

HOUMA MAIN STREET PLAN

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION PLAN FOR A THRIVING DOWNTOWN



Downtown Houma
TERREBONNE PARISH, LA

acknowledgment

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Updates

The Main Street Master Plan was adopted by the following groups and dates:

Houma-Terrebonne Regional Planning Commission - 05.16.24
Terrebonne Parish Council - 08.14.24
Houma Restoration District - 10.01.24



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01.



INTRODUCTION



MURAL, DOWNTOWN HOUMA

IMAGE SOURCE: *The Courier*

ARTIST: *Hans Geist*

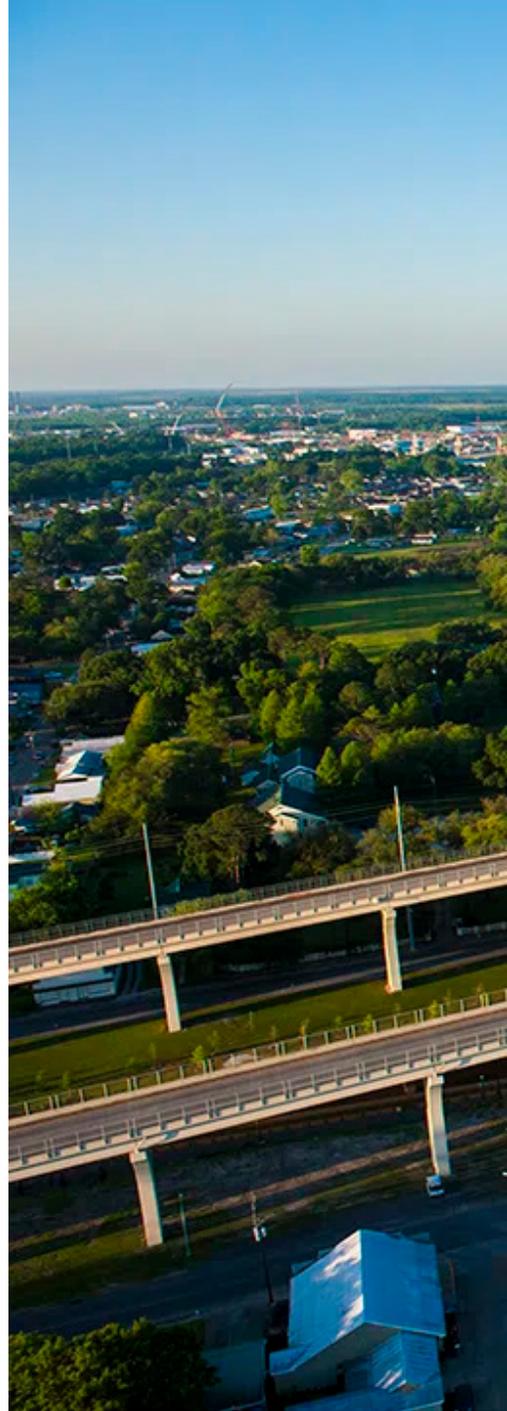
01.

Introduction

Vibrant downtowns are the economic and cultural heart of a city. They support businesses, draw new residents, and provide opportunities and spaces to draw community together. Downtown Houma has the potential to become, once again, such a downtown, and to spur rippling investment and growth in the greater Houma region. Advantages such as historic structures, rich local culture, and a central waterway (Bayou Terrebonne), can draw new visitors, residents and businesses if the right incentives and programs are put in place. Downtown Houma is poised to take advantage of a unique confluence of community interest and support, renewed energy, and one time funding opportunities to make change happen.

The destruction caused by Hurricane Ida and influx of subsequent recovery funding, the creation of the new Houma Restoration District, and the new federal infrastructure programs all lead to a one-time opportunity for significant investment in Downtown Houma. Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government (TPCG) recognized this opportunity and commissioned a Downtown Houma Master Plan.

This plan will examine the current conditions of Downtown Houma, relevant case studies to envision success, implementation strategies, funding mechanisms.





HOUMA, LA

IMAGE SOURCE: [1012 Industry Report](#)

Revitalization of Downtown Houma will be a multi-faceted endeavor combining incentives for business and housing, policies to shape future development that build on existing assets, and investments in infrastructure to create high quality and welcoming built environment. Progress across all of these initiatives will result in increased businesses, residents, visitors, and a general uptick in all activities.

Creative ideas, adaptive programming, and partnerships can harness the authentic character and opportunity Downtown Houma offers, allowing entrepreneurialism and innovation to thrive.

