



FLORIDA & PLANK CORRIDOR STUDY



December 2016





Southern University and A&M College Campus



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Belt Line Townhomes on North and 19th St. completed in 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Baton Rouge is moving forward. Looking to 2017 and beyond, this report outlines key actions and the agencies that can make meaningful change. Residents will prosper from improved transit mobility, access to growing economic opportunity, and reinvestments that result in safe and affordable neighborhoods.

This brief report outlines important actions that will benefit all residents of the City-Parish and unify the community. These recommendations will involve cooperative effort by the City-Parish, the EBR Redevelopment Authority, and the Capital Area Transit System, in addition to other community partner organizations and agencies.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Partner with Baton Rouge's major institutions for economic development along Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd.
- Support local businesses through facade improvements, expansion of commercial land ownership, and encouraging minority-owned businesses
- Expand housing in areas best served by transit
- Preserve and expand high quality affordable housing options
- Use innovative means to expand housing options for Baton Rouge's most vulnerable residents such as piloting a "Street of Dreams" Demonstration Project to showcase innovations in narrow lot and small house designs
- Conduct impact assessments and enact community benefit agreements for all major public investments and all private development receiving public assistance

TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

- Achieve fast, frequent and reliable transit service
- Bring premiere Bus Rapid Transit service to Baton Rouge, starting on Florida Blvd.
- Invest in transit-supportive amenities on Florida Blvd: sidewalks, transit shelters
- Invest in transit-supportive amenities on Plank Rd: sidewalks, transit shelters, lighting
- Improve bike and pedestrian connections

PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

- Update zoning to align with key community-supported plans to expand investment
- Revise or replace zoning districts to achieve mixed-use, walkable development

THE FLORIDA AND PLANK CORRIDOR STUDY

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS STUDY?

This study comprises a series of targeted recommendations for improvements to many elements affecting quality of life in Baton Rouge. This study provides a suggested direction for the City-Parish, the Capital Area Transit System (CATS), and the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (EBRRA), and other agencies and organizations to work together to jointly plan and implement transit improvements, infrastructure investments, housing; and make regulatory changes to facilitate future growth.

Concerted action across organizations and agencies is needed to move forward.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION STEPS

Working alongside the City-Parish Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority and CATS can address the lion's share of the recommendations herein. Partnerships with institutions such as Baton Rouge Community Foundation, public and private developers, Baton Rouge Community College and Southern University, industry groups, governmental agencies, and nonprofit organizations will further increase the scope and reach of implementation activity to improve quality of life in the Florida and Plank corridor areas, and across the City-Parish.

From top: Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport; South University Campus; research students at Southern University; a local church in the Plank Rd. study area; a CATS bus; artist's rendering of the Baton Rouge Community College Automotive Technology facility (Bani, Carville and Brown Architects, Inc.)





HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CURRENT CONDITIONS

THE FLORIDA AND PLANK STUDY AREA

The Plank study area consists of 26 U.S. Census block groups adjacent to the Plank Rd. corridor, from Interstate 110 north to Harding Blvd. The Florida study area consists of 18 U.S. Census block groups adjacent to Florida Blvd., and extends east-west from Interstate 110 to Lobdell Ave. See page 10 for a map of the study area.

EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use in the Florida Blvd. study area is predominantly a mix of commercial, office, institutional and residential uses. Major institutions include the Baton Rouge General Medical Center and the Baton Rouge Community College in the Florida Blvd. area, and the Baton Rouge Airport and Southern University in the Plank Rd. study area. The Florida Blvd. study area also includes Ardendale, which is a 200-acre development site in the eastern end of the corridor.

Existing land use in the Plank Rd. study area is predominantly a mix of residential, commercial, institutional and park land. Southern University is among the largest institutional uses in the study area, and although outside the boundaries, the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport is located north of Harding Blvd, and is accessible via Plank Rd.

By acreage, the most prominent land use in the combined Florida and Plank study area is residential (43.1%), including low, medium and high density housing. Undeveloped land comprises 18.3% of the study area. Businesses including office, commercial and industrial lands comprise 13.6% of the study area. Other uses in the study area include parks, utilities, vacant land, and agriculture (8.6%).

Table 1. Distribution of existing land use types within the study area

LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF STUDY AREA
Low Density Residential	2,411.85	35.7%
Undeveloped	1,238.11	18.3%
Institutional	1,102.09	16.3%
Commercial	529.13	7.8%
Medium Density Residential	303.47	4.5%
Park	256.58	3.8%
Vacant	248.58	3.7%
Office	220.68	3.3%
High Density Residential	202.17	3.0%
Industrial	172.37	2.5%
Utilities	75.98	1.1%
Agriculture	0.91	<0.1%
	6,761.92	100%

Source: Existing Land Use, City of Baton Rouge – Parish of East Baton Rouge (October 2015)

DEMOGRAPHICS

The total population in these two study areas is 45,349 as of 2014 (American Community Survey, 2014, 5-year estimates). Within the Plank Rd. area, there are 28,338 residents; within the Florida Blvd. area, there are 17,011 residents.

Close to a quarter of the residents are youth aged 17 and under (24.8%), and one in 6 (14.8%) are over the age of 60. Young people and older adults are typically more transit dependent, and make up nearly 40% of the study area residents.

Figure 1. Florida and Plank Study Area

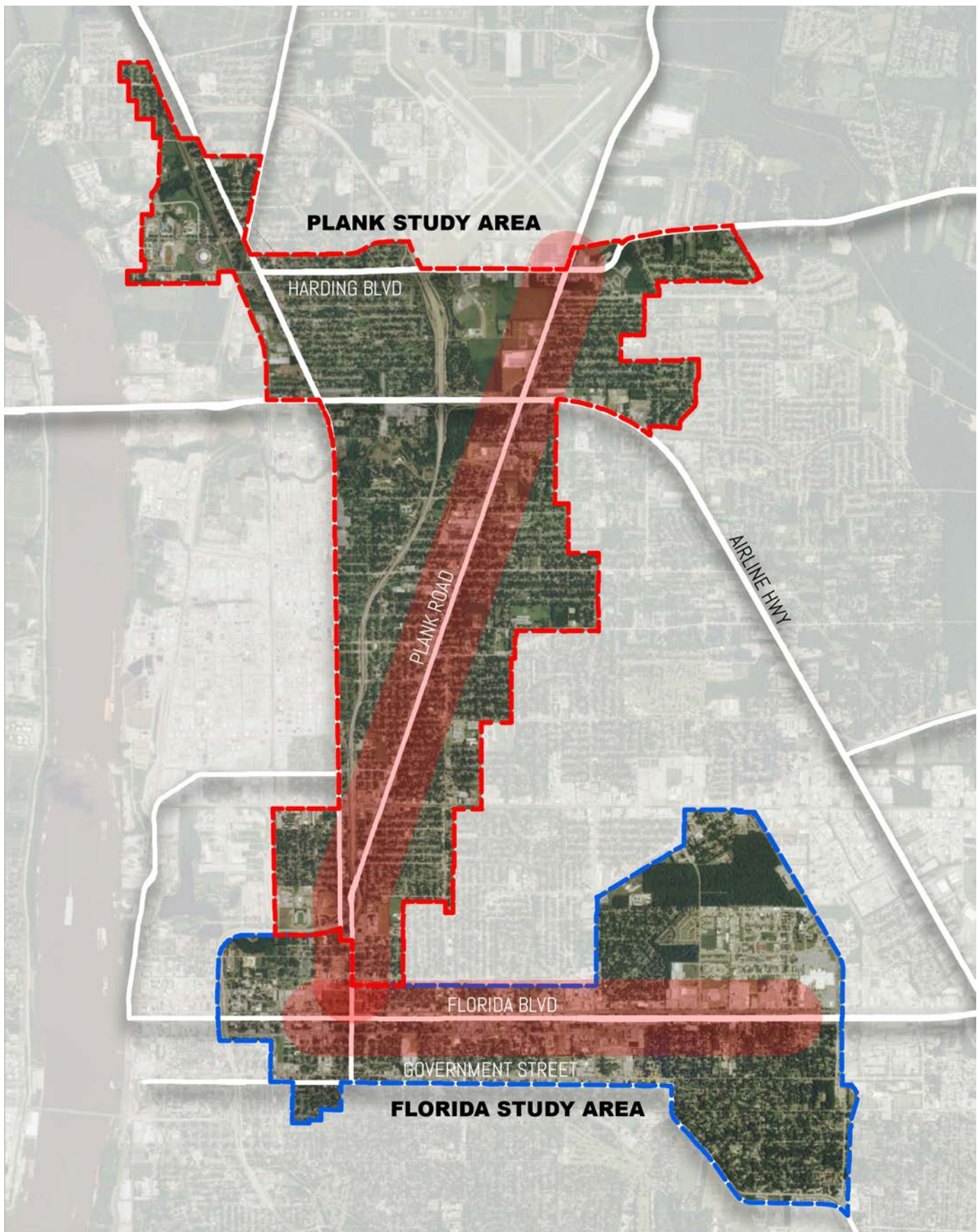


Figure 2. Existing land uses in the Florida and Plank study area (October 2015 data)

