2025 West Bank Small Area Plan Existing Conditions
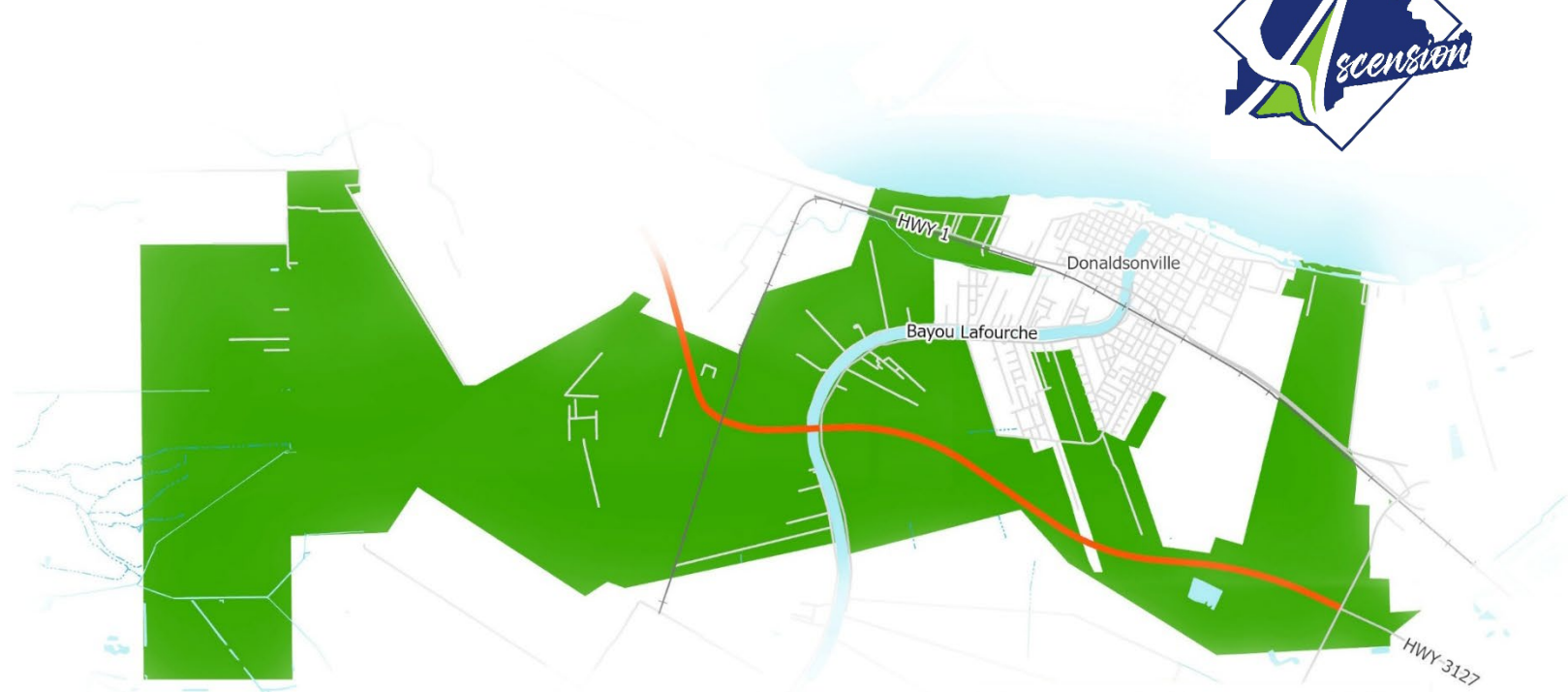

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Presented to:

Ascension Parish Planning Department

Presented by:

Introduction

This Existing Conditions Report gives an overview of the conditions within the 2025 West Bank Small Area Plan boundary (Small Area). The Small Area consists of 9,855 acres of unincorporated land located on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Ascension Parish, Figure 1.