1.1 Community Engagement

When developing a plan of any kind, it is crucial to engage the community for guidance and input. CSRS worked closely with the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government and the Houma Restoration District Board to include the Downtown Community. This took the form of a Downtown Houma walk with area stakeholders, TPCG officials, planners, and designers, followed by a series of meetings and presentations to all parties including the Downtown Houma Master Plan Steering Committee, the Houma Restoration District Board, Parish Administration, and Parish Council as well as the general public.

DOWNTOWN HOUMA
STAKEHOLDER MEETING

IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS

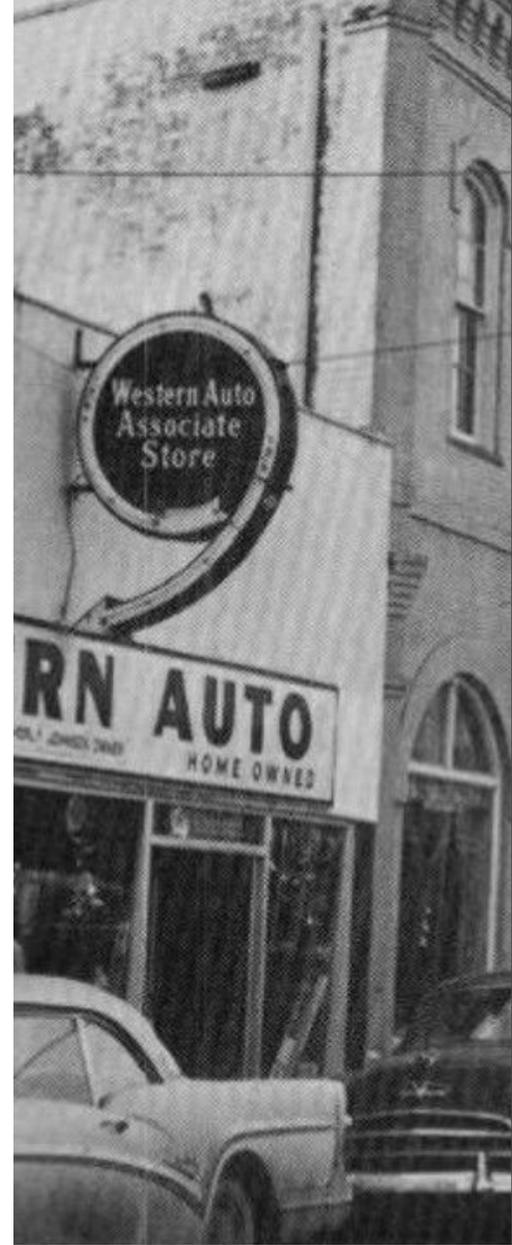




1.2 History

In 1834, Terrebonne Parish established the city of Houma as a centrally located and easily accessible parish seat. Bayou Terrebonne was a major factor of Downtown Houma becoming the commercial center of Terrebonne Parish, allowing for transportation and trade related largely to the seafood industry, and as a result, the city was oriented facing the Bayou.

Fishing and seafood dominated local industry until the discovery of oil in the early 1900's. Oil companies took advantage of the numerous canals and waterways to transport oil near and far. The increase in trade activity led to the building of new canals, such as the Houma Navigational Canal and the Intracoastal Waterway, which decreased travel time and further increased trade activity. The Works Progress Administration funded improvements in the 1930's that included new streets, a post office, and the Downtown Courthouse, expanding downtown Houma and moving commercial activity away from the banks of Bayou Terrebonne. These improvements also coincided with the rise of the automobile, resulting in an emphasis on vehicle-focused development.¹



HOUMA, LA 1855

In the mid-19th century Houma was oriented towards Bayou Terrebonne for transportation and commerce.

IMAGE SOURCE:

Map from Houma Historic District Design Guidelines, 2011.

1. Vision 2030: Terrebonne's Plan for the Future. 9-1 Downtown Houma

MAIN STREET & ROUSSELL STREET
(looking north) 1958



During the late twentieth century, downtown Houma, like many small towns across the country, experienced a decline, as people and businesses moved to the outskirts. The downtown area and neighboring residential areas were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 as the Houma Historic District.