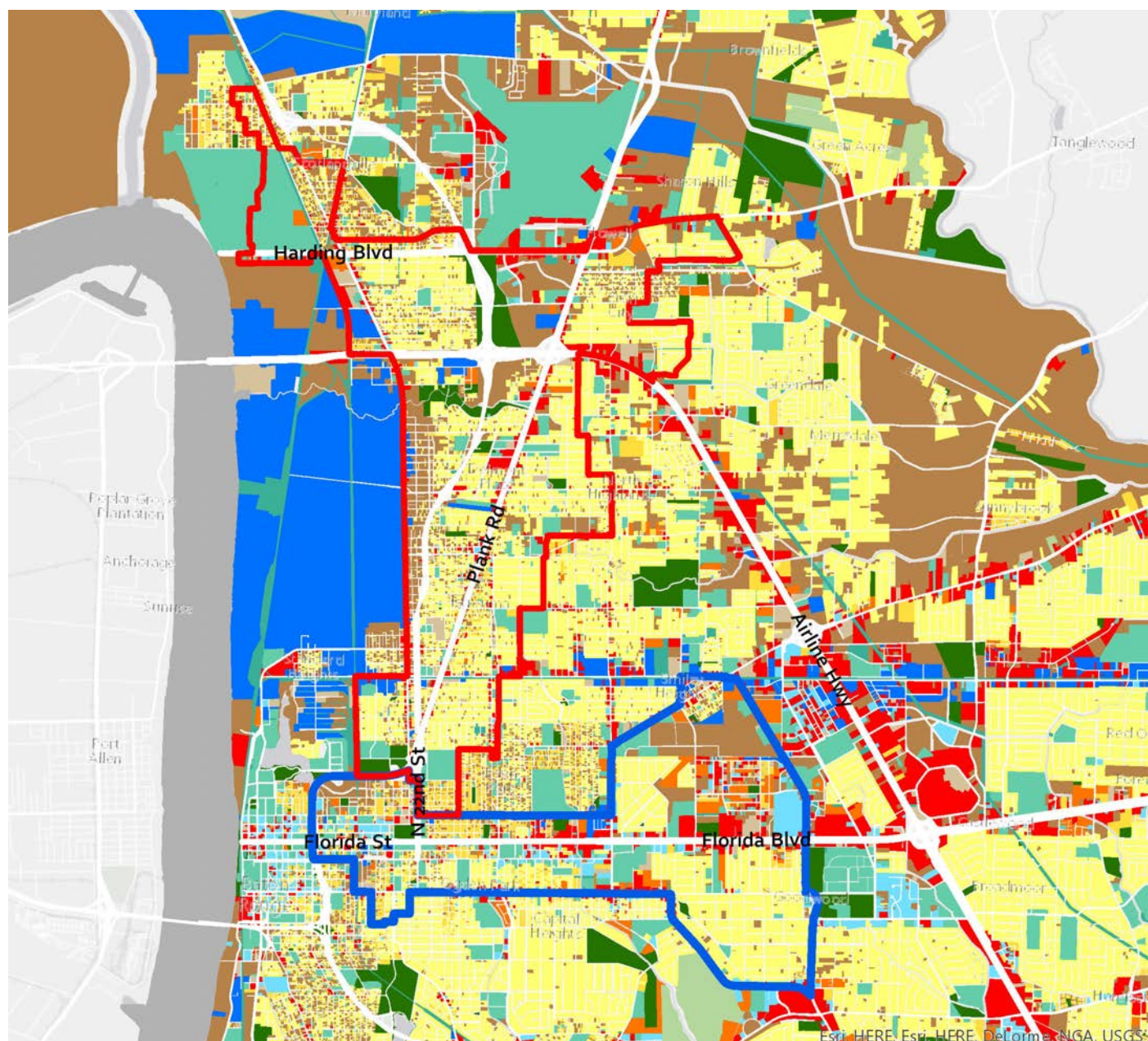
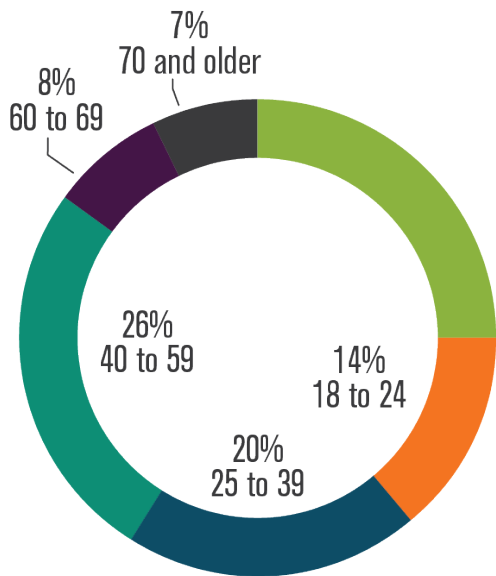
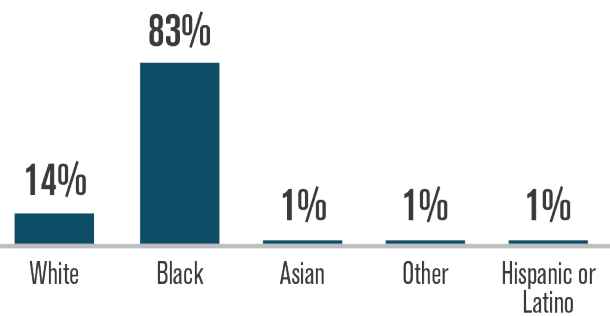


Figure 3. Population by age, Florida and Plank study area



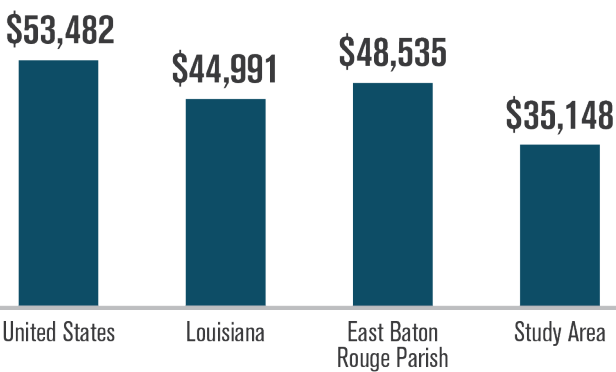
Residents in the study area are predominantly African American (non-Hispanic) (82.6%), in addition to 14.4% white (non-Hispanic), 1.4% Asian, 1.3% other race or multiple races, and 1.4% Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 4. Race and ethnicity in the study area



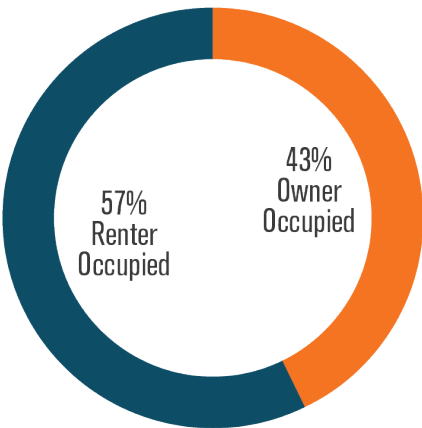
Median incomes in the study area are significantly less than the Parish; the median household earns \$13,387 less per year compared to the East Baton Rouge Parish median. Within the Plank Rd. portion of the study area, median incomes are \$28,088, with a 9.7% unemployment rate.

