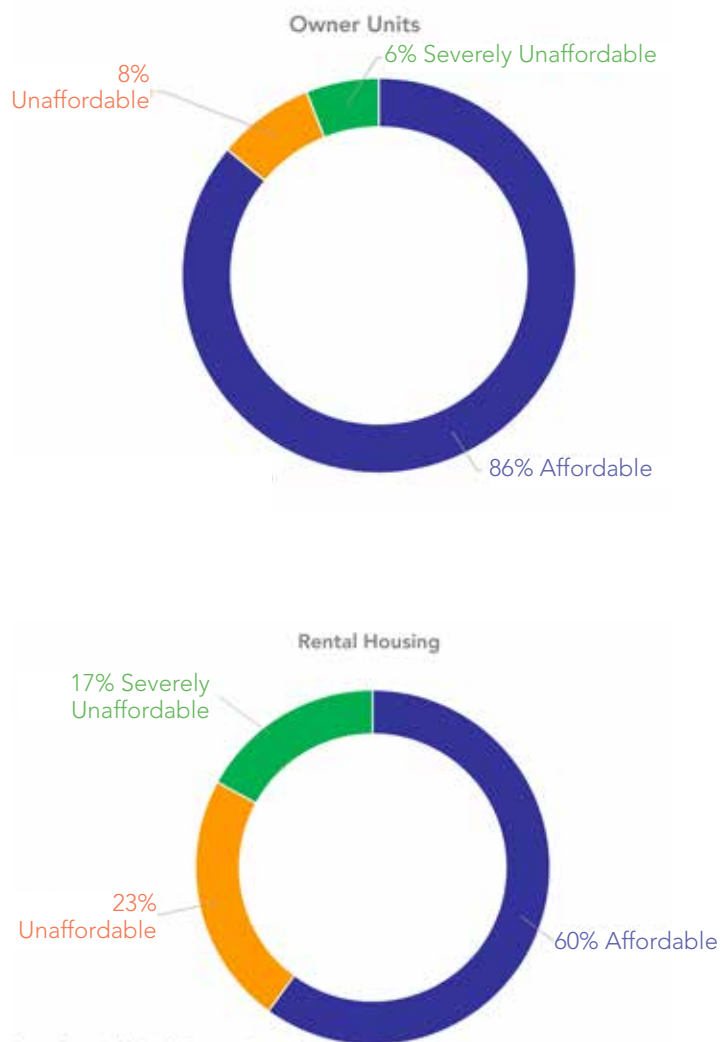
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Affordability

Affordability varies dramatically when comparing residents who rent and residents who own their homes. For 86 percent of homeowners, their housing costs are at or below 30 percent of their gross income, which is a common indicator of housing affordability. Homeowners who spend between 30 percent and 50 percent of their income on housing costs, which is considered unaffordable, account for 8 percent. Six percent of homeowners spend more than 50 percent of their income, which is considered severely unaffordable.

Residents who rent their homes are more cost-burdened as a group. Sixty percent of renters have affordable housing (costing less than 30 percent of their gross income); 23 percent have unaffordable housing costs (30 percent to 50 percent of income); and 17 percent have severely unaffordable housing costs (more than 50 percent of income).

Figure 6.2. Housing Affordability by Tenure



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

CURRENT HOUSING PROGRAMS

Ascension Parish currently has a Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). According to HUD, this is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments.¹⁹ Ascension Parish receives HUD funds for the vouchers, and a consultant administers the program.

A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of their choice that meets minimum health and safety standards and where the owner agrees to rent under the program. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by Ascension Parish on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.²⁰

Ascension Parish is currently able to assist up to 101 families through the housing choice voucher program and is currently spending 100 percent of its available program funds. The last intake of families into the program was in 2015, and approximately 30 families remain on the waiting list as of early 2019. In 2018, the Ascension Parish Council voted to request an increase in vouchers from HUD, but HUD does not anticipate issuing any more vouchers to the parish.

The City of Donaldsonville has a separate housing choice voucher program, which is administered by Ascension Parish's consultant, as well as public housing administered by the Housing Authority of the City of Donaldsonville. The City of Gonzales and the Town of Sorrento do not currently have

housing programs. Vouchers from Ascension Parish can be used inside the limits of any of the parish's municipalities and vice versa.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

While the parish does not have a requirement for homeowners associations, some neighborhoods do have active associations. The parish does require that owners maintain common areas, including detention ponds, that are owned by a common interest. This is usually accomplished through a homeowners association.

In addition to neighborhood associations, many residents subscribe to online area groups that combine several different subdivisions, such as Nextdoor or another similar app.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to housing and neighborhood services are listed here. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the Housing and Neighborhood Services vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

RELEVANT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Livable Community

- Protect and maintain existing neighborhoods.
- Influence how the parish grows and what the parish will look like in the future by updating ordinances and development standards aligned with the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*.
- Focus on attracting new housing and jobs to areas that are already developed and already served by infrastructure.
- Create vibrant housing, shopping, and arts and entertainment centers to attract and retain youth and serve existing and future residents.
- Provide a wider range of housing options—both in style and size—to retain and attract youth to the parish and to accommodate a variety of housing types and locations for people at all life stages and income levels.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Direct new development toward areas where there are adequate roads to accommodate growth, and scale new streets to fit their surroundings to promote safety and attractiveness.
- Provide convenient access to housing, stores, and services from all areas of the parish.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Conserve and protect areas of open green space from increased density and development to maintain natural resources and parks and recreational facilities as well as to facilitate sustainable development.

Economy and Education

- Develop updated, clear, objective land use regulations that implement the Plan and provide predictability.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Preserving and Maintaining Neighborhoods

Preserving the character and maintaining the quality of neighborhoods are critical to the parish's ability to retain current residents and attract new investment. The parish's neighborhoods not only contribute to the area's quality of life but also support its economic health as a key component of the parish's tax base.

Vacant and Substandard Housing

Vacant and substandard housing can have a destabilizing effect on a neighborhood. When homes fall into disrepair due to lack of maintenance or prolonged recovery from storm events, they can have a depressing effect on the surrounding home values. When left vacant for long periods of time, homes are more likely to suffer theft, vandalism, illegal dumping, fire, and structural failure. Even a single vacant and dilapidated property can affect the quality of life for neighbors if it serves as an attractive nuisance for these related problems. Quickly addressing the problem through enforcing codes that govern vacant and deteriorated housing units is an essential service for preserving and supporting neighborhoods.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement, in the parish's Building Department, enforces the regulations governing abandoned and dangerous buildings, abandoned vehicles, and abandoned white goods such as refrigerators and clothes dryers. The parish has the authority to cite buildings and properties that are in violation of these codes, hold hearings to determine whether they are guilty of these violations, and order actions, such as demolitions, to be carried out. Code Enforcement seeks voluntary compliance wherever possible, and typically, demolitions or other corrective actions are taken by the owner after receiving a violation notice. Residents may file complaints, which alerts Code Enforcement staff to properties that may be in violation of the code.

Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations can be comprised of groups of homeowners and renters as well as representatives from neighborhood businesses, churches, and schools. They are generally organized as a means to support and improve the neighborhoods they represent and provide an organizational framework to prioritize community needs and collaborate to address them. These organizations can take many forms, from dues-paying homeowners associations to more loosely organized neighborhood associations to crime watch groups. Supporting community organizations fosters neighborhood stability and offers an organized voice to protect and improve communities. Many jurisdictions support neighborhood organizations through educational materials, neighborhood “boot camps” or training sessions, organizational materials, public announcements, and databases.

Providing a Balance of High-Quality Housing Types

Mobile and Manufactured Homes

Approximately 22 percent of the parish’s housing stock is comprised of mobile homes, according to the 2016 ACS. This type of housing often provides an affordable option. Development regulations should ensure initial development quality as well as maintain development quality over time. Additionally, standards and regulations for residential buildings must equally apply to mobile and manufactured homes to receive CRS credit.

Changing Housing Demand

Ascension Parish is experiencing population changes, and these demographic shifts mean likely changes in future housing market demands. Trends that will shape this demand include an aging population that will have different housing needs than younger and middle-aged households; millennials who want homeownership of a different types of houses; and culture-wide changes in household size and workforce participation.

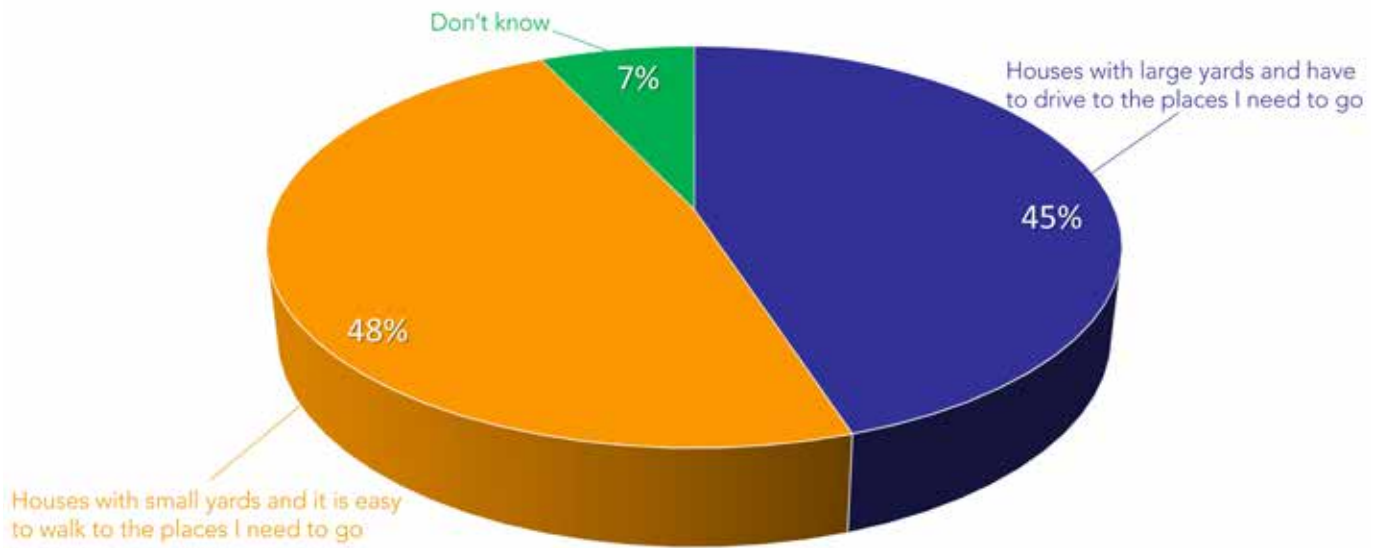
Household size. The average household in the US in 2015 was 2.54 people, 25 percent smaller than in 1950.²¹ The average household size in Ascension Parish is 2.82.²² Smaller families and households may be interested in more moderate-sized homes.

Single householders. In 2015, more than a quarter of households were single people. In Ascension Parish, 19 percent of households are singles.²³ Smaller housing units, such as townhomes, may become a greater component of the housing supply to meet these residents’ needs.

Aging population. The population above 85 years old is projected to triple between 2014 and 2040. The number of households headed by those over 85 will nearly double from 2005 to 2040.²⁴ Older householders may need more support to be able to age in place. Housing communities developed with older residents in mind will likely also become more popular.

Walkable communities. Nationwide, there is widespread desire for more urban neighborhoods characterized by livable communities and houses with small yards within easy walking distance to neighborhood destinations where children can walk and ride bikes to visit friends.

In 2017, the National Association of REALTORS conducted a housing preferences poll. It found that 45 percent of the respondents desired houses with large lots in a suburban setting while 48 percent desired houses with smaller lots and places to walk to. Although the parish’s predominant housing type will continue to be large lot, single-family subdivisions, it will be important to provide options for aging people who wish to downsize and younger residents who may want smaller, denser housing. The parish’s economic development professionals have indicated that providing walkable neighborhoods with a variety of shopping and services is a key factor in attracting young talent into the region.

Figure 6.3. National Survey of Housing Preferences

Source: 2017 Community & Transportation Preferences Survey, National Association of REALTORS

Housing Options for Youth, Workforce, and Seniors

Providing a range of innovative housing options has a number of benefits for the parish's long-term health. Diversifying the housing stock contributes to neighborhood character, provides affordable housing options, and appeals to a range of household types and ages. Making living in Ascension Parish more accessible to individuals who work within the parish can also address

challenges with traffic congestion by reducing commute distances.

Having housing options affordable to individuals just finishing school can also retain the talent pool necessary to support continued economic growth. Descriptions and images of potential housing types to expand housing options in Ascension Parish for youth, workforce, and seniors are shown on the following pages.

What is Workforce Housing?

Workforce housing is housing that is affordable to workers and is close to their jobs. It may be owned or rented housing that can be reasonably afforded by a moderate to middle income worker. Workforce housing is affordable if the housing costs are no more than 30 to 40 percent of income. While workforce housing is thought of as housing for public employees – teachers, police officers, firefighters, and others who are integral to a community, yet who often cannot afford to live in the communities they serve, it also includes housing for young professionals, workers in the construction trades, retail salespeople, office workers and service workers.

Figure 6.4. Potential Housing Types to Expand Housing Options for Youth, Workforce, and Seniors

Housing Type	Location Parameters	Development Characteristics
Traditional	Throughout Ascension	Front porches and parking to the rear
Skinny Houses	Existing narrow lots	Generally on 25-foot-wide lots with front porches and parking to the rear; one to one-and-a-half stories
Cottage Housing	Large tracts to accommodate 4–12 units, typically as a buffer	Small footprint homes (400–1,000 square feet); required common open space; consolidated parking; front porches; one to one-and-a-half stories
Duplex	Neighborhood edge or transition areas	Has the overall look of a single-family home; parking to the rear; front porches; one or two stories
Triplex	Neighborhood edge or transition areas	Has the overall look of a single-family home; parking to the rear; front porches; generally two stories
Quadplex	Neighborhood edge or transition areas	Has the overall look of a single-family home with a single entrance to the structure; parking to the rear; generally two stories
Townhome	Along the edge of a neighborhood, near or along busier streets, or lining neighborhood amenities such as parks and schools	Doors oriented toward the street with parking to the rear; developed in buildings consisting of eight or fewer units; typically, three stories with opportunities for roof decks
Live-Work Units	Along the edge of a neighborhood or busier streets, or incorporated into Neighborhood Hubs	Generally, two- to five-story structures with the ground floor occupied by office, retail, or studio space; dwelling units located on upper floors; doors are oriented toward the street
Accessory Dwelling Units	Throughout Ascension Parish	Additional dwelling units generally in detached structures that are smaller in area than the main structure
Mixed-Use Residential	Neighborhood Hubs and mixed-use centers	Contains more than four dwelling units per lot, generally two to five stories. These can be garden style with surface parking or more urban style with limited setbacks, doors facing the street, and potential structured parking. For vertical mixed-use projects, the ground floor is occupied by nonresidential uses, and upper stories are occupied by apartments or condominiums.

Figure 6.5. Example Images of Housing Types to Expand Housing Options for Youth, Workforce, and Seniors

Traditional



Skinny Houses



Cottage Housing



Duplex



Triplex



Quadplex



Townhome



Live-Work Units



Accessory Dwelling Units



Kol Peterson, Oregon Live

Creating Neighborhood Hubs to Maintain Open Space and Provide Neighborhood Services

Improving Congestion and Multimodal Access

With anticipated population growth on the horizon, current challenges with traffic congestion could be exacerbated if growth is not adequately managed. Investing in and encouraging neighborhood hubs at significant intersections in the East Bank's developed portions and in areas of the West Bank's anticipated new growth can provide opportunities for compatible infill and mixed-use development. If services and destinations are distributed more evenly throughout the parish and are accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists, residents' daily needs can be met closer to their homes, potentially with fewer automobile trips.

Maintaining Open Space and Natural Character

Redevelopment of existing retail and commercial nodes nearing the ends of their life cycles can create a more compact development pattern and direct infill growth in a more efficient way, consuming less land for development. Supported by the Vision Map, this model results in approximately 38 percent fewer newly developed acres compared to the current trend. Concentrating growth in this manner can preserve more open space and recreational opportunities as the parish develops and continue to maintain the parish's natural character.

Housing for Vulnerable Populations

A key element to support residents' quality of life is ensuring that vulnerable populations are considered in the parish's housing plans. Many populations have specific needs that may not be met without intentional planning, design, and development guidelines. To address these challenges, the housing needs for elderly residents, homeless individuals, and people with disabilities should be factored into the parish's plans, codes, and regulations.

Aging

As residents age, many will likely wish to live in the same home or neighborhood, commonly referred to as aging in place. Many homes and neighborhoods, however, were not designed to accommodate elderly residents or people with mobility challenges. To facilitate aging in place, the parish can ensure that the process for modifying existing homes for accessibility is permissible and straightforward. For those who require assisted living facilities, the parish can ensure that the process for permitting senior living facilities is encouraged, especially in locations with easy access to critical services, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, medical offices, and community centers. Lastly, the parish can endeavor to make neighborhoods as navigable as possible for elderly residents and anyone with limited mobility by installing or improving sidewalks, intersections, and easy-to-read street signs.



Homelessness

The needs of each homeless individual are different and therefore require different solutions across a range of services. Community-based organizations in the parish seek to provide services to match these varying needs. Because homeless individuals are also vulnerable to other risks such as extreme weather events, they should also be considered in programs that work to reduce risk. In addition to daily risks to their health, safety, and well-being, homeless individuals are especially vulnerable to extreme weather events, from intense heat and cold to storms and hurricanes. Providing them with emergency shelter and, more so, permanent housing should be considered in the parish's planning and development.

Flooding and Insurance Issues

Housing in the Floodplain

A major risk the parish faces from extreme weather is flooding caused by intense rain events and subsequent downstream effects. Due to the parish's topography and development, some residents live in high-risk areas where flooding has occurred in the past and/or is likely to occur in the future. Even areas where the structures have not flooded face risks of being disconnected from critical services if access to roads is impaired by floodwaters. The Great Floods of 2016 demonstrated that areas that historically had not flooded are at risk of flooding in extreme events. Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other federal agencies warn that the chances of such extreme events will increase in the future.²⁵

More than half of Ascension Parish is in a Special Flood Hazard Area, which has the potential to flood in any given year. As a risk reduction measure, the parish has already adopted one foot of freeboard, which earns points in the CRS. Any future development in the floodplain should consider present and future flood risk and build appropriately, including reducing impacts of development on the floodplain. This could be achieved through

regulatory standards and permit requirements demonstrating that the development will not alter predevelopment hydrology. It is recommended that Ascension Parish review its existing floodplain development standards and update as necessary. Ordinances that increase freeboard and prohibit fill to meet height requirements can earn significant CRS credit, which in turn reduce insurance costs.

Building Code Effectiveness Grading Scale

As the parish grows, homeowners should be encouraged to purchase flood insurance, even when the property is designated to be outside the 100-year floodplain. Furthermore, Ascension Parish should participate in the Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) to ensure all structures are, at a minimum, compliant with the International Building Code (IBC) and can take full advantage of available CRS points. Meeting BCEGS prerequisites is mandatory to be eligible for Class 6 in the CRS, which would further reduce insurance costs. Ascension Parish is currently at a Class 8.

BCEGS assesses the effectiveness of building codes and their level of enforcement in a given parish, county, or municipality with a focus on how well the codes protect buildings from natural hazards. Effective building codes can significantly reduce damage to buildings during storms and hurricanes, subsequently reducing property loss and providing for safer communities. Each reviewed municipality is given a BCEGS grade of 1 to 10; one is the highest score. The grade is based on a number of factors such as zoning provisions to mitigate natural hazards; training/qualification of code enforcers and building officials; contractor/builder licensing and bonding; performance evaluations for building plans; and building inspections' level of detail. BCEGS is both applicable to commercial and residential buildings, and awarded points assist in lowering insurance premiums, similar to the CRS program.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES*

This section is organized into a housing and neighborhood services vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The housing and neighborhood services vision captures citizens' input on how housing and neighborhood services should be provided in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

Housing and Neighborhood Services Vision

Neighborhoods are maintained, stabilized, and strengthened, making them attractive to new residents so that Ascension Parish continues to be the community of choice for residents seeking quality neighborhoods within the Baton Rouge region. Ascension Parish offers an array of housing options that make living in the parish more accessible for households and individuals of all ages, incomes, and household sizes. There are increased opportunities to live close to jobs, services, and amenities, improving the quality of life for all residents.

GOAL 9: PROTECT AND ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOODS.

- ▶ **Strategy 9.1:** Ensure residential developments have supportive infrastructure and access to neighborhood amenities.
 - » Review neighborhoods for access to amenities that can be walked to—such as open space, schools, and recreational facilities—and identify opportunities for improvement.
 - » Use the parish’s capital planning process to address infrastructure and amenity enhancements needed for neighborhoods.
 - » Work with developers of projects adjacent to neighborhoods to provide appropriate community amenities to support the area.
- ▶ **Strategy 9.2:** Review new and infill development proposals for compatibility with the surrounding context.
 - » Use the Land Use Vision Map and associated policies to review zoning requests to evaluate the appropriateness of the request with respect to neighborhood compatibility.
 - » Consider character, scale, and pattern of existing residential neighborhoods when evaluating zoning changes and development proposals within or adjacent to neighborhoods.
- » Evaluate current buffer, landscape, height, and setback requirements between land uses of differing intensity and amend zoning regulations as necessary to protect neighborhoods from adjacent uses.
- » Encourage transitional uses—such as open space, medium-density residential, and neighborhood-scaled retail—to manage the transition among neighborhoods and nearby commercial and employment development.
- ▶ **Strategy 9.3:** Identify and prioritize neighborhoods in need of revitalization or approaching a “tipping point” toward decline.
 - » Establish an evaluation criteria—using such items as the concentration of code violations, vacancy rates, absentee ownership, and declining or plateauing property values compared to the rest of the parish—to identify neighborhoods in need of focused improvements and review and prioritize neighborhoods with this criteria.
 - » Develop a multi-departmental task force to systematically review and develop specific action plans for neighborhoods identified as needing revitalization in order to stem specific conditions contributing to decline.
 - » Identify and direct available neighborhood programs to priority neighborhoods.
 - » Coordinate and engage nonprofit and for-profit organizations to invest time and resources in efforts that help address conditions contributing to neighborhood decline in priority neighborhoods, such as volunteer neighborhood clean-ups, home improvement workdays, and public amenity improvements.
- ▶ **Strategy 9.4:** Support a stable housing market with improved code enforcement.
 - » Build capacity to implement a proactive approach to code enforcement by regularly inspecting properties for signs of neglect

and issuing citations even before receiving a complaint.

- » Review applicable codes and pursue additions or updates to advance the parish's code enforcement efforts—such as minimum property maintenance standards—to reduce vacant and dilapidated properties.
- » Develop educational materials and an outreach program to raise awareness of common code compliance violations in neighborhoods to proactively improve voluntary code compliance.
- » Evaluate the staffing needed for a proactive code enforcement program. Analyze the resources needed and funding dedicated to code enforcement and identify funding sources.

GOAL 10: BUILD VIBRANT NEW NEIGHBORHOODS CONSISTENT WITH THE PARISH'S VISION.

- ▶ **Strategy 10.1:** Encourage new neighborhoods and residential development to locate in areas designated for housing on the land use map and monitor progress.
 - » Analyze land in areas designated for residential development with respect to existing infrastructure, entitlements, and development constraints to monitor the readiness of land for housing development.
 - » Publicize information about the supply of residential land that is development-ready.
 - » Track and map building permit data to monitor type, location, and amount of residential development.
- ▶ **Strategy 10.2:** Provide infrastructure and services to support desired new neighborhoods.
 - » Develop an infrastructure needs inventory to determine what's necessary to accommodate housing growth.

- » Use the parish's capital planning process to ensure that infrastructure and amenity enhancements are planned for areas that are targeted to support housing growth.
 - » Coordinate planned housing growth with the desired parish-wide sewer system and ensure that new development will have the ability to connect to the planned system.
 - » Develop block length and street standards to support a compact, highly connected street network that improves mobility by accommodating a balance of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.
 - » Coordinate the development of trails and new open space by the parish with new neighborhood growth.
 - » Consider adding open space requirements as part of new residential development to help support recreational and active transportation needs.
 - » Work with franchise utility providers to accommodate additional infrastructure for high-speed internet and other amenities.
 - » Continue coordination with Ascension Public Schools to maintain high-quality education across the parish.
- ▶ **Strategy 10.3:** Support development of Neighborhood Hubs to provide services for neighborhoods and accommodate mixed-use developments.
 - » Evaluate pedestrian infrastructure within a half mile of existing or proposed Neighborhood Hubs in order to identify deficiencies and plan necessary improvements.
 - » Provide design standards that specify development and redevelopment within Neighborhood Hubs must be walkable and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
 - » Encourage services and retail stores to locate within Neighborhood Hubs so that residents can meet their daily needs closer to home.

- ▶ **Strategy 10.4:** Ensure new housing development is consistent with the parish's vision to preserve community and neighborhood character.
 - » Develop design standards for mixed-use residential developments to promote walkability and pedestrian comfort as well as provide amenities such as seating areas, water features, or pocket parks.
 - » Create neighborhood development standards that preserve the natural character and provide access to open space and additional community amenities.
 - » Adopt single-family housing standards that ensure long-term durability and enduring quality of the housing stock.

GOAL 11: INCREASE HOUSING CHOICE.

- ▶ **Strategy 11.1:** Support existing housing renovation and new housing development that accommodate the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.
 - » Review building codes for inclusion or allowance of design elements such as ramps, lifts, entrances, or other elements that facilitate aging in place through renovating existing homes.
 - » Consider amending zoning and development regulations to accommodate senior housing facilities.
 - » Encourage development of senior housing in areas with easy access to services, shopping, and health care facilities.
- ▶ **Strategy 11.2:** Increase the array of available housing types to appeal to families of all ages, sizes, and income levels.
 - » Amend zoning regulations to provide for alternative housing types such as live-work units, cottage housing, and accessory dwelling units with appropriate standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding development.

- » Amend zoning regulations to include incentives for building workforce housing that targets households earning 80 percent to 140 percent Area Median Income (AMI).
- » Create neighborhood development standards that encourage a diversity of unit types and sizes within the same neighborhood.

- ▶ **Strategy 11.3:** Expand and improve rental housing options within Ascension Parish.
 - » Locate new multifamily development in areas that support a mix of complementary uses and have a well-connected pedestrian network.
 - » Develop standards to ensure quality, mixed-use residential development that require public benefits to offset density concerns.
 - » Develop a rental registration program for rental housing to ensure communication among landlords, apartment managers, and the parish.
 - » Amend regulations to improve inspection and enforcement ability.

GOAL 12: IMPROVE RESILIENCY OF THE HOUSING STOCK.

- ▶ **Strategy 12.1:** Direct neighborhood growth away from high-risk areas.
 - » Use the *Ascension Parish Hazard Mitigation Plan* to direct current and future resources towards risk reduction projects.
 - » Encourage housing development on high ground, especially on the West Bank.
 - » Encourage preservation of wetlands and floodplains in new housing developments.
- ▶ **Strategy 12.2:** Support risk reduction through improved development regulations.
 - » Reduce flood risk by supporting property owners who want to elevate or flood proof their structures or by resettling them in lower-risk areas.
 - » Review existing floodplain development standards and update as necessary to achieve higher regulatory standards and

permit requirements demonstrating that the development will not alter predevelopment hydrology.

- » Explore the adoption of ordinances that increase freeboard and prohibit fill to meet height requirements with the aim of increased costs being somewhat offset with significant CRS credit, reduced insurance costs, and long-term reduced risk and costs to the parish and residents.
- » Encourage low-impact development techniques as part of housing developments.
- ▶ **Strategy 12.3:** Increase public awareness regarding mitigating risks.
 - » Educate property owners—through town halls, outreach events, and presentations to homeowners associations—on the most current flood maps and risks as well as the benefits of flood insurance.
 - » Consolidate and maintain information on the parish’s website relating to flood risks within the parish and potential mitigation techniques, including information about available online resources.
 - » Develop a toolkit targeted toward homeowners and developers to outline best practices and techniques for addressing flood risks.
- ▶ **Strategy 12.4:** Continue to aid in recovery efforts following disasters.
 - » Develop a rapid response protocol to respond to and address flooding and disaster events and efficiently initiate recovery efforts
 - » Deploy inspections and permitting resources to provide for necessary review and approval of recovery construction in the field.

GOAL 13: EXPAND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS.

- ▶ **Strategy 13.1:** Support homeowners associations and neighborhood organizations.
 - » Inventory and map the boundaries of neighborhood associations, homeowners associations, and crime watch groups.
 - » Build and maintain a database of leadership contacts for each neighborhood association, homeowners association, and crime watch group to maintain communication between the parish and neighborhoods.
 - » Identify gaps in coverage and work with property owners to establish new neighborhood associations
 - » Consider creating a “Neighborhood Liaison” position to work with neighborhood associations and assist in connecting them to necessary parish resources.
 - » Hold neighborhood boot camps or academies to educate homeowners association members on organization and responsibilities of homeowners associations.
- ▶ **Strategy 13.2:** Develop and maintain support programs for neighborhoods.
 - » Continue and expand the parish’s household hazardous waste collection program to provide additional opportunities to recycle household chemicals throughout the year.
 - » Establish an annual fund to provide neighborhood improvement grants for beautification and improvement projects and develop a competitive process for awarding funds.
 - » Define a criteria to identify substandard housing and inventory existing units within the parish meeting this standard. Explore programs that support the repair, upgrade, or replacement of substandard structures, and encourage collaboration with nonprofit organizations to provide maintenance and rehabilitation programs.

- ▶ **Strategy 13.3:** Support workforce housing development to provide increased housing options for those that work within the parish and earn 80 percent to 140 percent AMI.
 - » Convene representatives of the lending, housing development, and real estate communities to identify regulatory and other barriers to developing workforce housing.
 - » Review development approval processes, such as rezoning, permitting, or platting, to eliminate barriers to developing workforce housing.
 - » Provide regulatory incentives to include workforce housing as a component of new mixed-use residential developments.



7

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY VISION

Ascension Parish provides needed transportation upgrades, maintenance, and new connections to provide residents with access to jobs, schools, services, and recreational areas. The parish implements plans to provide access to future growth in a timely manner, focusing on multimodal options where possible.

To accomplish their daily business, education, shopping, and recreation trips, people need to get around, into, and out of Ascension Parish. Transportation is having at least one way to get around. Mobility is having quality choices that are safe, affordable, and efficient. For example, a person with a working vehicle or bicycle has transportation, but if traffic congestion lengthens every car trip or bicycling for daily needs is unsafe, the person does not have mobility. Mobility means all residents have the opportunity to get where they want to go safely, at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable time.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY*

Between 2000 and 2016, Ascension Parish gained 40,382 residents—a 53 percent increase, which was the highest parish growth rate in Louisiana. The parish is estimated to have over 120,000 residents in 2019 if growth trends continue. This growth has impacted transportation and mobility in the parish.

In 2017, Ascension Parish contracted with a consultant to produce a parish-wide transportation master plan that would provide a vision and strategies for future multimodal transportation and investment decisions. The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* coordinated with the *Transportation Master Plan* throughout the planning process and incorporates research and recommendations from the *Transportation Master Plan* as noted.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

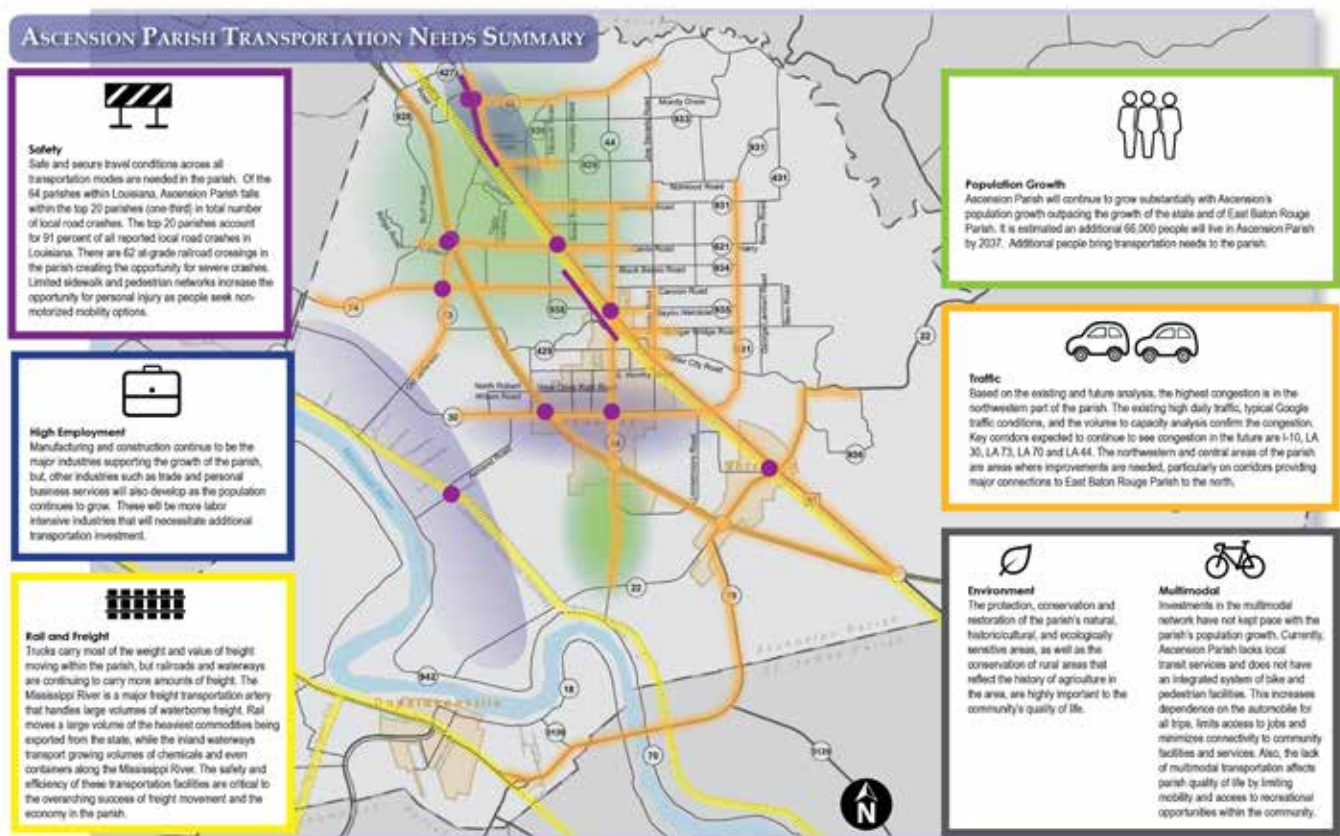
The *Transportation Master Plan* identified Ascension Parish's transportation needs by using national, state, and regional parish transportation goals, previous studies, a visioning workshop with parish leadership,

stakeholder interviews, and technical analysis of current and future no-build conditions. The primary categories of transportation needs identified were congestion, safety, mobility, and condition. The table below is from the *Transportation Master Plan* and gives more detail on each need and the reason it was identified.