CHURCH STREET
ca. 1935. TPCG



1.3 Present Day

The Main Street corridor, while home to many historic storefronts, is not the bustling commercial center that it once was. Vacancy rates are high, many shop fronts are boarded up, and occupancy is scattered throughout Main Street and not clustered in a particular area. This decline has been most recently exacerbated by Hurricane Ida, which made landfall in August 2021. Terrebonne Parish sustained significant wind damage to structures and homes, loss of electricity and water utilities for a prolonged period, and the closing of hundreds of businesses. The category 4 storm, with winds of 150 mph, damaged many downtown structures and the area has been in a prolonged state of recovery ever since.

**MAIN STREET AFTER
HURRICANE IDA, 2021**

IMAGE SOURCE: *Associated Press*



In many ways, the challenges Downtown Houma faces are common to once bustling small town Main Streets across America. Many historic downtowns have become automobile-centric commercial corridors, characterized by a wide road with multiple lanes, high-speed traffic, and nonexistent or limited transit service. In Houma, some buildings are separated from the street by large parking lots, there are unsightly utility poles and wires, a lack of trees and vegetation, and sidewalks that are narrow, not always connected, and unbuffered from the travel lanes. These hostile conditions discourage the pedestrian activity crucial to Downtown Houma activity. These will be detailed in the Current Conditions section.

**FROM DOWNTOWN
HOUMA WALK**

IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS



1.4 Downtown Houma Jurisdictions

There are numerous public agencies and commissions tasked with making decisions around the development of downtown Houma. One goal of this plan is to unify these groups around the goals and strategies that will be discussed in upcoming chapters, furthering a clear vision and priorities for future Houma. What follows is an illustration of these groups, their roles in downtown, and the specific geographies of their jurisdictions.

Drawing attention to these jurisdictions shows the overlap of some of the areas ideal for collaboration. These jurisdictions within Houma

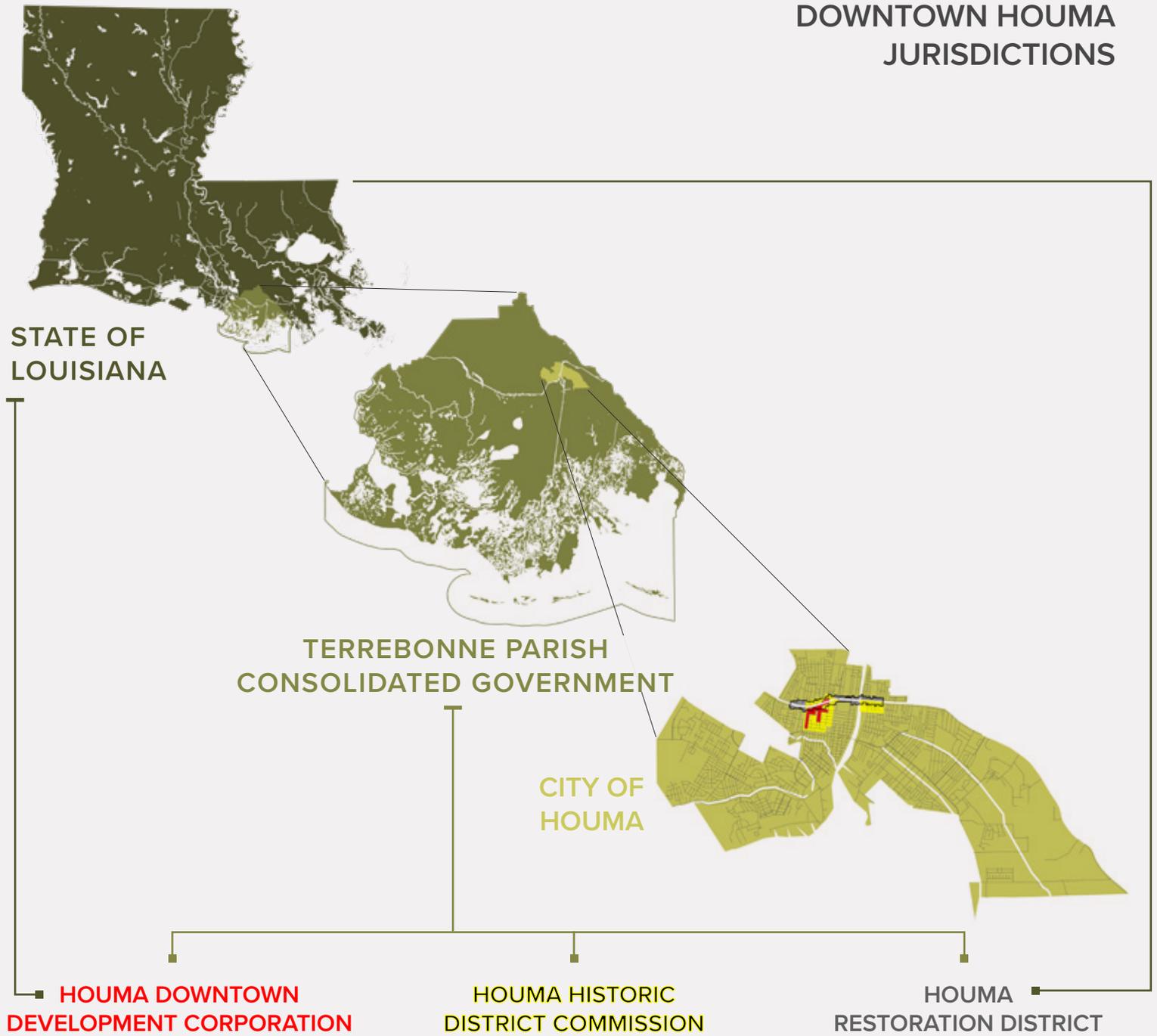
come with potential funding opportunities, resulting in areas of Downtown where this funding can be layered.