Figure 5. Median household income in the study area



Households in the Florida and Plank study area are also more likely to be renters. Of households in the study area, 57.2% rent their home, which is higher than the Parish average of 40% rental.

Figure 6. Housing tenure of occupied units in the study area



Source for all: ACS 2014, 5-year estimates.

There are 19,992 housing units in the Florida and Plank study area, of which 17,137 are occupied (86%). There are 18 federally subsidized housing properties in the Plank area, with 637 units; and 20 housing properties in the Florida area, with a total of 1,068 units, per the National Housing Preservation Database (October 2016). These units represent 10% of the occupied housing units in the combined study area.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On average, residents of the Florida and Plank corridor areas earn far less than households in East Baton Rouge Parish as a whole. In the study area, 34% of households are living in poverty, and another 28% are struggling (earning less than 200% of poverty line). There is a strong need in this area for public and private assistance to provide sustainable access to quality affordable housing, business development, and opportunities for employment that can provide a livelihood. The following strategies and actions seek to address these needs.

KEY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following entities have been identified as crucial to implement strategies in this section.

- East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (EBRRA)
- Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF)
- Capital Area Transit System (CATS)
- Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACTIONS FOR THE EBR REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

PARTNER WITH MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

BATON ROUGE GENERAL MID CITY CAMPUS

Continue working with Baton Rouge General to identify opportunities for design and site planning activities to identify opportunities for catalytic development, service improvements and infrastructure projects, which could include sidewalks, bike lanes, transit service and shelters, and lighting.

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Explore ways to better connect the university campus and student housing with the improvements along Plank Rd. Consider CATS transit service routes and hours that would best serve students living near campus and throughout the City-Parish.

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT

Create a facade improvement program to provide small business assistance for storefront improvements and infrastructure upgrades.

COMMERCIAL LAND

Explore options for assisting tenant businesses to have greater control over the commercial spaces they use.

- Create a “Buy Your Building” plan for local businesses that could be financed in partnership

with an economic development district (EDD) or in partnership with supportive local banks.

- Foster community ownership of commercial spaces.
- Explore ways to regulate lease renewal for commercial properties in the study area.
- Create a property tax credit for commercial landlords.

COMMERCIAL DIVERSITY

Encourage diversity in the city’s commercial and business community. Preserve and create opportunities for minority-owned businesses to operate and grow.

- Explore partnerships with local and community-focused banks including Black-owned banks to invest in local entrepreneurship.
- Preserve and increase the supply of smaller spaces available for commercial businesses.
- Explore options for encouraging developers to dedicate space for local businesses in new developments. This could be done in coordination with a Community Benefits Agreement, or by establishing a preference for local businesses in publicly-owned development.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT

Establish a requirement and process for the City-Parish to conduct a Community Impact Assessment and develop actionable strategies to address issues when the City-Parish and other public entities, including the Redevelopment Authority (EBRRA) and CATS, take actions in the study area that will potentially affect the real estate and housing markets. Actions that would trigger a Community Impact Assessment could include providing assistance for private development projects, forming an economic development district or tax increment financing area, providing tax breaks or development subsidies.

Routine actions such as issuing permits or rezoning would be excluded from this requirement.

The City-Parish should work with community partners to develop the methodology for conducting this analysis.

For private development projects receiving public assistance from the City-Parish, the City-Parish should require developers to enter into Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) which are:

1. Directly responsive to mitigation needs identified by the Community Impact Analysis
2. Negotiated prior to permits being issued
3. Legally binding
4. Created in collaboration with organizations and individuals embedded in communities at risk of disparate and adverse impact by the development in question

Require development projects that include a residential component receiving City-Parish assistance to include at least 25% permanently affordable units (up to 80% Area Median Income (AMI); or as negotiated.

HOUSING AND AFFORDABILITY

ACTIONS FOR THE CITY-PARISH AND EBR REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

INCREASE THE HOUSING SUPPLY IN TRANSIT-SERVED AREAS

EXPANDED HOUSING OPTIONS

Continue to encourage a wider range of high quality and affordable housing types as a response to homeownership preferences. Expand diversity of housing options, including small-lot housing types suitable for neighborhood infill. Encourage new and innovative housing types that meet the evolving needs of Baton Rouge households and expand housing choices in all neighborhoods. These housing types include single dwelling units; multi-dwelling units; accessory dwelling units; small units; co-housing and clustered housing/clustered services.

EMPLOYER ASSISTED HOUSING

Continue to encourage employer-assisted affordable housing in conjunction with major employment development that enables employees to live close to work.

ACCESSIBLE LOCATION

Facilitate expanding the variety of types and sizes of affordable housing units, and do so in locations that provide low-income households with greater access to convenient transit and transportation, education and training opportunities, downtown, industrial districts, and other employment areas.

STREET OF DREAMS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Partner with the Capital Region Homebuilders Association, the Growth Coalition, and CPEX to pilot an affordable “Street of Dreams” in a residential neighborhood near Florida or Plank as a demonstration project to showcase the possibilities of narrow lots and small house design. This type of event, sometimes called a “Street of Dreams” or “Parade of Homes,” draw big crowds and media attention, and can be used to troubleshoot permitting and construction on non-standard lots and affordable homes.

AGING IN PLACE

Encourage a range of housing options and supportive environments to enable older adults to remain in their communities as their needs change, especially in neighborhoods adjacent to CATS service, where transit provides an alternative to driving.

FINANCING STRATEGIES

FINANCING PLAN

Create a financing plan for affordable housing development and revitalization that enables public and private developers to utilize a range of tools to produce quality housing affordable to the city’s low and moderate income residents. These tools should include, but not be limited to:

- Tax Increment Financing
- Economic Development District
- HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

PRESERVE AND EXPAND HIGH QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

HOME BUYER ASSISTANCE

Maintain and expand the Homebuyer’s Assistance Program that offers down payment assistance to households earning under 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESOURCES

Work with agency partners and affordable housing developers and operators to pursue a variety of funding sources and mechanisms to preserve and develop housing units and various assistance programs for households whose needs are not met by the private market.

- Raise the quality of rental properties through proactive and systematic code enforcement, and zero tolerance towards chronic offenders.
- Include front porches, balconies, stoops, and attractive common open spaces which promote safety and security by means of their own activity.

PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Evaluate plans and investments for their impact on the supply of permanently affordable housing. Increase the supply where practicable.

- Partner with developers to create permanently affordable units within market-rate housing developments.
- Use land bank properties under EBRRA control as an anti-displacement tool.
- Establish a Community Land Trust for ownership housing; land held by a non-profit that ensures permanent affordability. Support shared-equity and cooperative forms of homeownership.

HOUSING PRESERVATION

Preserve and produce affordable housing to meet the needs that are not met by the private market by coordinating plans and investments with housing providers and organizations. Prioritize rehabilitation of existing single family and multifamily housing for affordable units.

Partner with community institutions for Collective Impact such as schools, places of worship, and other existing community groups.

TENANT PROTECTIONS

Explore ways to strengthen residential tenant protections in order to prevent their displacement and improve living conditions. Specific provisions to be considered include:

- Provide tenants with information about their rights.
- Target rental property owners for code enforcement to ensure housing quality standards are met.
- Ensure strict and consistent enforcement of fair housing laws, and of codes that protect the safety and health of tenants.

AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

Align plans and investments to support improving homeownership rates and locational choice for people of color and other groups who have been historically under-served and under-represented.

HOMEOWNERSHIP RETENTION

Support opportunities for homeownership retention for people of color and other groups who have been historically under-served and under-represented. Establish funding for renovation and building rehabilitation assistance for low-income and minority homeowners.

ACTIONS FOR CITY-PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION:

PRESERVE AND EXPAND HIGH QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

MIXED-USE HOUSING

Continue to permit construction of multifamily units in a vertical design stacked over office, retail or other non-residential ground floor units.

HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING

Continue to encourage higher density housing, including units that are affordable and accessible, in and around centers and transit stops to take advantage of the access to active transportation, jobs, open spaces, schools, and various services and amenities.