Existing conditions for this plan refer to the latest demographics along with data on housing, land use, flood zones, infrastructure, transportation, and economic development. This assessment provides a baseline for planning efforts and helps identify opportunities and challenges that may influence development and growth. The Small Area demographics presented are reflective of the entire Ascension Parish West Bank (West Bank). There are three census tracts that make up the West Bank, tracts 309, 310.01, and 310.02.
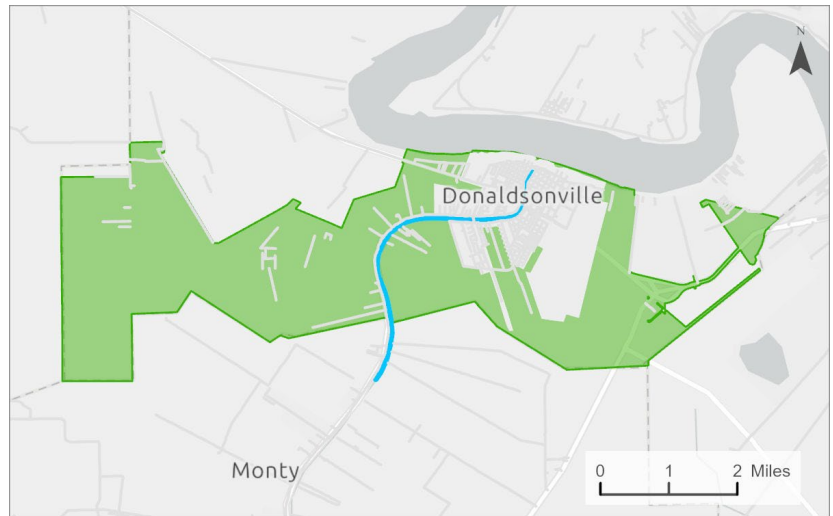

Figure 1: Boundary map

Demographics

Over the last 25 years, the population on the West Bank has declined by 12.7%, Figure 2 (Census 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2023a). In contrast, Ascension Parish (including the incorporated cities of Gonzales, Donaldsonville, and Sorrento) has been one of the fastest growing parishes in Louisiana by percentage growth, with 67.8% population growth in the last 23 years.
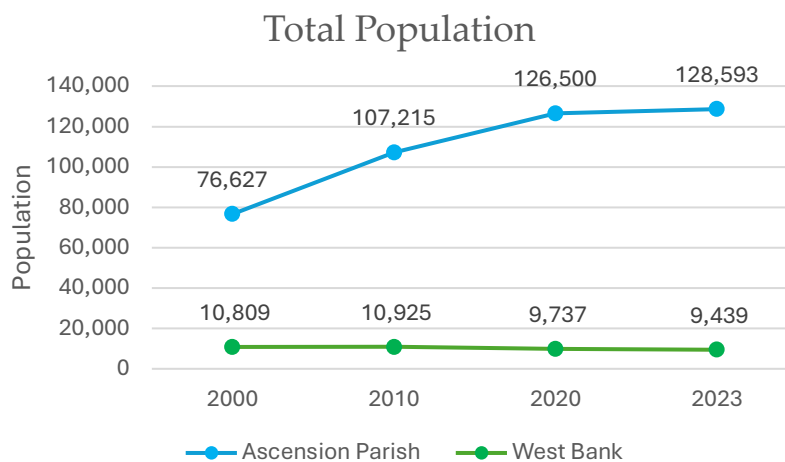

Figure 2: Population trend chart

Residents on the West Bank in the prime working age demographic of 25-54 years old, make up 35% of the population, Figure 3 (Census 2020). Overall, the population is distributed well.
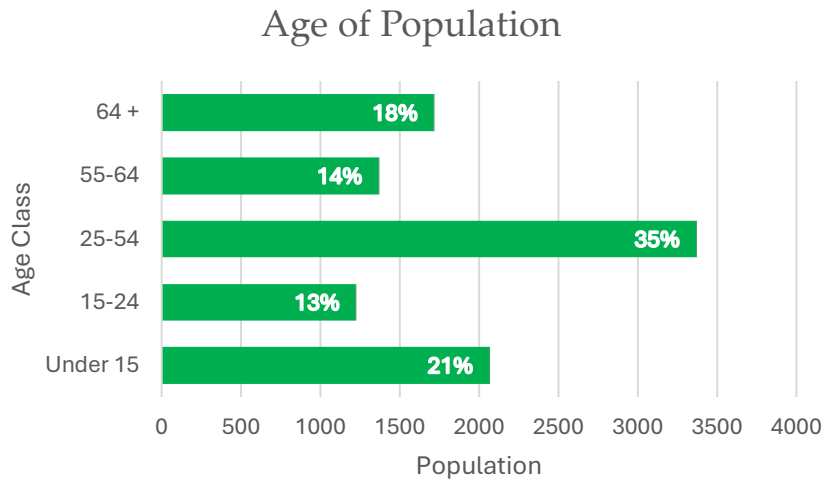
The median household income is $35,333, compared to the entire Parish which is $92,266 (Census 2023a). While Ascension Parish has consistently boasted a higher median income than Louisiana in the past few decades, the West Bank has consistently suffered from median income lower than both the Parish and the State. In fact, the most recent estimates from the 2023 American Community Survey 5-year data profiles show the greatest difference in median income with the West Bank being 89% lower than the Parish and 52% lower than the State.