Properties in the Federal Historic District (which is the same as the Historic District Development Corporation) are eligible for Federal Tax Credits. Properties in the Houma Historic District and the two Cultural Districts are eligible for State Tax credits and properties in both districts are eligible for both tax credits. Properties in local, national Historic Districts and Opportunity Zones are eligible for Property Tax Abatement (see Map 1).

HOUMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL *This historic building constructed in 1931 was rehabilitated in 2014 into mixed-income senior housing apartments.* IMAGE SOURCE: [National Park Service](#)



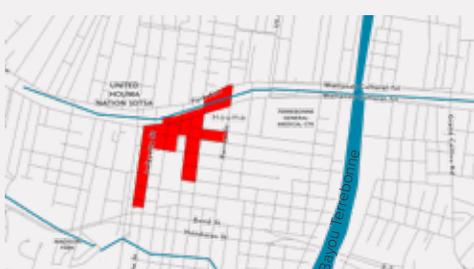
DOWNTOWN HOUMA JURISDICTIONS



Economic development-focused board that administers Louisiana Main Street program. Created by the **State** legislature with members approved by the **Parish Council**. This is also the *National Historic District*.

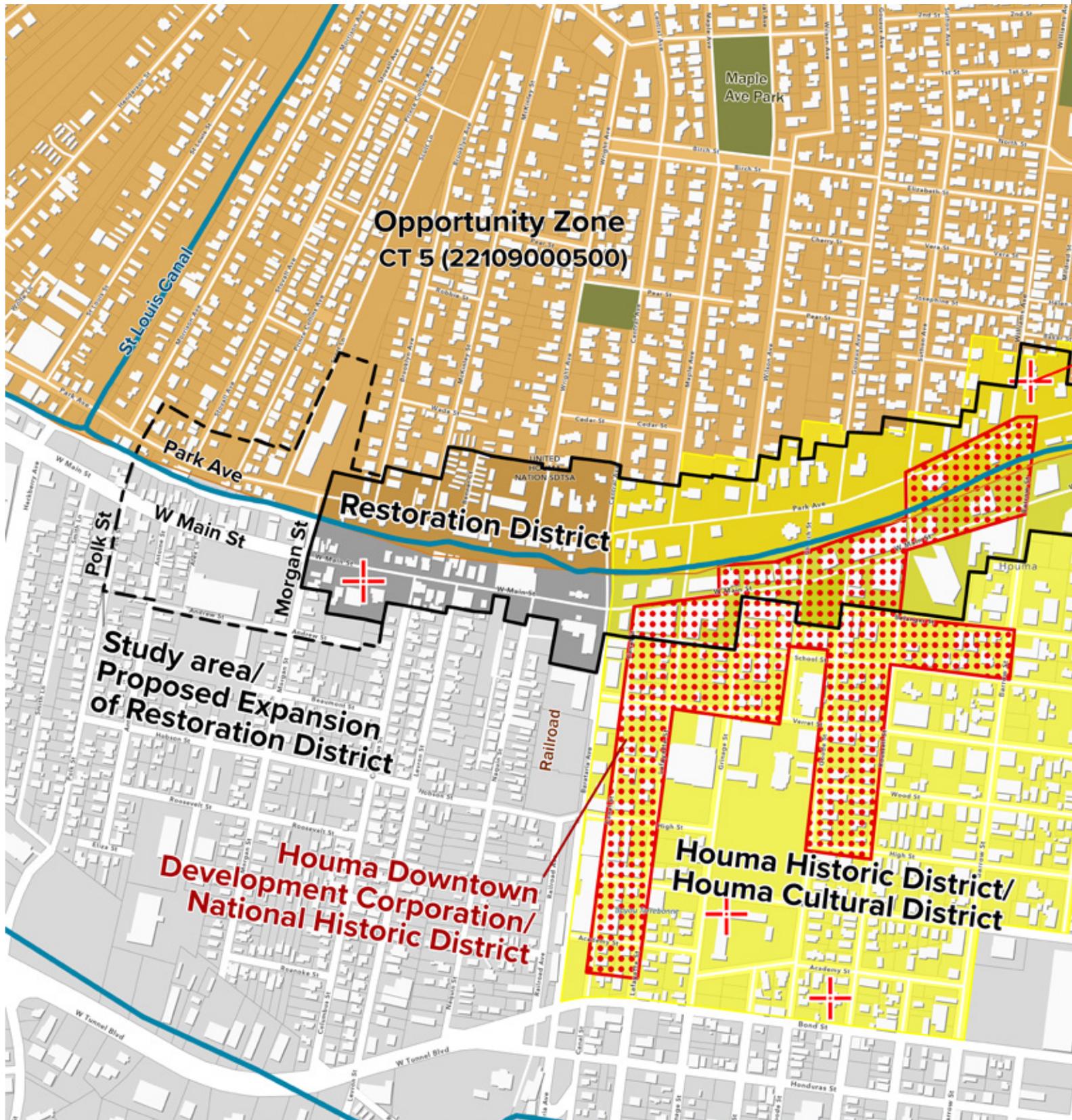
Responsible for permit approvals in Houma Historic District. Member appointment subject to the majority of the **Parish Council**.