IMPACT OF REGULATIONS ON AFFORDABILITY

Evaluate how existing and new regulations affect private development of affordable housing and minimize negative impacts where possible. Avoid regulations that facilitate economically exclusive neighborhoods.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

Develop an ordinance to allow accessory dwelling units under certain conditions, based on size, building design, and neighborhood context.

**JOINT ACTIONS FOR CITY-PARISH
PLANNING COMMISSION AND EBR
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:**

**EVALUATE IMPACTS OF PUBLIC DECISIONS
AND ACTIONS**

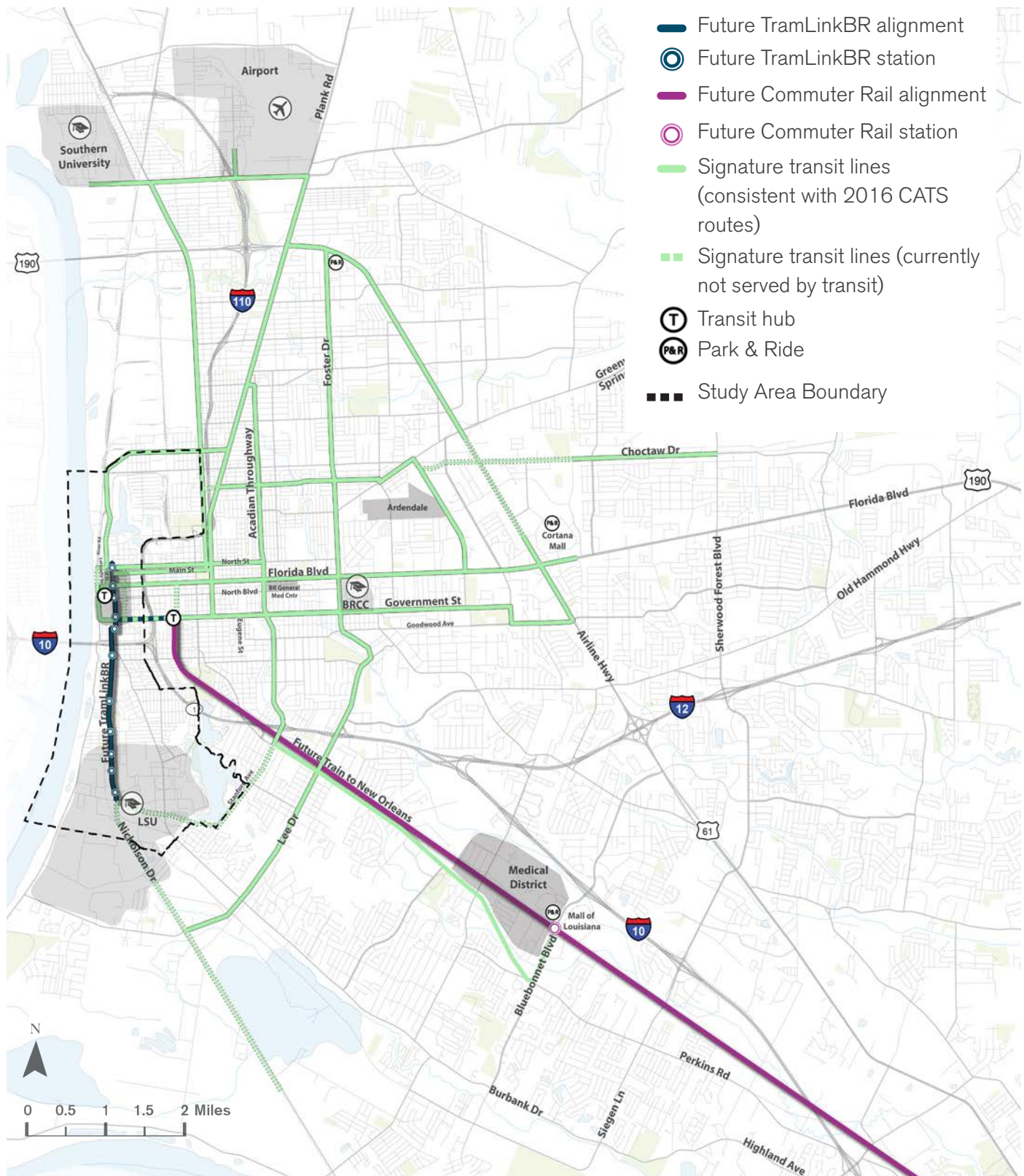
IMPACT ANALYSIS

Evaluate plans and investments, and other legislative land use decisions to identify potential disparate impacts on housing choice and access for protected classes.

HOUSING COST BURDEN

Evaluate plans and investments for their impact on household cost, and consider ways to reduce the combined cost of housing, utilities, and/or transportation.

Figure 7. Proposed FUTUREBR Transit Vision



TRANSIT VISION FOR THE PARISH

FUTUREBR, the City-Parish Comprehensive plan adopted in 2011, is the guiding document for the City-Parish's long term growth. Since adoption, the City-Parish has been working to implement many of the plan's key strategies and recommendations. In 2016, the Planning Commission initiated the first five-year update of the Comprehensive Plan, which will incorporate recent changes and advancements toward plan goals, notably in regards to city-wide transit network improvements. The plan update will include TramLinkBR, a proposed modern streetcar, the revised Transit Vision for the Parish, and updates to many of the plan elements, including Land Use, Transportation, and Urban Design and Neighborhoods.

CAPITAL AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM

CATS has a renewed commitment to coordinated long-range planning with the City-Parish, and is in the process of developing a Service Improvement Plan with the goal of making CATS service more efficient, convenient, accessible and reliable for the residents of Baton Rouge. Elements of this plan include increased service frequency, improved on-time performance, increasing evening service hours, extending routes into new service areas, restructured routes to improve direct travel and reduce the need for transfers, improved travel time and service efficiency. CATS will reinvest savings from discontinuing underutilized routes to improve overall system service.

FUTUREBR TRANSIT VISION

To advance the FUTUREBR vision for transit in Baton Rouge, the City-Parish envisions a system where housing is built near jobs and services; where signature bus lines provide fast, frequent and reliable service on the most-used routes; and these are supported by the foundation bus lines that provide wide coverage and reliable service. Signature lines should be located along well-traveled high-capacity corridors where the potential for reinvestment and

increased housing is high. Two transit hubs centrally located in downtown and Mid City will serve transit commuters; the Mid City hub on Government Street will connect to the future regional rail to New Orleans, and is envisioned to have many amenities for transit riders to complete the "last mile." These include a complete sidewalk network, transit shelters, pedestrian and pathway lighting, a park and ride facility, bike parking, a bike share station, opportunities to host car share and on-demand ride services as well. CATS is evaluating enhanced transit service and introduced new bus rapid transit along Florida Blvd, with limited service from the downtown transit hub to a third transit hub proposed for Cortana Mall, at the terminal end, with additional stops at 22nd, Acadian, Foster, Ardenwood and Lobdell.

Signature improvements of the Transit Vision include improved routes and service; accessibility improvements; bus rapid transit on Florida Blvd; transit-supportive streetscape improvements to Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd.; the TramLinkBR modern streetcar; and electric buses.

TRAMLINKBR

As part of overall transit system improvements, the City-Parish is planning for a modern streetcar. TramLinkBR will provide accessible, frequent and reliable tram service that can quickly carry many people between downtown Baton Rouge and Louisiana State University (LSU), with convenient high quality stations along the way. The tram travels from Capitol Park to LSU through historic Old South Baton Rouge. The tram will connect into a downtown transit hub that will connect multiple transit routes in one area to make transfers easier and more efficient.



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TRANSIT VISION FOR FLORIDA AND PLANK

This section of the study provides direction for the City-Parish Planning Commission and the Capital Area Transit System (CATS) to work together to jointly plan, implement and fund transit improvements and transit-supportive infrastructure investments.

Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. are two major transit corridors in northern Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Florida Blvd. has the highest ridership of any CATS route in fiscal year 2016, with a combined 405,251 riders and 36,456 annual trips on routes 44 and 72 (express). Plank Rd. has the second highest ridership of all routes in the City-Parish, with 273,002 annual riders and 31,068 trips.