Figure 7.1. Ascension Parish Transportation Needs

Transportation Focus Area	Further Detail
Congestion <i>Congestion and delays in traffic cost regional businesses, industries, and commuters millions of dollars annually.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing high-traffic volumes and congestion located on primary state highways and local roads. The parish is expected to grow by more than 87,000 new residents by 2042. The parish is expected to experience a significant increase of 86,000 new employees by 2042. Lack of multimodal options of walking, biking, and public transit contribute to congestion. Congestion contributes to environmental impacts such as noise, water quality, and air quality. Congestion contributes to an unhealthy lifestyle. Key stakeholders from the School District, AEDC, Chamber of Commerce and Sheriff's Department have identified a need. Parish land use decisions impact congestion. Congestion can negatively impact economic growth.
Safety <i>Safety is critical to the quality of life of the parish.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ascension Parish is in the top one-third of the most crashes in the state. The large number of at-grade railroad crossings serving local businesses creates a safety concern. Lack of a bicycle and pedestrian sidewalk creates a safety concern. Key stakeholders from the School District and Sheriff's Department have identified a need.
Mobility <i>Mobility is the connectivity and reliability of our multimodal trips.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of road connectivity to key areas such as the west bank area of Donaldsonville leads to congestion. Lack of local street connectivity puts more pressure on the arterial street network to provide first- and last-mile connections. Residents and businesses depend on a transportation system that can be unreliable as to when and where congestion and safety issues arise, increasing the cost to do business in the parish. Currently there is no public transportation. Walking and biking trips are impeded by a limited infrastructure. Freight is vital to the local and regional economy, and there are a number of freight bottlenecks. Parish land use decisions impact mobility.
Infrastructure Condition <i>The condition of the transportation system is crucial to the efficient flow of people and goods.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads in the parish have substandard geometrics related to lane width, turn bays, ditches, and other roadway infrastructure. Deteriorating bridge and pavement conditions exist.

The *Transportation Master Plan* also summarized the parish's transportation needs in the conceptual graphic shown at a small scale below. Please see the *Transportation Master Plan* for the full graphic.



Thumbnail of the Ascension Parish Transportation Needs Summary.

EXISTING EFFORTS TO MANAGE TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Ascension Parish and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD) are both responsible for planning and executing transportation efforts in the parish. In addition to ongoing pavement maintenance, overlays, reconstruction, and capital road improvements, Ascension Parish has several existing efforts to manage transportation and mobility in the parish.

Ascension Parish Transportation Master Plan

The *Transportation Master Plan* manages transportation and mobility with its own parish-specific recommendations and integrates other existing planning efforts at the national, state,

and regional level. Other plans referred to include the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's *Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update* (2015), which itself is consistent with the U.S. Department of Transportation's national goals, and the Capital Region Planning Commission's metropolitan transportation plan, *MOVE2042*. The *MOVE2042* study area includes the entirety of East Baton Rouge and Ascension Parishes and the urbanized portions of West Baton Rouge, Livingston, and Iberville Parishes.

Move Ascension

Begun in 2017 by Ascension Parish, the *Move Ascension* initiative is a derivative of the *Transportation Master Plan* process focused on moving key transportation projects forward toward preconstruction and construction in the short term.

The project list was developed to improve road safety and traffic congestion in Ascension Parish and is designed to work in collaboration with ongoing state highway improvements to provide safety and capacity upgrades for parish corridors that see high usage. *Move Ascension* projects are expected to be completed by 2022. A full description of the initiative and list of projects is available online.²⁶

Traffic Impact Analysis

In 2018, the Ascension Parish Council adopted a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) policy by ordinance that requires all proposed development projects, except for individuals requesting access for a single-family residence, to document the expected traffic impacts of that development and to reduce or mitigate those impacts to certain levels.

The parish's Department of Planning and Development administers the TIA process and works with applicants to determine the requirements and contents of each TIA based on project-specific conditions. Generally, applicants are required to provide initial information to determine the approximate range of peak-hour vehicle trips that would be generated by the proposed development. The more trips expected to be generated, the more documentation the applicant needs to submit. Issues with road safety, traffic congestion, development rates in the area, traffic volumes, turn lanes, sight distance, existing intersections' proximity, drive-through operations, and other circumstances may also be taken into account to determine needed documentation.

A proposed development may be disapproved if the TIA's results show it will "overburden the existing roadway system by causing a reduction in service of affected roadways, negatively impacts the safety of the roadway, or is below the adopted Level of Service (LOS) 'D'."

The applicant is responsible for either making or funding improvements to the transportation system to mitigate the expected impacts or modifying the

development proposal to reduce traffic impacts. Mitigation improvements must be completed before an occupancy permit is issued. If the existing LOS is below "D," the required mitigating improvements must improve the LOS to "D" or better.

Incorporated into the parish's Unified Land Development Code, the TIA policy is available in hard copy from the Department of Planning and Development and online.²⁷

Transportation Impact Fee

In 2017, the Ascension Parish Council adopted a Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance, which requires development that generates impacts to the parish's transportation system to bear a share of the cost of those impacts and that the fees collected for that purpose are used to improve the parish's major roadways.

Upon applying for a building permit, receiving a certificate of occupancy, or occupying an impact-generating development, the responsible entity must pay Ascension Parish a transportation impact fee or an equivalent, such as a land donation, according to a schedule set in the ordinance. The schedule used a 2017 study to determine the initial base fees for many different development types and sizes, and the base fees are updated each July 1. Impact fees are currently assessed at 70 percent of the base fee on the parish's east bank and 30 percent on the west bank.

Transportation impact fee exemptions include replacements or improvements to existing buildings; construction of unoccupied accessory buildings that do not generate any additional vehicle trips; and certain new construction that replaces residences damaged in the August 2016 flood. Subject to parish approval, credit may be given for constructed road improvements. No waivers or reductions to the transportation impact fee are allowed.

The collected impact fees are required to be used within eight years of collection to improve major roads in the parish or to administer the ordinance. The fees are also required to be used in the benefit district in which the impact-generating development is located. Both the major roadways and benefit districts are defined in the ordinance. The transportation impact fee ordinance is available from the parish Department of Planning and Development in hard copy or online.²⁸

Major Street Plan

In 2013, the Ascension Parish Council adopted a Major Street Plan for the parish, which defines roadway design standards by functional classification and discusses the concepts of corridor preservation and access management.

Roadways in the Major Street Plan are assigned a functional classification, which groups roadways by the character of the traffic and the degree of land access allowed. Each functional class has associated design standards, which include right-of-way width, pavement width, number of travel lanes, shoulders, medians, curbs and gutters, speed limits, and sidewalks.

Another function of the Major Street Plan is corridor preservation, which allows the parish government to reserve rights-of-way for future roadways as well as designate existing roads that will likely require improvements. Corridor preservation allows private land use decisions to anticipate future transportation needs, helps determine priorities and schedules in capital budgets, and minimizes the negative impacts of street widening on the community.

The concept of access management is also introduced in the Major Street Plan, which defines the concept as protecting the capacity of existing transportation routes and systems by controlling access from adjacent properties. Different levels of land access to roadways are appropriate for different

functional classifications. Access management techniques can manage traffic congestion, improve safety for those inside and outside vehicles, and provide opportunities for improved aesthetic and environmental benefits. Access management techniques mentioned in the Major Street Plan include limiting the number of and separating conflict points, limiting deceleration, removing turning vehicles from through lanes, spacing major intersections, and providing adequate on-site vehicle storage.

The Major Street Plan is Appendix XIII of the parish's Unified Land Development Code and is available in hard copy from the Department of Planning and Development and online.²⁹

Transportation-Related Subdivision Regulations

The Ascension Parish Subdivision Regulations, summarized below, specify transportation-related requirements when subdividing land in the parish, including pedestrian systems, driveways, parking, number of exit streets, conformance with the Major Street Plan, street geometry and construction standards, alley standards, and block standards.

No major or minor subdivision, except any division of eight or fewer lots, may be developed on any street that is less than 18 feet in pavement width.

The arrangement, character, extent, width, grade, and location of all streets shall conform to the Major Street Plan. If subdivision streets are not shown in the Major Street Plan, they must provide for continuation or appropriate projection of existing streets, or have an approved plan to meet a particular situation where conditions make continuation or conformance impracticable. Reserve strips controlling access to streets are prohibited unless the reserve strip is under parish control. Provision should be made for arterial streets approximately every half-mile.

Subdivisions should have more than one exit street, preferably on different streets or in different directions. The street network should facilitate the separation of local and through traffic. Where a subdivision abuts or contains an existing or proposed major thoroughfare, the planning commission may require treatments to protect residential properties and separate local and through traffic, including marginal access streets, reverse frontage with a non-access reservation along the rear property line, deep lots with rear-service alleys, or the dedication of additional right-of-way.

Major subdivisions, which have 20 or more lots, require a pedestrian system consisting of a concrete sidewalk, asphalt trail, raised boardwalk, or combination of those, or crushed stone trail in natural areas.

The parish's subdivision construction specifications also give further specific requirements for transportation improvements such as street and pedestrian system construction and traffic control signs and lights.

Incorporated into the parish's Unified Land Development Code as Appendix IV, the Subdivision Regulations are available online.³⁰ Incorporated into the parish's Unified Land Development Code as Appendix XIV, the Subdivision Construction Specifications are available online.³¹ Both are available in hard copy from the Department of Planning and Development.





PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to transportation and mobility are listed here. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the Transportation and Mobility vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Livable Community

- Plan for and provide infrastructure to serve existing and future growth.
- Protect and maintain existing neighborhoods.
- Influence how the parish grows and what the parish will look like in the future by updating ordinances and development standards aligned with the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*.
- Encourage mixed-use compact development, served by multiple transportation options, at strategically located neighborhood hubs to alleviate vehicle traffic and create new employment opportunities.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure improvements, including improved roads, drainage, stormwater management, and wetlands protection.
- Direct new development toward areas where there are adequate roads to accommodate growth, and scale new streets to fit their surroundings to promote safety and attractiveness.
- Provide convenient access to housing, stores, and services from all areas of the parish.
- Provide transportation facilities and services to ensure that workers have easy access to jobs.
- Over the long term, provide a transportation option for people without cars.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.
- Provide more walkable connections, trails, and bike paths that connect people to recreational areas and open space.

Economy and Education

- Coordinate with the school district on the location of schools in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.
- Promote Ascension Parish's developable land, friendly business climate, water and rail access, and energy resources to encourage industrial development.

Transportation Master Plan Guiding Principles

The *Transportation Master Plan's* guiding principles, developed in collaboration with parish staff, parish officials, stakeholder feedback, and public input, are listed here. More information and context on these guiding principles can be found in the *Transportation Master Plan*.

Improve transportation safety conditions.

Participants saw safety as the highest priority and want to ensure that safety will continue to be a guiding factor in the *Transportation Master Plan*.

Balance short-term and long-term needs and solutions.

Participants saw the importance of addressing short-term needs while also planning for future scenarios and guiding transportation development in the long term.

Target corridor solutions over “hot-spot” nodes.

Participants understood improving one node only pushes traffic problems to another area. The group wanted to focus on fixing whole corridors to help move people throughout the parish.

Support economic development and proactively guide growth in the parish.

Participants want to encourage growth and economic development that will promote the parish's long-term development and vision.

Leverage available funding to provide the greatest return for the parish.

Participants wanted to instill residents' confidence in parish officials and ensure that local taxpayer dollars are being leveraged to provide the greatest return in transportation investment.

Improve connectivity and mobility.

Participants had a general goal of improving connectivity and mobility. This includes improvements to both local and regional travel.



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

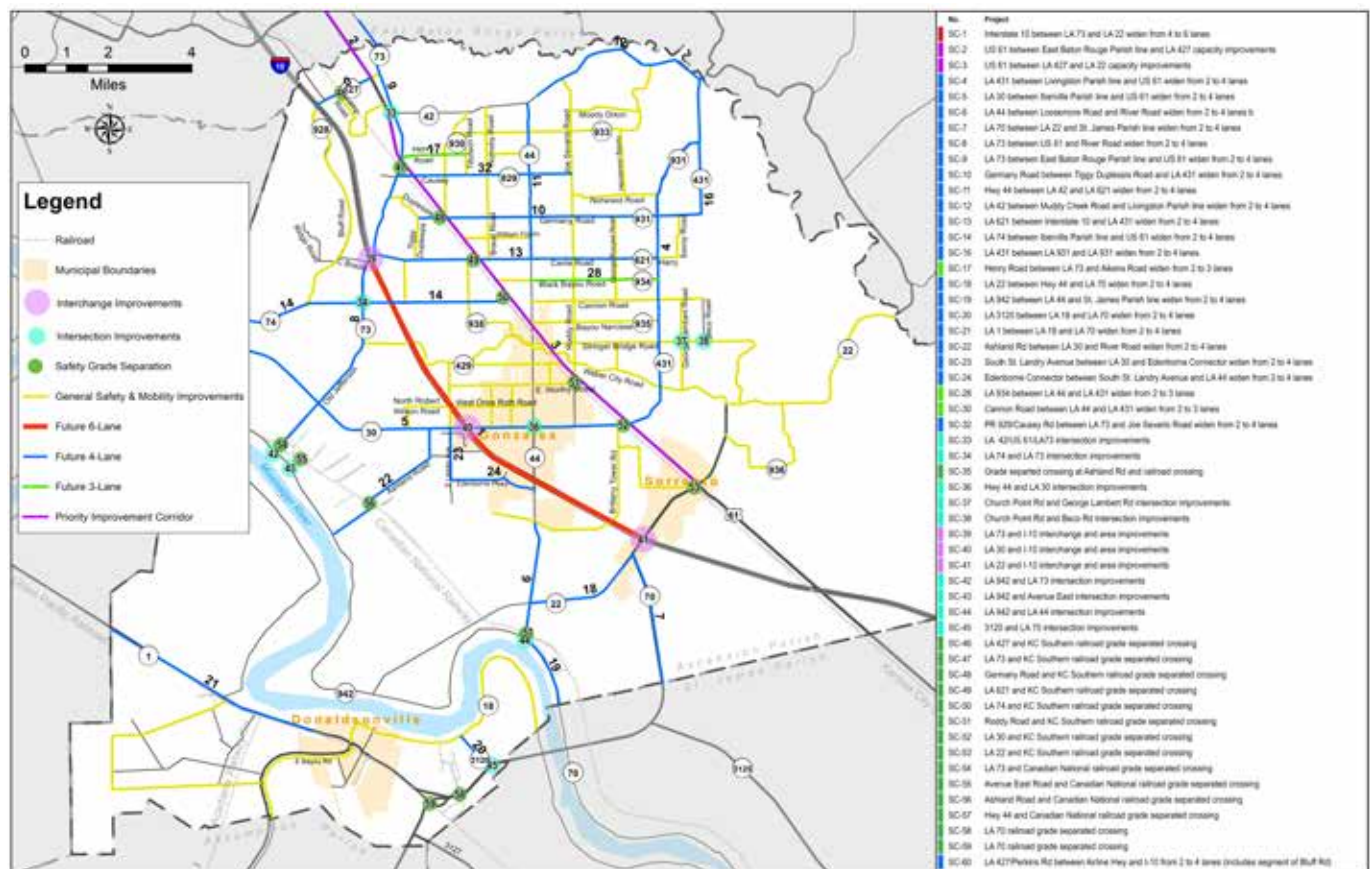
Issues and Concepts from the Transportation Master Plan

The *Transportation Master Plan* identified transportation needs for Ascension Parish, many of which stem from historical underinvestment in the transportation network. The *Transportation Master Plan* provides project-specific solutions to address parish transportation needs. Projects are categorized into safety and capacity improvements, new facilities, and multimodal improvements. It also provides several policy considerations in addition to recommended projects.

Safety and Capacity Improvements

The *Transportation Master Plan* recommends several capacity improvements for existing parish roads including widening roadways from two to three lanes, two to four lanes, and four to six lanes. Safety and capacity projects also include interchange improvements, intersection improvements, and grade separations for improved safety and freight movement. More than 50 capacity projects are recommended for the parish, and safety and mobility improvements are identified for other corridors. Safety and mobility improvements may include lane widening, shoulder construction, median or barrier construction, and signage and lane marking enhancements.

A small image of the Safety and Capacity Improvements map from the *Transportation Master Plan* is shown here. Please see Chapter 4 of the *Transportation Master Plan* for the full map.



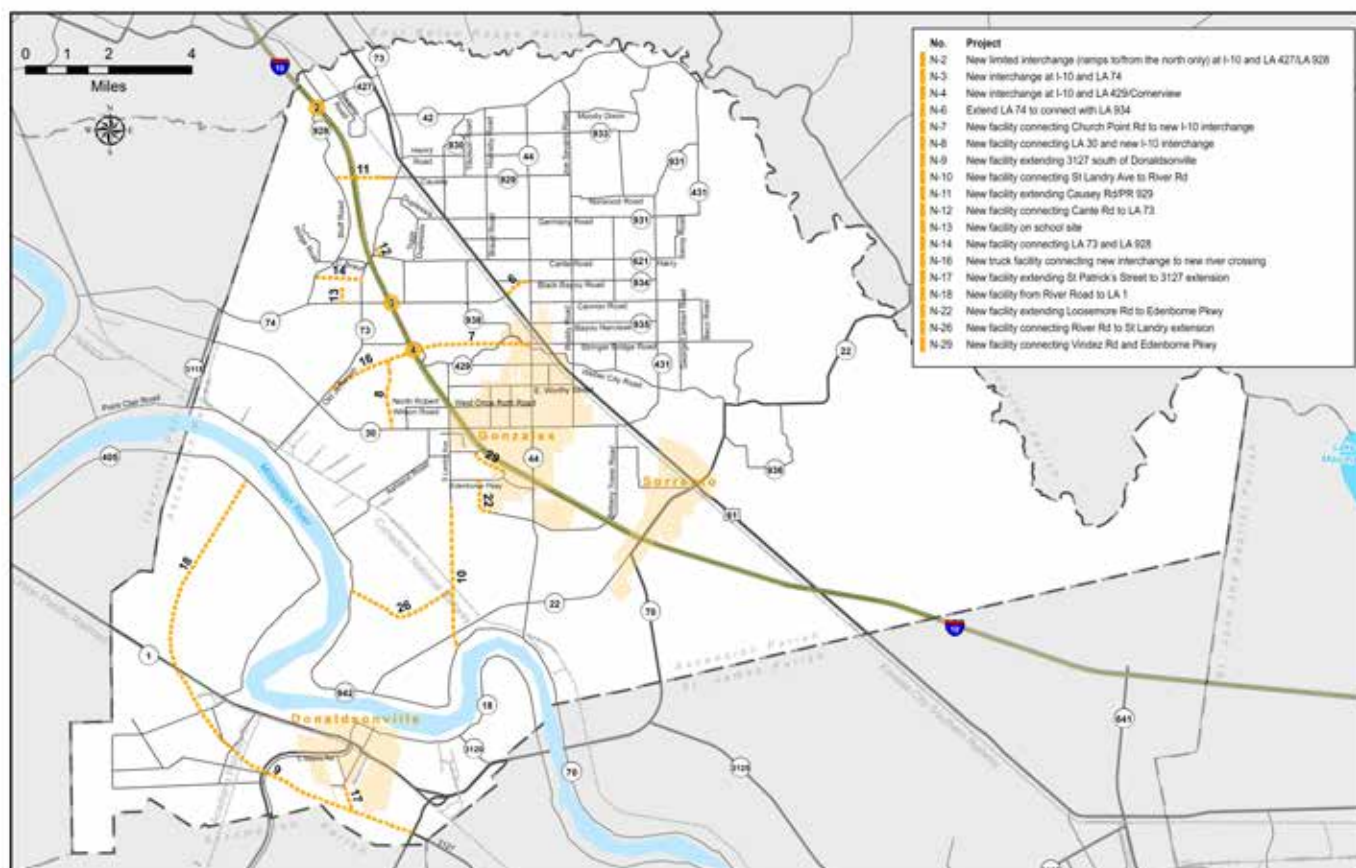
Safety and Capacity Improvements map from the *Transportation Master Plan*.

New Facilities

New facility projects in the *Transportation Master Plan* improve safety, congestion, and mobility just as the safety and capacity improvements do, but the new facility projects also provide opportunities for increased economic development. Proposed new facility projects include

- new roadways, the majority of which are proposed to increase access to the West Bank of the parish, and
- new grade-separated interchanges on Interstate 10.

A small image of the New Facilities map from the *Transportation Master Plan* is shown here. Please see Chapter 4 of the *Transportation Master Plan* for the full map.



New Facilities map from the *Transportation Master Plan*.

Multimodal Improvements

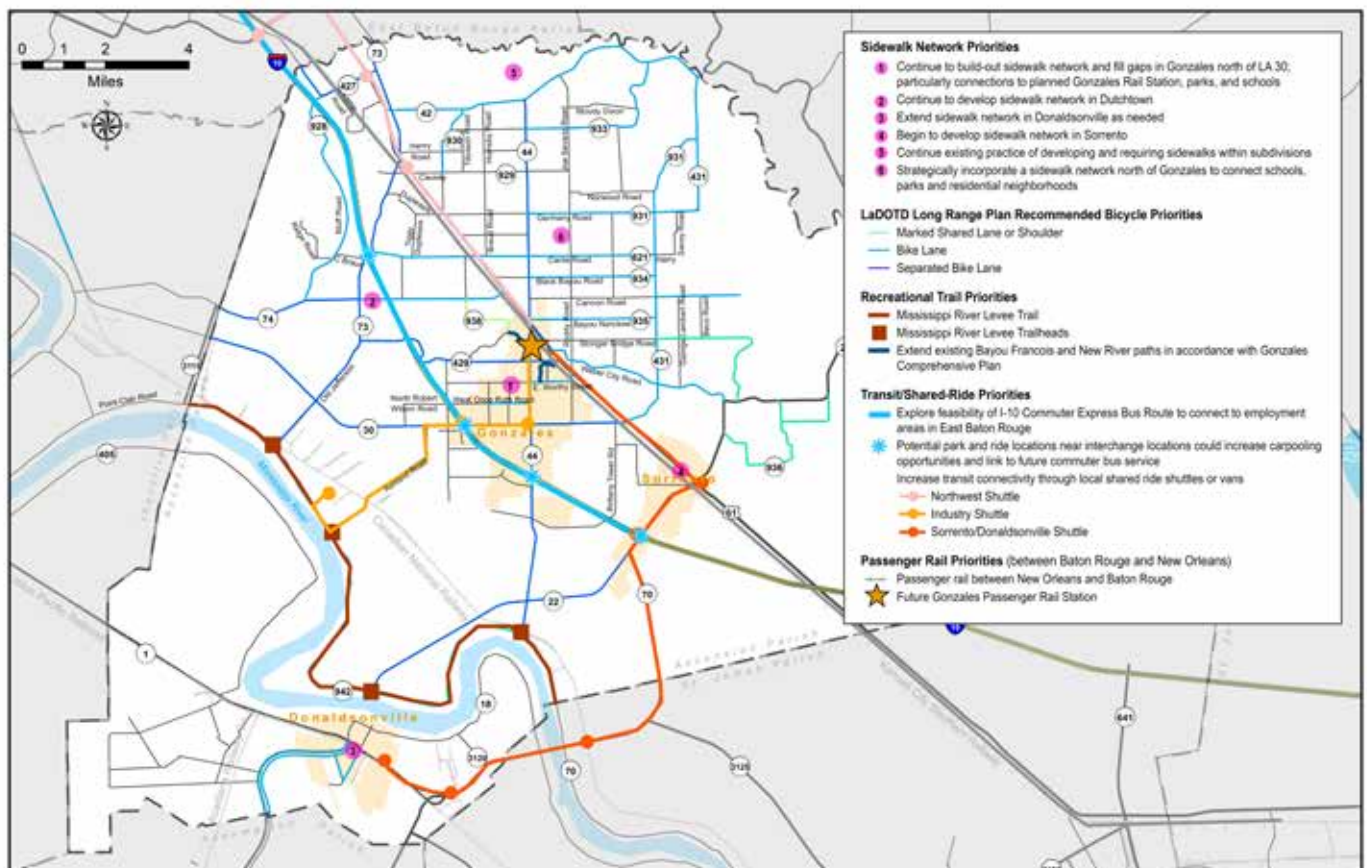
In addition to the safety and capacity improvements and new facilities proposed to Ascension Parish's roadway network, the *Transportation Master Plan* proposed multimodal improvements to make a complete transportation system. Multimodal improvements can include bus and transit options, "first-and-last mile" connections, reducing automobile reliance, and living a car-free lifestyle. These multimodal improvements include

- creating an active transportation network, including sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and recreational trails, all connected to central

locations, activity generators, and other modes of transportation;

- developing public transit and rideshare services, including commuter bus service to job centers;
- supporting the development of passenger rail service; and
- exploring technology-based solutions.

A small image of the Multimodal Improvements map from the *Transportation Master Plan* is shown here. Please see Chapter 4 of the *Transportation Master Plan* for the full map.



Multimodal Improvements map from the *Transportation Master Plan*.

Policy Considerations

The *Transportation Master Plan* recommends policy considerations that will help the parish achieve their vision. These include partnerships, access management, supporting street network, multimodal network, travel demand management, and future transportation. The policy considerations are discussed below; please see the *Transportation Master Plan* for the full text.

Partnerships

Many of the *Transportation Master Plan*'s proposed solutions involve agencies such as DOTD, Capital Region Planning Commission, and Capital Area Transit System. A primary tool in Louisiana is LA DOTD's Voluntary Road Transfer Program. The program's intent is to rightsize the state highway system as several state-owned facilities do not operate as highways and may be better served by management from the parish. The program benefits local parishes by providing immediate capital assistance, greater authority in prioritization and funding allocation, authority to regulate traffic, and the ability to implement plans (such as the *Transportation Master Plan*) with less dependency on the State. The Road Transfer Program can also be used as a local match to federal grant dollars.

Example: LA Road Transfer Program & I-10 Corridor

Four corridors prioritized in Program 1 of the *Transportation Master Plan* are identified as proposed corridors for transfer to Ascension Parish by LA DOTD. One of the corridors, LA 74, is a high-priority corridor for the parish. Other corridors not identified for road transfer will be implemented in collaboration with LA DOTD. For example, I-10 is an LA DOTD facility, but if the parish provides local dollars in support of the project, interchange planning and construction may progress more quickly.

Today, private partners are also included in the partnership discussion in delivering transportation solutions. Developing strong partnerships—at the federal, state, regional, and local levels—will be vital to a successful transportation master plan.

Access Management

Access management is a set of techniques that state and local governments use to control access to highways, major arterials, and other roadways. The benefits of access management include improved movement of traffic, reduced crashes, and fewer vehicle conflicts.

A range of access management principles can be applied to roadways of all types, ranging from fully access-controlled facilities, such as freeways, to those with little or no access control, such as local streets. The benefits of access management are achieved by limiting new vehicular access points and working to close and consolidate existing access, while also paying careful consideration to the interaction between automobile access points and multimodal access points along a corridor.

Analysis of access-related crashes has revealed that driveways and minor uncontrolled intersections (such as intersections with road and driveways that serve adjacent properties) can be especially dangerous locations for pedestrians and bicyclists. These entry and exit points can be managed by carefully planning their locations, complexity, extent (e.g., types of turning movements allowed), and if appropriate, use of medians or other schemes that facilitate or prohibit access to the roadway.

Access management tools include several options.

- Reduction in overall number of access points (to reduce opportunity for conflict between automobiles, transit, and nonmotorized users). This may include driveway closure and consolidation and, ultimately, enforced restrictions on driveway and access point spacing.
- Optimum location of transit stops (relative to sight distance, intersections, nonmotorized crossings, and access points). When planning for future multimodal improvements, access is key.
- Connection of key gaps in nonmotorized facilities (to promote safe, off-street movements and facilitate a multimodal environment).
- Proper spacing of access points along the same side of the street and from access points on the opposite side of the street (particularly spacing between intersections and other access points). This is key for the parish to consider when improving the configuration of existing key nodes, such as highly congested segments near I-10 interchanges.
- Geometric design of physical barriers to restrict certain turning movements (usually left turns). This includes designing access points for “right-in/right-out” only, raised medians that prevent cross-traffic movements, or design for auxiliary turn lanes including exclusive left or right and two-way left.

A corridor access management approach involves seeking an appropriate balance between the safety and mobility of a roadway facility with the access needs of adjacent land uses. Access management considerations will be required by any federally funded state highway project that involves new

Example: Airline Highway

New striping to provide left-hand turn lanes, a raised divider, and “right-out” only movements from the Cox Store Gonzales on Airline Highway helps to reduce conflict points, improve safety, and help traffic flow. Airline Highway, in addition to many other Ascension Parish roads, has several access points that could be removed or consolidated.



Credit: Google Maps; image capture December 2016

construction or reconstruction, though they should also be considered on any parish project that includes major rehabilitation, roadway widening projects, or new facility construction.

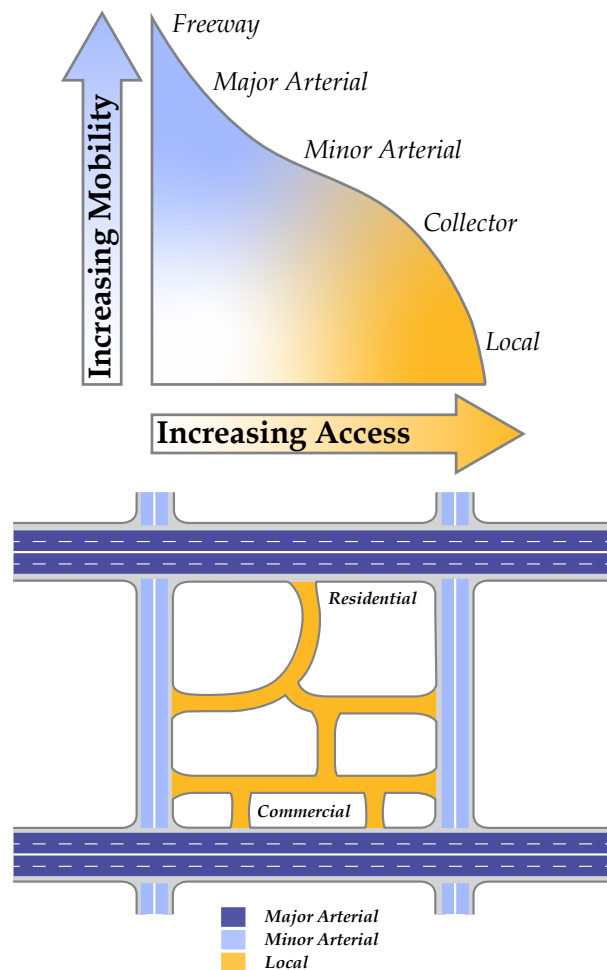
A formal Access Management Plan that sets requirements through the parish Code of Ordinances would guide development in a way that ensures safe and efficient operations for all modes. LA DOTD’s website³² discusses access management and can be used as a resource for a parish Access Management Plan.

Supporting Street Network

The parish has allowed development to occur in a strip pattern along major arterial roadways. In the absence of a sufficient supporting network of local and collector streets, arterial roadways are used for direct site access. The resulting proliferation of driveways and poor access management creates unsafe conditions. Strip development also leads to greater distances between land uses and thereby increases dependence on driving. Providing an adequate network of local and collector roadways and promoting internal connections between land uses will allow vehicles to circulate within neighborhoods and centers rather than on the arterial system.

A well-designed transportation network includes a wide range of facility types, or functional classifications, ranging from limited access facilities (interstates and some expressways) to local and collector roads (subdivision or neighborhood streets). Arterial and local roads support short-distance trips and provide access to freeways and expressways that support longer-distance travel. Access design, number of travel lanes, signalization, cross section, and multimodal accommodations should be rightsized to the facility type.

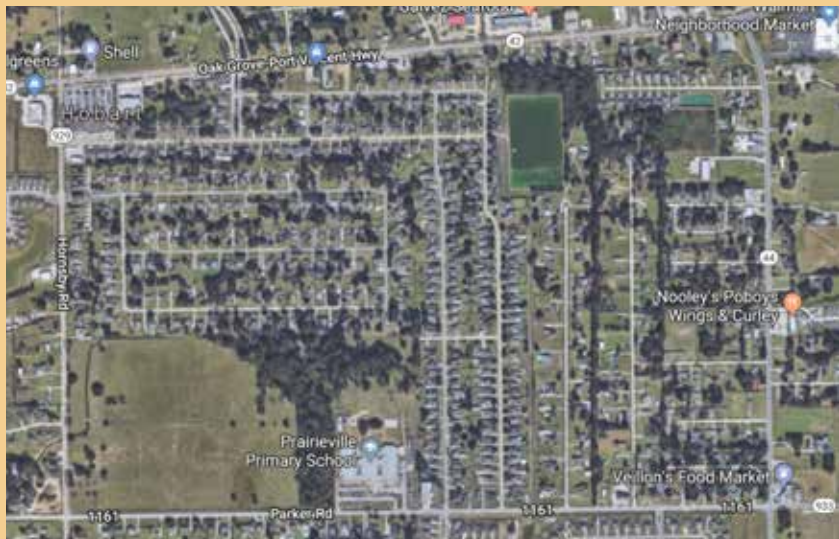
Figure 7.2. Street Hierarchy and Functional Classifications



Source: Transportation Master Plan

Example: Prairieville Primary School

Prairieville Primary School has several adjacent residential streets (to the north and east). However, families on these streets are unable to directly access the school. Instead, all traffic is funneled from Hornsby Road/LA 44 to Parker Road/LA 933. If the block were better connected with an internal grid, traffic accessing the school would be more dispersed, resulting in less congestion on Parker Road/LA 933.



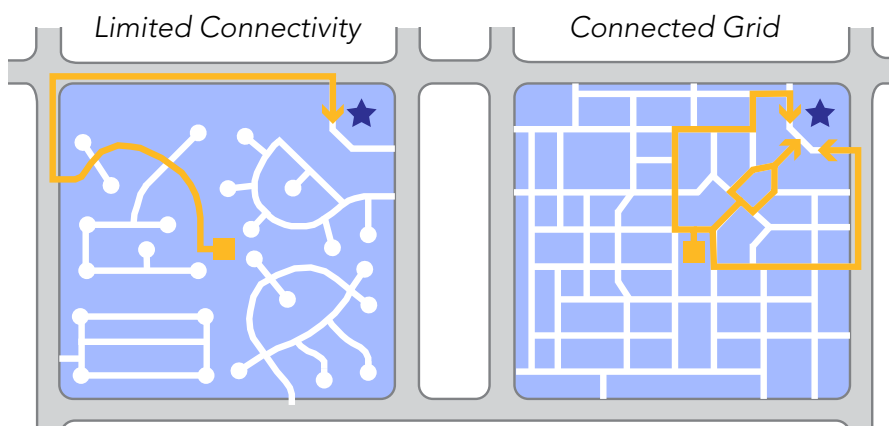
Credit: Google Maps, 2019

Connectivity is also key to a supporting street grid as no single roadway can provide utility without the addition of connecting roadways. Ensuring all roads connect, rather than dead-end, will improve arterial connectivity, allow traffic to be more evenly distributed, and help the network operate at a high level of service and more efficiently. Effective connectivity also ensures a redundant network, which is particularly important during extreme events such as weather events or states of emergency.