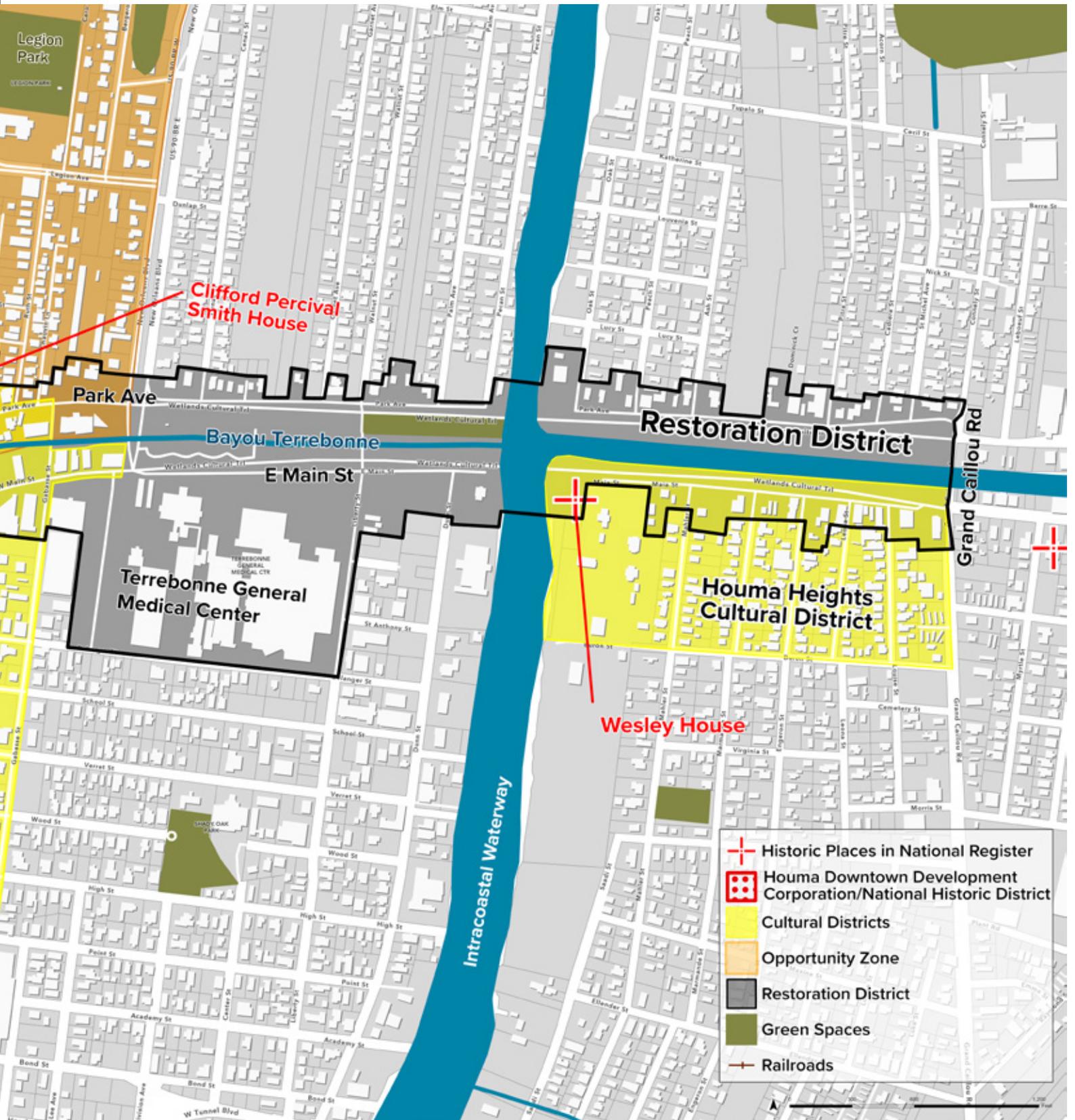
Political division with latitude to buy/sell property within the district, collect taxes, apply for/administer federal funds. Created by state legislature, members nominated by the **State and Parish and Local Entities**.