Age of Population

Figure 3: Population age

Housing

There are an estimated 4,024 total housing units in the West Bank, 591 of which are vacant according to the 2023 ACS 5-year Housing 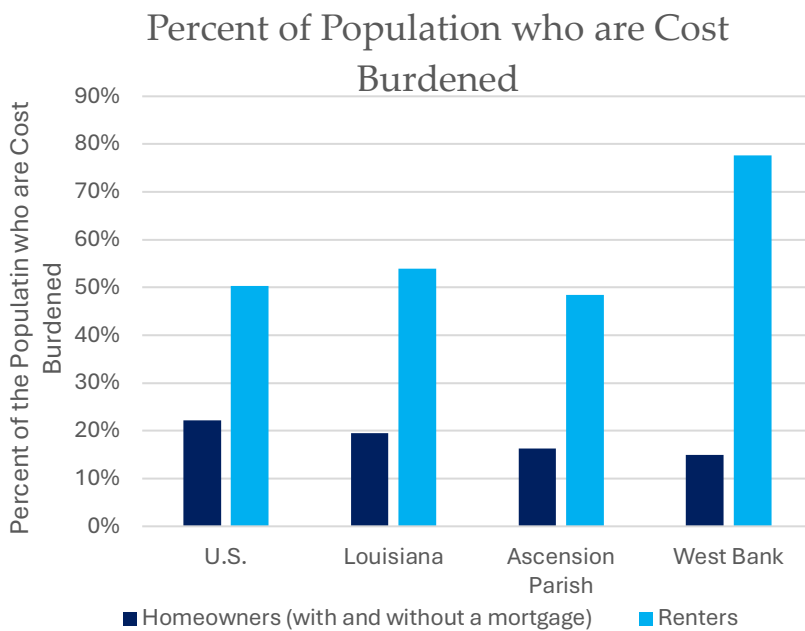Characteristic estimates. Across the three census tracts, the median home value of the West Bank ranges from $181,100 to $189,700, and gross rent ranges from $646 to $1,118 (Census 2023b). Most renters on the West Bank, 78%, are cost burdened, spending 30% or more of their household income on rent, Figure 4 (Census 2023b). Conversely, only 14% and 16% of West Bank homeowners with and without mortgages, respectively, are cost burdened, Figure 4.

Figure 4: Population of cost burdened households

Land Use

There are 9 different zoning districts throughout the Small Area, Figure 5. Conservation is the largest zoning district and is over twice the size of the second largest district, Rural, Table 1. Currently, this district consists largely of active agricultural fields with patches of rural residential areas scattered throughout and an undeveloped forested area in the southwestern most corner. The rural area is similarly comprised of mainly active agricultural fields with residential developments predominantly concentrated along Bayou Lafourche and near the City of Donaldsonville, and undeveloped forested patches on the east end of the district.

Zoning District	Total Acreage
Conservation (C)	5,043.1
Rural (R)	1,950.8
Mixed Use Corridors MU	1,281.9
Medium Intensity Residential (RM)	1,274.9
Medium Industrial (MI)	199.6
Heavy Industrial (HI)	82.7
Crossroads Commercial (CC)	12.0
Mobile Home Recreational Vehicle (MHRV)	7.5
Light Industrial (LI)	2.6

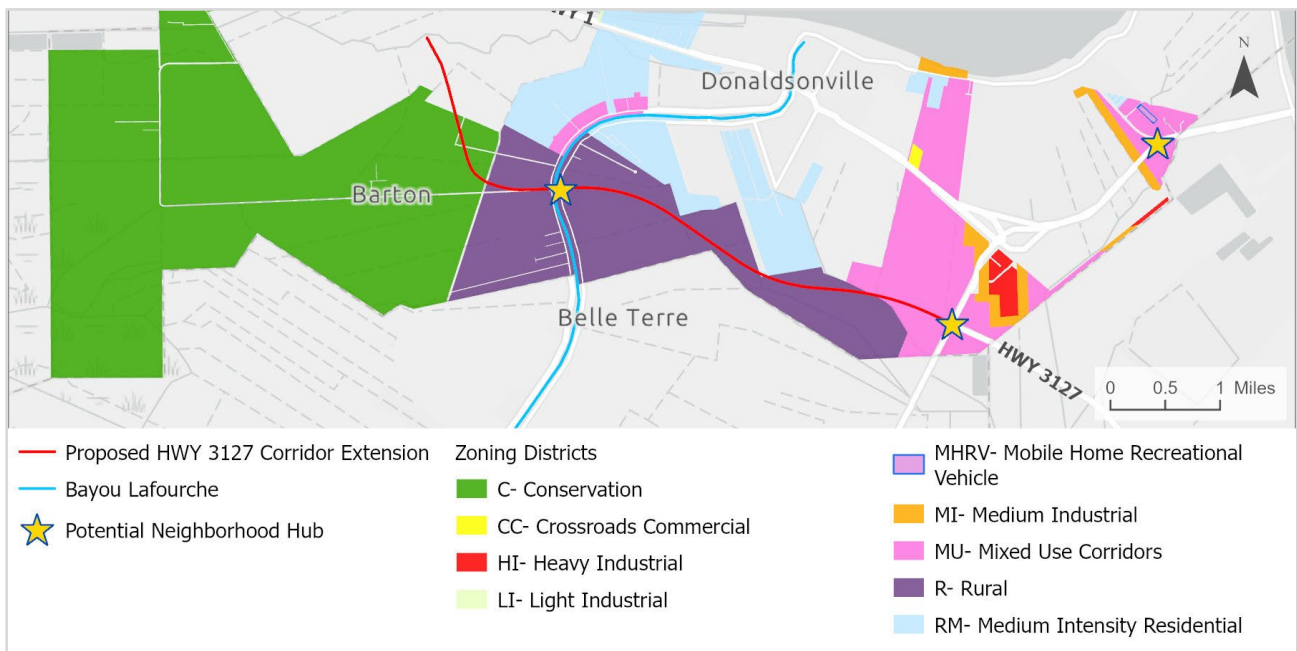*Table 1: Total area of zoning districts*