FLORIDA BLVD BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast, comfortable and efficient service using dedicated operating lanes and iconic stations. BRT service typically includes amenities that are typically associated with rail, such as off-board fare collection, fast and frequent operation, and half-mile or greater stop distribution. With these features, BRT is able to provide expedited service by avoiding causes of delay that typically slow regular bus service, such as traffic delays, frequent stops, and on-board payment exchanges.

CURRENT TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

Florida Blvd. is one of the Parish's most important east-west corridors, with two routes serving it. As the busiest bus route in the CATS system, Route 44 connects downtown to Cortana Mall in the east, and provides access in the burgeoning Mid City district. CATS Route 72 serves Florida Blvd with express service and fewer stops. Combined, these two routes had 405,251 riders and 36,456 annual trips in FY2016, nearly 50% higher ridership than the next busiest route, Plank Rd.

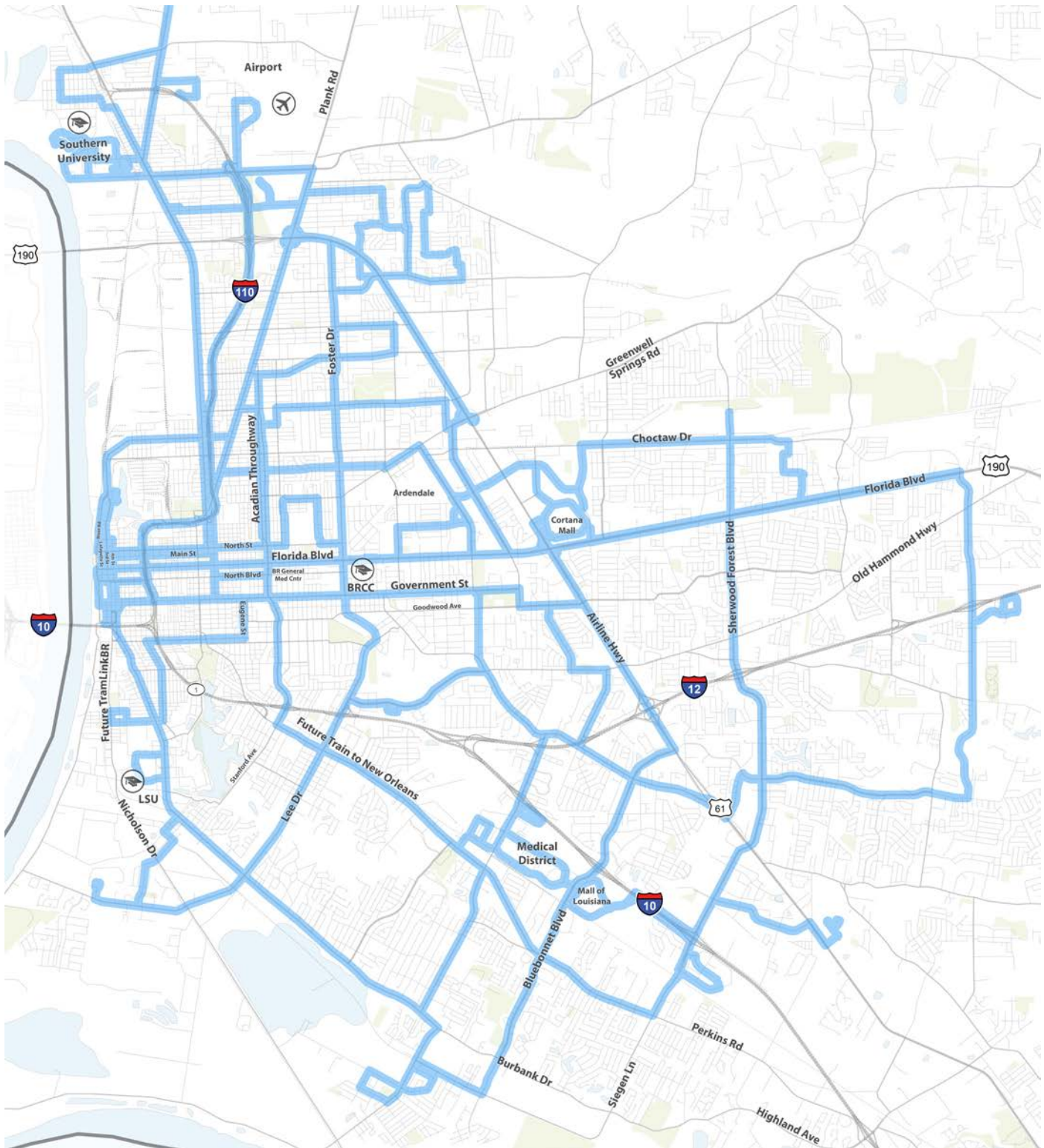
Plank Rd. is one of the city's most used transit corridors, second only to Florida Blvd. in number of riders and number of trips annually. CATS Route 41 runs from 22nd and Convention to Airline Highway and Greenwell. In FY2016, the Plank Rd. bus carried 273,002 riders in 31,068 total trips.

Table 2. Top 15 CATS Routes by Ridership in 2016

ROUTE	PASSENGERS	TRIPS
44 Florida Blvd - Cortana	336,098	24,024
41 Plank Rd	273,002	31,068
47 Highland Rd	170,666	23,030
12 Government / Jefferson	163,058	17,668
17 Perkins Rd / Mall of LA	140,878	19,210
80 Southern Univ Shuttle	133,903	5,180
54 Airline Hwy N / Southern Univ	133,211	16,621
57 Sherwood Forest Blvd	126,868	12,008
20 N Acadian Thwy	95,152	18,114
56 Mall to Mall via Drusilla	87,567	11,231
14 Thomas Delpit Dr	80,439	10,502
18 LSU - Cortana Mall	76,727	11,021
10 Scenic Hwy / Southern Univ	71,315	17,234
72 Florida Blvd - Limited	69,153	12,432
21 Fairfields Ave - Cortana	66,575	10,813

Source: Capital Area Transit System, fiscal year 2016 data.

Figure 8. Existing CATS bus network (2016)



SERVICE NEEDS

FREQUENT SERVICE

Despite the popularity of both routes, the headways are not frequent enough to provide efficient and convenient service for transit riders. Plank Rd. Route 41 has hourly service; Florida Blvd. Route 44 has hourly service; and Florida Blvd. Express Route 72 has half hour service until 6:00 PM weekdays. With increased headways, all three lines have the potential to greatly improve utilization of seated capacity by drawing potential riders who are discouraged by infrequent service.

TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE AMENITIES

Additionally, despite high transit use on both routes, the streets lack the basic infrastructure to ensure the safety and comfort of transit riders on their way to and from transit stops. Sidewalks along Florida Blvd. are too narrow and intermittent, and the route lacks bus shelters. On Plank Rd., the road is missing sidewalks and bus shelters for most of the length of the transit corridors, and street lighting is intermittent at best. Poor lighting makes it more difficult for drivers to see pedestrians, and lack of continuous sidewalks could mean pedestrians must walk on uneven terrain and could exclude people with disabilities from accessing transit. Pedestrian safety is of major concern in Baton Rouge; in 2016, more pedestrians died in East Baton Rouge Parish than any other parish in the state.

In 2016, more pedestrians died in East Baton Rouge Parish than any other parish in the State.

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. are two important transit corridors in the City-Parish, but sidewalks, street lighting and transit shelters are infrequent in large sections of both corridors. The FUTUREBR transit vision identifies Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. as signature transit lines, meaning that they are key routes which should be prioritized for improvements. Plank Rd. and Florida Blvd. can be transformed with tangible improvements to the transit service and corresponding investments in the streetscapes, including wide, continuous sidewalks, improved street lighting along Plank Rd; and bus shelters at major intersections and at each BRT station.

FLORIDA BLVD BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a modified form of bus service that delivers fast, comfortable and efficient service using dedicated operating lanes and iconic stations. BRT service includes amenities that are typically associated with rail, such as off-board fare collection, fast and frequent operation, and half-mile or greater stop distribution for faster travel. With these features, BRT is able to provide expedited service by avoiding causes of delay that typically slow regular bus service, such as traffic, frequent stops, and on-board payment exchanges.