MAP 1: DOWNTOWN HOUMA JURISDICTIONS

This map displays not only the jurisdictions of the Downtown Houma groups, but also the districts eligible for certain tax breaks, which will be discussed in detail in the implementation section.





02.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



02.

Current Conditions

Many of the current challenges identified in this Plan are longstanding and have been previously documented in the Terrebonne Parish 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Issues identified in the Comprehensive Plan included the lost potential of Bayou Terrebonne, need for restoration of historic buildings, lack of streetscape, and pedestrian friendly improvements and lack of commerce. Progress made in these areas was curtailed by Hurricane Ida, the snowballing impacts of which have made many challenges more acute.





MOVIE FILMED IN DOWNTOWN HOUMA

Filming for “Where the Crawdads Sing”, set in 1950s and 60s, in downtown Houma, LA

IMAGE SOURCE: [Houma Today](#)

2.1 Challenges

LOW COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY/ HIGH VACANCY

The Main Street corridor, while home to many historic storefronts, is not the bustling commercial center that it once was. Not only are storefronts vacant, but many show signs of long-term disinvestment. A common refrain on the downtown walk was dismay at the state of disrepair of many buildings, and the lack of code enforcement related to blight standards.

FROM MAIN STREET WALK
IMAGE SOURCE: *Carbo and Associates*



POOR PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Coupled with the lack of commercial draw to attract pedestrians is a streetscape with design features that are unfriendly to pedestrian traffic. High curbs, combined with a lack of crosswalks and walk signals, create an environment where crossing the street feels unsafe. Furthermore, the high curbs are not ADA compliant, and create an environment not only unfriendly, but impassable to persons with impaired mobility.

EXAMPLE OF MAIN
STREET CURB VARIANCE
AND HEIGHT

IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS



MAIN STREET/ LA24 HIGHLY TRAFFICKED STATE HIGHWAY

A major factor contributing to the current lack of commercial/ pedestrian activity on Houma's West Main Street is its dual function as a Louisiana State Highway (Route 24). It is a one-way, two-lane highway; allowing for higher speeds and frequent passage of commercial trucks. The traffic noise, proximity of high-speed truck traffic to the sidewalk, and lack of pedestrian crossing contribute to the feeling that Main Street is more of a highway than downtown center.

FROM MAIN STREET WALK
IMAGE SOURCE: *Carbo and Associates*



PARKING

Related to the lack of commercial activity and abundance of empty storefronts is an excess of largely unutilized parking. Street parking is metered, parallel parking on the highly trafficked Main Street, which makes parking unappealing although it is plentiful.