Network redundancy is an important feature of a connected network because it manages mobility

by providing alternative routing to a destination. Network redundancy allows drivers to avoid daily bottlenecks and take alternative routes to evade construction, extreme congestion, or roadway incidents. Redundancy is extremely important to emergency response services and in times of natural disasters or extreme events. On a large scale, redundancy must be built into the network (such as an adequate number and spacing of river crossings), but redundancy is also an important piece of connectivity on a small scale. This can be accomplished by requiring a minimum of two access points to all new subdivisions.

Figure 7.3. Network with Limited Connectivity versus Network with Connected Grid



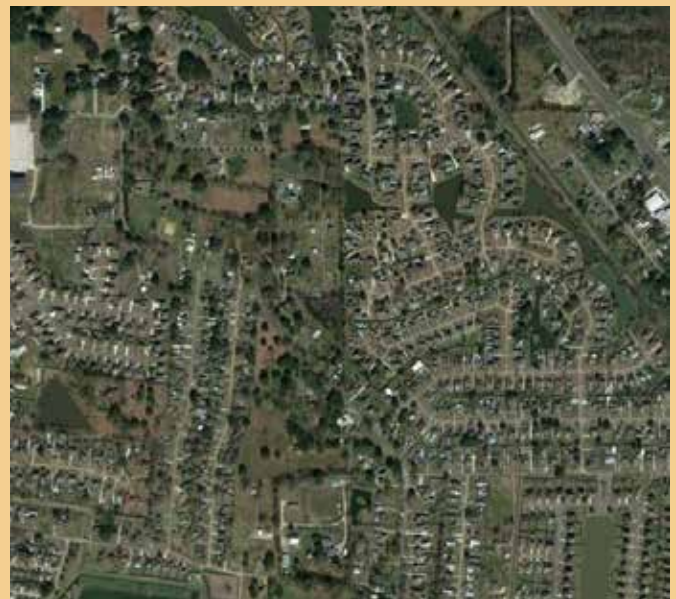
Source: Transportation Master Plan

Figure 7.4. An interconnected grid of streets in Donaldsonville



Credit: Google Earth, 2019

Figure 7.5. A suburban pattern of development in Prairieville



Credit: Google Earth, 2019

Multimodal Network

An efficient and fair transportation system must serve diverse users and needs. A complete transportation system provides adequate vehicular access and freight movement in addition to bus and transit options, sufficient “first-and-last mile” connections, and the option to live a car-free lifestyle or reduce reliance upon automobiles. Multimodal options support travel demand management objectives, are environmentally friendly and good for air quality, promote healthy and active lifestyles, and provide affordable and equitable mobility choices.

Complete Streets is a way of thinking about transportation that designs streets for users of all ages and physical abilities and allows for multiple modes of transportation so that all users are all able to move safely along and across streets. The City of Gonzales introduced Complete Streets concepts in their comprehensive plan and codified Complete Streets requirements tailored to different roadway types in their subdivision regulations. Gonzales’s regulations illustrate that Complete Streets concepts are not only for urban environments but are relevant to most roadway facility types.

Travel Demand Management

Travel Demand Management (TDM) tools are often used to expand mobility and access, improve travel choices, and support continued development.

TDM strategies aim to change travel behavior (how, when, and where people travel) to increase transportation system efficiency and achieve specific objectives, such as improved mobility, road

Example: CRPC Commuter Carpool Program

Carpooling is a great way to get more cars off the roads while still facilitating trips to and from work. CRPC supports the Commuter Krewe of Louisiana program that helps bring coworkers and neighbors together to commute to work. The program includes an online matching system to help bring people together with similar commute patterns.

Example: LA 42 Complete Streets

LA 42 was one of the first large-scale projects to integrate a Complete Streets approach after LA DOTD’s policy adoption. The 3.7-mile project (between Airline Highway and LA 44) will widen the roadway from two to four lanes to a four-lane separated roadway. Traffic in each direction will be separated by an 18-foot grass median to improve vehicular safety. To meet the needs of pedestrians, a six-foot sidewalk will be constructed on the north side of the roadway and ten-foot bicycle/pedestrian shared-use path will be located on the south side of the roadway.

LA DOTD has adopted a Complete Streets Policy with the purpose to “create a comprehensive, integrated, connected transportation network for Louisiana that balances access, mobility, and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, which includes users of wheelchairs and mobility aids.”³³ Complete Streets concepts can be rightsized to fit state highway facilities as well as arterial and local parish roads.

and parking cost savings, increased safety, energy conservation, and pollution emission reductions.

Listed below are TDM tools.

- Ridesharing and commuting programs
- Improving multimodal options, connectivity, and amenities
- Subsidized public transportation pass programs
- Paid parking
- Intelligent transportation solutions including mobile and social applications and wayfinding tools
- Higher-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes
- Tolling, congestion pricing, or road space rationing
- Flexible work schedules and telecommuting
- Active traffic management

Future Transportation

Communities all over the United States are dealing with an unprecedented amount of potential change as they plan for their transportation needs between now and 2050. An integral component of upcoming change is likely to include the deployment of automated, connected, electric, and shared-use vehicles and complementary technologies.

As these technologies begin to appear on publicly owned roads in significant numbers, those who own and operate the roads need to be prepared for their impacts. These emerging technologies will impact every aspect of transportation infrastructure, including operations, construction, maintenance, and information technology. They will likely also impact public works, LA DOTD, CRPC, and other entities that manage day-to-day transportation operations.

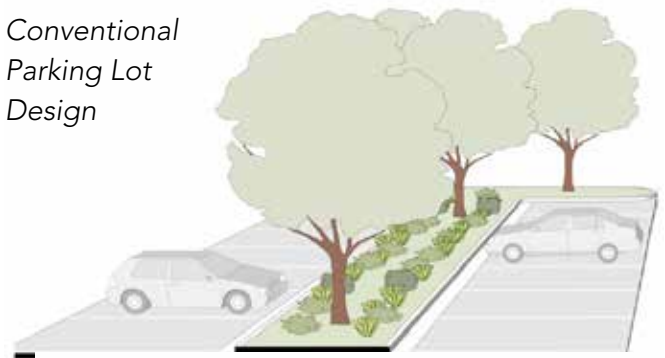
Preparing for future emerging transportation technologies—such as automated and connected vehicles—will require LA DOTD and the state's parishes to develop new policies, programs, and partnerships. They will need to address, deploy, and maintain these rapidly changing technologies; manage and analyze data from multiple new sources; identify funding options to implement new roadside and backend technologies; and assess the impacts these new vehicles will have on funding. Ascension Parish, CRPC, and LA DOTD will need to develop and implement a plan to manage this paradigm shift in mobility.

Green Infrastructure

Roads and other paved surfaces collect pollutants—such as oil, toxic chemicals, and heavy metals—increase the volume and speed of stormwater runoff. In addition to the harmful effects these pollutants can have on natural systems, stormwater entering the parish's drainage system can overtax the drainage system during high rain events. However, using best practices for green infrastructure along roads and in parking lots not only reduces runoff into storm sewers by allowing stormwater to percolate into soil, but also filters pollutants to improve the quality of runoff entering streams and rivers. In the example below of green infrastructure, a conventional approach to a parking lot design is shown at the top and an “enhanced stormwater” design at the bottom. The enhanced design has a similar planted area, but its curb has gaps to allow stormwater into the planted area to be captured, filtered, and held by the soil and plants instead of piped to containment or treatment areas.

Figure 7.6. Example of Green Infrastructure

*Conventional
Parking Lot
Design*



*Enhanced
Stormwater
Parking Lot Design*



Credit: Code Studio; Source: *Best Practices Manual for Development in Coastal Louisiana*



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY*

This section is organized into a transportation and mobility vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The transportation and mobility vision captures citizens' input on mobility options and how people move about the parish in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY VISION

Ascension Parish provides needed transportation upgrades, maintenance, and new connections to provide residents with access to jobs, schools, services, and recreational areas. The parish implements plans to provide access to future growth in a timely manner, focusing on multimodal options where possible.

GOAL 14: IMPLEMENT SAFETY AND CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS, NEW FACILITIES, AND MULTIMODAL IMPROVEMENTS AS RECOMMENDED AND PRIORITIZED IN THE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN.

- ▶ **Strategy 14.1:** Use the *Transportation Master Plan* priority projects to guide infrastructure investment decisions.
- ▶ **Strategy 14.2:** Identify additional revenues for transportation funding in order to implement recommended projects.
- ▶ **Strategy 14.3:** Utilize the *Transportation Master Plan* as a guide for corridor preservation where new facilities are identified.

GOAL 15: FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO DELIVER TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS.

- ▶ **Strategy 15.1:** Work to identify and utilize public and private partnerships to identify funding, parish priorities, and project implementation.
- ▶ **Strategy 15.2:** Work in partnership with surrounding communities and parishes to support the region's mobility goals, transportation system, sustainability, and quality of life.

- ▶ **Strategy 15.3:** Work closely with CRPC to coordinate parish projects with regional initiatives, include horizon projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region, and obtain planning and clearance approvals necessary for construction.
- ▶ **Strategy 15.4:** Coordinate with LA DOTD to improve state infrastructure.

GOAL 16: UPDATE ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE VISION AND THE *TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN* AND IMPROVE PARISHWIDE MOBILITY.

- ▶ **Strategy 16.1:** Adopt access management plan and standards.
 - » Add access management standards to the parish's Subdivision Regulations.
 - » Using LA DOTD's guidance, develop an Access Management Plan that sets standards for access management of various modes of transportation. Formally adopt the Access Management Plan and include reference to standards and requirements in the parish Code of Ordinances.
- ▶ **Strategy 16.2:** Strengthen supporting street networks by making connections.
 - » Enforce current requirements that require all new subdivisions to provide access points for future development. Do not allow waivers of connections between subdivisions.
 - » Establish stronger standards for connectivity elements, such as sidewalks, bikeways, and open space requirements, in new subdivision developments.
 - » Require linkages/connections to existing or planned infrastructure along all public streets.
 - » Limit the number of dwelling units on one access point.
 - » Adopt a maximum block length.

- » Require a minimum of two access points to all new subdivisions over 30 lots to accommodate emergency and service vehicles.
- » Ensure that all levels of government are educated about the importance of connectivity and a supporting street network.
- » Identify areas where small connections, for any variety of modes, could greatly improve mobility in the area.
- » Remove language in the Major Street Plan that recommends discontinuous streets. (The Major Street Plan currently has the following language: “Through traffic and excessive speeds should be discouraged on local streets by using appropriate geometric designs, traffic control devices, curvilinear alignments, and discontinuous streets.”)
- ▶ **Strategy 16.3:** Strengthen the parish’s multimodal network.
 - » Develop and adopt a customized Complete Streets policy that takes into account Ascension Parish’s context and is consistent with Ascension Parish’s development patterns.
 - » Develop a sidewalk and trails hierarchy plan to supplement LA DOTD’s planned bicycle facility network.
- ▶ **Strategy 16.4:** Implement Travel Demand Management.
 - » Work with CRPC on metropolitan-wide TDM strategies and initiatives.
 - » Work with LA DOTD on corridor-specific TDM strategies and tools, and consider also working with LA DOTD on primary congested corridors, such as Airline Highway and I-10, to influence traveler behavior.
 - » Work with business influencers to promote CRPC TDM programs including the Commuter Krewe of Louisiana program.
 - » Stay involved as other CRPC TDM strategies and programs take effect.
- ▶ **Strategy 16.5:** Plan for future transportation innovations.
 - » Ensure that Ascension Parish and CRPC representatives are included in any discussions developing around emerging technologies with LA DOTD.
- ▶ **Strategy 16.6:** Update the parish’s Major Street Plan to reflect the Vision and *Transportation Master Plan*.
 - » Update roadway standards in the Major Street Plan.
 - » Include front setbacks from centerline in the text of the Major Street Plan as well as in the figures.
- ▶ **Strategy 16.7:** Consider using green infrastructure for transportation improvements.
 - » Adopt green street standards to provide additional benefits for stormwater management.
 - » Promote permeable pavement options and include landscape options that improve water quality and reduce runoff.





8

DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER

DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER VISION

Ascension Parish designs, constructs, and maintains a safe, sustainable, and environmentally sound stormwater, floodplain management, and wastewater system that reduces risk and the potential of flooding, protects natural drainage features, and preserves and enhances water quality to meet the current and future needs of parish residents and businesses. New development complements and improves existing drainage within the watershed.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER*

Water, wetlands, and floodplains define much of how Ascension Parish looks and operates. While water bodies and wetlands provide scenic open spaces, natural recreation areas, wildlife habitats, and other amenities, the system that drains these watersheds is complex and can be impacted by development. Ascension Parish has a history of flooding, which is one of the most frequent hazards in the parish due to hurricanes, severe storms, heavy rainfall, Amite River flooding, tides, wind, and coastal storm surges. Most flood problems within the parish stem from its low topographic relief. The parish works through two drainage districts—one on the Mississippi River’s east bank and one on the west bank—to keep the drainage networks clear and operating to reduce flood risk in low-lying areas.

Currently, Ascension does not have a parish-wide wastewater system on the East Bank and is working on a phased approach to create one. While this long-term effort is underway, the parish is establishing short-term actions to provide this important service.

MAJOR WATERWAYS

Ascension Parish's numerous water bodies and waterways are integral to the parish's drainage network, culture, and recreational amenities. Major waterways are described below.

The Mississippi River flows in a southeastern direction and divides Ascension Parish into two parts, commonly referred to as the East Bank and the West Bank. No flooding occurs in the parish from the Mississippi River outside of the levees because of the federal flood control project of extensive levees along both banks of the river.

East Bank

Amite River

The Amite River forms the parish's eastern boundary. The Amite River is a major floodway for southeastern Louisiana, which is managed by the Amite River Basin Commission. The Amite River and the Amite River Diversion Canal are also recreational destinations for boating, fishing, and hunting for the region. Bayou Manchac and Henderson Bayou are tributaries of the Amite River. Alligator Bayou and Muddy Creek are tributaries to Bayou Manchac. Bluff Swamp drains into Bayou Manchac.

Black Bayou, Saverio Canal, Bayou Francois, New River, and Bayou Goudine

These waterways drain a large part of the parish to the Marvin Braud pump station. This pump station pumps during high water events and otherwise drains by gravity.

Henderson Bayou

Usually drained by gravity, Henderson Bayou has a floodgate that protects Galvez and Prairieville. The 15-foot-high floodgate cuts across Bayou Henderson in swampland upstream of where the bayou empties into Lake Villar and the Amite River. Together, the floodgate, levee and ridge are

designed to prevent backwater, which rises from the Amite when it is high, from flowing upstream into Henderson Bayou and flooding northeast Ascension

Bayou Conway, Bayou Boyle, and Panama Canal

These are gravity flow waterways that drain a large part of the southern portion of the parish into the Blind River Basin.

Spanish Lake

The Spanish Lake Basin is a backwater swamp of the Mississippi River and part of the Bayou Manchac Basin that covers southeastern Louisiana. It is fed by Alligator Bayou, Bayou Brand, Bayou Braud, and Bayou Paul.

Bayou Manchac

The section of Bayou Manchac between the Amite River and the Mississippi River was added to the list of Louisiana's historic and scenic rivers in 2009 through HB No. 451.³⁴

West Bank

Bayou Lafourche

Bayou Lafourche joins the Mississippi River and flows southward to the Gulf of Mexico. Mississippi River waters flowed into Bayou Lafourche until 1904, when a dam was constructed in the bayou to prevent flooding of the plantations along the bayou.³⁵ Water is presently pumped from the Mississippi River into Bayou Lafourche to maintain water quality in the bayou.

Rocky Canal, McCall Bayou, Bayou Napoleon, Irish Canal, and Bayou Verret

On the West Bank, Rocky Canal, McCall Bayou, Bayou Napoleon, Irish Canal, and Bayou Verret are all natural channels that are necessary to the drainage system.



Levees and drainage channels are critical parish infrastructure.

LEEVE PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Laurel Ridge Levee protects approximately 2,300 acres of cleared lands on the lower Amite River from overflow. Natural levees have formed along rivers and bayous, providing some of the highest ground in the parish.

DRAINAGE

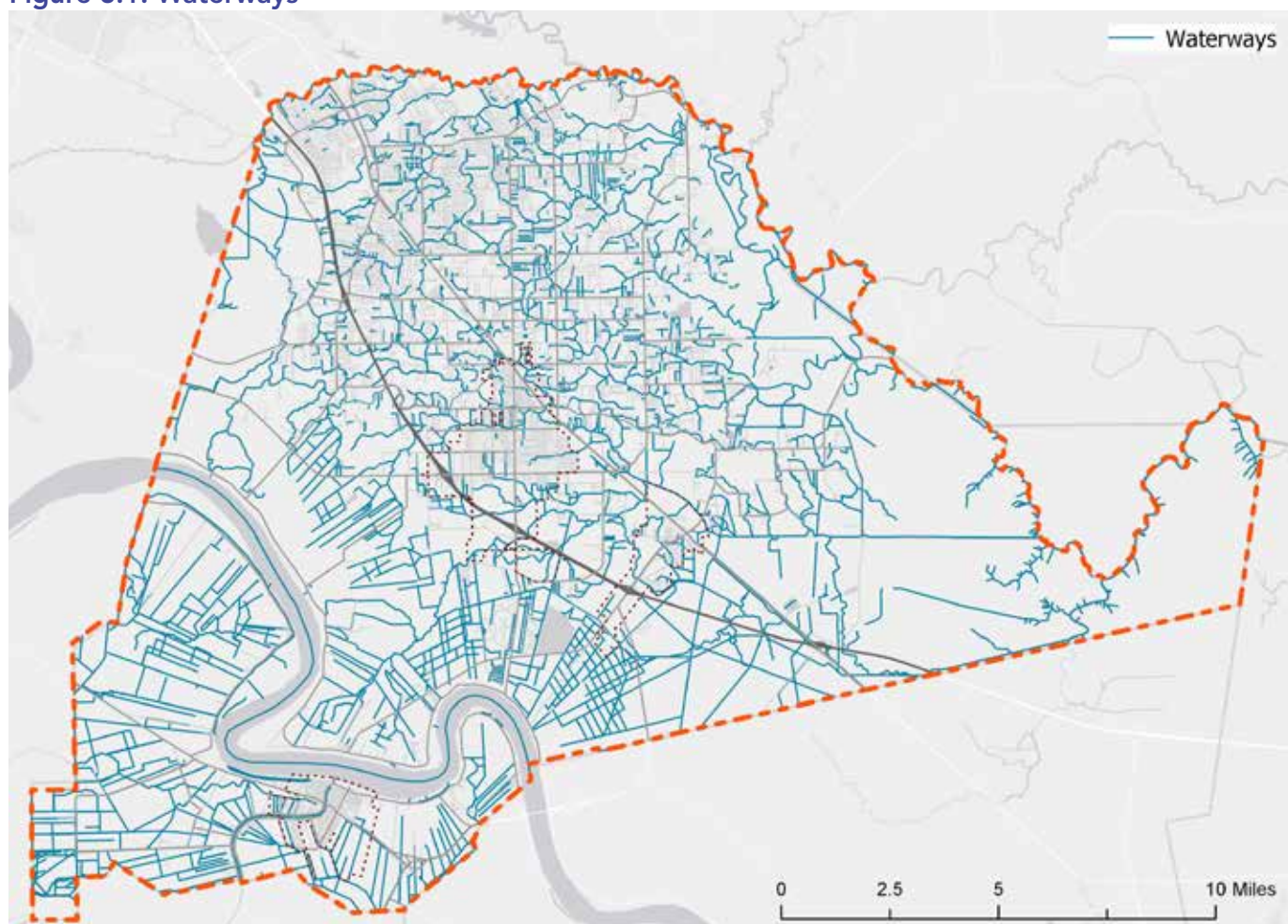
Ascension Parish's topography is very flat. The difference between the parish's highest point and lowest point is about 50 feet. The highest points of the parish are along the Mississippi River and in the central area of Gonzales. The highland along the Mississippi River is the result of sediment deposits that accumulated along the banks when the water's flow slowed down during floods. The land's

elevation built up during the past 10,000 years, and levees were constructed, primarily in the twentieth century, to prevent river flooding.

The majority of the eastern portion of the parish drains southeasterly into the Maurepas Swamp as part of the Pontchartrain Basin. The western part of the parish drains into bayous that flow west and south. The west parish drainage bayous are connected by hydraulic systems to the Gulf of Mexico; therefore, the flow is partially affected by tides. Because the parish is so flat, when a heavy rain occurs, water is slow to drain downstream to be pumped out.

With the exception of pumping back flow from the Amite River or during high tides or surge conditions, all waterbodies are gravity drained.

Figure 8.1. Waterways



Source: Ascension Parish GIS

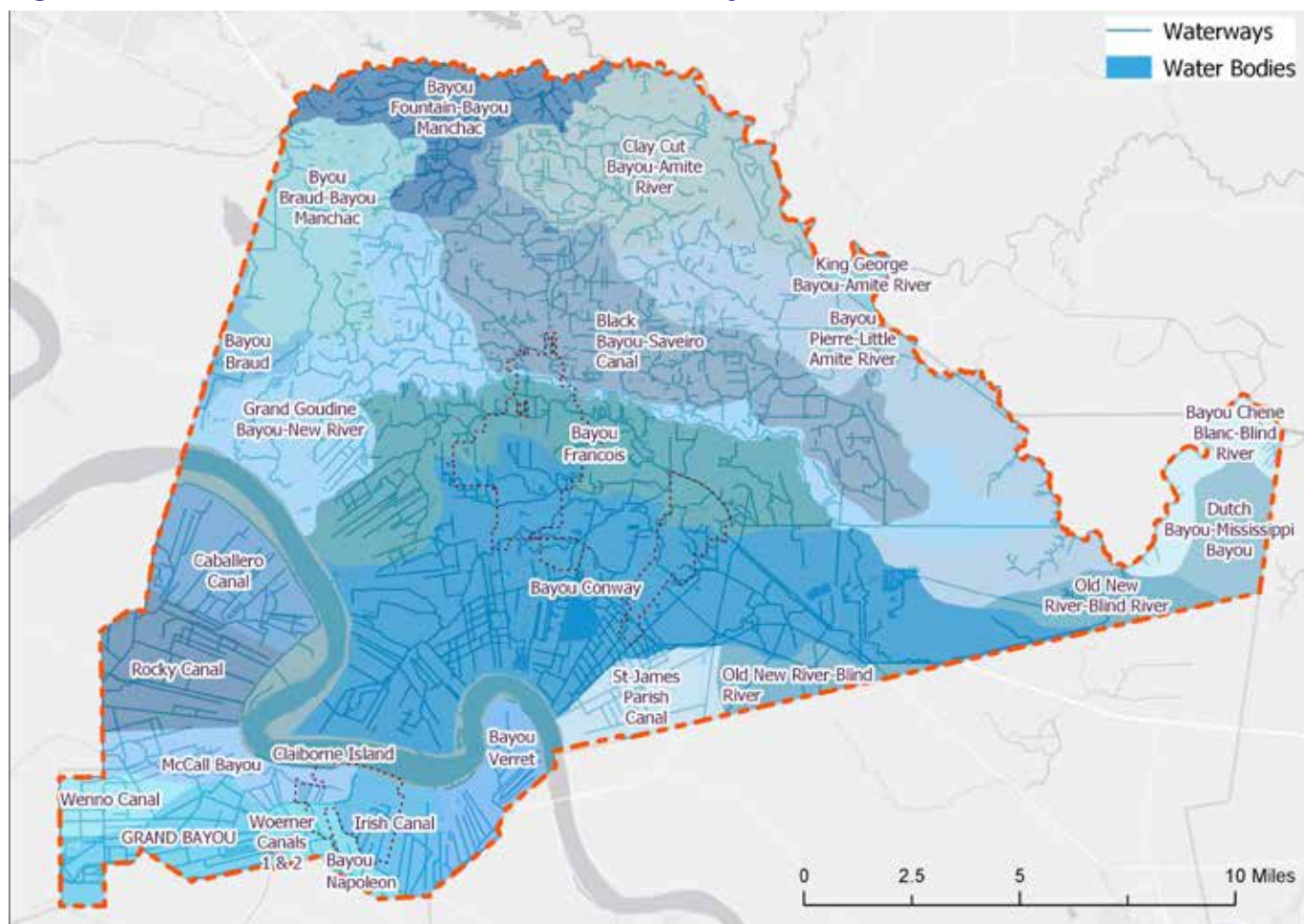
Ascension Parish currently has programs for roadside ditch clearing, grass cutting, cleaning culverts, and other maintenance and operations through two drainage districts: The East Ascension Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 1 and the West Ascension Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 1. These districts are responsible for establishing policies and operations and maintaining road ditches, off-road ditches, swales, major canals, and bayous.

A 5-mil property tax, which generates approximately \$5.6 million a year, supports the East Ascension Drainage District. The tax dollars are used to maintain the infrastructure, fund 15 parish drainage crews who clear vegetation and debris, and fund emergency workers who run the pump stations

during storm events. This 10-year property tax was first approved by voters in 1958 and has most recently been renewed by voters on November 6, 2018. The parish recently completed the first round of roadside ditch maintenance projects to remove litter and obstructive features that hinder local stormwater conveyance. The initial improvements, funded through the East Ascension Drainage Fund, included ditches on four streets in three subdivisions dating from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The East Ascension Drainage District also has a dedicated sales tax that was adopted in the early 1980s, which is used for larger, long-term projects such as the Laurel Ridge Levee extension. This money is also used as matching funds to leverage federal dollars.

Figure 8.2. Ascension Parish Watersheds with Waterways



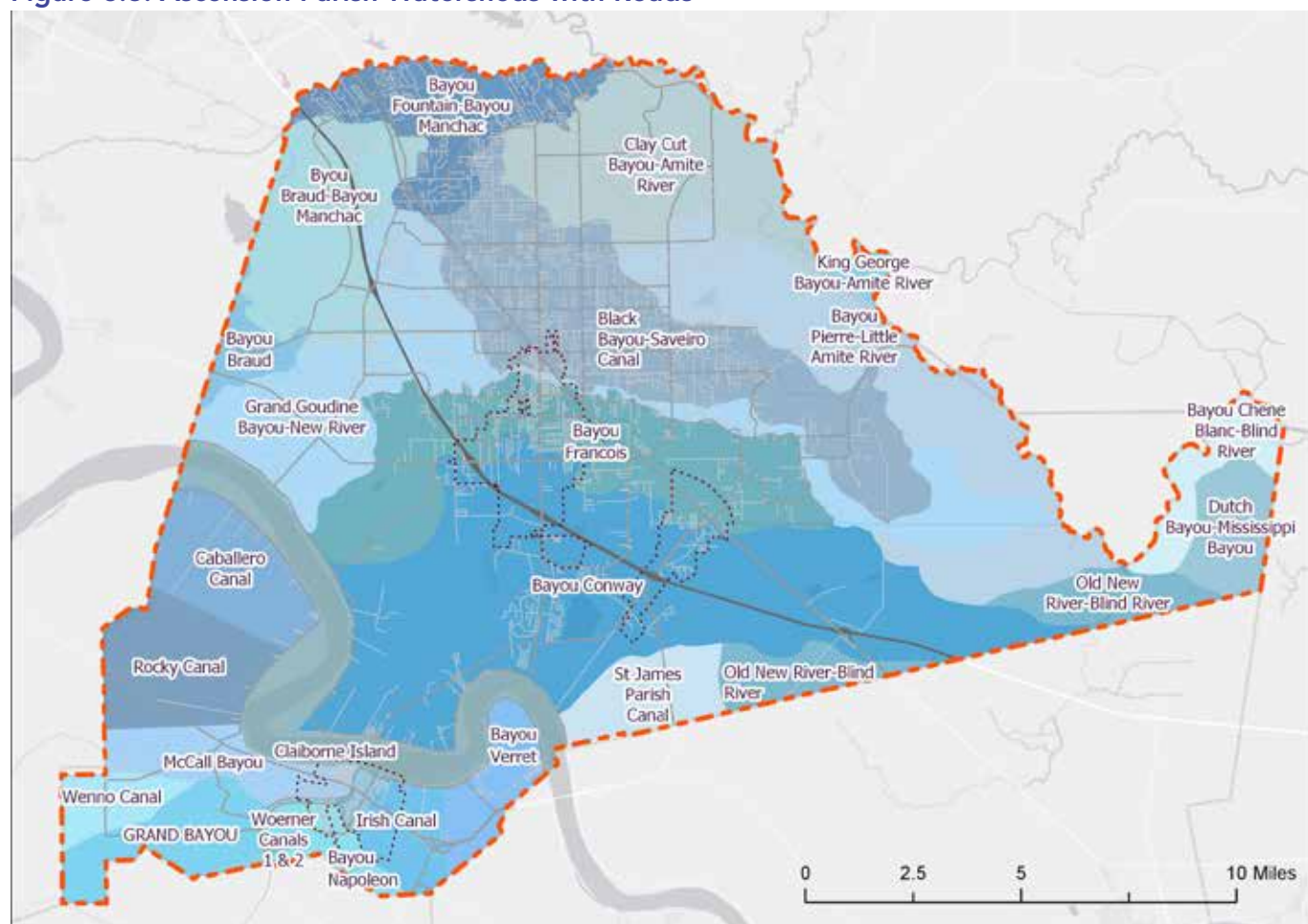
Source: Ascension Parish GIS

The West Ascension Drainage District is funded through a 10-mil property tax, which generates approximately \$1.1 million for maintenance and special projects. The West Ascension Drainage District cuts grass, cleans ditches, and sprays properties four times a year. In addition, the district participates in regional projects to clean waterways and repair clogged bayous and drainage areas. Beyond routine maintenance, the West Ascension Drainage District provides services on an on-call basis.

Ascension Parish has numerous lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers (See Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.2) with over 1,000 miles of waterways in 25 watersheds (see Figure 8.3).

The parish has approximately 19 miles of the Mississippi River, the east bank has over 760 miles of waterways, and the west bank has over 240 miles of waterways. These numbers include waterways in the municipalities. Waterways include natural waterways as well as engineered ditches and canals.

Figure 8.3. Ascension Parish Watersheds with Roads



Source: Ascension Parish GIS

Flooding History

Ascension Parish has a history of flooding due to hurricanes, severe storms, heavy rainfall, Amite River flooding, tides, wind, and coastal storm surges. History of flooding in the parish indicates flooding may occur during any time of the year from the internal bayous and Amite River. However, the majority of the floods have occurred during February, April, August, and November. Floods during later summer and fall months are most often associated with heavy rainfalls accompanied by hurricanes moving landward from the Gulf of Mexico. Most flood problems within the parish stem from the parish's low topographic relief. Headwater (upper reaches) flooding is caused by overflow of the Amite River, New River, Black Bayou, Bayou Narcisse, Bayou Francois, and Bayou Conway.

Backwater flooding (flooding due to downstream conditions such as channel restrictions or high flow in a downstream, confluence stream) occurs along the lower reaches of these streams and along Bayou Manchac. Most of these streams have formed natural levees along each bank throughout most of their lengths. The natural levees in some locations are the highest ground between principal streams. Because of low relief, there is flooding along the lower reaches of all of these streams. Since 1965, at least twelve major hurricanes and tropical storms have caused significant damage to Ascension Parish. Figure 8.5 below lists some of the significant storm events that have affected the parish over the past 50 years.³⁶

Figure 8.4. Ascension Parish Historical Flooding Events

Storm Event	Date	Description	Hurricane Category	Property Damage
Severe Storm	8/11/2016	13,100 structures flooded		\$8.7 billion*
Hurricane Isaac	8/28/2012	4.47" rainfall, flooding	1	\$1.1 million
Hurricane Gustav	8/29/2008	-	3	\$6.4 million
Hurricane Rita	9/24/2005	4" rainfall, backwater flooding	-	\$48 million*
Hurricane Katrina	8/29/2005	5.5" rainfall	3	\$16.9 billion*
Hurricane Ivan	9/15/2004	2" rainfall, flooding	3	\$20.5 million
Hurricane Lili	10/3/2002	4-8" rainfall, flooding	1	\$41.5 million*
Tropical Storm Allison	6/6/2001	20-24" rainfall, flooding	-	\$500,000
Tropical Storm Frances	9/30/1998	High winds, flooding	2	\$50.9 million
Rain/Storm	5/8/1995	Intense rain (402 homes flooded)	-	\$585 million*
Severe Storm	2/2/1993	Heavy rains, flooding	-	-
Hurricane Andrew	8/25/1992	9" rainfall, 35% sugar cane crop loss	3	\$25 billion*
Hurricane Juan	11/1/1985	10" rainfall, flooding	1	\$46.5 million*
Severe Storm	4/20/1983	Heavy rains, flooding	-	\$104 million
Severe Storm	5/2/1979	13" rainfall, flooding	-	(500 homes, 15 public)
Hurricane Edith	10/13/1971	2-3" rainfall, flooding	2	\$25 million*
Hurricane Betsy	9/10/1965	Flooding	3	\$1 million

*Includes areas outside Ascension Parish.

The August 2016 storm produced major flooding in the parish due to backwater overflow from the Amite River, which was a result of high rainfall in the upper reaches of the Amite River Basin. The flooding exceeded the 100-year storm event for the area. This event is also a prime example of a large rainfall event that produced rainfall for an extended period over a large area, including Ascension Parish and the entire Amite River Basin. The parish received approximately 15 inches of rain, which correlates to a 50-year rainfall event, and the Amite River basin saw anywhere from 14 inches of rain to greater than 30 inches of rain.³⁷ The Amite River stage near Port Vincent was above 16 feet, which is equivalent to a 500-year event according to the published FEMA elevations at that location.³⁸

EXISTING TOOLS TO MANAGE DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAINS, AND WASTEWATER

Floodplains

The 100-year flood is an event that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year.³⁹ The 100-year floodplain is estimated and officially adopted by FEMA and recorded on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

Currently, the parish requires that new buildings be constructed with main floors one foot above the 100-year flood level. When developers, builders, and residents import fill dirt to raise a structure out of the 100-year floodplain, this reduces the capacity of the floodplain, which may cause increased flooding on adjacent properties. For large subdivisions, the parish requires that any placed within the floodplain—such as to raise buildings out of the floodplain—must be offset by an equivalent volume of new storage that is connected to the floodplain. This created volume is predominantly done with detention ponds. This is commonly referred to as “zero net fill.” However, the regulations exempt individually constructed, single-family homes, on

lots less than a half acre in size, which allows a limit of three feet within the footprint of the building. For individual residential lots greater than one-half acre, fill is allowed above three feet, but the amount of fill above three feet must be mitigated. The parish currently does not have a permit process in place to allow for the placement of fill on a property.