Figure 5: Zoning Map

The future land use Vision Map, Figure 6, envisions most of the land use in the Small Area as residential neighborhood (Center for Planning Excellence et. al. 2019). There are three envisioned neighborhood hubs within the Small Area: the westernmost hub is located at HWY 308 near Bayou Lafourche at the proposed HWY 3127 extension intersection, one is at the intersection of HWY 3127 and HWY 70, and the easternmost hub is located at intersection of Highway 70 and Highway 3120, Figures 5 and 6.
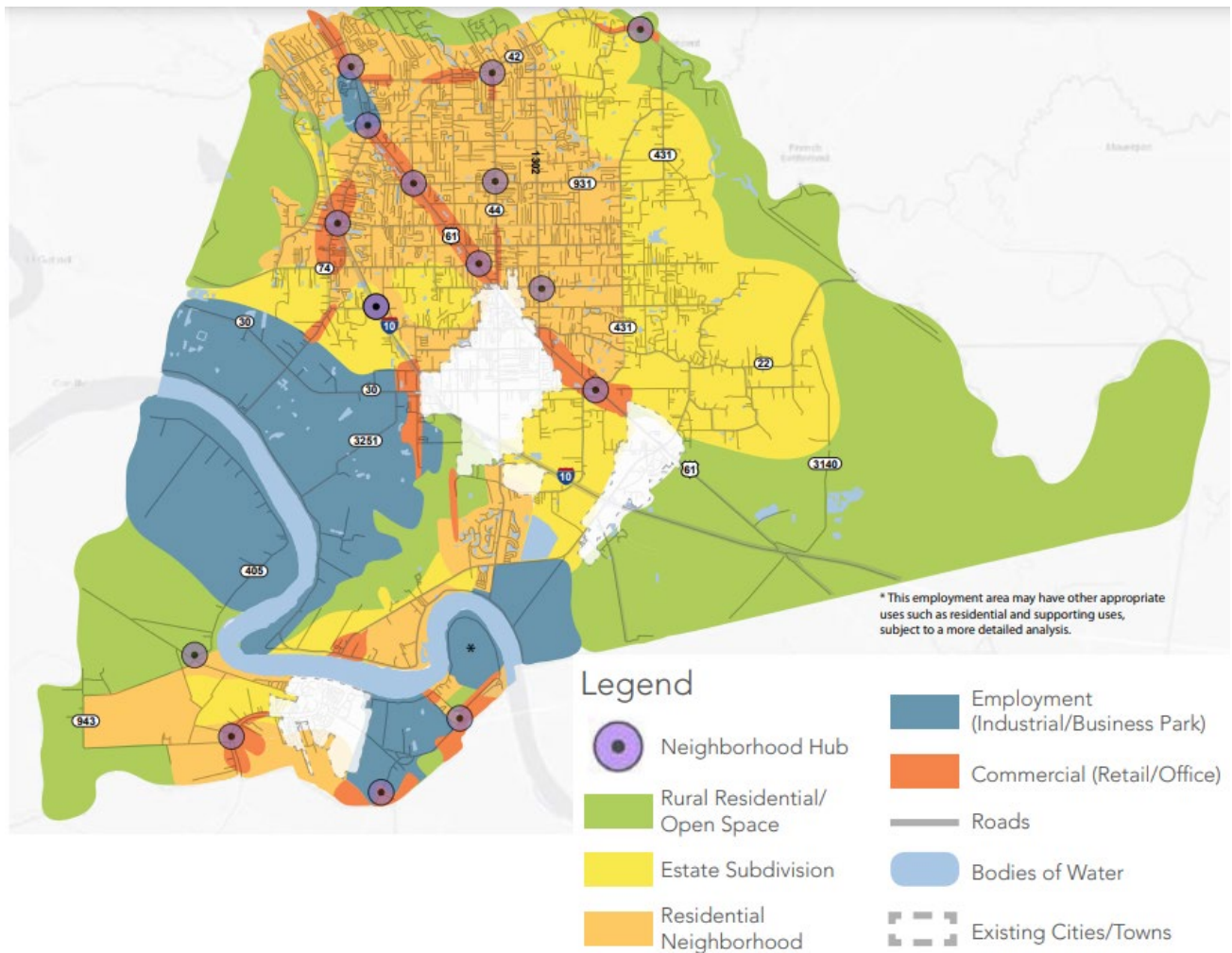