SIDEWALKS

Improving sidewalks along key routes in the Parish is one of the most important steps to enhancing pedestrian safety. Sidewalks in these three key areas are either discontinuous, non-existent or in urgent need to repair. On Florida Blvd., several roadway repaving projects have raised the grade of the road while the curbs and sidewalks remained at the same grade. The result is that there is little or no height differentiation between the roadway and the sidewalk creating dangerous conditions for pedestrians and vehicles alike.

SHELTERED STOPS

Sheltered transit stops are recommended for select locations along Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. In addition to providing shelter from the elements, these sheltered transit stops should include seating for at least two people and posted CATS system maps and arrival times. The premium BRT station shelters should also be outfitted with real-time bus arrival technology and a display located inside the shelter.

Standard transit stops should include signs indicating the bus line number.

LIGHTING

On Plank Rd., street lighting locations are identified to further enhance safety on this key route. Consistent with existing standards, roadway lighting is suggested at intersections to illuminate crossings both for pedestrians and vehicles and also at regularly spaced intervals along the roadway.

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Transit hub with shelters |  Bus Route |
|  BRT stop with shelters |  Proposed TramLinkBR Route |
|  Premium stop with shelters |  Proposed Commuter Rail |
|  Standard transit stop without shelters |  Parks/Open Space |
| |  Street lighting |

Figure 10. Plank Rd. Recommendations



Figure 9. Florida Blvd. Recommendations



Note: Transit stops may require two shelters, one for each direction of travel.

Figure 11. Conceptual cross section of recommended improvements on Florida Blvd. (For illustration purposes only)

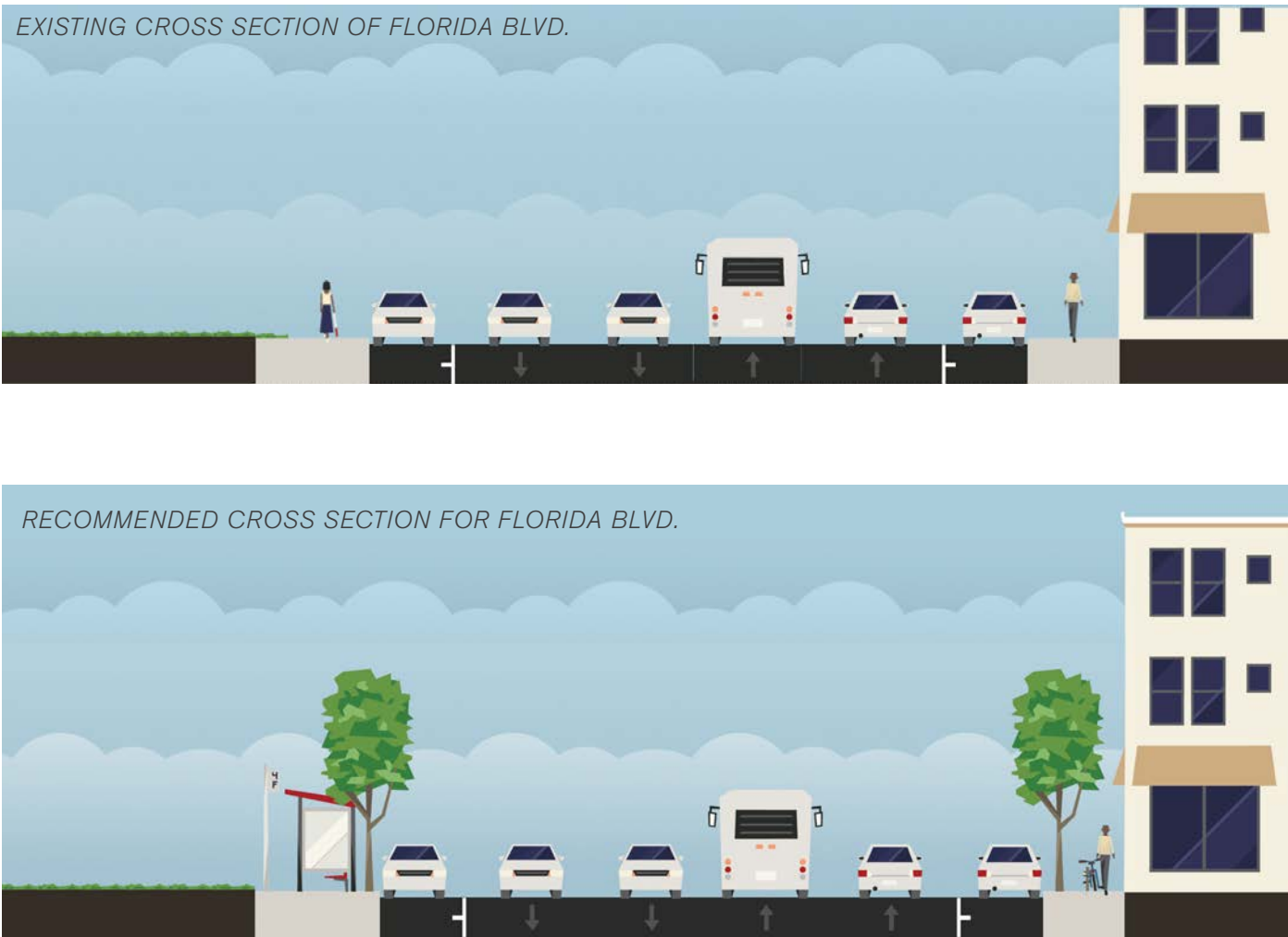


Figure 12. Conceptual cross section of recommended improvements on Plank Rd. (For illustration purposes only)



SUMMARY

FLORIDA BLVD. TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS:

- 3 transit hubs
- 5 BRT transit stops with shelters
- 2 premium transit stops with shelters
- 17 standard transit stops without shelters
- 25,500 linear feet of sidewalk

The sidewalk improvements and standard shelters along Florida would extend from the eastern side of Interstate 110 to Foster Drive. BRT stations would extend the whole length of the route to Cortana Mall, with premium stations located at the downtown transit hub, 22nd Street, Acadian Throughway, Foster Drive, Ardenwood Drive, Lobdell Blvd., and a transit hub at Cortana Mall.

PLANK RD. TRANSIT-SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS:

- 8 premium transit stops with shelters
- 18 standard transit stops without shelters
- 64 street lights
- 45,000 linear feet of sidewalk

Streetscape improvements along Plank Rd. would extend along the full length of CATS Route 41, from Harding Blvd near the airport to 22nd and Convention in Mid City.

Note: Transit stops may require two shelters, one for each direction of travel.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

As CATS and the City-Parish consider the future of transit in Baton Rouge, service and infrastructure enhancements to Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. should be near-term priorities.

KEY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following entities have been identified as crucial to implement strategies in this section.

- Capital Area Transit System (CATS)
- City-Parish Public Works

ACTIONS FOR THE CAPITAL AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM:

IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

TRANSIT SERVICE

CATS should make route and service improvements to increase the number of buses per hour serving the routes along Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd.

- Florida 44 and Plank 41: 15-20 minute headways during peak hours
- Florida Express 72: Bus Rapid Transit service to seven stations

TRANSIT SHELTERS

Transit shelters should be installed at stops located at major intersections along Florida and Plank; and premium transit shelters should be installed at all Bus Rapid Transit stops.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

CATS should explore the feasibility of adding several electric buses to its bus fleet, enhancing its ability to provide high quality transit service using less energy and improving air quality.

STREET LIGHTING

Street lighting should be installed at Florida Blvd. BRT station locations.

ACTIONS FOR CITY-PARISH PUBLIC WORKS:

IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SIDEWALKS

Wide, continuous sidewalks should be installed along the length of the Plank Rd. corridor, from 22nd and Convention to Harding; and along Florida Blvd. from Interstate 110 to N. Foster Dr.

STREET LIGHTING

Street lighting should be installed along the length of the Plank Rd. bus route.

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE CORRIDOR

FUNDING

Secure funding for sidewalks, street lighting and transit shelters along Florida Blvd. and Plank Rd. and neighborhood pedestrian and bicycle improvements through the City-Parish Capital Improvement Fund, such as the Green Light Plan project list.