NFIP Program and CRS program

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides federally underwritten private flood insurance to homeowners. Typically, property owners in a FEMA-designated floodplain—a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)—are required to have flood insurance in order to secure a mortgage. About 56 percent of Ascension Parish is in a SFHA. As with any insurance, NFIP premiums rise and fall with risk.⁴⁰ For example, a house outside of a SFHA will pay lower premiums than one in it; a structure in a SFHA that is built with its first floor higher than the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) will pay lower premiums than one built at grade. Ascension Parish currently has a regulation that require structures within a SFHA to be one foot above the BFE.

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a FEMA program designed to offset NFIP premiums, including recent increases. CRS can lower property owners’ NFIP premiums across an entire jurisdiction by between five percent and 45 percent if participating local governments undertake a variety of actions that are above and beyond NFIP baseline requirements. These actions are divided into four primary categories, for which points are earned: public information, mapping and regulations, flood damage reduction, and warning and response.

For every 500 CRS points earned, a jurisdiction advances a CRS rating level, which translates into a five percent NFIP premium reduction. “No action” results in a CRS rating of 10 and zero reduction to NFIP premiums. The best possible CRS rating is 1, which equals a 45 percent reduction in local flood insurance costs. Point-earning activities are intended

both to reduce aggregate risk across the parish and to make underwriting and documentation easier for the insurance industry. A participating parish benefits itself and its residents by reducing overall risk, easing access to flood insurance, and reducing the cost to residents of that insurance.⁴¹

Ascension Parish participates in the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System. Through the program's point-earning activities, the parish is a Class 8, which reduces flood insurance premiums by 10 percent for policyholders. The CRS program in Ascension Parish is administered by a Certified Floodplain Manager.

Since 2008, more than 9,000 flood insurance policyholders in unincorporated Ascension Parish have benefited from the parish's participation, saving nearly \$450,000 annually on insurance premiums. Nevertheless, more than 180 repetitive loss structures and 40 severe repetitive loss structures have been recorded in Ascension Parish and outside the municipalities. Of these 220 structures, 92 are insured under the NFIP.

Sewer Utilities

Ascension Parish requires all subdivision sewer lines and treatment plants and facilities to meet Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) regulations. Subdivisions being developed within the vicinities of operating sewer systems are required to tie into existing sewer systems, if additional sewer capacity is available and provide collection lines to the property line of each lot. For subdivisions with more than eight lots where the lots are smaller than one acre, the developer must provide for an approved sanitary sewage community collection and treatment system and submit a letter of no objection from the Ascension Parish Health Unit to the Planning Commission prior to approval. Community sewage treatment facilities cannot be located 100 feet from an existing residence and must be enclosed with a six-foot solid fence.

Donaldsonville on the west bank has a sewer system. The parish has an agreement with Donaldsonville and Ascension schools to treat the parish's wastewater on the west bank. Additional partnering opportunities are being explored to expand capacity and enhance maintenance of wastewater treatment.

Ascension Parish is currently planning for parish-wide sewer services, with the first phase connecting existing underutilized sewer infrastructure along LA 42 and LA 73 in the north of the parish to a centralized treatment plant. The parish also has a system along 22 and 44 that has existing river outflow. The parish is conducting a customer analysis and feasibility study to determine the extent that existing homes can hook up to a parish system. In the past, Ascension Parish gave developers credit towards sewer development fees if they provided private sewer facilities. The parish recently modified the sewer ordinance to eliminate the credits for internal sewer infrastructure, which creates a revenue source to apply to planning and implementing a parish-wide sewer system.

Ascension Parish has over 24 subdivision-scale sewer plants that serve portions of the parish's unincorporated areas. The Hillaryville Community Sewer plant discharges into the Mississippi River. In the past, property in unincorporated areas of the parish that was not connected to a sewer system had sewer provided by a private management system. The parish is continually acquiring existing plants and will acquire and operate sewer plants as new subdivisions are built.

New development within 300 feet of a sanitary sewer line is required to connect to the parish's system.

Water Utilities

Ascension Parish requires a developer to connect to accessible, approved water systems and provide water service to each lot. All water supplies and distribution systems must be approved by the local health authority and the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH). When no water system is available, the developer or property owner subdividing 19 or fewer lots must provide a system serving each lot with an adequate supply of potable water or include a note on the proposed final plat that individual lot purchasers are required to install their own approved water wells. Any proposed subdivisions of 20 lots or more must have approved systems installed and provide potable water to each lot.

Ascension Parish has two water utility districts.

- Ascension Consolidated Utility District No. 1 (ACUD1) (West of Mississippi River, outside of the Donaldsonville city limits)
- Parish Utilities of Ascension (Formerly Peoples Water Service Company, inside City of Donaldsonville)

All other water systems, such as Ascension Water, are under private management.

The parish is currently improving the water system on the West Bank, replacing approximately 21 miles of distribution lines and all of the meters on that system. An upgrade to the water plant is also planned.

Credit: Ascension Parish

Henderson Bayou floodgates and pumping station.



MASTER DRAINAGE PLAN

The parish is currently in the process of creating a master drainage plan for parish-wide drainage infrastructure. It is anticipated to be completed in 2020. The first step in this process was the completion of a Floodplain Management Implementation Plan, which evaluated policies, procedures, and enforcement practices related to drainage and floodplain management and recommended amendments to ensure consistency in ordinances and practices. The assessment found that

- there are too many documents and inconsistencies, and cross-referencing is not sufficient;
- there is a lack of clear guidance and submittal requirements;
- gaps exist in design requirements, and some design requirements are outdated; and
- there is a disconnect between policy requirements and review/enforcement procedures.

The recommendation was to clarify and update requirements and to expand on submittal requirements for development. As a result of this process, the Ascension Parish Council is reviewing several updates to drainage ordinances and practices.

Floodplain Management

As large areas of the floodplain are filled and there is an increased need for land area where flood waters can be stored, which may impact homes and businesses. The parish works to reduce flood risk in a number of ways.

Drainage Impact Studies

A development application (zoning, subdivision or other request) or a building permit application submitted to the planning commission triggers the requirement for a drainage study. When a drainage impact study is required the developer

or builder must explain how the project design decisions have met local, state, and/or federal requirements for drainage provisions and flood mitigation measures. As part of the study, the proposed mitigation actions that reduce impacts on the natural and built environments must be provided. The parish's Drainage Impact Study Policy establishes the minimum submittal requirements for a Drainage Impact Study and provides that if no construction has begun within 24 months following the acceptance of the drainage impact study, a new Drainage Impact Study must be submitted for review.

Fill Regulations

Ascension Parish currently limits fill to 36 inches and within the footprint of the foundation on individual lots smaller than one-half acre. On individual lots greater than one-half acre, the owners must provide mitigation proof if they are adding more than 36 inches of fill or filling beyond the foundation. The fill amount above 36 inches must be mitigated. For residential lots in a subdivision and for commercial lots, all fill must be mitigated, and there is no limitation of how high the project can be filled. The parish is currently considering amending these regulations to limiting fill to 36 inches in all instances.

Parish-Wide Sewer

Providing a parish-wide sewer system, within the next 20 to 25 years, is a high priority. However, it is such a large project, the parish has developed a plan to phase in sewer service. Historically, developers have provided their own treatment facilities, which were privately owned. These facilities are currently being transitioned into parish ownership. The parish is identifying new discharge sites and locating a new treatment facility. The first phase is to connect existing underutilized infrastructure along LA 42 and LA 73. The parish is currently conducting a customer analysis feasibility study to determine potential areas to tie into the new system. The long-term plan is to construct a

plant in Hillaryville with discharge to the Mississippi River and to continue to work with Donaldsonville and the school district for sewer coverage on the West Bank.

Sewer Development Fees

Ascension Parish currently has sewer development fees. The development fee is a one-time charge for a new project in order to generate revenue for funding new or expanded capital improvements, necessitated by that particular new project and others within a specific geographical district. The cost of projects needed to support growth is financed with development fees based on the measurement of a development's impact on future needs. Funds collected through development fees must be used to finance a public or state interest that is directly related to the development being assessed and may not exceed that development's fair share of the cost of the improvements. Ascension Parish recently modified the sewer development fee ordinance to eliminate previously allowed credits for internal sewer infrastructure.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to drainage, floodplain management, and wastewater are listed here. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Livable Community

- Plan for and provide infrastructure to serve existing and future growth.
- Protect and maintain neighborhoods.
- Influence how the parish grows and what the parish will look like in the future by updating ordinances and development standards aligned with the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan*.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure improvements, including improved roads, drainage, stormwater management, and wetlands protection.
- Plan for a public sewer system to prevent and reduce regulation of discharge into waterways.
- Continue to implement the parish's hazard mitigation plan to prepare for natural disasters, such as flooding and storm events.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Preserve natural floodplain and wetland areas to provide for stormwater management, recreational use, and natural beauty.
- Conserve and protect areas of open green space from increased density and development to maintain natural resources, parks, and recreational facilities as well as to facilitate sustainable development.
- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.
- Preserve the parish's natural beauty and its assets through the use of incentives and

conservation development practices, such as greenbelts and cluster development.

Economy and Education

- Develop updated, clear, objective land use regulations that implement the Plan and provide predictability.

DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Development in High-Risk Areas

The primary risks the parish faces from extreme weather are flooding caused by intense rain events and subsequent downstream impacts, backwater from the Amite River, or flooding from high tides and surge events. Because of the parish's topography and development, some residents live in high-risk areas where flooding has occurred in the past and/or is likely to occur in the future. Those who live in areas where structures have not flooded still face the possibility of being disconnected from critical services if floodwaters impede road access. The August 2016 flood demonstrated that areas that historically had not flooded are at risk of flooding in extreme events. Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other federal agencies warn that the chances of such extreme events will increase in the future.⁴²

More than half of Ascension Parish is in a Special Flood Hazard Area, which has the potential to flood in any given year. As a risk reduction measure, the parish has adopted first floor elevation requirements of building construction one foot over the BFE, which earns points in the CRS. Any future development in the floodplain should consider present and future flood risk and build appropriately, such as to reduce the impacts of development on the floodplain. This could be achieved through higher regulatory standards and permit requirements that require developments to not alter pre-development

hydrology. It is recommended that Ascension Parish review its existing floodplain development standards and update as necessary. Ordinances that increase freeboard and prohibit fill to meet height requirements can earn significant CRS credit.

Reducing the amount of fill used to meet elevation requirements reduces flood risk. Any slope of fill increases runoff velocity, which can lead to soil erosion, scouring, and stormwater quality impairments as well as alterations in local hydrology and the hydrology of borrow pits. To prevent future unintended consequences from the use of fill, communities are identifying and implementing development best practices to incentivize use of the least amount of fill or no fill to meet elevation requirements.

New Proposed Projects

In March 2019, the engineering firm BKI—sponsored by the Pontchartrain Levee District (PLD)—proposed a project to the East Ascension Drainage Board that would consist of a new levee, canal, and pumping station for the southern portion of the parish. The project would be in two parishes, Ascension and St. James. This project is budgeted at more than \$200 million for Ascension’s portion and does not currently have a funding source.

Additional unfunded projects on the East Bank include making LA 22 cuts to mitigate existing conditions by allowing water to flow through LA 22 into McElroy Swamp; exploring improvements—such as modifying bridges, identifying funding, and limiting new development—to the historically flood-prone area along LA 22.

The West Ascension Drainage District is currently participating in a St. James Parish project to clean out silt from Bayou Verret and Bayou Napoleon, where they come together in St. James Parish. The West Ascension Drainage District has committed funds to this project, as has the Lafourche Levee District and Assumption Parish. The Lafourche

Levee District is currently securing right-of-way to obtain access to dig out the silt in the first mile of Bayou Lafourche.

In addition, the parish is working to unclog several obstructed bayous and canals.

Regional Floodplain Coordination

Watersheds cross parish boundaries. Therefore, decisions made and actions taken in one parish can have downstream impacts on the floodplains in another parish—expanding or contracting the risk of flooding in other areas. In May 2018, Governor John Bel Edwards established the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, which has a long-range vision for the state’s multi-pronged approach to mitigating future flood risk focusing on natural boundaries rather than regional, parish, or municipal boundaries.

Through the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, the Council on Watershed Management has established strategies to guide planning, projects, and policies toward long-term flood risk reduction and quality of life improvement across the state. A key element is establishing an integrated planning program in which each watershed has a plan—that was developed by its member parishes—aligned with Louisiana’s plan and existing programs and state agencies support the state plan.

Considering the degree to which communities within a watershed are hydraulically and hydrologically connected, decisions regarding land use, policy, and infrastructure need to be coordinated, made, and implemented at the watershed level if flood risk is to be effectively managed. This collaborative statewide initiative will bring parish representatives together with other state and local organizations to develop recommendations to establish, implement, and enforce floodplain management plans for each watershed in Louisiana.

An example of Ascension Parish working regionally is a recent interlocal agreement approved by the

West Ascension Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 1, St. James Parish Council, Assumption Parish Police Jury, Ascension Parish Government, and Lafourche Basin Levee District to manage drainage in the Lafourche Basin. In addition, Ascension Parish and Livingston Parish are working together to manage drainage regionally, with the best interests of residents in both parishes considered.

Multipurpose Recreation and Open Space Areas

As the parish acquires or develops recreational and open space areas, stormwater management considerations must be part of the planning, design, and construction processes. By integrating stormwater retention and water-based recreational facilities, the parish can increase the area's water capacity by capturing and holding overflow during heavy rain events and provide amenities for residents and visitors. A wetland park could offer recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities and connect to existing and future trails within and near neighborhoods.

Case Study: Wally Pontiff Jr. Park, Metairie, LA

Wally Pontiff Jr. Park, located in the Old Metairie section of Jefferson Parish, is a high-performance landscape that maintains the appearance of a traditional suburban park. In addition to providing significant stormwater retention, it offers recreational opportunities for local residents including ball fields and a gymnasium. Pontiff Playground flooded after Hurricane Katrina and subsequent levee failures, damaging facilities and necessitating near total reconstruction.

The most striking strategy of the reconstruction of Pontiff Park is a three-foot tall earthen berm, which was constructed around the perimeter of the park, creating a 40-acre stormwater retention area that is designed to retain water for up to a day before being siphoned into the 17th Street and Suburban Canals. The bermed area accommodates approximately 52 million gallons of stormwater. This is sufficient to drain six inches of standing water from a surrounding area totaling 180 acres, with the goal of mitigating a 10-year rain event (9.4 inches in a 24-hour period). During heavy rainfall, the playground can be intentionally flooded to help alleviate the burden on surrounding drainage systems. The berm, additional drainage modifications, and required pumps were financed by the Jefferson Parish Drainage Department for approximately \$6 million. Enhancing the pre-Katrina park infrastructure with a cost-effective and high-capacity integrated landscape water management system has reduced risk of flooding in Old Metairie, dual-purposed public land, and has created a popular destination that improves the quality of life for Jefferson Parish residents.⁴³



Credit: Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan: Implementation

Low-Impact Development (LID)

Low-impact development integrates natural systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the retention, infiltration, evaporation, or use of stormwater to protect water quality and manage water. In communities across the state and nation, stormwater management best practices such as LID are being used to complement and support resilient development and redevelopment. Many green infrastructure site-design practices can reduce the cost of infrastructure while maintaining or increasing the value of the property.

Another best practice being implemented across the state and nation is reducing impervious surfaces to decrease the amount of stormwater runoff entering drainage systems. Incorporating

green infrastructure into public and private development—such as permeable driveways and parking lots—can decrease flood risk.

Examples of Low-Impact Development

The parish can promote the following stormwater management strategies through a variety of incentives, programs, and regulations. By creating programs and development regulations, the parish can guide how development occurs at the site and building scale to ensure that the parish’s character and identity are maintained and flood risks are reduced. There are a number of ways in which stormwater runoff can be managed so that its potentially damaging effects can be minimized.

Paving

In more developed areas, most paved surfaces are

Figure 8.5. Paving Material Matrix

	PAVING MATERIAL	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	NATURAL
	Compacted earth			✓
	Wood planks	✓		✓
	Crushed stone, gravel, or shell	✓	✓	✓
	Paver blocks	✓	✓	
	Grassed cellular plastic or concrete	✓	✓	
	Asphalt (conventional / pervious)	✓	✓	
	Concrete (conventional / pervious)	✓	✓	








made of impervious concrete or asphalt, which do not allow water to filter through the material and into the ground. This becomes a problem when large volumes of water move quickly across impervious surfaces, causing flooding, scouring, and erosion. Impervious paving materials are needed for uses such as heavily traveled roads and parking lots because they are strong enough to hold up to heavy use. Generally, porous or permeable paving materials slow down flowing water and allow water to filter through them. For lighter uses, such as residential driveways, patios, and light- to medium-use parking lots, there are a number of suitable

paving materials that can help mitigate the effects of stormwater runoff.

Channeling

It is often necessary to move water away from areas where it may cause damage to homes and other structures. Flood risk may be reduced by combining curbs with gutters and pipes with slower-moving channeling methods that mimic natural hydrology. These options can direct water to natural water courses or to large open space areas where it can be slowly absorbed into the ground.






Figure 8.6. Channeling Method Matrix

	CHANNELING METHOD	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	NATURAL
	Creeks	✓		✓
	Ditches	✓	✓	✓
	Swales	✓		✓
	Riprap channel		✓	
	French drain	✓	✓	
	Concrete pipe		✓	
	Curb and gutter	✓	✓	

Storage

If water cannot be channeled away fast enough, it can be stored nearby using a number of methods including detention or retention ponds or underground cisterns. Stored water can be slowly filtered back in the ground, and it can also be used for irrigation or agricultural purposes.






Figure 8.7. Storage Method Matrix

	STORAGE METHOD	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	NATURAL
	Retention or detention pond	✓		✓
	Landscape or tree wells		✓	
	Underground pipe		✓	
	Vaults or cisterns	✓	✓	
	Convey to natural areas	✓		✓

Filtration/Infiltration

As stormwater flows across surfaces, it picks up whatever sediments, oils, and other contaminants are present. A number of filtration and infiltration methods can be used to protect the health of the water bodies into which this stormwater runoff ultimately flows. The use of certain plants in filtration methods—

Figure 8.8. Infiltration Method Matrix

	INFILTRATION METHOD	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	NATURAL
	Constructed wetland/marsh	✓		✓
	Infiltration pond	✓		✓
	Natural vegetation/surface landscaping	✓		✓
	Bioswales	✓	✓	✓
	Rain garden	✓	✓	✓

such as constructed wetlands, rain gardens, and bioswales—mimics the natural filtration ability of swamps and marshes. The benefits of bioretention include

- maintaining the water table, in turn reducing subsidence, by allowing water to soak into the ground instead of being removed by pipes and pumps;
- reducing flash floods by decreasing the amount of water entering already overtaxed storm sewer pipes during a storm event; and
- reducing contaminants by using plants to soak up pollutants from delayed stormwater before they enter the water system.

Increasing Ditch and Channel Maintenance Programs

Communities across the country have also begun educational programs on maintaining ditches and conveyance channels. Both education and enforcement of regulations and requirements are needed to ensure that local stormwater is able to be captured and drained as originally designed. Several parishes have adopted “Adopt-a-Ditch (or Bayou)” or “Maintain the Drain” programs similar to the “Adopt-a-Bayou” program, which was established by the Louisiana Legislature in 2007 (RS 30:2548). These programs create a structure to develop partnerships with neighborhood associations, nonprofits, academic institutions, merchants, and others to expand existing programs for the removal of litter and other obstructive features that hinder local stormwater conveyance. In addition, it provides the education and framework to facilitate owners, neighborhood associations, and others to maintain nearby culverts, inlets, outlets, and other drainage infrastructure and further increase awareness and public participation in stormwater management.

Case Study: Adopt-A-Ditch Program, Houston, TX

Expanding their existing “Adopt-A-Block” program, the City of Houston’s Department of Public Works and Engineering, Street and Drainage Division partnered with Keep Houston Beautiful, local merchants, volunteers, and residents to transform the adopted areas into clean, maintained, and landscaped places that improve water quality and stormwater management and raise quality of life. As part of this program, in 2015/2016 the City of Houston cleared more than 124 ditches, planted nearly 500 trees and more than 350 flowers and plants, and involved thousands of volunteers.⁴⁴



Volunteers planting vegetation at Adopt-A-Ditch site.
Credit: Jim Olive via Keep Houston Beautiful



Phillips 66 employee volunteers plant trees along a ditch.
Credit: Keep Houston Beautiful



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER*

This section is organized into a drainage, floodplain management, and wastewater vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The drainage, floodplain management, and wastewater vision captures citizens' input on how these services should be provided in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND WASTEWATER VISION

Ascension Parish designs, constructs, and maintains a safe, sustainable, and environmentally sound stormwater, floodplain management, and wastewater system that reduces risk and the potential of flooding, protects natural drainage features, and preserves and enhances water quality to meet the current and future needs of parish residents and businesses. New development complements and improves existing drainage within the watershed.

GOAL 17: REDUCE DEVELOPMENT IN SENSITIVE AREAS AND CONVEYANCE CHANNELS TO REDUCE RISK.

- ▶ **Strategy 17.1:** Revise the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) to include a zoning district that permits one unit per five acres.
 - » Implement a new district that encompasses areas outside of the levee protection system and other wetland areas.
 - » Include implementation standards that allow lots that are less than one acre in size prior to application of the new zoning district to build one dwelling unit on a lot.
- ▶ **Strategy 17.2:** Enforce current Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 9.5 of Ascension Parish Ordinances.

GOAL 18: ESTABLISH CONSENSUS FOR DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS. UPDATE DRAINAGE ORDINANCES, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES TO COORDINATE, CLARIFY, AND INTEGRATE BEST PRACTICES ON HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON WATER QUANTITY AND QUALITY IN SENSITIVE AREAS.

- ▶ **Strategy 18.1:** Continue to develop the *Ascension Parish Master Drainage Plan* to establish standards for stormwater quantity and quality that are consistent with the regional, state, and federal standards for stormwater management.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.2:** Revise Appendix 5 “Drainage” of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).
 - » Clarify, update, and add definitions to fill requirements for individual, subdivisions, and commercial properties.
 - » Continually review drainage design regulations to ensure current storm events can be managed.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.3:** Update Chapter 9.5—Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to be consistent with current regulations and standards.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.4:** Actively enforce drainage regulations and fill restrictions consistently throughout the parish.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.5:** Revise the Drainage Impact Study Policy.
 - » Update requirements so detention methods are functional and effective for at least 25 years.
 - » Expand and clarify submittal requirements.
 - » Clarify and update design criteria and modeling requirements.
 - » Update and expand on watershed flow and conveyance requirements.
 - » Clarify and expand upon fill mitigation/detention requirements.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.6:** Consider establishing a drainage impact fee, a one-time fee paid only by new development to offset development that increases the amount of impervious area. A building permit would trigger this fee.
- ▶ **Strategy 18.7:** Establish a site development permit process that requires parish review

and approval prior to placing fill or moving dirt. This permit would address current issues with unregulated fill.

- ▶ **Strategy 18.8:** Consider requiring houses in the Rural Residential development type to be built on piers.

GOAL 19: IMPROVE THE EXISTING DRAINAGE SYSTEM. REDUCE THE RISK OF FLOODING TO ASCENSION PARISH'S EXISTING AND FUTURE STRUCTURES.

- ▶ **Strategy 19.1:** Improve the condition and capacity of the existing system by implementing the following projects.
 - » Complete drainage system assessments for each individual drainage basin to identify problem areas.
 - » Review major channels going to pumping station to determine impact and needs.
 - » Acquire federal funding to enhance the levee system and the Marvin Braud Pump Station.
 - » Extend the Laurel Ridge Levee and submit for certification.
 - » Improve the pumping station at Sorrento. Expand the capacity to pull water from Sorrento and lower Gonzales.
 - » Add new floodgate at Fish Bayou.
 - » Dredge New River.
- ▶ **Strategy 19.2:** Provide sufficient infrastructure capacity to meet future needs.
 - » Protect the natural functions of hydrological areas, maintain water quality, and control sedimentation.
 - » Minimize stormwater-borne pollutants through implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).
 - » Incorporate stormwater management retention and detention features into the design of parks, trails, and open spaces.
 - » Use pervious materials to minimize impervious surface area.

- » Use vegetative management, such as planted buffers and minimal mowing.

- ▶ **Strategy 19.3:** Identify ways to increase the parish's CRS rating to reduce insurance costs. Potential actions that may increase the CRS rating include
 - » implementing projects to improve floodplain management;
 - » educating property owners on the most current flood maps and risks along with the benefits of flood insurance; and
 - » providing informational materials on the importance of and techniques and impacts of raising structures in Special Flood Hazard Areas.

GOAL 20: CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN EXISTING STORMWATER MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND EXPAND EXISTING DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS.

- ▶ **Strategy 20.1:** Continue subdivision drainage improvement programs through the drainage districts.
- ▶ **Strategy 20.2:** Develop informational materials about the need to maintain ditches in front yards and provide best practices for maintaining ditches.
- ▶ **Strategy 20.3:** Identify waterways without servitude and develop a plan to obtain access to these areas to provide ongoing maintenance of bayous and ditches.
 - » Work to obtain connective servitudes to enable cleanup of bayous and ditches.
 - » Identify major laterals of drainage district.
 - » Identify servitudes and ensure that servitudes are obtained on future subdivision plats.
- ▶ **Strategy 20.4:** Develop and implement an "Adopt-a-Ditch" program that facilitates partnerships with neighborhood associations, nonprofits, academic institutions, and others to expand existing

programs for the removal of litter and other obstructive features that may hinder local stormwater conveyance.

GOAL 21: IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE STORMWATER PRACTICES USING LOW-IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID) TECHNIQUES WHERE PHYSICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY POSSIBLE.

- ▶ **Strategy 21.1:** Incentivize the use of stormwater improvements into all new developments. Promote the use of rain gardens, rooftop gardens, porous soil amendments, hardscape storage, pervious pavement, and other innovative stormwater techniques.
- ▶ **Strategy 21.2:** Retrofit existing parks and open space to incorporate rain gardens and other multiuse detention practices that maintain the park facilities but also slow water discharges into the stormwater system. Examples include lowered flower beds (e.g., instead of raised beds), use of lawn areas for incorporating slight depressions that retain rainfall, and elevating storm drains where water detention is acceptable so that they are not at the lowest elevation.
- ▶ **Strategy 21.3:** Use low-impact development on public projects.

GOAL 22: COLLABORATE WITH ADJACENT PARISHES TO MANAGE WATERSHEDS REGIONALLY.

- ▶ **Strategy 22.1:** Continue to collaborate with adjacent parishes to manage water so that all residents and businesses benefit from floodplain management initiatives that reduce risk.
- ▶ **Strategy 22.2:** Take a leadership role in the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and explore

ways to work with adjacent parishes and communities to incorporate best practices; showcase demonstration projects; and work with state to further regional watershed management efforts.

- ▶ **Strategy 22.3:** Participate in an educational program that promotes floodplain management.

GOAL 23: WORK TOWARD A PARISH-WIDE SEWER SYSTEM THAT COLLECTS WASTEWATER IN AN EFFICIENT, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND MANNER.

- ▶ **Strategy 23.1:** Prepare a comprehensive wastewater master plan.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.2:** Continue planning for phased implementation of parish sewer system.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.3:** Require new development to have design and capacity to hook up to parish system.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.4:** Continue monitoring to identify infrastructure issues needing immediate repair or upgrades.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.5:** Modify and coordinate ordinances to support centralized sewer.
 - » Strategically place sewer lines in areas with high potential for customers.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.6:** Review the fee structure for residential and commercial fees.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.7:** Prioritize sewer in high-growth areas to obtain customer base. Create a system for calculating capacity; update as needed when expansion occurs.
- ▶ **Strategy 23.8:** Reserve right-of-way to incorporate sewer expansions.

GOAL 24: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STORMWATER AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.

- ▶ **Strategy 24.1:** Provide homeowners and business owners information on how to flood proof their properties and how to use landscaping and LID site development to lessen their impact on the watershed.
- ▶ **Strategy 24.2:** Promote the parish's CRS rating to reduce insurance costs and provide details on ways to improve the parish's rating.
- ▶ **Strategy 24.3:** Provide information and training on how to reduce contaminants getting into the water system; topics include how to collect and properly dispose of paint, cleaning products, and debris and how to maintain motor vehicles to prevent leakage of oil, grease, and other fluids.
- ▶ **Strategy 24.4:** Provide education on stormwater issues at all levels—from K-12 to community education initiatives—through outreach and demonstration projects.
- ▶ **Strategy 24.5:** Include interpretive information and educational opportunities that showcase innovative stormwater design and BMP concepts.
- ▶ **Strategy 24.6:** Pursue grants and other opportunities to fund implementation, outreach, and study of stormwater best management practices.





9

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE VISION

Ascension Parish residents have convenient access to multifunctional parks and open space facilities, which provide recreational opportunities for all ages and skill levels. The parks facilities enable residents to have healthy lifestyles and share activities with friends and families. Parents can enjoy walking trails and exercise areas while watching children participate in sports and playground activities. Parks are well maintained, and there are opportunities to walk through natural areas, fish off docks, go boating, and enjoy the parish's many environmental amenities.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE*

Ascension Parish's residents express a strong desire for access to all types of recreational and open space opportunities. As the parish shifts from a rural area to a thriving network of suburban communities, residents continue to value the parish's natural character, recreational opportunities, and unique connections it has to bayous, rivers, and wetlands.

As the parish grows, recreational and open space opportunities become even more critical to the residents' quality of life. This chapter highlights the parish's existing recreation inventory and condition as well as evaluates the future needs of recreation based on projected growth. This assessment will provide a framework for creating a well-planned recreation and open space system as a valued component of community life.

Ascension Parish has 18 parks and recreational facilities managed by the Parish of Ascension Recreation and Culture Department (PARC). The core of Ascension Parish's inventory centers on community parks, which support the parish's team sports culture. The parish has at least four active athletic associations including Ascension Baseball Council, Ascension Youth Softball Association, Ascension Youth Basketball Association, and Gonzales Soccer Club. With both youth and adult teams, these associations utilize the diverse ball fields available to rent, including several competition-grade fields to accommodate larger tournaments. In addition to ball fields, PARC offers five facilities for rent: Ascension Gym, Darrow Community Center, Geismar Community Center, Frank Sotile Pavilion, and the Oak Grove Community Center. The Ascension Gym at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center operates as the parish's only regional park and allows PARC to facilitate a large part of its recreational programming, such as senior sock hops as well as basketball and volleyball facility use. In addition to the sports fields and community centers, PARC facilities include two splash pad parks, disc golf, walking trails, four fitness stations, bayou access, two boat launches, and a fishing pond at Lamar Dixon stocked with trout each year. PARC cultivates and maintains relationships with

the City of Gonzales, City of Donaldsonville, Town of Sorrento, and Ascension Public Schools to expand the parks and recreation inventory. Lease, joint-use, and intergovernmental agreements allow the parish to bridge gaps in areas lacking recreation infrastructure. Additionally, these crucial relationships enable the parish to continue to meet the demand of current programming despite budget limitations and maintenance costs. For example, the parish-owned Geismar Community Center is used on a lease basis for after-school programs and summer camps. Also, the parish accommodates its East Bank youth basketball league by using a number of courts in public schools through the cooperation of Ascension Public Schools.

Municipalities investing in their own recreation systems offer additional opportunities for Ascension Parish residents to participate in recreation, sports programs, and facility use. The City of Gonzales has 10 recreational parks and facilities in operation including an outdoor pool, splash park, and amphitheater. Additionally, Gonzales plans to acquire property for a gym facility in the near future. The City of Gonzales has three facilities currently available to rent including the Gonzales Civic Center, the Spray Park Gazebo, and the Amphitheater at Jambalaya Park. These



Credit: Ascension Parish

St. Amant Recreation Park

rental facilities are available for any East Bank Ascension Parish resident to reserve. Neither the City of Donaldsonville nor the Town of Sorrento has formal recreation departments at present. The Town of Sorrento has a newly formed Recreation Committee within city government that hopes to eventually add a park to the town's inventory. Sorrento's current inventory includes a community center that any parish resident can reserve. The City of Donaldsonville operates five parks including outdoor picnic pavilions, playgrounds, an outdoor basketball facility, and Bicentennial Jazz Plaza. The city also owns the Lemann Memorial Center, an indoor community center that is used as a gym for the parish-run basketball program as well as a reception and event space, which can be rented. Like Sorrento's facility, this community center is available for any parish resident. The City of Donaldsonville and Prevoist Memorial Hospital are partnering to add an outdoor physical fitness park across from the hospital, which owns the land for the park. The city will provide programming for the park. The City of Donaldsonville is exploring opportunities to create a Bayou Lafourche park development, with a trailhead, renovated boat launch, and boat tour with historical and cultural stops along the waterway. This could enhance recreational opportunities on the West Bank and increase traffic along Bayou Lafourche.