Figure 6: Future Land Use Vision Map (2019 Master Plan)

Flood Zones

Most of the land within the Small Area is outside of a FEMA flood zone, Figure 7. The largest flood zoned area has a future land use of Rural Residential/Open Space which can limit future development.
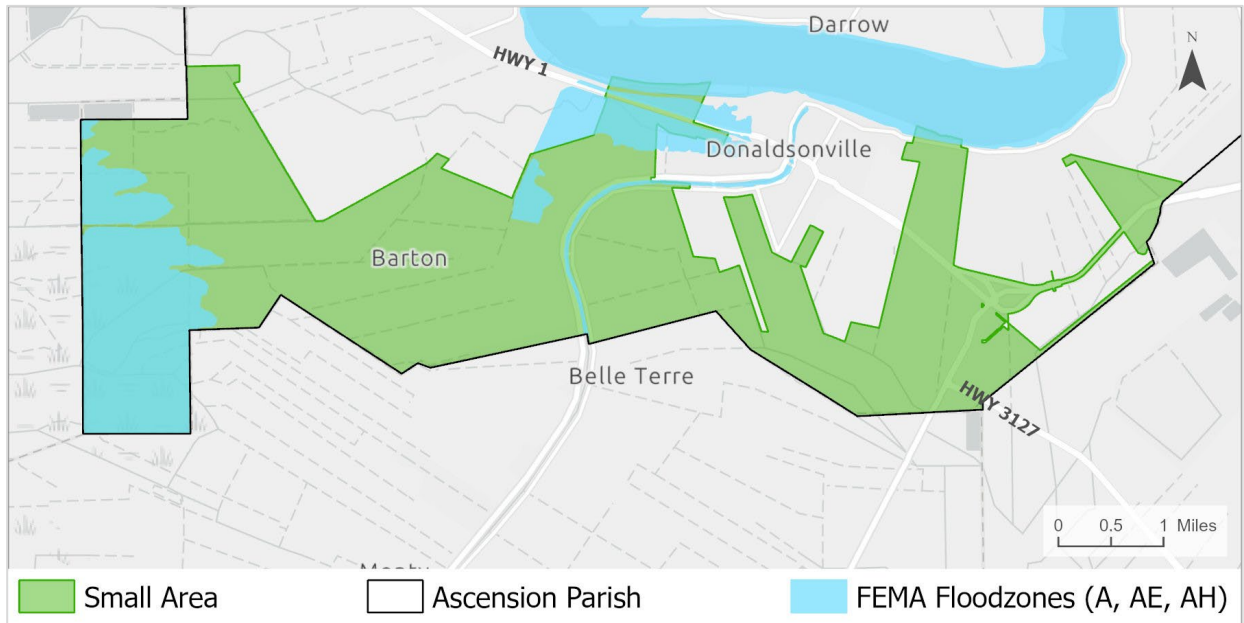
Figure 7: West Bank FEMA Flood Zones (FEMA 2007)