COMPLETE STREETS

Implement the City-Parish Complete Streets Vision and Policy improvements in the adjacent neighborhoods starting with critical pedestrian and bicycle routes to make streets safer for people of all ages and abilities.

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Improve the pedestrian environment along routes that connect to transit stops. The City-Parish should proactively fund sidewalk improvements ahead of new development.

BIKE NETWORK

Expand the bike network and ensure safe and efficient connections to bus service.

INTERMODAL CONNECTIONS

Encourage the co-location of intermodal connections – including transit stops, station areas, enhanced bicycle facilities, wayfinding, high quality sidewalks, crosswalks and shared public parking. Prioritize, fund and construct these enhancements.

SAFETY

Make safety improvements at key intersections and crossings. Install crosswalk striping at key crosswalks. Ensure ADA compliance. Use modern technology to increase pedestrian safety.

PERSONS OF ALL ABILITY LEVELS

Continue program for providing curb ramps and other facilities to accommodate persons of all mobility and physical ability levels and improve access to transit to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



ARTIST'S RENDERING OF BATON ROUGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN ARDENDALE (SOURCE: BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION)

PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

COMMUNITY PLANS

There are seven community-supported plans that have not been formally recognized by the City-Parish. These include five Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) completed with the help of the EBR Redevelopment Authority (EBRRA); the Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan, and the Ardendale Master Plan. Each of these plans has at the centerpiece a concept map for future land use, which is the primary method of influencing future development in these areas of north Baton Rouge. The City-Parish should incorporate these maps into the FUTUREBR future land use map.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

In 2010-2011, the EBRRA worked with community members to develop five Community Improvement Plans for small areas located within the Florida and Plank Study Area.

- Scotlandville
- Zion City and Glen Oaks
- Northdale
- Chocktaw Corridor
- Melrose East

The plans were community-driven with residents and other stakeholders providing input for guiding the future reinvestment and development in their communities to ensure that neighborhood redevelopment efforts are sustainable and in keeping with each respective community's needs, character, and vision. In addition, the plans include action-oriented strategies that identify opportunities for reinvestment back into the community.

Each of the five CIPs detail major opportunity sites, as well as recommended future land use, particularly for mixed use development, infill housing, and neighborhood centers or nodes seen on pages 33-34.

Figure 13. Scotlandville CIP

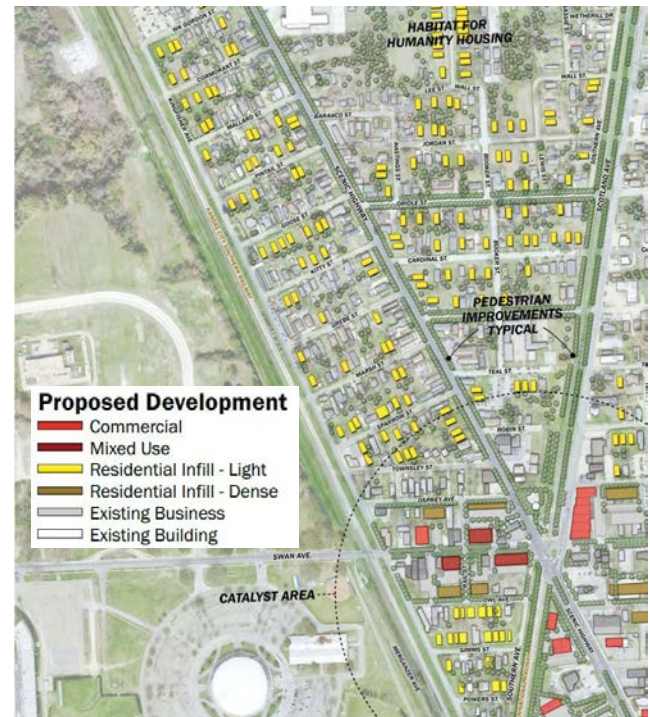


Figure 14. Northdale CIP

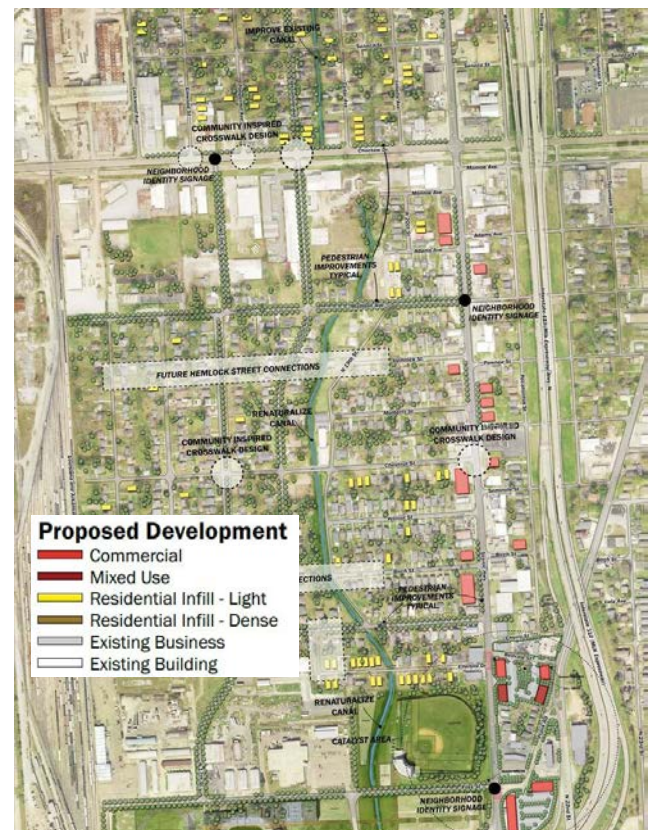


Figure 15. Choctaw Corridor CIP

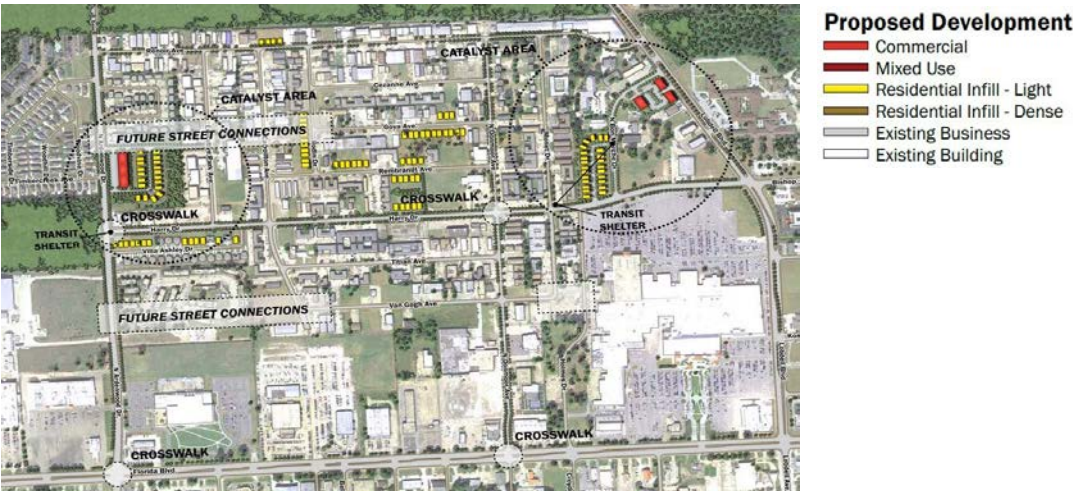


Figure 16. Zion City-Glen Oaks CIP

- Proposed Development**
- Commercial
 - Mixed Use
 - Residential Infill - Light
 - Residential Infill - Dense
 - Existing Business
 - Existing Building



Figure 17. Melrose East CIP



ARDENDALE URBAN VILLAGE MASTER PLAN

In addition, the EBRRA and partners have completed a master plan in 2014 for the redevelopment of Ardendale, a 200-acre redevelopment site, into an urban village in Mid City, located north of Florida Blvd. in the study area (see Figure 18). The plan aims to create a walkable, connected, mixed use community with transit-supportive densities and a traditional neighborhood structure.