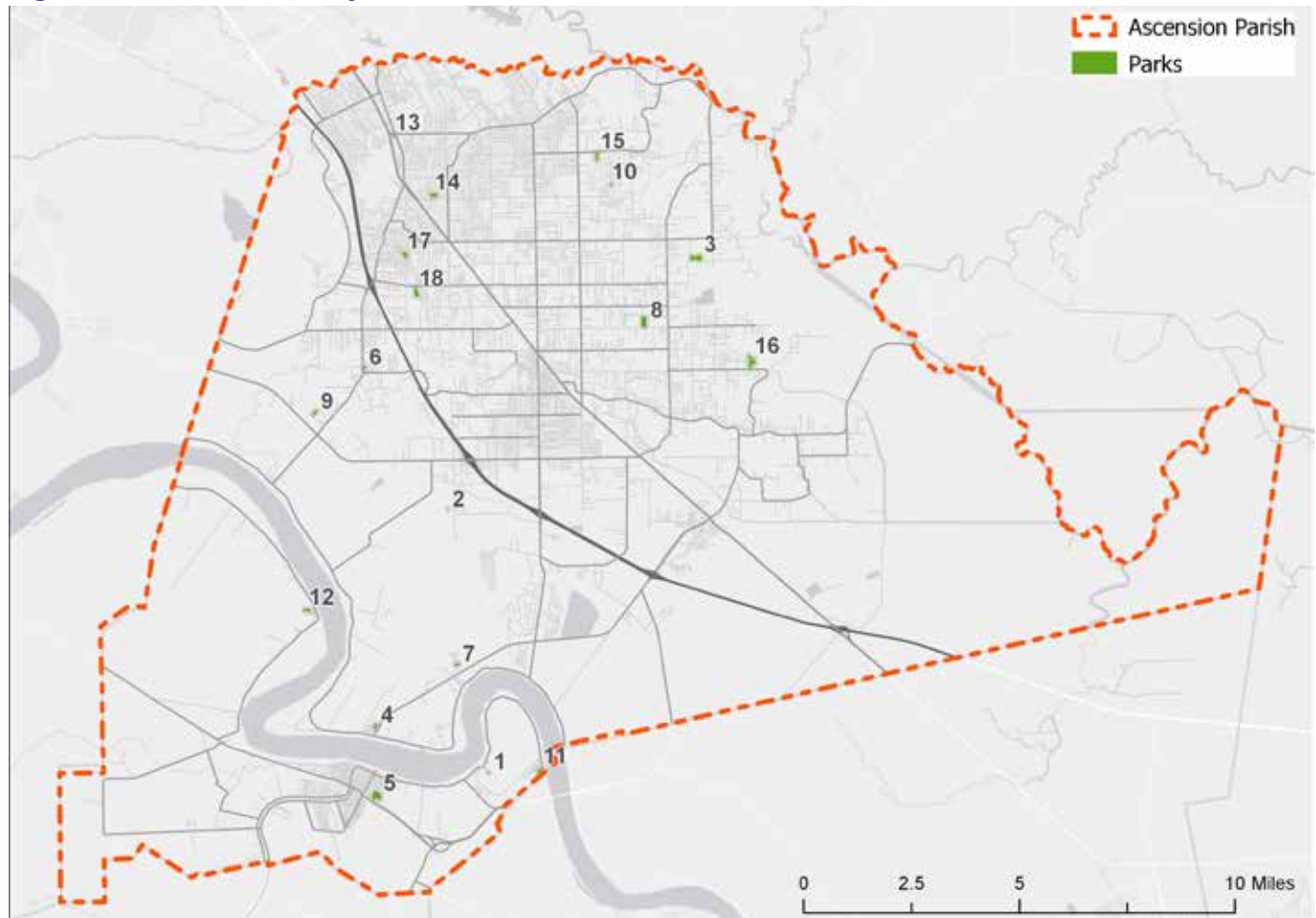
PARC's two public boat launches offer access to Louisiana's southern bayous for fishing and recreational boating. These popular launches include Laurel Ridge Landing on Black Bayou in St. Amant and PJs Landing on Bayou Francois in Sorrento. Additionally, state agencies account for a few additional recreational opportunities within Ascension Parish. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) owns and currently leases their boat launch on the Mississippi River off LA 1

in Donaldsonville. Located in the parish' southeast corner is a small portion of the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area, which also has land in Livingston, St. John the Baptist, St. James, and Tangipahoa Parishes. This ecologically rich area is managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The Maurepas Swamp WMA as a whole totals more than 100,000 acres and allows for open space conservation as well as activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, camping, birdwatching, and hiking.⁴⁵

Partnerships with local homeowners associations (HOAs) also diversify parkland inventory. PARC currently has interlocal agreements in place with two Prairieville subdivision HOAs: Keystone Park in the Keystone of Galvez subdivision and Southwood Park in the Southwood Village subdivision. In this type of agreement, the developer or HOA agrees to dedicate land to the parish for public use and agrees to maintain the landscaping. The parish in turn builds the structure and maintains the amenities, such as the sidewalks, pavilion, picnic tables, and playground. These mutually beneficial relationships provide the parish with cost-effective additions to the public parkland system while also providing developers with favorable conditions to approach subdivision park requirements.

Several parishes have begun construction of a Mississippi River Levee Trail at the crown of the levee between Baton Rouge and New Orleans on both the east and the west banks of the river. This multiuse trail takes advantage of the existing gravel road on the levee crown within the levee servitude. This trail offers a safe path along the river with its breathtaking views most do not get to see due to the height of the levee. Ascension Parish is the only one of eight parishes along this route that does not currently have a trail section constructed.

Figure 9.1. PARC Inventory



PARC INVENTORY LEGEND

#	NAME	ADDRESS
1	Abend Community Park and Playground	Mt. Bethel Lane, Donaldsonville, LA 70346
2	Ascension Gym (located at Lamar Dixon Expo Center)	9039 S St Landry Avenue, Gonzales, LA 70737
3	Butch Gore Memorial Park	14550 Harry Savoy Road, St. Amant, LA 70774
4	Darrow Community Center Playground and Park	37112 Martin Luther King Street, Darrow, LA 70725
5	Frank Sotile, Jr. Pavilion and Recreational Fairground Complex	2162 Thibaut Drive, Donaldsonville, LA 70346
6	Geismar Community Center	12060 LA 73, Geismar, LA 70734
7	Hillaryville Park	5120 Galaxy Boulevard, Darrow, LA 70725
8	J. Leo Stevens Park and Playground	43230 Cannon Road, Gonzales, LA 70737
9	Jackie Robinson Memorial Park	35638 Coco Road, Geismar, LA 70734
10	Keystone Park and Playground	16090 Timberstone Drive, Prairieville, LA 70769
11	Lemanville Park and Playground	3131 LA 18, Donaldsonville, LA 70346
12	Modeste Park and Playground	3544 Butler's Road, Donaldsonville, LA 70346
13	Oak Grove Community Center and Playground	37433 LA 42, Prairieville, LA 70769
14	Prairieville Park and Playground	38430 LA 929, Prairieville, LA 70769
15	Paula Park and Playground	42217 LA 933, Prairieville, LA 70769
16	St. Amant Recreation Park	45404 Stringer Bridge Road, St. Amant, LA 70774
17	Southwood Park and Playground	14318 Parkview Drive, Prairieville, LA 70769
18	Youth Legacy/Duplessis Park	38103 LA 621, Gonzales, LA 70737

PARC INVENTORY

Abend Community Park and Playground (4.87 acres)

Located three miles east of Donaldsonville, Abend Community Park includes a playground, a picnic pavilion with barbeque pits, and an outdoor basketball court.

Ascension Gym

Located at Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Ascension Gym is a 36,000-square-foot indoor facility with a banquet room and a court that can be configured for volleyball or basketball use. The space is available for rent through PARC.

Butch Gore Memorial Park (20.26 acres)

Home field to the Ascension Youth Softball Association, Butch Gore Memorial Park in St. Amant includes four lighted softball fields, two practice fields, four practice soccer fields, three large batting cages, playground equipment, a concession stand, and a 20-table picnic pavilion. Butch Gore Park is one of the only complexes dedicated to youth girls' softball in the state.

Darrow Community Center Playground and Park (6.42 acres)

Located along LA 22 off River Road, Darrow Community Center is an indoor facility with a kitchen that can accommodate up to 150 people. The space is available for rent through PARC. The grounds also include a baseball field, playground equipment, a basketball court, and a limestone walk track.

Frank Sotile, Jr. Pavilion and Recreational Fairground Complex (21.26 acres)

Located off LA 3089 in Donaldsonville, Frank Sotile Pavilion is a large outdoor pavilion utilized for community events such as festivals and music concerts. Behind the pavilion, amenities include four ball fields, a concession stand, and a new splash park.

Geismar Community Center

Located along LA 73 between Dutchtown and Geismar, Geismar Community Center is the newest addition to the parish recreation system. The indoor facility includes a central meeting and reception space available for rent that can accommodate up to 75 people, in addition to several smaller rooms utilized for parish youth programs and summer camps.

Hillaryville Park (3.46 acres)

Located near LA 22 in Darrow, Hillaryville Park is in the process of being rebuilt from its former location on Marchand School Road a few blocks over. The new Hillaryville Park plans to include a picnic pavilion, basketball court, and walking trail.

J. Leo Stevens Park and Playground (18.67 acres)

Located off Cannon Road in Gonzales, J. Leo Stevens Park is a parcel of land that was originally donated by the Stevens family. The facility includes six lighted ball fields, three batting cages, a concession facility, refurbished tennis court, basketball court, and fenced playground area. The backside of the park includes access to a natural trail and fishing pond.

Jackie Robinson Memorial Park (4.56 acres)

Located off LA 73 in Geismar, Jackie Robinson Memorial Park includes a playground with swings, two basketball courts, a lighted ball field, concession facility, and barbeque pavilion with shaded picnic areas.



Recreational Fairground Complex in Donaldsonville



Butch Gore Memorial Park

Keystone Park and Playground (1 acre)

Located behind the Keystone of Galvez subdivision in Prairieville, Keystone Park is a one-acre park with a playground and picnic pavilion.

Lemanville Park and Playground (5.81 acres)

Located along the Mississippi River and LA 18 in Donaldsonville, Lemanville Park and Playground has a basketball court, volleyball court, small baseball field, two barbeque pavilions, and a large picnic pavilion with a playground. The Lemannville community maintains the amenities of this park.

Modeste Park and Playground (8.05 acres)

Located near the Mississippi River in the Modeste community in Donaldsonville, Modeste Park and Playground includes a lighted baseball field, two basketball courts, a large picnic pavilion, and playground equipment with two swing sets.

Oak Grove Community Center and Playground (1.43 acres)

Located in Prairieville off LA 42 at LA 73, Oak Grove Community Center and Playground includes an indoor facility that can accommodate up to 75 people, a sand volleyball court, and a splash park. The community center is available for rent through PARC.

Prairieville Park and Playground (9.72 acres)

Located just off Airline Highway on LA 929 in Prairieville, Prairieville Park and Playground includes playground equipment, a basketball court, a concession stand, and two barbeque pavilions.

Paula Park and Playground (9.67 acres)

Home field for the Ascension Parish T-Ball Association, Paula Park and Playground includes six small lighted baseball fields, two concession stands, barbeque pavilions, and a playground area. Located off LA 933 in Prairieville, Paula Park was PARC's original site for youth sports.

St. Amant Recreation Park (28.84 acres)

St. Amant Recreation Park houses the Ascension Parish Recreation and Culture Department office. There are plans to rebuild the former recreation center into a multiuse office and recreational space. St. Amant Recreation Park presents several opportunities for recreation program expansion. The current facility includes three lighted ball fields, two batting cages, a small outdoor fitness station, a walking trail along the perimeter of the park, and water access behind the park.

Southwood Park and Playground (7.06 acres)

Located behind Southwood Village subdivision in Prairieville, Southwood Park and Playground includes a lighted ball field, basketball court, concession stand, barbeque pavilion, and playground.

Youth Legacy/Duplessis Park (10.25 acres)

Located along LA 621 in Gonzales, Youth Legacy/Duplessis Park includes over 10 acres of shady facilities. The park includes multiple tennis courts, volleyball and badminton courts, barbeque pavilions, horseshoe pits, a walking trail, disc golf course, and playground.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL SITE INVENTORY

Occupied by native tribes since the 1200s and one of the original parishes created by the territorial government in 1807, Ascension Parish offers residents and visitors access to a wealth of historically and culturally rich destinations. In addition to parks, recreational sites, and various attractions, the parish has multiple sites on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).⁴⁶

- Ascension Parish Courthouse, Jail, and Louisiana Square, also known as Place de la Louisiane
- Ashland Plantation, also known as Belle Helene
- Bocage Plantation
- Dixon House, also known as Moore House
- Donaldsonville Historic District
- Evan Hall Slave Cabins
- Fort Butler
- Galvez Town Site, also known as Old Spanish Town
- Helvetia Dependency
- Hermitage Plantation
- The Houmas, also known as Houmas House
- Kraemer House
- Landry Tomb
- Lemann Store
- Mulberry Grove
- Palo Alto Dependency
- Palo Alto Plantation
- Rome House
- St. Emma Plantation
- Robert Penn Warren House, also known as Twin Oaks



Ascension Parish Courthouse



Lemann Store



Houmas House
Credit: Ascension Parish Tourism Commission

Several other historically and culturally significant places exist throughout the parish outside of the National Register of Historic Places. Protecting and maintaining these types of sites enriches the parish's culture, and cultural planning is a crucial aspect to uphold the parish's sense of place. These activities not only create strong community ties but also can maximize long-term public investment, enhance quality of life, and increase economic development. Currently, the Ascension Parish Tourism Commission recognizes a number of historic sites and museums in addition to those on the National Register.⁴⁷

- Ascension Veterans Memorial Park
- Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church
- Donaldsonville's historic cemeteries, including Ascension of Our Lord Cemetery (Catholic), Bikur Cholim Cemetery (Jewish), and Donaldsonville Protestant Cemetery
- River Road African American Museum
- Tee Joe Gonzales Museum



Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church



Bikur Cholim Cemetery
Credit: Visit Donaldsonville



River Road African American Museum
Credit: Ascension Parish Tourism Commission



Tee Joe Gonzales Museum

OPEN SPACE

Approximately 17 percent of Ascension Parish's total land area consists of open space. Public parks and associated facilities are forms of open space. However, not all open spaces are public, and not all open spaces are parks. The American Society of Landscape Architects refers to public open spaces as "view corridors; linear greenways along waterways and railroad rights of way; privately owned lands covered by scenic easements; the preservation of landscapes that are threatened by development; wetlands; and the preservation of areas of ecological importance." This list offers a well-defined starting point for understanding the potential functions of open space. Within public open space, there is the opportunity for both active and passive recreational spaces. Active recreational open space broadly refers to public parkland that has developed uses for recreation and open space appreciation with hardscapes and landscaped grounds. This includes PARC's 18 previously described facilities. PARC estimates approximately 90 percent of its total recreation inventory is developed and available for public use.

The remaining open space generally consists of wetlands, undevelopable floodplains, and private easements. As a whole, these are considered areas of passive recreational open space, which is generally undeveloped land protected and managed as a natural environment, such as wetlands protection, undevelopable floodplains, and stormwater mitigation. An example of passive recreational space in Ascension Parish is the natural bayou and access point behind St. Amant Recreation Park. Areas such as these require minimal maintenance but still provide recreational opportunities to preserve and enjoy the natural environment.

EXISTING EFFORTS TO MANAGE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Current Subdivision Standards for Parks⁴⁸

Accessible parks and playgrounds play an essential role in creating a quality living environment. To provide neighborhood parks, parishes and municipalities can require developers to provide public open space during the subdivision platting process. Provisions for public open spaces in subdivisions are critical to managing increasing densities and variable land uses that are not always compatible. The parish's ULDC contains park design standards for major subdivisions:

- Eight acres of recreation/park space per 1,000 population generated by the new major subdivision is required (2.5 persons per household).
- Recreational space must be defined as active recreational play areas/parks, trails, and passive play areas.
- Wetlands, wet and dry stormwater ponds, and lands that are periodically inundated and unusable may not be used to meet the park requirement unless public accessibility improvements are made.
- Required park acreage must be comprised of at least 50 percent of lands that are not wetlands or stormwater ponds.
- Required park acreage may be split into multiple parks; however, no park may be less than half of one acre in size.

Besides provisions for acreage and land type, the parish has guidelines for amenities such as sidewalks and tree allocation. Stage 1 is the minimum standard for developers in a major subdivision. To meet the Stage 1 requirements, the park must have

- a sidewalk or walking trail that connects the park to the homes in the subdivision;
- a sign identifying the area as a private park

and under the ownership/maintenance of the HOA; and

- at least 12 Class A trees and 24 ornamental trees per acre.

From this basis, developers may elect to increase their commitment beyond the Stage 1 minimum requirements. These are referred to as Stages 2, 3, and 4 and include standards for providing amenities such as lighting additions, picnic pavilions, play fields, and pools. Developers may reduce the park acreage by providing a higher level of amenities; however, reducing the acreage beyond those set by the minimum requirements could result in a deficit of park area for these subdivisions.

Similar standards exist for townhouse subdivisions. In these often more compact residential spaces, the park requirements are 200 square feet of recreational space per dwelling unit, a minimum width of 45 feet, and a central location near a majority of units. In all cases, maintenance and upkeep are the sole responsibilities of the developer and ultimately the HOA.

Parks Improvement and Maintenance

PARC schedules routine maintenance in its parks and facilities on a rotating basis and makes improvements to existing facilities as staffing and budget allow. However, maintenance funding increases do not match the rising demand to maintain current facilities and the need to update and improve older parks. With a staff size of 20 people, maintenance responsibilities have surpassed the capacity for employees alone. Often, declining maintenance capabilities and resources for capital improvements leave parks in poor condition, making them less attractive to the public and therefore underutilized. Additionally, PARC would like to expand its programming and park inventory to meet the parish's growing needs.

Lamar Dixon Expo Foundation

Originally built by Mary Lee and Bill Dixon, the Lamar Dixon Expo Center is a state-of-the-art multiuse events facility that will support charitable organizations and community development. In 2009, Ascension Parish purchased the Lamar Dixon Expo Center through the use of grants and private donations.⁴⁹ The Lamar Dixon Expo Foundation, established by the family, is a civic foundation with net assets of \$2.65 million in 2017.⁵⁰ The foundation, whose purpose is to promote community welfare for recreational purposes, supports the Lamar Dixon Expo Center. Currently, there are no other parks foundations in Ascension Parish.



Parish park maintenance. Credit: Ascension Parish



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to recreation and open space are listed below. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the recreation and open space vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Preserve natural floodplain and wetland areas to provide for stormwater management, recreational use, and natural beauty.
- Conserve and protect areas of open green space from increased density and development to maintain natural resources, parks, and recreational facilities and to facilitate sustainable development.
- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.
- Increase and diversify recreational opportunities, including sports fields, play space, skate parks, passive recreational areas, walking trails, and natural areas.
- Provide more walkable connections, trails, and bike paths that connect people to recreational areas and open space.
- Preserve the natural beauty of the parish and its assets through the use of incentives and conservation development practices, such as greenbelts and cluster development.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Benefits of Parks and Open Space

Well-planned parks and recreation systems are integral to creating a “complete community.” Parks and open space provide many benefits to strengthen communities and make them more attractive places to live and work. According to the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), parks and recreation are recognized as essential public services because of their health opportunities, environmental benefits, and social and economic values.⁵¹

Health Opportunities: Parks and recreation systems promote physical and psychological well-being.

- Provide safe physical spaces for exercise.
- Provide access to sports and recreational programming to all ages.
- Strengthen communities’ interpersonal relationships.
- Connect people to nature and provides space for relaxation.



*Oak Grove Community
Park and Playground*

Credit: Ascension Parish

Environmental Benefits: Parks and recreation systems promote environmental infrastructure and sustainability practices.

- Conserve natural features and habitats.
- Provide carbon reducing landscapes—one acre of trees absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by driving a car 11,000 miles.⁵²
- Assist in stormwater management and ecological resilience.
- Promote environmental stewardship and responsibility.
- Preserve open space for future generations.

Social Values: Parks and recreation systems provide social equity to residents.

- Create local destinations for community engagement.
- Increase community engagement and fosters community pride.
- Connect people to each other as well as to the natural environment.
- Serve as a tangible reflection of community cohesion.
- Provide equal access to all residents.

Economic Values: Parks and recreation systems serve as a catalyst for and provide a foundation for place-based economic development.

- Increase property values. In turn, this increases property tax revenues.
- Generate indirect revenue to local economy through special events and recreational tournaments.
- Attract consumers and foster local job creation.
- Increase tourism.

In addition to the nationally recognized values of parks and open space highlighted above, Ascension Parish has a unique opportunity for economic benefit with the Community Rating System (CRS) through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

CRS defines open space as “free from buildings, filling, paving or other encroachment to flood flows” and requires that land designated for preservation must have “a signed statement from a public or creditable private owner or regulations that prohibit buildings, filling, or other encroachments on flood flows.”⁵³

The parish can earn additional CRS credits if more land is preserved as open space. Two options to achieve this include having property owners within Special Flood Hazard Areas restrict their deeds so that development does not occur and having communities build parks that preserve open space and use acceptable forms of development such as recreational trails and playgrounds.

Types of Parks

The following categories describe the common park types in Ascension Parish and their general characteristics. In the past, the NRPA prescribed acreage per person and distance standards based on park types similar to the ones below. Though NRPA no longer promotes the same standards, these park types are easily understood and can be helpful in considering Ascension Parish’s future needs.

Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are examples of open space at a small scale. They function as play areas for children and may include a playground structure or picnic area. Pocket parks are often created through community efforts or by private agencies to benefit a particular group, such as special educational facilities, or a neighborhood. Pocket parks are also useful in urban and mixed-use areas where space is restricted. In Ascension Parish, pocket parks are most commonly seen within subdivisions per parish development requirements, for example Keystone Park in the Keystone of Galvez development.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks serve as recreational and social centers for the local community. They are often centrally located to allow for ease of access to residents within their service area. These parks accommodate a range of recreational activities and often have spaces for organized activities, such as outdoor courts and fields. They are generally more than five to 10 acres. An example of a neighborhood park is Southwood Park and Playground in Prairieville.

Community Parks

Community parks generally serve a broader geographic area than neighborhood parks. They encompass a greater amount of open space and accommodate a wide variety of amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, walking trails, and picnic pavilions. Community parks are generally between 30 and 50 acres. Butch Gore Memorial Park is an example of a community park.

Regional Parks

Regional parks may serve and connect several communities. These large multipurpose areas may include a combination of recreational facilities and programs such as nature preserves, indoor facilities for programming, outdoor sports courts and fields, and playgrounds. Lamar Dixon is the parish’s only regional park.

Natural Areas

Natural areas refer to open spaces that are preserved as a means of conservation and environmental stewardship. Sometimes set aside to support native habitats, these areas promote natural ecosystem functions, such as water retention, and provide educational value. Examples of natural areas in Ascension Parish are Babin Canal behind St. Amant Recreation Park or the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Assessment of Needs—Type and Location

In 2018, 1,069 park and recreation agencies submitted park metrics data for the NPRA Agency Performance Survey. This information was compiled for the *2018 NPRA Agency Performance Review*, which provides a peer-to-peer comparison of operating resources and capital facilities. The review presented benchmarks, which focus on the social and economic conditions that define a community, and offered a framework for recreation agencies to plan and budget their parks and recreation systems. For Ascension Parish, the review is a valuable tool to assess the needs for recreation and open space.⁵⁴

The typical park and recreation agency has 10.1 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents. An agency with a jurisdictional population of a similar size to Ascension Parish (100,000 to 250,000 residents) has a median 8.5 acres for every 1,000 residents.

Figure 9.2. Acres of Park Land per 1,000 Residents by Jurisdictional Population

	All Agencies	100,000 to 250,000 Jurisdictional Population
Median	10.1	8.5
Lower Quartile	5.1	4.1
Upper Quartile	17.4	15.6
Ascension Parish	n/a	1.41 (estimate)

Source: 2018 NPRA National Agency Performance Review

With a resident population of 117,009 as of 2016, Ascension Parish’s population density is approximately 441 residents per square mile. Using the *2018 NPRA Agency Performance Review* metrics as a comparison, this puts Ascension Parish in the lowest population density category with “fewer than 500 residents per square mile.” Figure 9.3 highlights Ascension Parish’s current facility inventory and the median number of residents per facility for agencies with a similar population. The table also lists Ascension Parish’s desired number of facilities in each category, based on discussions with parish staff.



Paddle Bayou Lafourche, 2018
Credit: Ascension Parish Tourism Commission

Figure 9.3. Population per Facility

Facility Type	Ascension Parish Inventory—Current Number of Public Facilities	Ascension Parish Number of Residents per Facility (Based on 2016 population)	Median Number of Residents per Facility for Agencies with Similar Jurisdictional Population (Fewer than 500 Residents per Square Mile)	Ascension Parish Desired Number of Public Facilities
Outdoor Park and Recreation Facilities				
Playgrounds	15	7,801	6,132	17
Tot lots (playgrounds for small children)	2	58,505	19,766	5
Basketball courts	5	23,402	7,869	10
Multiuse courts: basketball, volleyball	4	29,252	12,757	10
Diamond fields: baseball—adult	4	29,252	15,000	4
Diamond fields: baseball—youth	16	7,313	6,628	20
Diamond fields: softball fields—adult	2	58,505	10,957	4
Diamond fields: softball fields—youth	10	11,701	10,495	14
Diamond fields: T-ball	6	19,502	11,270	6
Rectangular fields: football field	0	0	21,750	2
Rectangular fields: multipurpose	0	0	9,043	2
Rectangular fields: soccer field	7	16,716	10,250 (for adult fields) 5,584 (for youth fields)	7
Skate park	0	0	27,375	1
Swimming pools (outdoor only)	0	0	42,344	1
Tennis courts (outdoor)	2	58,505	5,462	4
Community gardens	0	0	37,571	1
Dog park	0	0	51,804	3
Multipurpose synthetic field	0	0	35,238	4
Indoor Park and Recreation Facilities				
Recreation centers	0	0	25,000	3
Gym	1	117,009	21,000	3
Community centers	3	39,003	24,746	5
Senior centers	0	0	26,750	1
Fitness center	0	0	33,000	3
Performance amphitheater	0	0	43,735	2
Nature centers	0	0	160,380	1
Stadiums	0	0	27,375	1
Indoor track	0	0	25,000	2
Teen centers	0	0	16,440	3

Sustainable Practices

Stormwater Management with Parks and Recreational Facilities

Parks and open space serve a vital ecological function to facilitate natural stormwater management and to reduce impervious surfaces that do not allow rainwater to absorb and infiltrate the ground. In urban landscapes, impervious cover repels the rainwater and forces overland flow. Naturally vegetated landscapes that permit infiltration help replenish the water table, reduce pollutants from rainwater and runoff, and decrease erosion and flood risk. In many areas nationwide, playgrounds, baseball fields, soccer fields, and other types of recreational spaces are intentionally created as multifunctional spaces to retain water during rain events. Retaining water on site provides many ecosystem services, including infiltration, pollutant and silt removal, and runoff velocity reduction, which decreases soil erosion.

Preservation and Protection of Wetlands and Other Designated Natural Areas

Environmental/ecological resiliency is built on the presence of trees, groundcover, and other natural areas that assist with stormwater management and reduce urban heat islands. Ascension Parish has many scenic natural features that are great habitats for plants and wildlife. These areas include lakes, rivers, bayou, forests, and wetlands. It is important that these environmental assets are protected and conserved to foster a green, active, ecologically diverse and economically sound community. Protecting these natural resources for future generations to use and enjoy will pass on this important cultural asset for years to come.

Case Study: Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, Baton Rouge, LA

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center is located on 103 acres of varied habitats including cypress-tupelo swamp, beech-magnolia, and hardwood forests. The site is home to hundreds of bird species, snakes, turtles, raccoons, rabbits, opossums, armadillos, squirrels, foxes, coyotes, deer, and otter. In addition to over a mile of paths and boardwalks, Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center features live animal exhibits, photography of area wildlife and flora, natural artifacts, and periodic art and ecology exhibits. Conference and event space is available for rent.⁵⁵



Credit: Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC)

Universal Design Principles

Universal design is defined as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”⁵⁷ Roughly 20 percent of the world population has some type of condition that impacts their ability to engage in daily life activities.⁵⁸ Universal design principles support this diverse population of all ages and abilities, ensuring that park and recreational spaces are accessible to these individuals, their friends, and family.

Design principles that increase accessibility to parks and recreational areas include the following components.

- Attractive to people with diverse abilities and accessible to all users.
- Easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- Accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- Communicates necessary information effectively to users with a variety of sensory abilities.
- Uses different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for presentation of essential information.
- Provides appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user’s body size, posture, or mobility.
- Minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- Can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Case Study: Spring Creek Nature Area and Galatyn Woodland Preserve, Richardson, TX

Spring Creek Nature Area covers 51 acres in Richardson, Texas and includes a multiuse trail, hardwood forest, a pedestrian bridge over winding Spring Creek, picnic benches, and a horseshoe pit. A trail links the nature area to the adjacent Galatyn Woodland Preserve, which is eight acres with a multiuse trail, picnic areas, an animal sculpture playground, a boardwalk for bird-watching, wetland ponds, and three horseshoe pits. The natural areas provide educational opportunities for all ages.⁵⁶



Credit: DARTable Destinations



Credit: Schrickel, Rollins Parkhill Smith and Cooper

Maintenance Practices

PARC facilities require continual maintenance as well as capital improvements. The key concern with the current system is that there is a wealth of potential in the spaces currently owned and operated; however, the budget and workload do not afford for the appropriate maintenance and improvements to be made. Existing demands should be addressed so the parish can expand the park and recreation system in the future. Some opportunities to address these concerns from an operational standpoint are noted below.

- Creating written standards to provide a framework for best practices and ensure sustained quality among all facilities.
- Implementing maintenance and landscape quality standards.
- Identifying new funding sources would allow the parish to address current facility maintenance needs and proactively approach future expansions.
- Increasing staff size would improve maintenance consistency and availability.
- Creating an “Adopt a Park” program could provide volunteer assistance.
- Adding fees for park use by residents and/or visitors in some situations.

An inventory of deferred facility, building, and equipment maintenance needs would allow PARC staff to facilitate preventative maintenance schedules and understand future staffing needs.

Funding Sources

In addition to funding through the Ascension Parish budget, several federal grants and private industry opportunities are available for parks and recreational programming. Strategies implemented by local government and private partnerships can also play key roles in achieving infrastructure improvements and offsetting maintenance costs. The following programs and funding opportunities could help expand the parish’s recreational options.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program assists communities with resources to address a wide range of community development needs. Developed under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, it is one of the longest sustained programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). CDBG funds must benefit people of low- and moderate-income and are generally associated with affordable housing projects. However, CDBG funding is a powerful tool for recreation departments to facilitate public park improvements. The low- to moderate-income requirements allow parish and municipal recreation and parks agencies to invest in areas with some of the highest needs for recreational space and programming.⁵⁹

Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act funds surface transportation infrastructure planning and programs. Passed by Congress on December 1, 2015, the FAST Act builds on the 2012 legislation—the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)—and authorizes more than \$305 billion in funding for highway and public transportation programs and investment for fiscal years 2016 through 2020.⁶⁰ An average of \$844 million is set aside annually for transportation alternatives (TA) from the Surface Transportation Block Grant program. Eligible TA funds are allocated for a variety of projects including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, safe routes to school, recreational trails, historic preservation, and scenic beautification as well as environmental mitigation, such as stormwater management.⁶¹

States and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for urbanized areas with more than 200,000 people are eligible to compete for TA funding. Ascension Parish is part of the federally designated Baton Rouge Urbanized Area. Capital Region Planning Commission is the Baton Rouge



Oak Grove Community Park and Playground



Butch Gore Memorial Park

area's designated MPO and is responsible for the allocation of federal transportation funding for projects within the MPO.⁶²

The National Park Service (NPS) Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program

The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) is a nationally competitive grant funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and administered by NPS. These grants provide funding to develop and enhance state and locally owned park and outdoor recreational areas in ways that help provide the public with access to the outdoors. Specifically, funding may be used to acquire land for public recreational use as well as support the access and enjoyment of outdoor recreational facilities, such as community parks, playgrounds, sports fields, picnic areas, hiking trails, boat launches, and restrooms. States and local government agencies with populations of 50,000 or more and consisting of densely settled territory are eligible to apply.⁶³ A total of \$13.3 million of federal funding was available through the 2018 ORLP.⁶⁴

Park and Open Space Impact Fees

Impact fees are commonly used by local governments to balance the cost of maintenance and development. Fees are generally imposed on all new developments with the notion that increased development and/or population increases the demand on existing facilities. Therefore, these fees are necessary to improve existing facilities and finance new public facilities and programs. Park and open space impact fees can be utilized for the acquisition and development of larger regional parks, local parks, public open space, and park improvements.

Drainage Impact Fees

Municipalities are increasingly using local drainage ordinances and fees to regulate businesses and development with large areas of impervious surfaces to limit stormwater impacts. As discussed

in detail in the Drainage, Floodplain Management, and Wastewater chapter, urban development increases the occurrence and often the intensity of flooding by removing natural vegetation and soil, grading land surfaces, and covering floodplains with pavement. Stormwater management practices, including impact fees, are put in place to counteract the challenges associated with development and minimize future threats to community safety and property. A drainage impact fee is generally based on the percentage or square footage of impervious surface a new development will create. If implemented, these fees could contribute to building multipurpose park and stormwater management facilities.

Park Foundation

A park foundation is an independent, private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that supports a specific park or a community of parks. Many governmental agencies have park foundations to generate financial support as well as build public/private partnerships to invest in future park and recreation campaigns. Donations received by a park foundation can support an entire parish park system. BREC, the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, is an example of a parish implementing the foundation system. BREC Foundation has been in operation since 2004 and remains a close partner in helping BREC support its mission and strategic planning through fund development. Park foundations enable community park systems to garner support from local, regional, and national sources.⁶⁵

The National Recreation and Park Association (NPRA)

The National Recreation and Park Association maintains a Grant and Fundraising Resources page on their website. This resource highlights available government and foundation grant opportunities for park and recreation agencies.⁶⁶



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE*

This section is organized into a Recreation and Open Space vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The Recreation and Open Space vision captures citizens' input on how parks and open space should be provided in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE VISION

Ascension Parish residents have convenient access to multifunctional parks and open space facilities, which provide recreational opportunities for all ages and skill levels. The parks facilities enable residents to have healthy lifestyles and share activities with friends and families. Parents can enjoy walking trails and exercise areas while watching children participate in sports and playground activities. Parks are well maintained, and there are opportunities to walk through natural areas, fish off docks, go boating, and enjoy the parish's many environmental amenities.

GOAL 25: TRANSFORM PARKS INTO MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES OF RECREATION AND FITNESS.

- ▶ **Strategy 25.1:** Inventory existing parks and develop a plan and budget for adding multipurpose functions to parks. Prepare a phased approach to make improvements over a five-year time frame.
- ▶ **Strategy 25.2:** As new facilities are developed, ensure that they are designed with the goal of creating multifunctional parks for the enjoyment of a range of generations—from toddlers to seniors.
- ▶ **Strategy 25.3:** Include fitness stations at all parks to promote wellness throughout the parish.
- ▶ **Strategy 25.4:** Amend the subdivision ordinance to require parks provided by subdivision developers to have several functions or implement a "fee in lieu of" method of acquiring and improving larger community park spaces.
- ▶ **Strategy 25.5:** Provide multipurpose trails on the levees on both sides of the Mississippi

River to connect to the Mississippi River Trail, designed for bicycle and pedestrian use.

» Identify public funding sources and public/private partnerships to fund trail.

- ▶ **Strategy 25.6:** Prioritize improvements to the current park system before implementing expansion projects.
 - » Build on the potential of the current park inventory to make necessary capital improvements.
 - » Use innovative budget strategies to plan and implement improvements and additions to current facilities.
 - » Transform the park inventory into valuable destinations for recreation, engagement, and social gathering.
- ▶ **Strategy 25.7:** Explore providing emergency shelters at future community centers.

GOAL 26: EXPAND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING DIVERSITY TO REACH ALL AGE GROUPS AND ABILITIES.

- ▶ **Strategy 26.1:** Assess existing program offerings and conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps.
- ▶ **Strategy 26.2:** Consider implementing universal design principles in the planning and construction of new parks and recreational facilities.
- ▶ **Strategy 26.3:** Increase program capacity beyond team sports to be more comprehensive and accessible to residents with varying interests and skill levels.
- ▶ **Strategy 26.4:** Develop programs and partnerships with parish schools to implement after-school programs.
- ▶ **Strategy 26.5:** Partner with Ascension Parish School Board to plan for future school needs for multi-school facilities able to

accommodate several high school events as property becomes more scarce and athletic facilities are not possible at all area high schools.

- ▶ **Strategy 26.6:** Collaborate with local Council on Aging centers in Gonzales and Donaldsonville and explore other potential partners to provide senior activities and classes.
- ▶ **Strategy 26.7:** Provide resources and education on the protection of wetlands and natural areas for staff, residents, and business groups.

GOAL 27: EVALUATE CURRENT MAINTENANCE NEEDS TO PROACTIVELY MANAGE FUTURE MAINTENANCE RESOURCES.