Infrastructure

There are two water storage tanks located within the Small Area, the Palo Alto tank owned by Assumption Parish west of Bayou Lafourche which has a 150,000-gallon capacity and the Highway
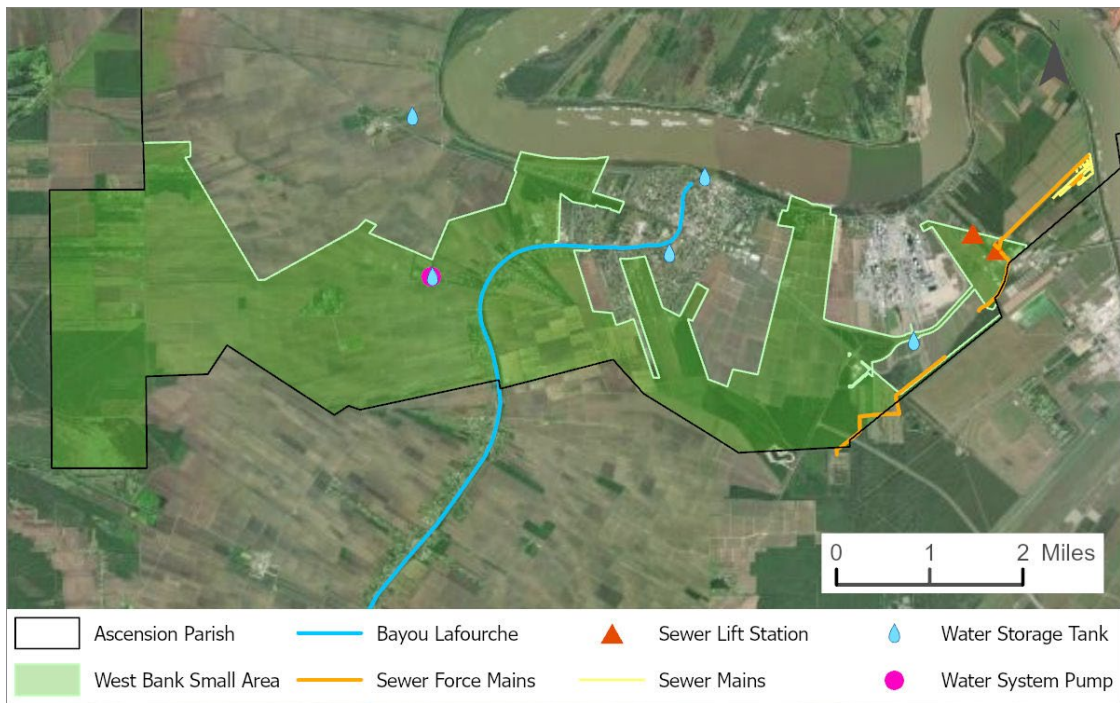

Figure 8: West Bank Infrastructure

70, 400,000-gallon capacity tank owned by St. James Parish, Figure 8. The sewer mains, sewer lift stations, and sewer force mains are on the eastern end of the West Bank.

Transportation

The automobile is the primary means of transportation with 71.8% of workers driving to work alone, and an average commute time of 40-44 minutes (ESRI 2025a). Occupied households with no vehicles available are 25%, this is high compared to the parish at 4%, the state, which is 8.3%, and the national which is 8.7% (Census 2023b).