METERED PARALLEL PARKING ON MAIN STREET
 IMAGE SOURCE: Carbo and Associates

There are numerous surface lots on both sides of Bayou Terrebonne, in addition to the parallel street parking on West Main Street. The pedestrian bridges spanning Bayou Terrebonne are a unique asset of downtown Houma, indicating a prioritization of pedestrian traffic, though the parking lots at either side diminish the potential of human-centered activity that might otherwise occur there. A benefit of the abundance of parking is that much of the north side of Bayou Terrebonne, facing Park Avenue, is owned by Terrebonne Parish (see map below).

This provides a unique opportunity for Terrebonne Parish to control the future of downtown Houma.



ABUNDANCE OF SURFACE PARKING LOTS
 Depicted in yellow, surface parking lots along Main St. in downtown Houma.

BAYOU RELEGATED TO BACKYARD

A unique and central feature of downtown Houma is the waterway that runs through it: Bayou Terrebonne. There are many physical features of the built environment that might draw pedestrians to the bayou; including the pedestrian bridges as well as the Bayou Walk that runs along the south side of the bayou from Church Street to Barrow.

However, without commercial activity or recreational amenities to complement these features, the Bayou remains underutilized by pedestrians.

While there are a few restaurants with back patios facing the bayou, all storefronts face East Main Street or Park Avenue, and where there is space between buildings facing East Main Street and the Bayou, it is utilized predominantly for parking. During the walking tour and community meetings, many attendees expressed a desire for the bayou to become a focus of downtown Houma rather than a backdrop.



BAYOU TERREBONNE
IMAGE SOURCE: *Carbo and Associates*



IMAGE SOURCE: *Carbo and Associates*

LACK OF DESIGN STANDARD

A strong visual impression is crucial when attracting visitors and businesses. Currently, there is a lack of consistency to signal that Downtown Houma is a focus of investment and center of the community. Signage, street quality, sidewalks, and lighting are inconsistent, and street planting on sidewalks facing Main Street is minimal. Also apparent is the downtown utility infrastructure, where aging above-ground power lines clutter overhead. Many attendees of the downtown walk and public meetings cited the power lines as a concern, both for safety and visual appeal.

Up to date and consistent wayfinding signage not only provides visitors with crucial information, but they also create an important sense of identity and serve as marketing for Downtown Houma.

DOWNTOWN STREETScape



IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS

2.2 Momentum + Assets

Despite very real challenges, Downtown Houma is abundant in historic structures, boasts a beautiful waterway, and has momentum and energy from residents and organizations invested in change. The Downtown Walk in November 2022 with officials, key stakeholders, and consultants demonstrated a community ready and willing to engage in new ideas. The stakeholders engaged in this Master Plan process were enthusiastic and committed to improving Downtown Houma.

For example, the non-profit Hache Grant Association engaged community members by soliciting opinions and spurring their imagination through the “I Wish This Was” project. The momentum generated through grass roots community engagement is coupled with existing assets in Downtown Houma that will be leveraged in its revitalization.

DOWNTOWN STREETScape

IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS



ASSETS

Cultural Programming – Festivals and Events

Houma, in the heart of Cajun Country, is home to one of the richest, most distinct cultures in America. Downtown Houma does an excellent job attracting visitors and locals alike due to its joyful and welcoming culture evidenced in these events. Festival culture is alive in Houma, and the Main Street boasts multiple annual events, the largest being Mardi Gras. White Boot Stroll, Bayou Terrebonne Boucherie, Rougarou Fest, and Downtown Live After 5 concerts are other examples of cultural and programming events.

Festivals and Events are an important way to draw visitors and highlight improvements and are already drawing crowds to Downtown regularly.