- ▶ **Strategy 27.1:** Assess current maintenance plan and procedures to ensure efficiencies in staff time and consistency in facility condition.
 - » Create written procedures for maintenance staff to acknowledge best practices with the goal of updating and improving them annually or as situations require.
 - » Implement written procedures with the intention of creating awareness for annual budgeting for the care of parish parks and facilities.
- ▶ **Strategy 27.2:** Increase the maintenance budget so facilities attract and retain more visitors.

GOAL 28: INCREASE FUNDING FOR PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE.

- ▶ **Strategy 28.1:** Identify new funding streams for parks and recreational facilities.
 - » Identify governmental and private sector grant opportunities.

- » Investigate how to structure park and stormwater management impact fees.
- » Research how to create a park foundation for the parish system.
- » Expand the donor base to encourage significant donations and provide major donors with naming opportunities for parks or fields.

- ▶ **Strategy 28.2:** Examine current parks and recreation expenditures to prioritize designated areas of funding (e.g., maintenance, recreational programming, staffing, etc.) and explore applicable funding options for each.
- ▶ **Strategy 28.3:** Enter into agreements with the school district, private athletic associations, and nonprofit organizations to offset park maintenance costs.
- ▶ **Strategy 28.4:** Implement a fee structure for park use where appropriate.
- ▶ **Strategy 28.5:** Expand resources through innovative partnerships.
 - » Build on the partnerships with Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento to expand public access to open space and recreation and to coordinate infrastructure projects.
 - » Continue to partner with the school system to provide joint-use facilities.
 - » Partner with nonprofits to create nature learning centers, ecological demonstrations, and other educational facilities.
 - » Develop a program for businesses to partner with PARC, either through shared land or other donations.

GOAL 29: PROTECT AND CONSERVE OPEN SPACE AS A FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT TOOL.

- ▶ **Strategy 29.1:** Coordinate parks and open space design and development with parish floodplain management needs.

- ▶ **Strategy 29.2:** Design stormwater management facilities on public open spaces as a recreational asset.
- ▶ **Strategy 29.3:** Implement stormwater management techniques within the current park system and future open spaces by including multiuse retention areas, permeable paths and sidewalks, water gardens, and other amenities.
- ▶ **Strategy 29.4:** Create a demonstration park that showcases sustainable water management practices and market this throughout the region as an educational learning center on southern Louisiana's natural systems.

GOAL 30: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF PARISH PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND PROGRAMMING.

- ▶ **Strategy 30.1:** Update the Recreation page on Ascension Parish's website to provide current information on facilities, programs, and public interest stories.
- ▶ **Strategy 30.2:** Promote parish facilities and programming through the Ascension Parish Facebook page and other social media.
- ▶ **Strategy 30.3:** Partner with nonprofits to host food, craft, and music festivals and events.

GOAL 31: PREPARE A COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN.

- ▶ **Strategy 31.1:** Build off the guiding principles of the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* to prioritize the PARC system as a integral entity of the parish community. Work toward creating a recreation and open space master plan to identify specific community preferences and a unifying vision

for how PARC should look in the future. The plan should include the following aspects:

- » Identify goals for a well-planned system of parks, public spaces, and natural areas.
 - » Address maintenance of existing park facilities and expectations about how to address future growth and demand.
 - » Include a full inventory and analysis of the current system to be made available to the public and periodically updated.
 - » Seek community input from residents and schools to assess needs, demands, and usage.
 - » Propose a funding plan to achieve desired parks, recreation, and open space goals.
- ▶ **Strategy 31.2:** Plan for future expansion of the park and recreation system.
 - » Strategically acquire new parkland and open space that has the potential to attract widespread use, is accessible from multiple parts of the parish, and has the potential to generate revenue.
 - » Add acreage to existing parks where possible to increase service areas.
 - » Explore methods for new nonresidential and mixed-use development to provide public parkland and resources to develop needed park and open space facilities.

GOAL 32: PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE PARISH'S HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.

- ▶ **Strategy 32.1:** Develop historic and cultural resource programs for a variety of interests and age levels.
 - » Support the Ascension Parish Tourism Commission in partnership with the Cities of Gonzales and Donaldsonville and local organizations to develop and promote programs focused on historic and cultural events.

- » Cultivate relationships with local museums and historical sites.
- » Create markers and wayfinding for featured sites.

GOAL 33: IMPLEMENT ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

- ▶ **Strategy 33.1:** Invest in resilience infrastructure and sustainable materials for parks and trails.
- ▶ **Strategy 33.2:** Evaluate and incorporate the following sustainable practices where possible:
 - » LED lighting
 - » Gray water watering system
 - » Native plants
 - » Organic compost for fertilizer
 - » Pervious parking areas
 - » Bioretention areas
 - » Educational signage
- ▶ **Strategy 33.3:** Improve connectivity among parks, open spaces, and adjacent uses.
- ▶ **Strategy 33.4:** Identify recreational facilities that are inefficient, underutilized, or not cost-effective, and reprogram or repurpose them to other program areas needed within the parish.





10

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT VISION

Within the parish, residents have diverse, quality employment options concentrated along the Mississippi River, along major transportation corridors, at major intersections, and in neighborhood hubs. The parish will be stronger economically with a more diverse economic base and an improved balance of jobs and housing between the East and West Banks.



WHERE WE ARE NOW: *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT*

Along with Ascension Parish’s high quality of life and attractive education options, the area’s logistical and locational advantages—afforded by the Mississippi River’s and I-10’s proximity—offer fertile ground to support one of the most vibrant economies in Louisiana and throughout the South. The parish serves as a destination for process-oriented industries and high-wage jobs. Through a range of employment opportunities and key competitive advantages, the parish is a proven location for business growth and expansion; Ascension Parish had job growth rates that were approximately double that of the Baton Rouge MSA between 2008 and 2018. Strategically building upon current successes and further diversifying the parish’s economy can better position the parish to weather potential economic impacts of changing business cycles. Economic policies that more fully leverage the parish’s cultural, environmental, and economic assets can enhance the quality of life for residents and ultimately attract the talent pool necessary to sustain continued business growth and expansion.

POPULATION

The population of Ascension Parish has increased quickly over the past 50 years and has been the fastest-growing parish by percentage growth in the state for years. The population in 2016 was 117,009. The Baton Rouge MSA had a 2016 population of 824,667, and Ascension Parish represents approximately 14 percent of the region's population.

The Vision is based on the expected future population growth in Ascension Parish. For this plan, it is estimated that unincorporated Ascension Parish will add approximately 52,000 new residents, 22,500 new housing units, and over 60,000 new jobs in the next 20 years. The forecast originates from the 2017 travel demand model provided by the Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, which estimates that the parish will gain more than 87,000 people by 2042. CRPC's base year for the forecast is 2015 and looks ahead to the forecast year 2042. The scenarios used in this planning process use a base year of 2018, which was accomplished by adding three years of growth to the 2015 base-

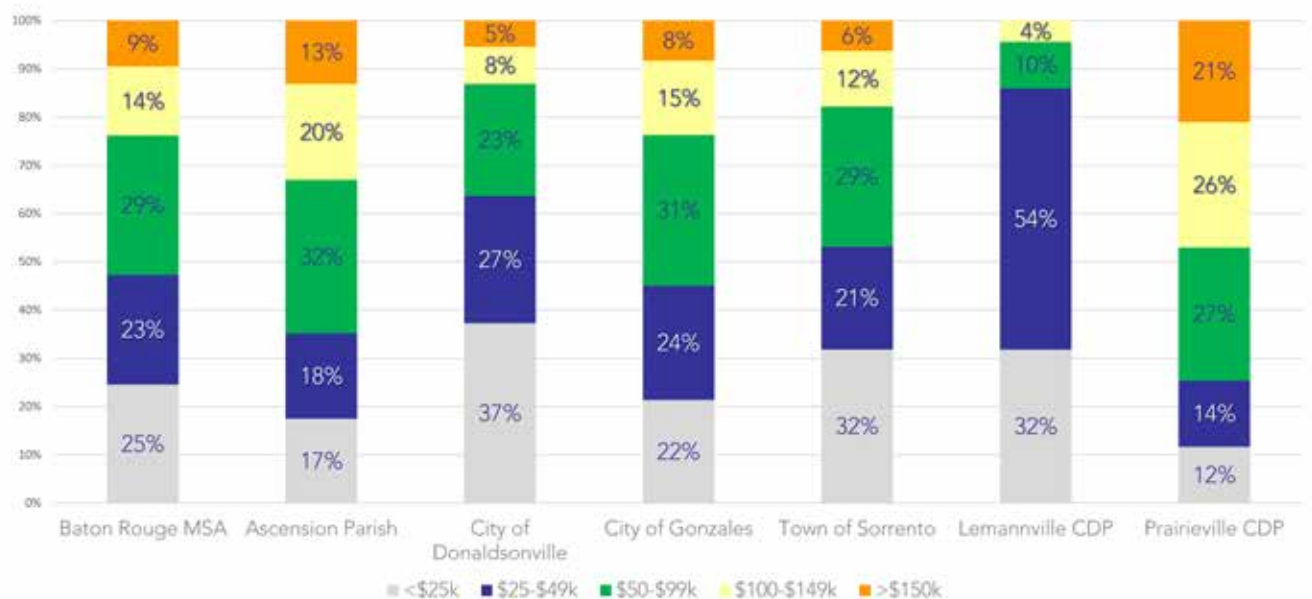
year population. For this plan, it was estimated that the unincorporated areas will see more than 60 percent of overall parish growth in the 2018–2042 time frame.

INCOME, EDUCATION, AND EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Income

Households in Ascension Parish have higher incomes when compared to the Baton Rouge MSA, with a median household income of \$71,752 for the parish compared to \$53,004 for the MSA. Additionally, 33 percent of Ascension Parish households earn \$100,000 or more. However, there is a wide variety in income levels for communities throughout the parish. Prairieville CDP has the highest median household income of \$95,750; half of the households earn \$100,000 or more, and 21 percent earn more than \$150,000. In contrast, Lemannville CDP has the lowest median household income at \$26,571 and the highest percentage (84 percent) of households earning \$49,000 or less. Thirty-two percent of the households parish-wide earn between \$50,000–\$99,000.

Figure 10.1. Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Figure 10.2. Median Household Income



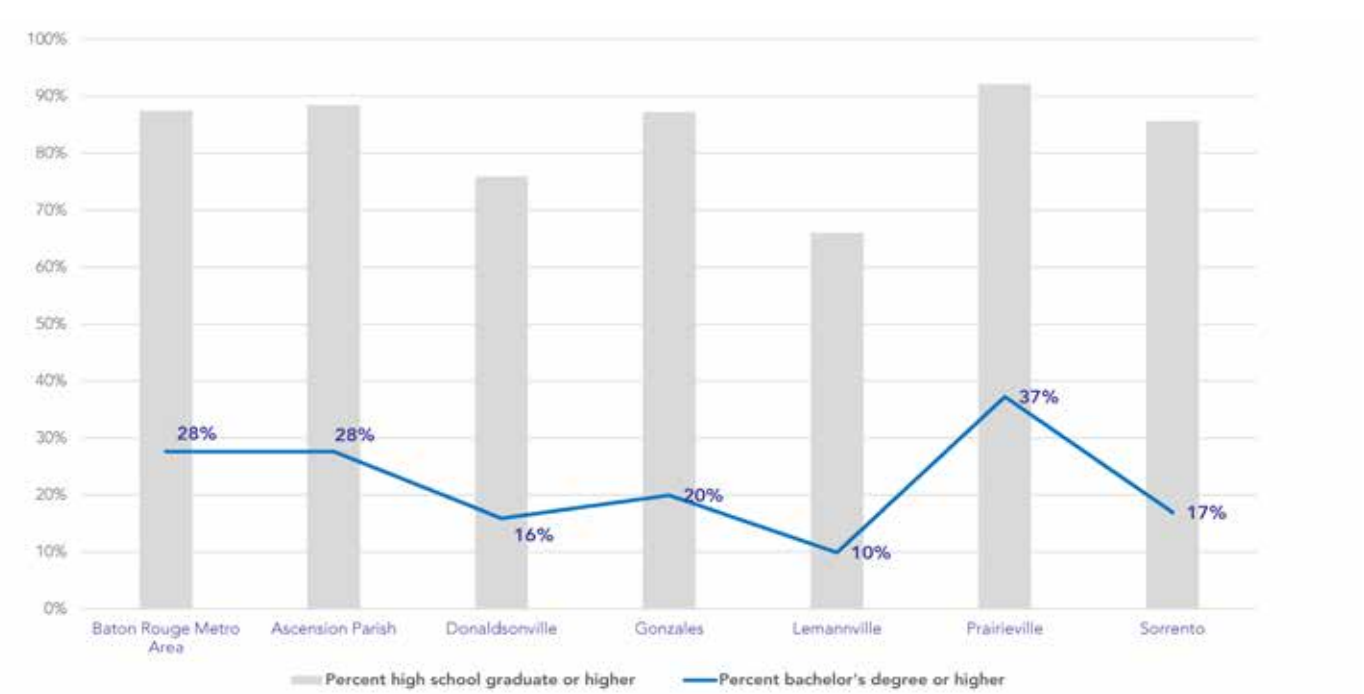
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Education

About one quarter of the parish’s population age 25 and over has attained a bachelor’s degree, roughly equivalent to that of the Baton Rouge MSA.

Additionally, the share of population in this age bracket that has received a high school diploma or equivalent is also largely the same for the parish compared to the MSA.

Figure 10.3. Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 ACS (5-year estimates)

Employment

Ascension Parish has a civilian labor force of 61,377 and a January 2019 unemployment rate of 4.5 percent. According to U.S. Census Bureau

data, the largest industries within the parish are education and health care services (22.4 percent); manufacturing (14.3 percent); retail trade (11.3 percent); and construction (10.5 percent).

Figure 10.4. Major Employers in Ascension Parish, 2018

Company name	Number of Employees	Location
Ascension Parish School Board	3,222	Gonzales
BASF Corporation	1,195	Geismar
Walmart	700	Various locations
Shell Chemicals Geismar	636	Geismar
Smith Tank and Steel	600	Gonzales
St. Elizabeth Hospital (now Our Lady of the Lake Ascension)	540	Gonzales
CF Industries	500	Donaldsonville
Ascension Parish Government (FT & PT)	472	Gonzales
Huntsman Corporation	420	Geismar
Eatel	400	Gonzales
Rouse's Supermarkets	350	Gonzales
Volks Constructors	307	Prairieville
Cabela's	303	Gonzales
Almatis	290	Burnside
St. Elizabeth Physicians	283	Gonzales
Honeywell	280	Geismar
Occidental Chemical Corporation—Geismar Plant	253	Geismar
TOPCOR Companies	250	Gonzales
Westlake Vinyls	170	Geismar
Bengal Transportation Services	165	Geismar
Methanex	160	Geismar
Crown Crafts, Inc.	140	Gonzales
Lion Copolymer Geismar	140	Geismar
PCS Nitrogen	137	Geismar
Williams Olefins	125	Geismar
Auger Services	100	Gonzales

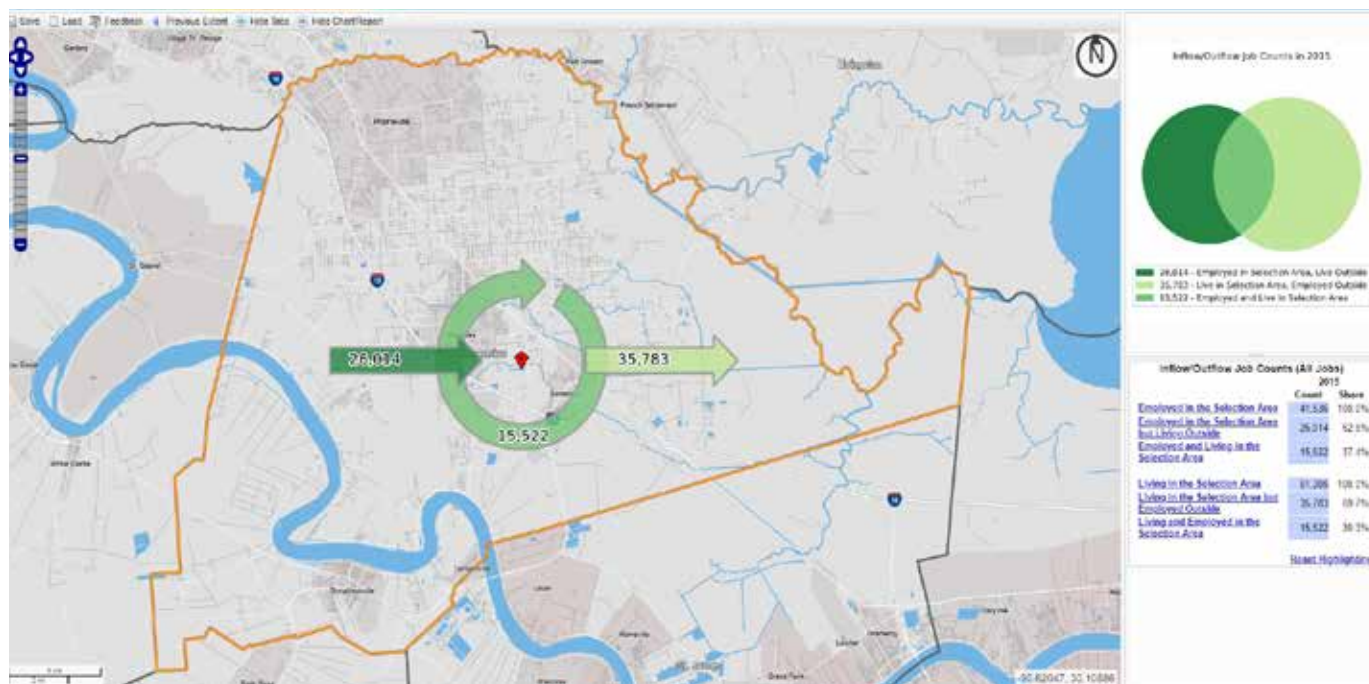
Source: Ascension Economic Development Corporation

Commuting

Ascension Parish is a net exporter of workers; more people commute out of the parish (35,783) than commute into the parish (26,014) for employment. A total of 15,522 residents both live and work in the parish. While residents will continue to commute to

jobs at the Baton Rouge State Capitol, LSU, and other major regional employers, efforts to increase the number of residents that both live and work within the parish will have a positive impact on traffic and congestion, quality of life, and economic stability.

Figure 10.5. Ascension Parish Commuting, 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap, 2015. Note: arrows do not indicate direction of commuting.

Logistical and Locational Assets

Land Availability

While much of the parish's vacant land has development constraints because of wetland or floodplain designations, areas west of Interstate 10 and throughout the West Bank provide significant growth opportunities. The parish has over 30,000 acres of vacant land, much of it on the West Bank. Of the employment areas shown on the Vision Map on page 12, over 16,000 acres are vacant, with approximately 54 percent of this land on the west bank along the Mississippi River with 46 percent on the East Bank, primarily along the river. This land availability provides opportunities for economic growth.

Highway Access

Transportation infrastructure plays an important

role in supporting economic development—from providing a means of connecting goods and services to the businesses and industries that need them to providing avenues for commuters to reach jobs and services that support daily life. The parish's road and highway accessibility can drive a place's economic activity and contribute to its character. Ascension Parish has easy access to Interstate 10 and regional highways, which allow it to benefit from its strategic location between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Interstate 10 provides an opportunity for regional retail destinations as well as connects parish communities and businesses to the rest of the region and the state. Other main highways and arteries—such as Airline Highway, LA 22, LA 30, LA 44, and LA 73 on the East Bank and LA 3127, LA 70 and LA 1 on the West Bank—provide opportunities for local and regional access.

Rail and River Access

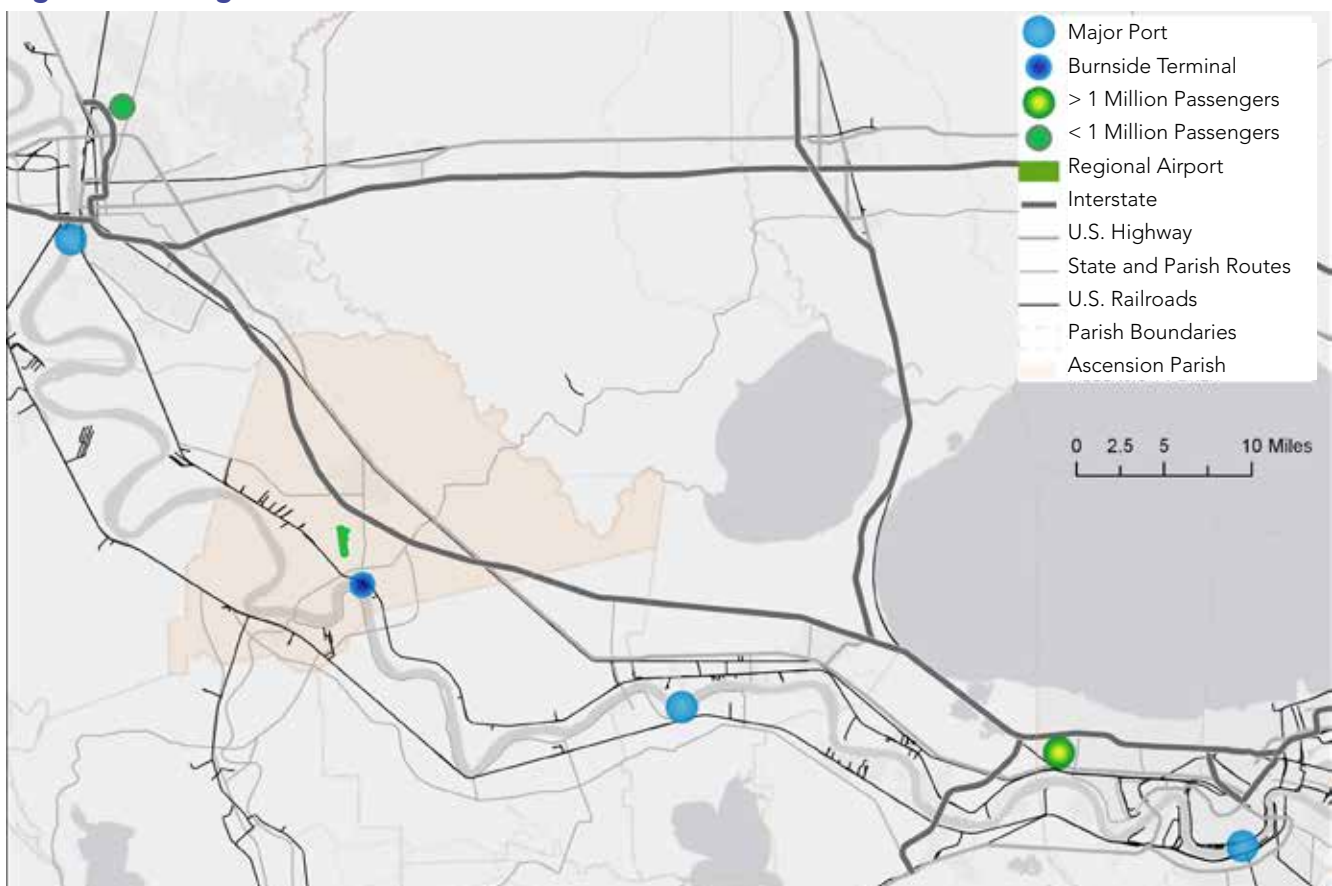
Industrial growth allows the parish to establish a stronger regional presence by participating in industrial expansion occurring in the entire Gulf of Mexico coast and in southeast Louisiana, specifically with property located along the Mississippi River. Ascension Parish has a diverse array of transportation infrastructure to move freight from river to rail or deep-water access. Supporting commercial freight movement and drawing industrial types of businesses not only adds to the parish's business attractiveness but also increases its economic competitiveness.

Port Access

Rivers and waterways are a significant feature of the region and play a prominent role when it comes to economic development. Burnside Bulk Marine Terminal, an existing industrial port, is located along the Mississippi River near the unincorporated area of Burnside. The Port of

Greater Baton Rouge, located in West Baton Rouge, encompasses Ascension Parish in its port jurisdiction. Forest products, agricultural products, steel and pipe, ores and coals, petroleum products, and bulk and liquid bulk chemicals top the list of cargoes shipped through the port facilities bound for markets all over the world. Two additional ports are located close to Ascension Parish—Port of New Orleans, and Port of South Louisiana—and, within the parish, viable sites with rail access for additional deep-draft docks along the Mississippi River's west bank. Access to the existing ports is an asset for the parish, but adding an additional port opportunity will strengthen the parish's position within the region and improve the attractiveness of Ascension Parish's entire industrial corridor along the Mississippi River. The ability to place deep-draft docks adjacent to several of the LED-certified sites gives the West Bank industrial sites a competitive advantage.

Figure 10.6. Logistical Assets



Sources: CPEX, DRW Planning Studio, and Fregonese Associates

Access to Quality Educational Opportunities

Ascension Parish and the Baton Rouge metropolitan area offer excellent educational opportunities—from the parish’s high-performing public schools to the region’s community colleges, technical schools, universities, and colleges.

Ascension Schools

Ascension Economic Development Corporation rates the parish’s public school system as one of the top five parish strengths in relation to its economic competitiveness. According to the 2016–17 School Performance Scores released by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Ascension Parish School District is one of the highest performing in the state. Prior to 2017, Ascension Parish achieved an A rating for six consecutive years. The overall district performance score in the 2015–16 school year was 109.3. In 2016–17, the score increased to 110.4, which ranked Ascension as the fourth-highest performing public school district in Louisiana.

Numerous private schools exist in Ascension Parish and offer preschool to high school education. Both parochial and non-parochial schools are available.

Jump Start Program

Ascension Parish Schools work with community colleges, local industry, and workforce development agencies to provide specialized training courses for to earn industry-based credentials. Programs and certifications are offered during the summer with students earning \$400 stipends as well as certifications.

Work Ready Ascension

Ascension Parish Schools is partnering with the Ascension Chamber of Commerce, the Donaldsonville Chamber of Commerce, and

Ascension Economic Development Corporation to work in partnership to prepare high school students for jobs in the Ascension workforce and to sustain employment opportunities and increase economic growth by having a work-ready employee base. This bridge between the schools and Ascension businesses will fill gaps in the workforce and provide jobs to Ascension Parish School graduates.

River Parishes Community College (RPCC)

The River Parishes Community College provides educational resources for youth and trains qualified workers for new jobs, which is important in attracting and retaining businesses in Ascension Parish. RPCC is an open-admission institution that partners with the communities and businesses of Louisiana’s river parishes region to provide workforce training, certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees.

- The Industrial Instrumentation Technology Program is one of the degrees in high demand preparing students to work with automated processes. This program trains students to become competent, qualified instrumentation technicians who can meet the ever-changing demands of modern industry.
- The Process Technology (PTEC) program prepares individuals to become refinery, chemical, and other industry-related operators. The curriculum leading to the Process Technology AAS degree was developed in collaboration with local business and industry partners and the North American Process Technology Alliance (NAPTA). It is a rigorous study of the operating processes found in industrial plants that will prepare students for high-skill, high-wage jobs needed in the manufacturing industry. Upon graduation from the program, students are prepared to enter the employment market as entry-level process operators for specialty careers in a strong job market.

RPCC strives to coordinate with existing and future employers to train specialized workers for specific needed jobs. This effort makes Ascension Parish attractive to industries looking for a stable employment base.

Higher Education

With Louisiana State University (LSU) and Southern University (SU) located within the region, Ascension Parish residents have access to educational opportunities that prepare them for employment in the parish's expanding commercial and industrial fields. Located 18 miles from Ascension Parish, LSU is a leading research university, "challenging students to achieve the highest levels of intellectual and personal development" and implementing the mission of "the generation, preservation, dissemination, and application of knowledge and cultivation of the arts."⁶⁷ SU is committed to "research

and creative works and to advancing knowledge that will help society resolve technological, scientific, cultural, and socioeconomic issues." Southern's mission is "to further develop and fortify [their] land grant purpose with emphasis on appropriate access and delivery of quality instruction, problem-solving, high-impact research, extension, and service."⁶⁸ Emphasizing connections between Ascension Parish major employers and LSU/SU would support the community's business retention and expansion efforts.



River Parishes Community College

EXISTING EFFORTS TO MANAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Organizations

Ascension Economic Development Corporation

The Ascension Economic Development Corporation was created in 2005 with the sole mission of maximizing opportunity in Ascension Parish. AEDC initiatives strive to create a more diverse local economy, improve the parish's tax base, and attract and retain businesses in order to support permanent job growth. AEDC's vision is that Ascension Parish will be the preferred location for quality business and economic development in the worldwide market. The top three economic development priorities identified through their most recent strategic planning process were the retention and expansion of existing business and industry, workforce development, and diversification of the Ascension economy. Primary programs administered by AEDC include the Ascension Retention and Expansion Program and the Ascension Advantage Program.

Ascension Retention and Expansion Program

Ascension Retention Expansion (A.R.E.) is a parish economic development program that supports communication about interest areas, concerns, needs, and barriers that affect existing businesses' abilities to survive, succeed, and grow. The program also strives to retain and expand existing enterprises as well as maintain a stable business climate where these enterprises can flourish. Key strategies include utilizing economic development specialists to assist with business expansions and developing a business information database. Other strategies essential to the mission are the building of relationships, providing professional development workshops, and establishing a network of public officials and service providers.⁶⁹

Ascension Advantage Program

The AEDC Ascension Advantage program gives a rebate on applicable local sales and use taxes

for building materials, machinery, equipment, and permanent fixtures purchased for the construction and start-up of a qualifying project. A qualifying project must create or retain 20 jobs and be prequalified for participation in either Louisiana's Enterprise Zone or Quality Jobs incentive. The Ascension Advantage program offers additional incentives of 10-year exemptions for manufacturing projects and five-year deferred assessments on existing facility renovations and improvements.⁷⁰

Ascension Chamber of Commerce

The Ascension Chamber of Commerce promotes a healthy business environment and encourages businesses to grow and create more opportunities for the people of Ascension. Today, the chamber facilitates and fosters economic growth for more than 530 chamber members. Partnerships in the Ascension Chamber cultivate benefits between local businesses, both large and small, and the community.⁷¹

Ascension Parish Tourism Commission

The Ascension Parish Tourism Commission's mission is to enhance and develop tourism in Ascension Parish to make a positive economic impact. The Commission executes a tourism marketing plan that highlights the unique attractions and experiences available in the parish, such as destination retail, dining, recreational opportunities, film, festivals, plantations, and other historic and cultural assets. The Commission also produces marketing videos and images, maintains TourAscension.com, and boosts the parish's online presence through social media. Commission staff and board members coordinate with other parish organizations, including Lamar Dixon Expo Center, chambers of commerce, AEDC, and local business and industry on a comprehensive approach to promoting Ascension Parish for living, tourism, and employment.

Donaldsonville Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Information Center

Donaldsonville Chamber of Commerce offers new and existing businesses a variety of benefits,

ranging from its U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) business loan program, networking events, and directory listing. Donaldsonville has a historic district nearly as large as the French Quarter, providing a unique cultural experience for the parish with banquets and festivals.

Baton Rouge Area Chamber

Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) leads economic development in the nine-parish Baton Rouge area by assisting and recruiting businesses and advocating for public policy reforms. The chamber's vision is "for the Baton Rouge area to be one of the leading economies and premier business locations in the country, growing and attracting talent with its unique culture, vibrant communities and beautiful spaces."⁷² The Baton Rouge area has ranked first among the Mississippi River Corridor Metros, within the Top 10 Regional South Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and of cost-friendly business locations among mid-sized cities.⁷³ BRAC continues to be a trusted advocate and change agent for the region's business community.

Louisiana Economic Development (LED)

Louisiana Economic Development (LED) is responsible for strengthening the state's business environment and creating a more vibrant Louisiana economy by cultivating jobs and economic opportunity for the people of Louisiana through nine integrated economic development strategies:

1. Strategically improve state economic competitiveness.
2. Engage with local partners to enhance community competitiveness.
3. Forge partnerships to enhance regional economic development assets.
4. Expand and retain in-state businesses.
5. Execute a strong business recruitment program.
6. Cultivate small business, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
7. Enhance workforce development solutions
8. Promote Louisiana's robust business

advantages.

9. Attract foreign direct investments and grow international trade.

LED's website hosts a summary of programs and incentives and maintains a extensive database of certified and other available development sites.⁷⁴

LED Certified Sites

LED's Certified Sites Program identifies industrial buildings and sites that are prepared for development for companies interested in building new facilities in the state. Certified sites have been reviewed for zoning restrictions, title work, environmental studies, soil analysis, and surveys, and they are 180-day development ready. LED works with local and regional economic development organizations to market its certified sites to companies making complex site selection decisions.

Due to its strategic location along I-10 and the Mississippi River, Ascension Parish has 12 certified sites as of March 2019. Six of the certified sites are in the Donaldsonville area, one is in the Modeste area on the West Bank, one is in the Gonzales area, and four are in the Geismar area on the East Bank. Site-specific information on these certified sites as well as all the available buildings and sites (not certified) in Ascension Parish can be accessed online.⁷⁵

Figure 10.7. LED Certified Sites in Ascension Parish



Sources: LED, CPEX, and Fregonese Associates

Economic Development Programs

FastLane

Louisiana Economic Development's FastLane manages Louisiana's business incentive programs that are approved by the Board of Commerce and Industry. The FastLane website is a secure online interface that allows users to electronically send data directly to Louisiana Economic Development. It is designed for individual users managing one company or consultants who manage multiple companies' data. Information on FastLane is available online.⁷⁶

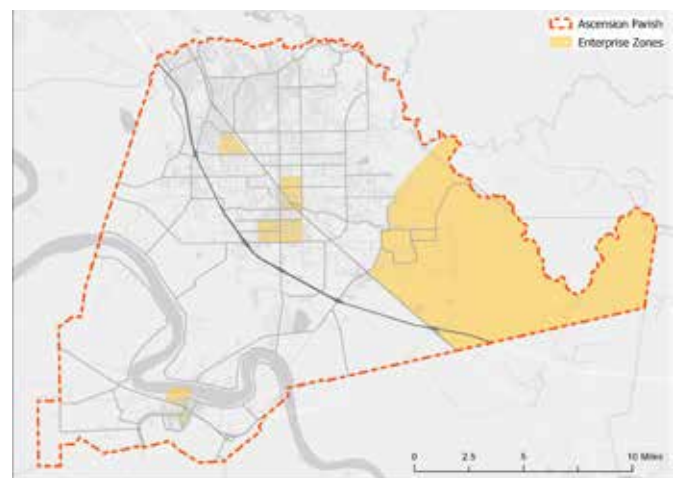
FastStart

FastStart is a workforce training program that provides customized employee recruitment, screening, training development and training delivery for eligible, new or expanding companies—at no cost to the employer. Based on a company's immediate and long-term workforce needs, the Louisiana FastStart team crafts unique programs that ensure high-quality, flexible workers are prepared on day one and beyond. The FastStart team includes professionals from a range of businesses—manufacturing to corporate headquarters, digital media to customer support centers and R&D. Information on FastStart is available online.⁷⁷

Louisiana Enterprise Zones

The Enterprise Zone program is a job incentive program that targets specific geographies throughout the state. Businesses can receive tax credits on Louisiana income and franchise taxes for each job created within an enterprise zone, with an emphasis on providing employment to individuals that reside within the zone or meet certain need-based criteria. Much of the eastern portion of the Ascension Parish is located within an enterprise zone.