Traffic and congestion in Ascension Parish are shown in the 2020 (pre-covid) traffic volume map, Figure 10, with few locations on the West Bank experiencing high traffic volumes. There is a proposed phase 1 extension of Highway 3127 linking the St. James/ Ascension Parish border to Highway 308 within the Small Area, Figure 9.
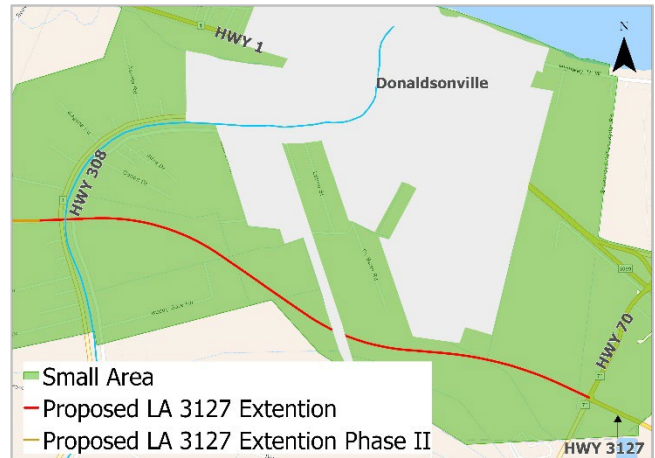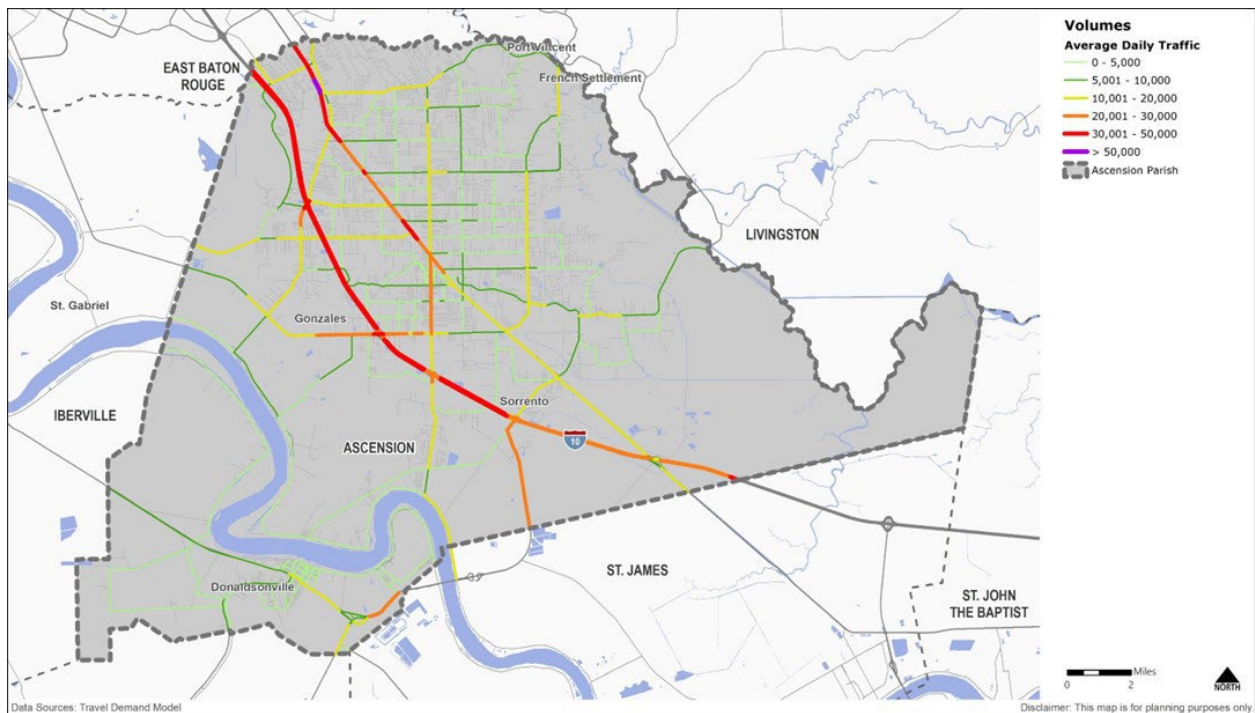

Figure 9: Proposed HWY 3127 Extension

Figure 10: Average daily traffic volumes 2020 (2024 Ascension Parish Long-Range Transportation Master Plan)

Economic Development

Currently, the labor force is distributed between occupation types with the workforce split between white collar jobs (39%), blue collar (31.7%), and service jobs accounting for 29.3% of the jobs. The predominant industries on the West Bank include health care/social assistance (16.7%), accommodation/food services (13.3%), retail trade (12.6%), and Construction (9.4%) with educational services (8.5%) and public administration (8.1%) ranking 5th and 6th respectively, Figure 11. There are an estimated 3,768 employees of the West Bank and 372 businesses (Esri 2025).
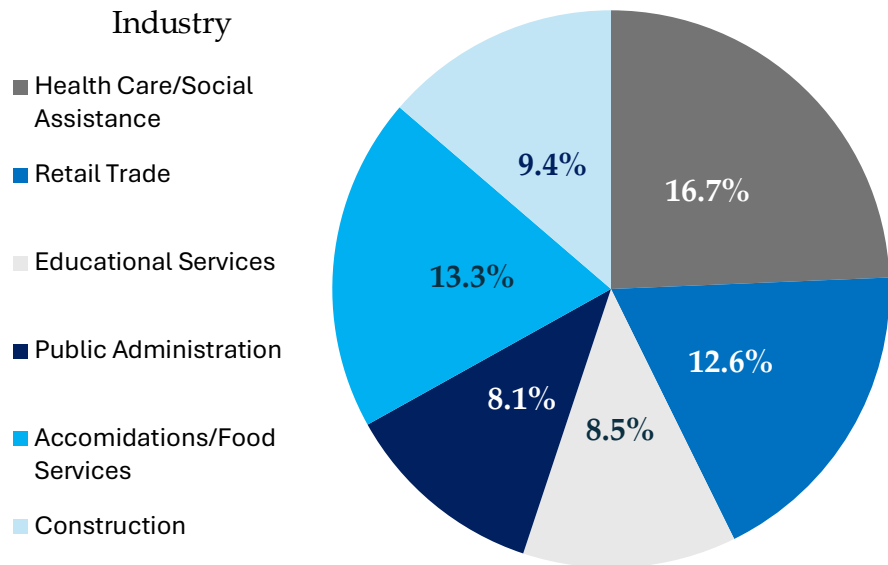

Figure 11: Main industry types of the West Bank

The Louisiana Economic Development (LED) agency is a state agency tasked with cultivating jobs and economic opportunity for the people of Louisiana. The LED Certified Sites program qualifies industrial and business sites for use by undergoing substantial due diligence prior to development to attract industry and facilitate economic growth. Within the Small Area there are three development-ready certified sites: one commercial (9.67 acres), one commercial/industrial (13.2 acres), and one industrial site (52 acres), Figure 12 (LEDa 2025).