SCOTLANDVILLE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan (SCCDP) defines the shared vision based on community input, covering community image, economic development, education, environmental concerns, housing, infrastructure, recreation and entertainment, safety and crime, social policies and community awareness, and transportation (see Figure 19). The plan also includes action steps, funding sources, responsible agencies, and approaches for monitoring the implementation of the plan.

COMMUNITY PLAN RECOGNITION

The Ardendale Master Plan, the Scotlandville CCDP and the five Community Improvement Plans were never formally adopted by the City-Parish. These plans should be formally recognized by the City-Parish Planning Commission, and the recommendations incorporated into the FUTUREBR policies and future land use map.

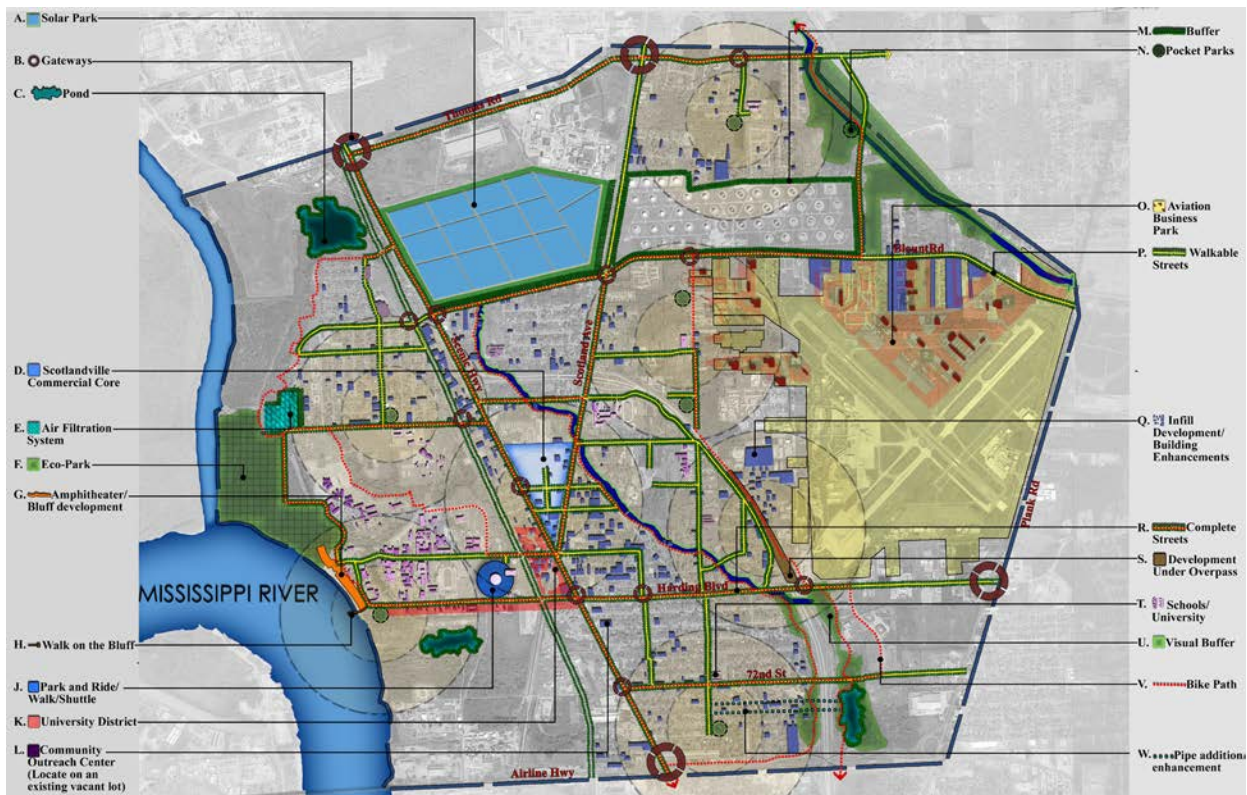
MIXED USE ZONING

In analyzing the community plans land use designations for compliance with existing plans and zoning, it became clear that current mixed use zoning can be improved. The current zoning districts that allow mixed use development are confusing and often do not clearly state so. The City-Parish Planning Commission should revise existing zones or create new zoning districts to expressly promote mixed-use development in coordination with downtown, urban or walkable urban design standards that will result in future land use and urban design that is more in line with the vision of FUTUREBR, at densities that are cost-effective and marketable.

Figure 18. Ardendale Urban Village Master Plan



Figure 19. Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

KEY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following entities have been identified as crucial to implement strategies in this section.

- City-Parish Planning Commission
- The East Baton Rouge Development Authority

ACTIONS FOR THE CITY-PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION:

UPDATE CITY CODE AND PRACTICES TO EXPAND INVESTMENT

COMMUNITY PLANS

Formally incorporate the seven community plans into the Comprehensive Plan: Community Improvement Plans for Scotlandville, Zion City and Glen Oaks, Northdale, the Chocktaw Corridor, and Melrose East; the Ardendale Master Plan; and the Scotlandville Comprehensive Community Development Plan.

UPDATE FUTUREBR

Incorporate the land use recommendations from each of the seven community plans into the FUTUREBR future land use map and plan policies as part of the 5-year FUTUREBR update.

ESTABLISH EXPRESSLY MIXED USE ZONING

Improve mixed use zoning to establish clear guidelines for mixed use development that is allowed by right. Revise existing zones or create new zoning districts to expressly promote mixed-use development in coordination with downtown, urban or walkable urban design standards that will result in future land use and urban design that is more in line with the vision of FUTUREBR.

UPDATE ZONING FOR CONSISTENCY

Following the incorporation of the community plans into FUTUREBR, revise zoning designations across the City-Parish, and particularly in the Florida and Plank study area, to be consistent with FUTUREBR future land use designations to enable transit-oriented and mixed-use development types.

- Expressly mixed use zoning and urban design standards should be applied to areas identified in the FUTUREBR future land use map.
- Expressly mixed use zoning and urban design standards should be applied to commercial properties along the length of Plank Rd., in alignment with FUTUREBR.
- Zoning changes could be accomplished at the initiative of individual property owners, or a petition from a group of property owners, or by a comprehensive City-led process.

REGULATORY INCENTIVES

Promote transit-oriented development along the Florida and Plank corridors by increasing expediency, clarity, transparency and certainty for development projects that meet City-Parish objectives.

ACTIONS FOR THE CITY-PARISH:

FIGHT BLIGHT AND ENHANCE CODE ENFORCEMENT

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Pilot a code enforcement program that prioritizes and coordinates across departments and agencies to focus on enforcement in the study area.

CODE COMPLIANCE

Proactively and systematically bring blighted properties into code compliance. Work strategically with high impact landlords to produce early and visible results.

BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

Create a GIS database of blighted properties and a methodology for ongoing updates across departments.

VACANT PROPERTIES

Enact an ordinance for fee-based vacant property registry and require owners or foreclosing lenders to register long-term vacant buildings with the City-Parish.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Continue to identify and monitor environmental hazards and health impacts through the Parish Brownfields Program.

ACTIONS FOR THE EAST BATON ROUGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

BEAUTIFY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES

LAND BANK AND PARISH-OWNED PROPERTIES

Enable greater flexibility for the EBRRA to acquire, sell and redevelop land bank and City-Parish-owned properties.

- Include appropriate deed restrictions or reversionary rights to hold new buyers accountable for maintenance requirements, tax payments and redevelopment deadlines.
- Establish flexible procedures for selling parcels to directly abutting property owners or owners on the same block.
- Enable private non-profits to acquire bundles of lots to support community development.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Pilot a home improvement incentive program for neighborhoods to provide a financial incentive to residents who make improvements to their homes.

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

Establish and fund a façade improvement program to help small and local businesses with storefront upgrades.

INCENTIVES

Establish incentives to encourage major development projects to provide quality public spaces.

PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Develop programs and partnerships to return blighted properties to productive use.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Target public investment for acquisition and improvement of properties in blighted areas to play a catalytic role in neighborhood revitalization through housing development, neighborhood green space and other public amenities.

CULTURAL ASSETS

Highlight cultural assets through public art and event nights.

GREEN SPACES

Create community green spaces; utilize land bank properties for short-term and long-term temporary uses such as pop-up parks, community gardens, and event nights.

December 2016



The Florida and Plank Corridor Plan