Figure 10.8. Enterprise Zones in Ascension Parish

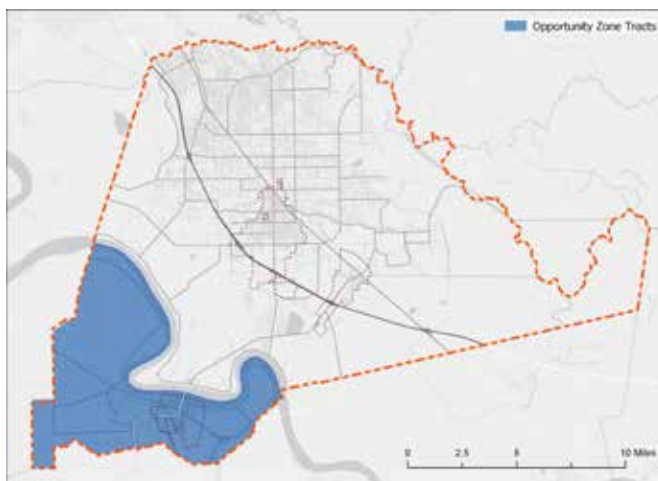


Sources: CPEX and Fregonese Associates

Louisiana Opportunity Zones

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 established the Opportunity Zones program to encourage long-term investments in economically-distressed communities. Investors are allowed to invest capital gains in Qualified Opportunity Funds that support development efforts in opportunity zones and, as part of this program, can defer paying taxes on those gains. The entire West Bank is designated as an Opportunity Zone.⁷⁸

Figure 10.9. Opportunity Zones in Ascension Parish



Sources: CPEX and Fregonese Associates

New Market Tax Credit Areas

The New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) program is a federal program that encourages investments to create jobs and improve the quality of life for residents in designated low-income communities. Qualified Active Low-Income Community Businesses (QALICBs), which can be nonprofit or for-profit enterprises, receive these funds, and the NMTC investors benefit from credits against their federal income tax obligations. The West Bank is designated as a New Market Tax Credit area as well as most of the property bound by I-10, LA 429, LA 30, and Airline Highway.

Figure 10.10. NMTC Areas in Ascension Parish



Sources: CPEX and Fregonese Associates

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), an incentive given to a private company through a parish or an industrial development board, may be used for economic development projects such as manufacturing, multifamily housing, warehouses, distribution centers, commercial and retail facilities, and transportation facilities. PILOTs are structured to allow the parish to take title to an economic development project for a term of years, with the project leased back to the company when the project has been built or developed. Companies are responsible for paying maintenance, operation and insurance costs and receive the benefits of depreciation; however, the property is exempt from local property taxes allowing for reduced tax payments. The PILOT payments may never exceed the amount of property taxes that would have been due.

Industrial Tax Exemption Program

Louisiana's Industrial Ad Valorem Tax Exemption Program (ITEP) is available to certified manufacturing businesses that allows for an 80 percent abatement in local property taxes for up to 10 years to encourage investment in land, buildings, and equipment that are necessary for manufacturing processes.⁷⁹

Other LED Business Programs

LED small business programs include a bonding assistance program, CEO roundtables, an economic gardening initiative with tailored marketing and technology assistance, the Hudson initiative for purchasing and contracting opportunities at the state government level. In addition, the LED small business programs provide a Louisiana contractors accreditation institute, the Louisiana veteran entrepreneurship program, a mentor-protégé recognition program, a small and emerging business development program, a small business loan guaranty program, and step grants with export development assistance. Information on these programs can be found online.⁸⁰

Microbusiness Enterprise Corporation of Ascension (MBECA)

MBECA, with classes and an incubator in Donaldsonville and Gonzales, is an entrepreneurship development center, which offers a variety of specialized training and technical assistance programs to individuals interested in starting a business, improving an existing business, or gaining management training to improve their marketability in the workplace. MBECA offers a variety of services from conceptualizing small business ideas to meet the needs of the growing business ecosystem to accelerated growth of small firms into larger enterprises. Services include business start-up, marketing planning, technical assistance, specialized training, accelerator programs, leadership development, workforce enhancement, investor relations, credit coaching, and microlending/lending referrals.⁸¹

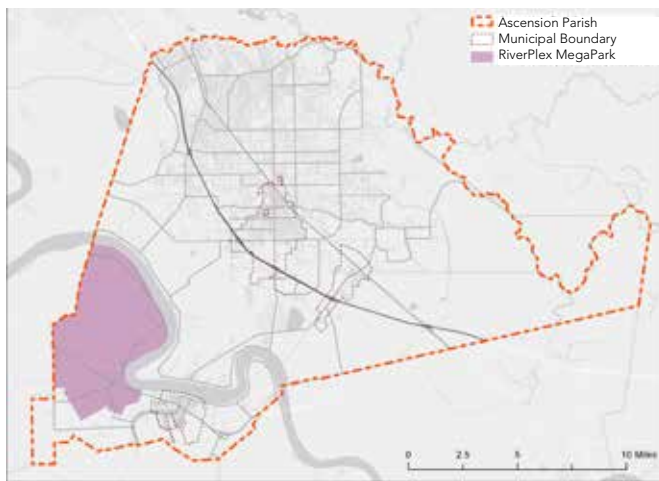
West Bank Industrial Overlay

The West Bank Industrial Overlay was adopted in 2015 to better position properties located on the West Bank near Donaldsonville for industrial and related development. Spanning approximately 17,000 acres that includes 10 miles of Mississippi River frontage, the area has access to LA 1 and the Union Pacific Railroad. The overlay provides buffering requirements in order to minimize conflicts between industrial and other land uses and preserves land for employment purposes. In order to further minimize conflicts between land uses and prioritize employment uses, certain uses—including townhouses, multifamily housing, bed and breakfasts, day cares, and hotel uses—are prohibited, residential density is capped at one dwelling unit per acre, and new major subdivisions are prohibited.

RiverPlex MegaPark of Louisiana

Located on the Mississippi River's west bank, the approximately 17,000-acre RiverPlex MegaPark site has deep-water access, utility infrastructure, rail, suitability for dock construction, and an available workforce. The site is within the Mississippi River industrial corridor near major operations such as BASF, Honeywell, Terra terminal, CF Industries, Motiva, and Air Products.

Figure 10.11. RiverPlex MegaPark



Sources: Ascension Parish GIS, CPEX, and Fregonese Associates



Westlake Chemical in Geismar



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT*

Guiding principles reflect Ascension Parish residents' and stakeholders' core values. The guiding principles relevant to economic development and redevelopment are listed opposite. These principles reflect residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and guide the development of the Economic Development and Redevelopment vision, goals, and strategies. The full list of guiding principles is shown in the Vision chapter on pages 10 and 11.

RELEVANT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Livable Community

- Plan for and provide infrastructure to serve existing and future growth.
- Create vibrant housing, shopping, and arts and entertainment centers to attract and retain youth and serve existing and future residents.
- Encourage mixed-use compact development, served by multiple transportation options, at strategically located neighborhood hubs to alleviate vehicle traffic and create new employment opportunities.
- Provide a wider range of housing options—both in style and size—to retain and attract youth to the parish and to accommodate a variety of housing types and locations for people at all life stages and income levels.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Invest in infrastructure improvements, including improved roads, drainage, stormwater management, and wetlands protection.
- Plan for a public sewer system to prevent and reduce regulation of discharge into waterways.
- Direct new development toward areas where there are adequate roads to accommodate growth, and scale new streets to fit their surroundings to promote safety and attractiveness.
- Provide transportation facilities and services to ensure that workers have easy access to jobs.

Recreation, Open Space, and Natural Environment

- Promote and support recreation, transportation, and tourism along the parish's waterways.

Economy and Education

- Maintain the parish's excellent educational system to provide consistent quality educational opportunities in all areas of the parish and at all levels, from preschool to job training and higher education.
- Support historic preservation and tourism across the parish.
- Promote new economic development in the parish, especially on the West Bank, along the Mississippi River, and in areas west of I-10.
- Work with existing industry, schools, and colleges to provide educational opportunities and technical training programs to build a workforce with skills that match future employment demands.
- Maintain a transparent land use planning and management process.
- Develop updated, clear, objective land use regulations that implement the Plan and provide predictability.
- Promote the development of high-quality business parks to support economic development opportunities within the region. Situate business development zones along highway corridors and near compatible industrial zones.
- Target new businesses that are related to industries that have potential for growth in the parish such as industrial servicing, health care, and logistics.
- Promote Ascension Parish's developable land, friendly business climate, water and rail access, and energy resources to encourage industrial development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Workforce Development

Continuing to cultivate a qualified workforce is a fundamental building block for economic growth. Ascension Parish has an existing skilled workforce that businesses see as a major asset, but the parish needs to continue to grow that workforce. The state, parish, and school district all have programs key to expanding the workforce. A lack of people equipped with the necessary skills can serve as a barrier to economic expansion by discouraging growth of existing businesses and limiting new businesses opportunities. A survey conducted as part of Ascension Economic Development Corporation's strategic planning efforts for 2016–2018 identified workforce development as one of their top three economic development priorities.

Two primary approaches ensure that a sustained talent pool of workers is available to support job growth and economic expansion. First, market the programs to develop an educational pipeline that equips local youth with skills they'll need as they reach working age and provides existing workers with professional development opportunities to meet the changing needs of business. Second, attract talent to relocate to the area by initiatives such as providing new, more diverse housing opportunities and expanding recreational and cultural amenities. Ascension Parish has a well-regarded educational system, which serves as a strong foundation to build and maintain the workforce desired by industry and businesses. Additionally, the parish has a number of assets that can be built upon to attract a workforce. A major challenge to attracting talent is providing walkable mixed-use communities where these workers want to live.

Balanced and Sustainable Economy

A balanced and diversified local economy insulates the area from economic fluctuations more effectively than economies with an overreliance on any one industry. By spreading risk out over a variety of business sectors, gains in some areas can offset losses in others. A vibrant mix of businesses, by industry as well as size, breeds innovation and strengthens the support network upon which to grow the economy even further.

The Vision for Ascension Parish anticipates employment approximately doubling by 2042. While the parish has abundant growth opportunities, continuing to support the current anchor industries of chemical, manufacturing, education, and health care is important. Building on support services for these businesses is an anticipated growth area. In addition, given the amount of natural resources, wetland areas, and waterways, there is an opportunity to further develop the "water economy" within the parish and capitalize on industries such as tourism and recreation as well as water resource management in collaboration with entities such as The Water Institute of the Gulf. Proactively working to expand the array of business opportunities and improve the balance will maximize the benefits of this growth and improve the economic stability over the long term.

Employment Corridor along the Mississippi River

The parish has about 16,000 acres of vacant land in employment areas as shown on the Vision Map. Approximately 54 percent of this land is on the Mississippi River's west bank, and 46 percent is on the east bank, primarily along the river. It is anticipated that these areas will continue to develop in employment uses, building on locational advantages provided by the Mississippi River and Interstate 10, consistent with the industrial growth and expansion that has occurred in these areas.

in recent years. Preparing this area for growth by planning for necessary infrastructure can further enhance the parish's competitive advantages and make the area even more attractive for continued employment development. There is also an opportunity to attract support services and commercial uses that benefit from access to the river, highways, and proximity to industry.

Grow the West Bank

One of the fundamental issues that the Vision strives to address is a better balance of growth between parish's the East and West Banks. The West Bank has historically lagged behind the remainder of the parish in growth and development. If current trends continue, only 17 percent of the housing and 14 percent of employment growth within the parish is expected to occur on the West Bank. To encourage quality growth, several assets could be capitalized on to benefit the West Bank as well as nearby communities. This area has rail and river access, a highly trafficked corridor at LA 1, new connections planned with LA 3127, and vacant developable land, including the 17,000-acre RiverPlex MegaPark. Currently, there is a comprehensive package of regulatory incentives to spur economic development. Many employees who live in St. James Parish, south of Ascension, will likely look to Ascension for housing and services. Providing high-quality neighborhoods in and around Donaldsonville and making efficient connections through the development of LA 3127 will attract some of these new workers. Another major draw of Donaldsonville is the culture and arts environment, which has the potential to continue to attract artists from across the Gulf Coast. The Vision aims to support a greater increase in housing and jobs on the West Bank than anticipated at current development levels.

There are challenges that need to be addressed to realize this vision, however. There are no bridges

across the Mississippi River within Ascension Parish. The nearest river crossings are either the Sunshine Bridge in St. James Parish or the Horace Wilkinson Bridge in East Baton Rouge Parish. As a result, the West Bank is relatively disconnected from Interstate 10 and from goods, services, and jobs on the East Bank. These connectivity challenges were highlighted when, in 2018, a barge collided with the Sunshine Bridge, and repairs forced a closure for several months, lengthening already long commute times.

This lack of connectivity presents a challenge with efforts to bring additional jobs and housing to the West Bank. While strategies to improve connectivity across the river are under consideration, there must be an emphasis on developing the West Bank as a self-sustaining community with jobs close to housing, services, and amenities that support a high quality of life. Capitalizing on available land to develop not only new employment destinations but also new mixed-use centers located at main highway intersections can support the type of balanced growth that will be necessary to help serve existing and new neighborhoods. Ensuring the quality of new development can also build upon the small-town charm of historic Donaldsonville and maintain the unique identity of the West Bank.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES: *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT*

This section is organized into an economic development and redevelopment vision, followed by goals and strategies that will move Ascension Parish toward the community's vision. The economic development and redevelopment vision captures citizens' input on the parish's employment and economic opportunities in the next 25 years. Goals guide the Plan's implementation, are specific, attainable, and realistic, and ensure that the community and stakeholders have a clear awareness of what must happen to move the parish toward the Vision. Strategies delineate how the goals will be achieved. When applicable, action steps specify activities that will fulfill those strategies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT VISION

Within the parish, residents have diverse, quality employment options concentrated along the Mississippi River, along major transportation corridors, at major intersections, and in neighborhood hubs. The parish will be stronger economically with a more diverse economic base and an improved balance of jobs and housing between the East and West Banks.

GOAL 34: REINFORCE AN EMPLOYMENT CORRIDOR ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER BY ENCOURAGING GROWTH WEST OF INTERSTATE 10 AND THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK.

► **Strategy 34.1:** Protect employment areas from incompatible encroachment.

- » Use the Land Use Vision Map as a guide to evaluate and grant zoning changes to ensure preservation of employment areas and minimize potential conflicts between incompatible land uses within or adjacent to employment areas.
- » Review potential modifications to the West Bank Industrial Overlay to align it with areas that are designated as “Employment” on the Vision Map during the next biannual update.
- » Reduce or eliminate fees for applicants seeking to rezone property to underlying zoning categories compliant with the West Bank Industrial Overlay. This could encourage prospective employment developers to proactively rezone land for employment uses.

► **Strategy 34.2:** Provide infrastructure to support desired employment growth.

- » Empanel a work group of industry leaders and economic development professionals to identify hurdles to realizing desired economic development.
- » Create a timeline for updating the 2015

inventory of West Bank properties to identify deficiencies in supporting desired commercial and industrial growth and expansion to outline needed logistical enhancements—road rights-of-way, port, and rail—as well as other infrastructure needs, such as telecom and water/wastewater.

- » Develop a capital improvement plan focused on encouraging employment growth and develop costs estimates, prioritize projects, and outline desired timeline for implementation.

► **Strategy 34.3:** Further emphasize and market West Bank development opportunities.

- » Work with AEDC and the Donaldsonville Chamber to create a West Bank development task force focused on marketing and clearing hurdles for development along the West Bank.
- » Commission a market study to identify strategic opportunities for economic development and potential new target industries on the West Bank.
- » Continue to work with property owners to update the inventory database of vacant or underdeveloped land, including relevant characteristics such as available infrastructure, current zoning, and other relevant data to market for target industry development.
- » Continue to market the West Bank’s Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, and New Market Tax Credit opportunities to encourage investment.
- » Develop a detailed master plan for the RiverPlex MegaPark.
- » Encourage the development of vibrant, mixed-use centers and new neighborhoods that align with the Land Use Vision Map to provide housing and services to support industry development.
- » Ensure approved development requests are aligned with the Vision and reflect the quality development desired on the West Bank.

GOAL 35: ALIGN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS WITH THE PARISH'S ASSETS IN ORDER TO DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMIC BASE.

- ▶ **Strategy 35.1: Expand tourism.**
 - » Support Ascension Parish Tourism Commission and partners in promoting Ascension Parish's unique attractions and experiences.
 - » Evaluate opportunities near major destinations such as Lamar Dixon, Interstate 10, retail centers, and historic plantations for complimentary development that supports increased tourism.
 - » Develop short-term rental standards to expand lodging options in Ascension Parish.
- ▶ **Strategy 35.2: Maximize development opportunities using existing infrastructure.**
 - » Identify aging retail centers for potential redevelopment and evaluate common needs to encourage their redevelopment.
 - » Develop a package of regulatory incentives to encourage redevelopment of aging retail centers, such as parking adjustments.
 - » Develop infill standards to promote appropriate infill development that enhances existing neighborhoods, provides greater housing choices, and supports a variety of commercial uses.
 - » Encourage continued development along Interstate 10 by supporting a proposed interchange at Cornerview Road in Gonzales to improve highway access and make available sites for highway development.
 - » Develop and map a needs inventory of infrastructure to identify capacity constraints to infill growth.
- ▶ **Strategy 35.3: Increase the role of water and water management in the parish's economic growth.**
 - » Promote recreation on waterways within the parish by improving public access to water.
 - » Participate in the water economy to help

minimize floodplain and wetland weaknesses.

- » Work with local colleges to develop curricula for water management and coastal restoration programs using wetland resources in Ascension Parish as a laboratory.
- » Consider earn and learn programs for high school and college students to expand skills training in water management and coastal careers.

GOAL 36: SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT THAT REFLECTS THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH.

- ▶ **Strategy 36.1: Coordinate workforce development efforts throughout the parish so that they complement and build upon one another.**
 - » Develop a comprehensive inventory of all workforce development programs within the parish to review their goals and objectives for constancies and contradictions.
 - » Create a virtual workforce development center to market area programs to potential participants.
 - » Coordinate with the City of Gonzales and AEDC on their efforts to support River Parishes Community College programs and other educational opportunities through Ascension Public Schools.
 - » Engage the parish's existing employers—such as chemical companies and other industries—to actively improve the pipeline that prepares, educates, and trains qualified workers for jobs both near term and long term.
- ▶ **Strategy 36.2: Ensure workforce resiliency by understanding needs and market trajectory; align programs to maximize opportunities on the horizon.**
 - » Evaluate the existing workforce to identify whether it can supply the talent needed by current and future target industries.

- » Update workforce development providers about identified skill gaps and anticipated needs for incoming industries and provide assistance to create adult education programs that address evolving needs.
- ▶ **Strategy 36.3:** Market opportunities to live and work in Ascension Parish in order to attract talent.
 - » Coordinate with Gonzales and Donaldsonville to market housing and job opportunities.
 - » Expand the selection of housing types to meet the needs and desires of future workers.
- ▶ **Strategy 37.3:** Expand small business programs.
 - » Publicize the MBECA and LED small business assistance programs.
 - » Increase networking opportunities for small businesses to market themselves.
 - » Develop an inventory of small businesses in Ascension Parish to market services to potential clients.

GOAL 37: MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY BUSINESS CLIMATE.

- ▶ **Strategy 37.1:** Align zoning, public policy, and regulatory practices to target desired businesses.
 - » Monitor and publish development review timelines to provide transparency in the development review process.
 - » Evaluate permitting and development review processes to identify opportunities for improved efficiency.
 - » Review proposed regulatory and policy changes for potential impacts upon economic development efforts.
- ▶ **Strategy 37.2:** Support AEDC efforts to attract and retain businesses.
 - » Identify a parish staff member to serve as an economic development liaison to work with AEDC and support economic development initiatives.
 - » Evaluate effectiveness of existing tools for attracting desired businesses or encouraging investment in the expansion of existing businesses.
 - » Develop an international roundtable program to interact with and support Ascension Parish's foreign companies and to expand business networking opportunities.





STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The adoption of the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* is the first step in implementing the Plan. This plan reflects the efforts and input of Ascension Parish — its residents, elected, appointed and civic leaders, and parish staff. Full implementation of the Plan will take the concerted effort of a range of implementation partners — from across the parish and region — requiring participation by nonprofit organizations and outside governmental agencies as well as the business community. Continuous action to implement the Plan is required for it to have a lasting impact. The Plan will guide private and public development; Ascension Parish decisionmakers will use it as a tool to assess the appropriateness of proposed development. All Plan chapters have a role to play in assessing development applications.

This Strategic Implementation Plan Chapter describes how the strategies and actions in the Plan should be carried out. It provides recommendations for administering the planning process and enhancing linkages between the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* and other planning processes. It also recommends steps to be taken to update the Plan on a regular basis.

Implementation through Building Strategic Partnerships

Many of the Plan's strategies and actions will require the input and coordination of other jurisdictions and private sector groups. For this reason, it will be important for Ascension Parish to continue engaging in strategic partnerships with key stakeholders including other governmental agencies, business and neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions, and many more. This culture of collaboration will ensure that Ascension Parish is able to recruit and partner with the team members necessary to efficiently implement the Plan's strategies and help ensure the parish's leadership role in the region.

Consistency with Departmental Plans

The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* was developed in coordination with the recently completed *Transportation Master Plan* and the Master Drainage Plan that is underway. These plans should continue to be coordinated with each other and with other departmental initiatives such as plans for parish-wide sewer and future recreation and open space plans.

Guiding Future Development

The *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* provides the policy direction for future development decisions. The Plan's goals and strategies will be implemented through development regulations (zoning and subdivision ordinances) and through operational, capital, facility and service expenditures. Public service and infrastructure decisions should ensure that adequate resources are planned to meet the needs of new development and to ensure that new construction is consistent with the desired vision. Staff should use the Plan's goals and strategies to evaluate development proposals and should indicate in development review staff reports whether the request is consistent with the Plan.

Master Land Use Plan Review and Updates

To ensure the *Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan* remains an effective guide for decisionmakers, Ascension Parish should conduct periodic evaluations of the Plan. At least one meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission annually should be devoted to review the Plan's implementation status and any issues that have arisen. These evaluations should consider:

- The parish's progress in implementing the Plan
- Changes in conditions that form the basis of the Plan
- Community support for the Plan's goals and strategies
- Changes in state laws
- Identified areas of conflict

The Plan should be updated every three to five years to adjust for changing conditions.

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Priority Strategic Actions (described in the Vision) and the Implementation Matrix, below, provide a roadmap to implement the Plan.

Priority Strategic Actions, detailed on pages 16 and 17 of Chapter 2, the Vision, are the first steps that the parish should take to address pressing issues. They should be undertaken immediately or initiated in a short period of time—one to three years. When these implementation measures are initiated and ultimately completed, it will clearly show how the parish is moving toward the citizens' vision and will make a significant impact on the quality of life in the parish. Implementation will take significant effort and collaboration by elected and appointed officials, businesses and residents. Priority actions are in four categories: ordinance, policy and practices updates; code enforcement programs; interagency and public/private implementation; and citizen engagement programs.

The following implementation matrix provides the Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan's goals and strategies and their time frame. The goals and strategies in the implementation matrix are identical to the goals and strategies at the end of Chapters 5 through 10 of the Plan. The implementation matrix is designed to be maintained and updated by the parish Planning Department to monitor implementation progress. The time frame, coordinating department, and status will be maintained annually by the Planning Department in a separate document.

EXAMPLES OF HOW THE GOALS AND STRATEGIES MAY BE IMPLEMENTED

Following are selected examples of how the parish could implement the goals and strategies. These are examples only, and will be further refined as the goals and strategies are implemented.

Example 1

Goal 1: Make land use and infrastructure decisions consistent with the Vision Map to improve Ascension Parish's fiscal stability and implement the citizens' vision.

Strategy 1.2: Guide land use decisions and long-term growth using the Vision Map.

- Use the Vision Map to evaluate zoning, platting, and other development-related requests.
- Use the Vision and Vision Map to provide broad direction in guiding development decisions, while also acknowledging the importance of locational analysis and consistency with the goals and strategies in making development determinations.

How this goal and strategy could be implemented:

1. As rezoning requests are evaluated, use the vision map and applicable goals and strategies to assess the request.
2. Include "Consistency with the Master Land Use Plan" information in rezoning staff reports.

Example 2

Goal 6: Reduce the impact of development on drainage.

Strategy 6.1: Promote Low-Impact Development (LID).

- Integrate LID principles into zoning and subdivision regulations, including requiring the use of alternative landscape methods and

materials that are appropriate to geologic, hydrologic, and climatic conditions.

How this goal and strategy could be implemented:

1. Amend ordinances to require that retail and commercial uses that install excess parking (more than 10% over their required parking) use pervious parking materials to reduce water runoff.

Example 3

Goal 10: Build vibrant new neighborhoods consistent with the parish's vision.

Strategy 10.3: Support the development of Neighborhood Hubs to provide services for neighborhoods and accommodate mixed-use developments.

- Evaluate pedestrian infrastructure within a half mile of existing or proposed Neighborhood Hubs in order to identify deficiencies and plan necessary improvements.
- Provide design standards that specify development and redevelopment within Neighborhood Hubs must be walkable and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Encourage services and retail stores to locate within Neighborhood Hubs so that residents can meet their daily needs closer to home.

How this goal and strategy could be implemented:

1. Amend the Planned Unit Development standards to include neighborhood hub development.
2. Incorporate design standards into the development code that require pedestrian infrastructure to support neighborhood hubs.
3. Incorporate design standards into the development code to guide placement of retail and commercial uses and ancillary parking in neighborhood hubs by requiring parking at the side or rear of the buildings.

Example 4

Goal 17: Reduce development in sensitive areas and conveyance channels to reduce risk.

Strategy 17.2: Enforce current Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 9.5 of Ascension Parish Ordinances.

How this goal and strategy could be implemented:

1. Convene a small working group to review existing ordinance requirements and enforcement practices.
2. Identify best practices in enforcing similar regulations.
3. Develop recommended changes in practice.
4. Identify staff resources and training needed for enforcement.
5. Brief parish council and update enforcement practices.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

			TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	DEPT	STATUS
LAND USE GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 1	Make land use and infrastructure decisions consistent with the Vision Map to improve Ascension Parish’s fiscal stability and implement the citizens’ vision.			
Strategy 1.1	Mix land uses to create a balanced and sustainable economy. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote the unique characteristics of neighborhoods as key to the parish’s long-term health and vitality.Support a variety of nonresidential uses, including office, office warehouse, commercial, industrial and industrial research, and retail uses.Obtain a wider variety of jobs in the parish, with the potential for jobs with higher wages, by diversifying types of businesses in Ascension Parish.Provide more housing choices, such as townhomes, smaller units, and affordable housing for youth, public and retail workers, and retirees and seniors.	Ongoing		
Strategy 1.2	Guide land use decisions and long-term growth using the Vision Map. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use the Vision Map to evaluate zoning, platting, and other development-related requests.Use the Vision and Vision Map to provide broad direction in guiding development decisions, while also acknowledging the importance of locational analysis and consistency with the goals and strategies in making development determinations.	Ongoing		
Strategy 1.3	Guide infrastructure investment decisions using the Vision Map. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use the Vision Map to determine areas of and plan for anticipated development.Use the Vision Map to evaluate required transportation, water, sewer, and drainage improvements and to inform the parish’s capital improvement program.Prioritize the placement of public services such as schools, libraries, and parks using the Vision Map as one data source to minimize negative impacts on desired service levels.	Ongoing		
Strategy 1.4	Revisit and update the Vision, the Vision Map, and priority strategies every five years. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluate and adjust the Vision to reflect community preferences and economic conditions.Update the Strategic Implementation Plan to identify needed high-priority actions to be implemented through both public and private entities.Monitor and evaluate the Vision’s implementation and ensure that any necessary adjustments reflect long-term economic conditions and opportunities, or large shifts in community priorities.	Ongoing		
Goal 2	Align the zoning and subdivision ordinances with this Plan to achieve desired development.			
Strategy 2.1	Develop clear and objective standards for making land use planning decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review and amend ordinances as needed to ensure that they are easily understood, using language that has unambiguous meaning.To the extent possible, use standards that can be measured and evaluated using data that are reliable and can be replicated.	Short-term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 2.2	<p>Review and update the zoning and subdivision regulations to promote desired development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the zoning and subdivision ordinances—including district regulations, uses, and definitions—and ensure consistency in standards. Incorporate a wider range of housing types in the development code and develop design standards where appropriate. Identify barriers to desired development in the development code and introduce development standards where appropriate. Review landscape and buffer standards. Review off-street parking standards to reflect actual market demand. In appropriate areas, implement design standards to facilitate the development of more pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environments to promote a sense of identity and safety, to encourage walking, and to foster cultural and civic pride. Review the subdivision regulations to ensure that desired types of mixed-use and single-family attached housing are permitted and encouraged. Rezone all or most of the area outside of the levees in the rural development type to require five-acre minimum lots. Lots that are smaller than five acres when zoning is implemented will be permitted to build one structure but will not be able to subdivide to parcels less than five acres. 	Short-term		
Strategy 2.3	<p>Review zoning changes and other development requests for consistency with the Vision and the Plan's goals and policies in order to ensure that development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a healthy balance of jobs and households. Protect and stabilize neighborhoods. Establish sustainable new neighborhoods with expanded housing choices and amenities such as walking trails and connections to services. Plan for neighborhoods to be served by and accessible to neighborhood commercial areas, parks, cultural areas, open space, libraries, and schools. Emphasize mixed-use development in neighborhood hubs. Protect existing employment centers. 	Ongoing		
Goal 3	Protect Ascension Parish's character and quality of life.			
Strategy 3.1	<p>Reinforce regulations that maintain rural atmosphere and quality of life where consistent with the Vision Map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider expanding criteria and requirements for Scenic Rural Highway Overlay Zones. Develop street design standards for rural streets. Adopt rural commercial standards in rural residential/open space development type areas. Review setback requirements and development standards for rural residential/open space development type areas to promote a more rural atmosphere. Maintain an updated inventory of historic assets; continually evaluate for potential threats, needed protections, and incentives that would encourage their reuse, such as parking reductions. 	Short-term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

Coordinating Department (DEPT) and Status will be updated as implementation begins.

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 3.2	<p>Maintain and strengthen neighborhoods, making them attractive to current and new residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate development transitions adjacent to neighborhoods. • Require new development to be sensitive to its surroundings in density, form, and size, particularly when adjacent to existing residential areas and historic assets. • Require parking lot location, configuration, access points, and screening to offset any negative impacts. • Provide buffers between residential and employment uses through landscape and screening standards. • Encourage applicants for zoning changes to meet with neighborhood organizations and resident groups prior to the zoning review process. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 3.3	<p>Continue to support a robust employment sector that provides jobs for parish residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect employment areas from incompatible new residential development. • Ensure that adequate access routes exist to support employment sector. • In employment areas, consider the context of the area when developing public improvements and prioritize streets to be compatible with truck traffic. 	Ongoing		
Goal 4	Bring a balanced mix of development to the West Bank, which, over the long term, enhances and supports Donaldsonville and creates a self-sustaining community.			
Strategy 4.1	<p>Encourage growth and development on the West Bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and improve educational opportunities on the West Bank. • Look at long-range transportation alternatives to improve access across the Mississippi River. • Incentivize employment opportunities. 	Ongoing and Mid- and Long-term		
Strategy 4.2	<p>Continue to actively market Louisiana Economic Development's seven Development-Ready Certified Sites on the West Bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Ascension Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) efforts to identify and attract appropriate industrial development to the West Bank. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 4.3	<p>Encourage housing growth on the West Bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for and encourage a variety of housing choices and neighborhoods that appeal to a range of ages and family types. • Update the zoning ordinance to accommodate alternative housing types, such as cottage housing and small-scale multifamily. • Allow for and integrate live-work units into mixed-use centers and corridors. 	Ongoing and Mid- and Long-term		
Strategy 4.4	<p>As industrial development occurs in adjacent parishes and creates a demand for West Bank housing and supporting services, plan for quality, appropriately located development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a small-area plan for the Donaldsonville area to provide predictability for potential developers and investors. The plan should identify development goals, appropriate development, incentives, and standards. • Coordinate planning with the City of Donaldsonville. • Ensure that proposed development is appropriate and meets the development standards consistent with development throughout the entire parish. 	Ongoing and Long-term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 4.5	Continue to coordinate with the City of Donaldsonville to maximize benefits to both the city and parish. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Donaldsonville's efforts to improve tourism and enhance existing development. Partner with the city to support service provision and amenities for all residents. 	Ongoing		
Goal 5	Create compact neighborhood hubs and vibrant commercial corridors.			
Strategy 5.1	Establish standards that create a pedestrian-friendly environment and encourage a mix of uses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review zoning standards to promote compact, walkable development in appropriate districts and areas. Provide block and streetscape standards that ensure higher connectivity and improved pedestrian comfort. Adjust parking standards for mixed-use districts that promote shared parking and establishes design criteria that minimizes the impact of vehicles on pedestrian areas. Incorporate public areas into neighborhood hubs—places that people can walk to and that can host cultural and arts events, such as food fairs and farmers' markets. Incorporate standards for building designs oriented toward sidewalks rather than parking lots. Minimize the amount of parking between building fronts and streets. 	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 5.2	Invest in streets, trails, and sidewalks to improve multimodal connections to neighborhood hubs and commercial corridors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a needs inventory of necessary infrastructure enhancements to improve bike and pedestrian connections. Develop a trails and open space master plan with the objective of improving connections between residential areas and community amenities, such as neighborhood services, schools, and other civic destinations. 	Ongoing and Long-term		
Strategy 5.3	Plan for and encourage redevelopment of aging commercial centers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential market opportunities for redevelopment. Create redevelopment strategies for high-priority commercial sites. Identify and proactively rezone commercial centers in neighborhood hubs desired for mixed-use redevelopment. Invest in supportive infrastructure to improve multimodal access to centers. Introduce incremental changes, such as sidewalks and building placement, to transform selected aging commercial strips into mixed-use main streets. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Goal 6	Reduce the impact of development on drainage.			
Strategy 6.1	Promote Low-Impact Development (LID). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate LID principles into zoning and subdivision regulations, including requiring the use of alternative landscape methods and materials that are appropriate to geologic, hydrologic, and climatic conditions. Use LID best practices on public capital projects funded by the parish. 	Ongoing		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

Coordinating Department (DEPT) and Status will be updated as implementation begins.