Additionally, there are several other LED development-ready certified sites in and around the West Bank. While these sites may not be in the Small Area, economic development in the nearby areas would benefit potential residents and businesses within the Small Area. There are two industrial LED sites and one commercial site on the West Bank and two industrial and one industrial/commercial nearby. These additional sites total 3,445 acres of LED development ready land that could help spur growth within the Small Area.

At the time of this report, LED has announced a steel production plant to be located in the Ascension Parish River Plex Mega Park on the West Bank (outside of the Small Area). The

projections for this project estimate 1,300 new direct jobs, as well as 4,100 indirect new jobs, making the Small Area boundary ideal for land use planning and analysis (LED 2025a).
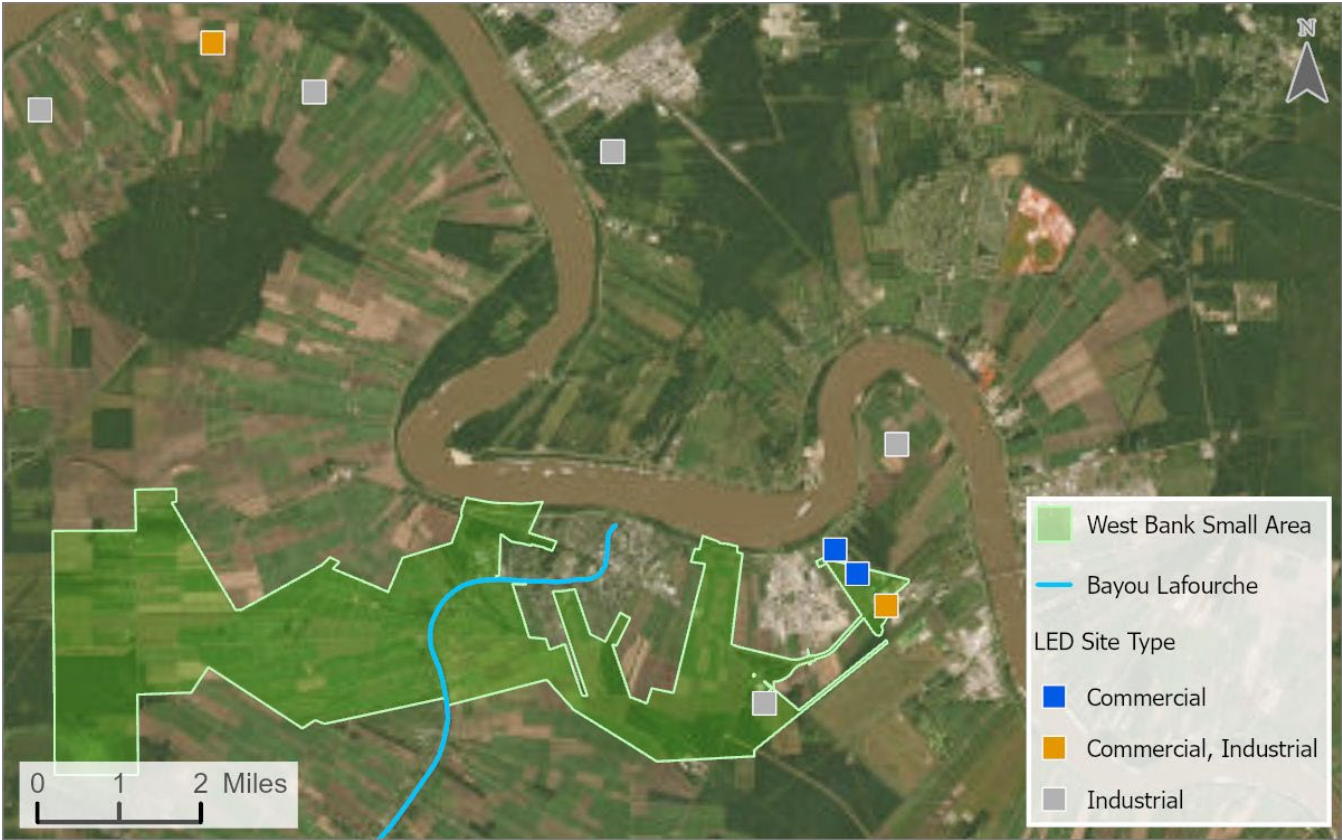

Figure 12: LED development-ready certified sites around the Small Area

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