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 6.2	<p>Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the zoning ordinance to include a district with five-acre minimum parcel sizes that would be allowed in environmentally sensitive areas, especially those outside the levee system. Develop an open space zoning category that allows for limited development within wetlands if certain development conditions are met. Require redevelopment and infrastructure projects that impact wetlands and other sensitive areas to use building and site design techniques and materials so that they improve watershed conditions. 	Ongoing and Short- term		
Goal 7	Collaborate with the Ascension Parish School Board.			
Strategy 7.1	<p>Continue to brief the school board on the <i>Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan</i> recommendations to ensure that future educational facilities are aligned with projected growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host biannual coordination meetings to discuss growth and potential school development needs. Discuss impact mitigation for traffic impacts. Work with school board to develop traffic control plans for each school. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 7.2	<p>Improve accessibility and provide safe, direct routes—such as sidewalks, pathways, and adequate signage—for schoolchildren and their parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize walking distances and conflicts with traffic by providing sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails or other off-street connections to schools. Adopt measures to reduce traffic speed in school areas. 	Ongoing and Mid- term		
Strategy 7.3	Coordinate with the school district on the location of schools in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure.	Ongoing		
Goal 8	Address incompatible land uses and manage development transitions.			
Strategy 8.1	<p>Review and enforce buffering and compatibility standards to protect the natural landscape and abutting development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review buffering and screening requirements and enforcement. Survey existing buffers and screening and evaluate the need for development code revisions. Include traffic controls and street design that limit nonresidential traffic movement through residential areas. Establish truck routes for high impact industrial areas. Require green buffers around industrial areas that include stormwater management features. When reviewing zoning changes and development requests that are adjacent to municipal boundaries, consideration should be given to compatibility with adjacent uses in Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento. 	Ongoing and Short- term		

			TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	DEPT	STATUS
HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 9	Protect and enhance neighborhoods.			
Strategy 9.1	Ensure residential developments have supportive infrastructure and access to neighborhood amenities. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review neighborhoods for access to amenities that can be walked to—such as open space, schools, and recreational facilities—and identify opportunities for improvement.Use the parish’s capital planning process to address infrastructure and amenity enhancements needed for neighborhoods.Work with developers of projects adjacent to neighborhoods to provide appropriate community amenities to support the area.	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 9.2	Review new and infill development proposals for compatibility with the surrounding context. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use the Land Use Vision Map and associated policies to review zoning requests to evaluate the appropriateness of the request with respect to neighborhood compatibility.Consider character, scale, and pattern of existing residential neighborhoods when evaluating zoning changes and development proposals within or adjacent to neighborhoods.Evaluate current buffer, landscape, height, and setback requirements between land uses of differing intensity and amend zoning regulations as necessary to protect neighborhoods from adjacent uses.Encourage transitional uses—such as open space, medium-density residential, and neighborhood-scaled retail—to manage the transition among neighborhoods and nearby commercial and employment development.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 9.3	Identify and prioritize neighborhoods in need of revitalization or approaching a tipping point toward decline. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish an evaluation criteria—using such items as the concentration of code violations, vacancy rates, absentee ownership, and declining or plateauing property values compared to the rest of the parish—to identify neighborhoods in need of focused improvements and review and prioritize neighborhoods with this criteria.Develop a multi-departmental task force to systematically review and develop specific action plans for neighborhoods identified as needing revitalization in order to stem specific conditions contributing to decline.Identify and direct available neighborhood programs to priority neighborhoods.Coordinate and engage nonprofit and for-profit organizations to invest time and resources in efforts that help address conditions contributing to neighborhood decline in priority neighborhoods, such as volunteer neighborhood clean-ups, home improvement workdays, and public amenity improvements.	Ongoing and Long-term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

Coordinating Department (DEPT) and Status will be updated as implementation begins.

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 9.4	<p>Support a stable housing market with improved code enforcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity to implement a proactive approach to code enforcement by regularly inspecting properties for signs of neglect and issuing citations even before receiving a complaint. Review applicable codes and pursue additions or updates to advance the parish's code enforcement efforts—such as minimum property maintenance standards—to reduce vacant and dilapidated properties. Develop educational materials and an outreach program to raise awareness of common code compliance violations in neighborhoods to proactively improve voluntary code compliance. Evaluate the staffing needed for a proactive code enforcement program. Analyze the resources needed and funding dedicated to code enforcement and identify funding sources. 	Ongoing and Short- term		
Goal 10	Build vibrant new neighborhoods consistent with the parish's vision.			
Strategy 10.1	<p>Encourage new neighborhoods and residential development to locate in areas designated for housing on the land use map and monitor progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze land in areas designated for residential development with respect to existing infrastructure, entitlements, and development constraints to monitor the readiness of land for housing development. Publicize information about the supply of residential land that is development ready. Track and map building permit data to monitor the type, location, and amount of residential development. 	Ongoing and Mid- term		
Strategy 10.2	<p>Provide infrastructure and services to support desired new neighborhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an infrastructure needs inventory to determine what's necessary to accommodate housing growth. Use the parish's capital planning process to ensure that infrastructure and amenity enhancements are planned for areas that are targeted to support housing growth. Coordinate planned housing growth with the desired parish-wide sewer system and ensure that new development will have the ability to connect to the planned system. Develop block length and street standards to support a compact, highly connected street network that improves mobility by accommodating a balance of pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Coordinate the development of trails and new open space by the parish with new neighborhood growth. Consider adding open space requirements as part of new residential development to help support recreational and active transportation needs. Work with franchise utility providers to accommodate additional infrastructure for high-speed internet and other amenities. Continue coordination with Ascension Public Schools to maintain high-quality education across the parish. 	Ongoing and Mid- term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 10.3	<p>Support the development of Neighborhood Hubs to provide services for neighborhoods and accommodate mixed-use developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate pedestrian infrastructure within a half mile of existing or proposed Neighborhood Hubs in order to identify deficiencies and plan necessary improvements. Provide design standards that specify development and redevelopment within Neighborhood Hubs must be walkable and create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Encourage services and retail stores to locate within Neighborhood Hubs so that residents can meet their daily needs closer to home. 	Ongoing and Short- term		
Strategy 10.4	<p>Ensure new housing development is consistent with the parish's vision to preserve community and neighborhood character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop design standards for mixed-use residential developments to promote walkability and pedestrian comfort as well as provide amenities such as seating areas, water features, or pocket parks. Create neighborhood development standards that preserve the natural character and provide access to open space and additional community amenities. Adopt single-family housing standards that ensure long-term durability and enduring quality of the housing stock. 	Ongoing, Short- term and Long- term		
Goal 11	Increase housing choice.			
Strategy 11.1	<p>Support existing housing renovation and new housing development that accommodate the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review building codes for inclusion or allowance of design elements such as ramps, lifts, entrances, or other elements that facilitate aging in place through renovating existing homes. Consider amending zoning and development regulations to accommodate senior housing facilities. Encourage development of senior housing in areas with easy access to services, shopping, and health care facilities. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 11.2	<p>Increase the array of available housing types to appeal to families of all ages, sizes, and income levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend zoning regulations to provide for alternative housing types such as live-work units, cottage housing, and accessory dwelling units with appropriate standards to ensure compatibility with surrounding development. Amend zoning regulations to include incentives for building workforce housing that targets households earning 80 percent to 140 percent Area Median Income (AMI). Create neighborhood development standards that encourage a diversity of unit types and sizes within the same neighborhood. 	Ongoing and Mid- term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

Coordinating Department (DEPT) and Status will be updated as implementation begins.

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 11.3	<p>Expand and improve rental housing options within Ascension Parish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate new multifamily development in areas that support a mix of complementary uses and have a well-connected pedestrian network. • Develop standards to ensure quality, mixed-use residential development that require public benefits to offset density concerns. • Develop a rental registration program for rental housing to ensure communication among landlords, apartment managers, and the parish. • Amend regulations to improve inspection and enforcement ability. 	Ongoing and Long-term		
Goal 12	Improve resiliency of the housing stock.			
Strategy 12.1	<p>Direct neighborhood growth away from high-risk areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Ascension Parish Hazard Mitigation Plan to direct current and future resources towards risk reduction projects. • Encourage housing development on high ground, especially on the West Bank. • Encourage preservation of wetlands and floodplains in new housing developments. 	Short-term		
Strategy 12.2	<p>Support risk reduction through improved development regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce flood risk by supporting property owners who want to elevate or flood proof their structures or by resettling them in lower-risk areas. • Review existing floodplain development standards and update as necessary to achieve higher regulatory standards and permit requirements demonstrating that the development will not alter predevelopment hydrology. • Explore the adoption of ordinances that increase freeboard and prohibit fill to meet height requirements with the aim of increased costs being somewhat offset with significant CRS credit, reduced insurance costs, and long-term reduced risk and costs to the parish and residents. • Encourage low-impact development techniques as part of housing developments. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 12.3	<p>Increase public awareness regarding mitigating risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate property owners—through town halls, outreach events, and presentations to homeowners associations—on the most current flood maps and risks as well as the benefits of flood insurance. • Consolidate and maintain information on the parish’s website relating to flood risks within the parish and potential mitigation techniques, including information about available online resources. • Develop a toolkit targeted toward homeowners and developers to outline best practices and techniques for addressing flood risks. 	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 12.4	<p>Continue to aid in recovery efforts following disasters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a rapid-response protocol to respond to and address flooding and disaster events and efficiently initiate recovery efforts. • Deploy inspections and permitting resources to provide for necessary review and approval of recovery construction in the field. 	Ongoing		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Goal 13	Expand programs that support housing and neighborhoods.			
Strategy 13.1	Support homeowners associations and neighborhood organizations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory and map the boundaries of neighborhood associations, homeowners associations, and crime watch groups. Build and maintain a database of leadership contacts for each neighborhood association, homeowners association, and crime watch group to maintain communication among the parish and neighborhoods. Identify gaps in coverage and work with property owners to establish new neighborhood associations. Consider creating a neighborhood liaison position to work with neighborhood associations and assist in connecting them to necessary parish resources. Hold neighborhood boot camps or academies to educate homeowners association members on the organization and responsibilities of homeowners associations. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 13.2	Develop and maintain support programs for neighborhoods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue and expand the parish's household hazardous waste collection program to provide additional opportunities to recycle household chemicals throughout the year. Establish an annual fund to provide neighborhood improvement grants for beautification and improvement projects and develop a competitive process for awarding funds. Define criteria to identify substandard housing and inventory existing units within the parish meeting this standard. Explore programs that support the repair, upgrade, or replacement of substandard structures, and encourage collaboration with nonprofit organizations to provide maintenance and rehabilitation programs. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 13.3	Support workforce housing development to provide increased housing options for those that work within the parish and earn 80 percent to 140 percent AMI. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene representatives of the lending, housing development, and real estate communities to identify regulatory and other barriers to developing workforce housing. Review development approval processes—such as rezoning, permitting, or platting—to eliminate barriers to developing workforce housing. Provide regulatory incentives to include workforce housing as a component of new mixed-use residential developments. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 14	Implement safety and capacity improvements, new facilities, and multimodal improvements as recommended and prioritized in the <i>Transportation Master Plan</i>.			
Strategy 14.1	Use the <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> priority projects to guide infrastructure investment decisions.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 14.2	Identify additional revenues for transportation funding in order to implement recommended projects.	Ongoing and Mid-term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

Coordinating Department (DEPT) and Status will be updated as implementation begins.

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 14.3	Utilize the <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> as a guide for corridor preservation where new facilities are identified.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Goal 15	Form partnerships to deliver transportation solutions.			
Strategy 15.1	Work to identify and utilize public and private partnerships to identify funding, parish priorities, and project implementation.	Ongoing		
Strategy 15.2	Work in partnership with surrounding communities and parishes to support the region's mobility goals, transportation system, sustainability, and quality of life.	Ongoing		
Strategy 15.3	Work closely with CRPC to coordinate parish projects with regional initiatives, include horizon projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region, and obtain planning and clearance approvals necessary for construction.	Ongoing		
Strategy 15.4	Coordinate with LA DOTD to improve state infrastructure.	Ongoing		
Goal 16	Update ordinances and regulations to align with the Vision and the <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> and improve parish-wide mobility.			
Strategy 16.1	Adopt access management plan and standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add access management standards to the parish's Subdivision Regulations. Using LA DOTD's guidance, develop an Access Management Plan that sets standards for access management of various modes of transportation. Formally adopt the Access Management Plan and include reference to standards and requirements in the parish Code of Ordinances. 	Short-term		
Strategy 16.2	Strengthen supporting street networks by making connections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce current requirements that require all new subdivisions to provide access points for future development. Do not allow waivers of connections between subdivisions. Establish stronger standards for connectivity elements, such as sidewalks, bikeways, and open space requirements, in new subdivision developments. Require linkages/connections to existing or planned infrastructure along all public streets. Limit the number of dwelling units on one access point. Adopt a maximum block length. Require a minimum of two access points to all new subdivisions over 30 lots to accommodate emergency and service vehicles. Ensure that all levels of government are educated about the importance of connectivity and a supporting street network. Identify areas where small connections, for any variety of modes, could greatly improve mobility in the area. Remove language in the Major Street Plan that recommends discontinuous streets. (The Major Street Plan currently has the following language: "Through traffic and excessive speeds should be discouraged on local streets by using appropriate geometric designs, traffic control devices, curvilinear alignments, and discontinuous streets.") 	Ongoing and Short-term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 16.3	Strengthen the parish's multimodal network. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and adopt a customized Complete Streets policy that takes into account Ascension Parish's context and is consistent with Ascension Parish's development patterns. Develop a sidewalk and trails hierarchy plan to supplement LA DOTD's planned bicycle facility network. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 16.4	Implement Travel Demand Management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with CRPC on metropolitan-wide TDM strategies and initiatives. Work with LA DOTD on corridor-specific TDM strategies and tools, and consider also working with LA DOTD on primary congested corridors, such as Airline Highway and I-10, to influence traveler behavior. Work with business influencers to promote CRPC TDM programs including the Commuter Krewe of Louisiana program. Stay involved as other CRPC TDM strategies and programs take effect. 	Short-term and Mid-term		
Strategy 16.5	Plan for future transportation innovations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Ascension Parish and CRPC representatives are included in any discussions developing around emerging technologies with LA DOTD. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 16.6	Update the parish's Major Street Plan to reflect the Vision and <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update roadway standards in the Major Street Plan. Include front setbacks from centerline in the text of the Major Street Plan as well as in the figures. 	Short-term		
Strategy 16.7	Consider using green infrastructure for transportation improvements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt green street standards to provide additional benefits for stormwater management. Promote permeable pavement options and include landscape options that improve water quality and reduce runoff. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
DRAINAGE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT AND WASTEWATER GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 17	Reduce development in sensitive areas and conveyance channels to reduce risk.			
Strategy 17.1	Revise the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) to include a zoning district that permits one unit per five acres. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a new district that encompasses areas outside of the levee protection system and other wetland areas. Include implementation standards that allow lots that are less than one acre in size prior to application of the new zoning district to build one dwelling unit on a lot. 	Short-term		
Strategy 17.2	Enforce current Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 9.5 of Ascension Parish Ordinances.	Short-term		
Goal 18	Establish consensus for development requirements. Update drainage ordinances, policies, and practices to coordinate, clarify, and integrate best practices on how to reduce the impact of development on water quantity and quality in sensitive areas.			
Strategy 18.1	Continue to develop the Ascension Parish Master Drainage Plan to establish standards for stormwater quantity and quality that are consistent with the regional, state, and federal standards for stormwater management.	Ongoing		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 18.2	Revise Appendix 5 “Drainage” of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify, update, and add definitions to fill requirements for individual, subdivisions, and commercial properties. Continually review drainage design regulations to ensure current storm events can be managed. 	Short-term		
Strategy 18.3	Update Chapter 9.5—Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to be consistent with current regulations and standards.	Short-term		
Strategy 18.4	Actively enforce drainage regulations and fill restrictions consistently throughout the parish.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 18.5	Revise the Drainage Impact Study Policy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update requirements so detention methods are functional and effective for at least 25 years. Expand and clarify submittal requirements. Clarify and update design criteria and modeling requirements. Update and expand on watershed flow and conveyance requirements. Clarify and expand upon fill mitigation/detention requirements. 	Short-term		
Strategy 18.6	Consider establishing a drainage impact fee, a one-time fee paid only by new development to offset development that increases the amount of impervious area. A building permit would trigger this fee.	Short-term		
Strategy 18.7	Establish a site development permit process that requires parish review and approval prior to placing fill or moving dirt. This permit would address current issues with unregulated fill.	Short-term		
Strategy 18.8	Consider requiring houses in the Rural Residential development type to be built on piers.	Ongoing		
Goal 19	Improve the existing drainage system. Reduce the risk of flooding to Ascension Parish’s existing and future structures.			
Strategy 19.1	Improve the condition and capacity of the existing system by implementing the following projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete drainage system assessments for each individual drainage basin to identify problem areas. Review major channels going to pumping station to determine impact and needs. Acquire federal funding to enhance the levee system and the Marvin Braud Pump Station. Extend the Laurel Ridge Levee and submit for certification. Improve the pumping station at Sorrento. Expand the capacity to pull water from Sorrento and lower Gonzales. Add new flood gate at Fish Bayou. Dredge New River. 	Ongoing, Mid- and Long-term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 19.2	Provide sufficient infrastructure capacity to meet future needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the natural functions of hydrological areas, maintain water quality, and control sedimentation. Minimize stormwater-borne pollutants through implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Incorporate stormwater management retention and detention features into the design of parks, trails, and open spaces. Use pervious materials to minimize impervious surface area. Use vegetative management, such as planted buffers and minimal mowing. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 19.3	Identify ways to increase the parish's CRS rating to reduce insurance costs. Potential actions that may increase the CRS rating include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing projects to improve floodplain management; educating property owners on the most current flood maps and risks along with the benefits of flood insurance; providing informational materials on the importance of and techniques and impacts of raising structures in Special Flood Hazard Areas. 	Ongoing, Short-term and Mid-term		
Goal 20	Continue to maintain existing stormwater management infrastructure and expand existing drainage maintenance programs.			
Strategy 20.1	Continue subdivision drainage improvement programs through the drainage districts.	Ongoing		
Strategy 20.2	Develop informational materials about the need to maintain ditches in front yards and provide best practices for maintaining ditches.	Short-term		
Strategy 20.3	Identify waterways without servitude and develop a plan to obtain access to these areas to provide ongoing maintenance of bayous and ditches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to obtain connective servitudes to enable cleanup of bayous and ditches. Identify major laterals of drainage district. Identify servitudes and ensure that servitudes are obtained on future subdivision plats. 	Mid-term		
Strategy 20.4	Develop and implement an "Adopt-a-Ditch" program that facilitates partnerships with neighborhood associations, nonprofits, academic institutions, and others to expand existing programs for the removal of litter and other obstructive features that may hinder local stormwater conveyance.	Short-term		
Goal 21	Implement sustainable stormwater practices using Low-Impact Development (LID) techniques where physically and economically possible.			
Strategy 21.1	Incentivize the use of stormwater improvements into all new developments. Promote the use of rain gardens, rooftop gardens, porous soil amendments, hardscape storage, pervious pavement, and other innovative stormwater techniques.	Mid-term		
Strategy 21.2	Retrofit existing parks and open space to incorporate rain gardens and other multi-use detention practices that maintain the park facilities but also slow water discharges into the stormwater system. Examples include lowered flower beds (e.g., instead of raised beds), use of lawn areas for incorporating slight depressions that retain rainfall, and elevating storm drains where water detention is acceptable so that they are not at the lowest elevation.	Ongoing and Mid-term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 21.3	Use low-impact development on public projects.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Goal 22	Collaborate with adjacent parishes to manage watersheds regionally.			
Strategy 22.1	Continue to collaborate with adjacent parishes to manage water so that all residents and businesses benefit from floodplain management initiatives that reduce risk.	Ongoing		
Strategy 22.2	Take a leadership role in the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and explore ways to work with adjacent parishes and communities to incorporate best practices; showcase demonstration projects; and work with state to further regional watershed management efforts.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 22.3	Participate in an educational program that promotes floodplain management.	Short-term		
Goal 23	Work toward a parish-wide sewer system that collects wastewater in an efficient, reliable, sustainable, and environmentally sound manner.			
Strategy 23.1	Prepare a comprehensive wastewater master plan.	Short-term		
Strategy 23.2	Continue planning for phased implementation of parish sewer system.	Ongoing		
Strategy 23.3	Require new development to have design and capacity to hook up to parish system.	Short-term		
Strategy 23.4	Continue monitoring to identify infrastructure issues needing immediate repair or upgrades.	Ongoing		
Strategy 23.5	Modify and coordinate ordinances to support centralized sewer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically place sewer lines in areas with high potential for customers. 	Short-term		
Strategy 23.6	Review the fee structure for residential and commercial fees.	Short-term		
Strategy 23.7	Prioritize sewer in high-growth areas to obtain customer base. Create a system for calculating capacity; update as needed when expansion occurs.	Short-term		
Strategy 23.8	Reserve right-of-way to incorporate sewer expansions.	Short-term		
Goal 24	Develop and implement a stormwater and floodplain management educational program.			
Strategy 24.1	Provide homeowners and business owners information on how to flood proof their properties and how to use landscaping and LID site development to lessen their impact on the watershed.	Short-term		
Strategy 24.2	Promote the parish's CRS rating to reduce insurance costs and provide details on ways to improve the parish's rating.	Short-term		
Strategy 24.3	Provide information and training on how to reduce contaminants getting into the water system; topics include how to collect and properly dispose of paint, cleaning products, and debris and how to maintain motor vehicles to prevent leakage of oil, grease, and other fluids.	Short-term		

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			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 24.4	Provide education on stormwater issues at all levels—from K-12 to community education initiatives—through outreach and demonstration projects.	Short-term		
Strategy 24.5	Include interpretive information and educational opportunities that showcase innovative stormwater design and BMP concepts.	Short-term		
Strategy 24.6	Pursue grants and other opportunities to fund implementation, outreach, and study of stormwater best management practices.	Ongoing		
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 25	Transform parks into multifunctional spaces of recreation and fitness.			
Strategy 25.1	Inventory existing parks and develop a plan and budget for adding multipurpose functions to parks. Prepare a phased approach to make improvements over a five-year time frame.	Short-term		
Strategy 25.2	As new facilities are developed, ensure that they are designed with the goal of creating multifunctional parks for the enjoyment of a range of generations—from toddlers to seniors.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 25.3	Include fitness stations at all parks to promote wellness throughout the parish.	Long-term		
Strategy 25.4	Amend the subdivision ordinance to require parks provided by subdivision developers to have several functions or implement a “fee in lieu of” method of acquiring and improving larger community park spaces.	Short-term		
Strategy 25.5	Provide multipurpose trails on the levees on both sides of the Mississippi River to connect to the Mississippi River Trail, designed for bicycle and pedestrian use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify public funding sources and public/private partnerships to fund trail. 	Mid-term		
Strategy 25.6	Prioritize improvements to the current park system before implementing expansion projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on the potential of the current park inventory to make necessary capital improvements. Use innovative budget strategies to plan and implement improvements and additions to current facilities. Transform the park inventory into valuable destinations for recreation, engagement, and social gathering. 	Short-term		
Strategy 25.7	Explore providing emergency shelters at future community centers.	Long-term		
Goal 26	Expand recreational programming diversity to reach all age groups and abilities.			
Strategy 26.1	Assess existing program offerings and conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps.	Short-term		
Strategy 26.2	Consider implementing universal design principles in the planning and construction of new parks and recreational facilities.	Ongoing		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 26.3	Increase program capacity beyond team sports to be more comprehensive and accessible to residents with varying interests and skill levels.	Short- and Mid-term		
Strategy 26.4	Develop programs and partnerships with parish schools to implement after-school programs.	Short- and Mid-term		
Strategy 26.5	Partner with Ascension Parish School Board to plan for future school needs for multi-school facilities able to accommodate several high school events as property becomes more scarce and athletic facilities are not possible at all area high schools.	Ongoing		
Strategy 26.6	Collaborate with local Council on Aging centers in Gonzales and Donaldsonville and explore other potential partners to provide senior activities and classes.	Ongoing		
Strategy 26.7	Provide resources and education on the protection of wetlands and natural areas for staff, residents, and business groups.	Ongoing		
Goal 27	Evaluate current maintenance needs to proactively manage future maintenance resources.			
Strategy 27.1	Assess current maintenance plan and procedures to ensure efficiencies in staff time and consistency in facility condition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create written procedures for maintenance staff to acknowledge best practices with the goal of updating and improving them annually or as situations require. Implement written procedures with the intention of creating awareness for annual budgeting for the care of parish parks and facilities. 	Short-term		
Strategy 27.2	Increase the maintenance budget so facilities attract and retain more visitors.	Short-term		
Goal 28	Increase funding for parks, recreational facilities, and open space.			
Strategy 28.1	Identify new funding streams for parks and recreational facilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify governmental and private sector grant opportunities. Investigate how to structure park and stormwater management impact fees. Research how to create a park foundation for the parish system. Expand the donor base to encourage significant donations and provide major donors with naming opportunities for parks or fields. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 28.2	Examine current parks and recreation expenditures to prioritize designated areas of funding (e.g., maintenance, recreational programming, staffing, etc.) and explore applicable funding options for each.	Short-term		
Strategy 28.3	Enter into agreements with the school district, private athletic associations, and nonprofit organizations to offset park maintenance costs.	Ongoing		
Strategy 28.4	Implement a fee structure for park use where appropriate.	Short- and Mid-term		
Strategy 28.5	Expand resources through innovative partnerships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on the partnerships with Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento to expand public access to open space and recreation and to coordinate infrastructure projects. Continue to partner with the school system to provide joint-use facilities. Partner with nonprofits to create nature learning centers, ecological demonstrations, and other educational facilities. Develop a program for businesses to partner with PARC, either through shared land or other donations. 	Ongoing		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Goal 29	Protect and conserve open space as a floodplain management tool.			
Strategy 29.1	Coordinate parks and open space design and development with parish floodplain management needs.	Ongoing		
Strategy 29.2	Design stormwater management facilities on public open spaces as a recreational asset.	Mid-term		
Strategy 29.3	Implement stormwater management techniques within the current park system and future open spaces by including multi-use retention areas, permeable paths and sidewalks, water gardens, and other amenities.	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 29.4	Create a demonstration park that showcases sustainable water management practices and market this throughout the region as an educational learning center on southern Louisiana's natural systems.	Long-term		
Goal 30	Increase public awareness of parish parks, open space, and programming.			
Strategy 30.1	Update the Recreation page on Ascension Parish's website to provide current information on facilities, programs, and public interest stories.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 30.2	Promote parish facilities and programming through the Ascension Parish Facebook page and other social media.	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 30.3	Partner with nonprofits to host food, craft, and music festivals and events.	Ongoing		
Goal 31	Prepare a comprehensive recreation and open space master plan.			
Strategy 31.1	<p>Build off the guiding principles of the <i>Ascension Parish Master Land Use Plan</i> to prioritize the PARC system as an integral entity of the parish community. Work toward creating a recreation and open space master plan to identify specific community preferences and a unifying vision for how PARC should look in the future. The plan should include the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify goals for a well-planned system of parks, public spaces, and natural areas. Address maintenance of existing park facilities and expectations about how to address future growth and demand. Include a full inventory and analysis of the current system to be made available to the public and periodically updated. Seek community input from residents and schools to assess needs, demands, and usage. Propose a funding plan to achieve desired parks, recreation, and open space goals. 	Ongoing and Long-term		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
			DEPT	STATUS
Strategy 31.2	Plan for future expansion of the park and recreation system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategically acquire new parkland and open space that has the potential to attract widespread use, is accessible from multiple parts of the parish, and has the potential to generate revenue. Add acreage to existing parks where possible to increase service areas. Explore methods for new nonresidential and mixed-use development to provide public parkland and resources to develop needed park and open space facilities. 	Ongoing and Mid- and Long-term		
Goal 32	Preserve and enhance the parish's historic and cultural resources.			
Strategy 32.1	Develop historic and cultural resource programs for a variety of interests and age levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Ascension Parish Tourism Commission in partnership with the Cities of Gonzales and Donaldsonville and local organizations to develop and promote programs focused on historic and cultural events. Cultivate relationships with local museums and historical sites. Create markers and wayfinding for featured sites. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Goal 33	Implement additional sustainable practices.			
Strategy 33.1	Invest in resilience infrastructure and sustainable materials for parks and trails.	Ongoing		
Strategy 33.2	Evaluate and incorporate the following sustainable practices where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LED lighting Gray water watering system Native plants Organic compost for fertilizer Pervious parking areas Bioretention areas Educational signage 	Ongoing		
Strategy 33.3	Improve connectivity among parks, open spaces, and adjacent uses.	Ongoing		
Strategy 33.4	Identify recreational facilities that are inefficient, underutilized, or not cost-effective, and reprogram or repurpose them to other program areas needed within the parish.	Ongoing and Short-term		
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES				
Goal 34	Reinforce an employment corridor along the Mississippi River by encouraging growth west of Interstate 10 and throughout the West Bank.			
Strategy 34.1	Protect employment areas from incompatible encroachment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Vision Map as a guide to evaluate and grant zoning changes to ensure preservation of employment areas and minimize potential conflicts between incompatible land uses within or adjacent to employment areas. Review potential modifications to the West Bank Industrial Overlay to align it with areas that are designated as "Employment" on the Vision Map during the next biannual update. Reduce or eliminate fees for applicants seeking to rezone property to underlying zoning categories compliant with the West Bank Industrial Overlay. This could encourage prospective employment developers to proactively rezone land for employment uses. 	Ongoing		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
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Strategy 34.2	<p>Provide infrastructure to support desired employment growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empanel a work group of industry leaders and economic development professionals to identify hurdles to realizing desired economic development. Create a timeline for updating the 2015 inventory of West Bank properties to identify deficiencies in supporting desired commercial and industrial growth and expansion to outline needed logistical enhancements—road rights-of-way, port, and rail—as well as other infrastructure needs, such as telecom and water/wastewater. Develop a capital improvement plan focused on encouraging employment growth and develop cost estimates, prioritize projects, and outline desired timeline for implementation. 	Ongoing and Short- term and Mid-term		
Strategy 34.3	<p>Further emphasize and market West Bank development opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with AEDC and the Donaldsonville Chamber to create a West Bank development task force focused on marketing and clearing hurdles for development along the West Bank. Commission a market study to identify strategic opportunities for economic development and potential new target industries on the West Bank. Continue to work with property owners to update the inventory database of vacant or underdeveloped land, including relevant characteristics such as available infrastructure, current zoning, and other relevant data to market for target industry development. Continue to market the West Bank's Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, and New Market Tax Credit opportunities to encourage investment. Develop a detailed master plan for the RiverPlex MegaPark. Encourage the development of vibrant, mixed-use centers and new neighborhoods that align with the Vision Map to provide housing and services to support industry development. Ensure approved development requests are aligned with the Vision and reflect the quality development desired on the West Bank. 	Ongoing and Mid- term and Long- term		
Goal 35	Align economic development efforts with the parish's assets in order to diversify the economic base.			
Strategy 35.1	<p>Expand tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Ascension Parish Tourism Commission and partners in promoting Ascension Parish's unique attractions and experiences. Evaluate opportunities near major destinations such as Lamar Dixon, Interstate 10, retail centers, and historic plantations for complimentary development that supports increased tourism. Develop short-term rental standards to expand lodging options in Ascension Parish. 	Ongoing		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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Strategy 35.2	<p>Maximize development opportunities using existing infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify aging retail centers for potential redevelopment and evaluate common needs to encourage their redevelopment. Develop a package of regulatory incentives to encourage redevelopment of aging retail centers, such as parking adjustments. Develop infill standards to promote appropriate infill development that enhances existing neighborhoods, provides greater housing choices, and supports a variety of commercial uses. Encourage continued development along Interstate 10 by supporting a proposed interchange at Cornerview Road in Gonzales to improve highway access and make available sites for highway development. Develop and map a needs inventory of infrastructure to identify capacity constraints to infill growth. 	Ongoing, Short-term and Mid-term		
Strategy 35.3	<p>Increase the role of water and water management in the parish's economic growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote recreation on waterways within the parish by improving public access to water. Participate in the water economy to help minimize floodplain and wetland weaknesses. Work with local colleges to develop curricula for water management and coastal restoration programs using wetland resources in Ascension Parish as a laboratory. Consider earn and learn programs for high school and college students to expand skills training in water management and coastal careers. 	Mid- and Long-term		
Goal 36	Support workforce development that reflects the future of the parish.			
Strategy 36.1	<p>Coordinate workforce development efforts throughout the parish so that they complement and build upon one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive inventory of all workforce development programs within the parish to review their goals and objectives for constancies and contradictions. Create a virtual workforce development center to market area programs to potential participants. Coordinate with the City of Gonzales and AEDC on their efforts to support River Parishes Community College programs and other educational opportunities through Ascension Public Schools. Engage the parish's existing employers—such as chemical companies and other industries—to actively improve the pipeline that prepares, educates, and trains qualified workers for jobs both near term and long term. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 36.2	<p>Ensure workforce resiliency by understanding needs and market trajectory; align programs to maximize opportunities on the horizon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the existing workforce to identify whether it can supply the talent needed by current and future target industries. Update workforce development providers about identified skill gaps and anticipated needs for incoming industries and provide assistance to create adult education programs that address evolving needs. 	Ongoing and Mid-term		
Strategy 36.3	<p>Market opportunities to live and work in Ascension Parish in order to attract talent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Gonzales and Donaldsonville to market housing and job opportunities. Expand the selection of housing types to meet the needs and desires of future workers. 	Ongoing and Short-term		

GOAL/ STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY	
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Goal 37	Maintain a friendly business climate.			
Strategy 37.1	Align zoning, public policy, and regulatory practices to target desired businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and publish development review timelines to provide transparency in the development review process. • Evaluate permitting and development review processes to identify opportunities for improved efficiency. • Review proposed regulatory and policy changes for potential impacts upon economic development efforts. 	Ongoing and Short-term		
Strategy 37.2	Support AEDC efforts to attract and retain businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a parish staff member to serve as an economic development liaison to work with AEDC and support economic development initiatives. • Evaluate effectiveness of existing tools for attracting desired businesses or encouraging investment in the expansion of existing businesses. • Develop an international roundtable program to interact with and support Ascension Parish's foreign companies and to expand business networking opportunities. 	Ongoing		
Strategy 37.3	Expand small business programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicize the MBECA and LED small business assistance programs. • Increase networking opportunities for small businesses to market themselves. • Develop an inventory of small businesses in Ascension Parish to market services to potential clients. 	Ongoing		

Legend

Timeframe: Ongoing | Short-term (1-5 years) | Mid-term (6-10 years) | Long-term (> 10 years)

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Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2012–2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; using AmericanFactFinder.
- 2 Ascension Economic Development Corporation. "Major Employers." 2016. Accessed March 21, 2019.
<https://ascensionedc.com/site-selection/major-employers/>.
- 3 Native Land Digital. n.d. Online interactive map of Indigenous territories. Accessed March 21, 2019.
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