**MARDI GRAS PARADE
ON MAIN STREET**
IMAGE SOURCE: *Explore Houma*

MARKET AT THE MARINA *Farmers Market located at Houma's Downtown Marina*



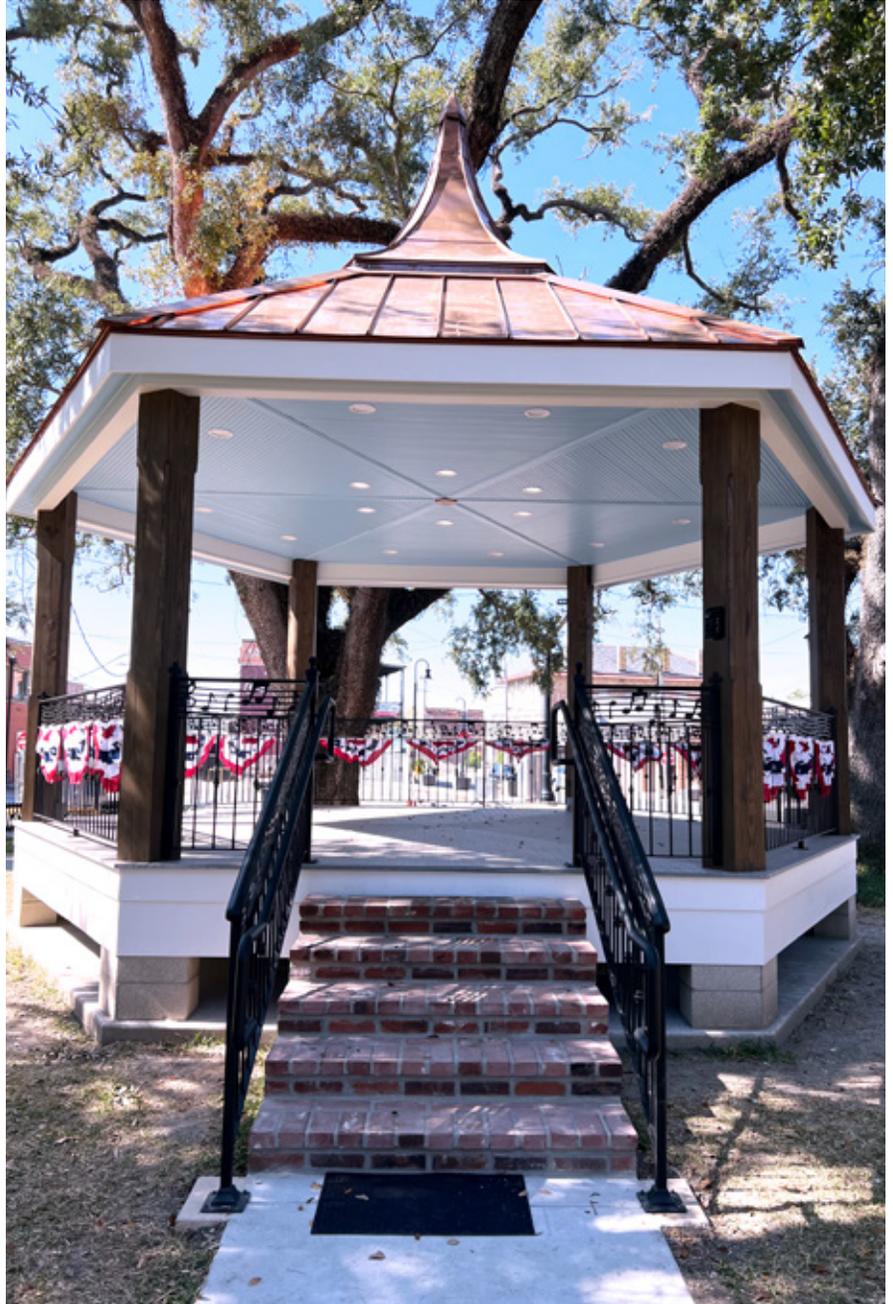
IMAGE SOURCE: [Daily Comet](#)

ASSETS

Public Space

Another asset in downtown Houma is the numerous new public space improvements providing recreational opportunities for the community. The new bandstand in courthouse square, completed in 2022 to replicate the original bandstand built in the early 1900s, and near-complete Rotary Centennial Plaza and pedestrian walkway, are helping to restore a sense of community pride that is grounded in Downtown. These visible public investments signify that downtown Houma is in the process of change, and have helped spur the revitalization momentum that this plan draws from:

- » Rotary Centennial Plaza
- » Repaved Bayou Walk
- » Live Healthy Houma Fitness Trail
- » Courthouse Bandstand
- » The recent renovation (partially with public funds) of Le Petit Theatre
- » Houma Heights Park
- » Houma Memorial Fountain and Park
- » Downtown Marina Park



COURTHOUSE BANDSTAND

IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS

ASSETS

Historic Buildings

A key asset in downtown Houma, one that cannot be built or created today, is the existing historic fabric. Small towns around the country draw tourists and residents by highlighting the sense of history created through preservation of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century buildings that abound in downtown Houma.

As the historic downtown was built to be compact and walkable, the oldest buildings in downtown Houma are clustered together around Main Street—creating the sense of place that is unique to Houma. The recently restored La Petit Theatre de Terrebonne exemplifies the potential held in these buildings. Many of the historic storefronts have been restored, but some still lie dormant or underutilized—holding great potential for future cultural or consumer opportunities.

LE PETIT THEATRE

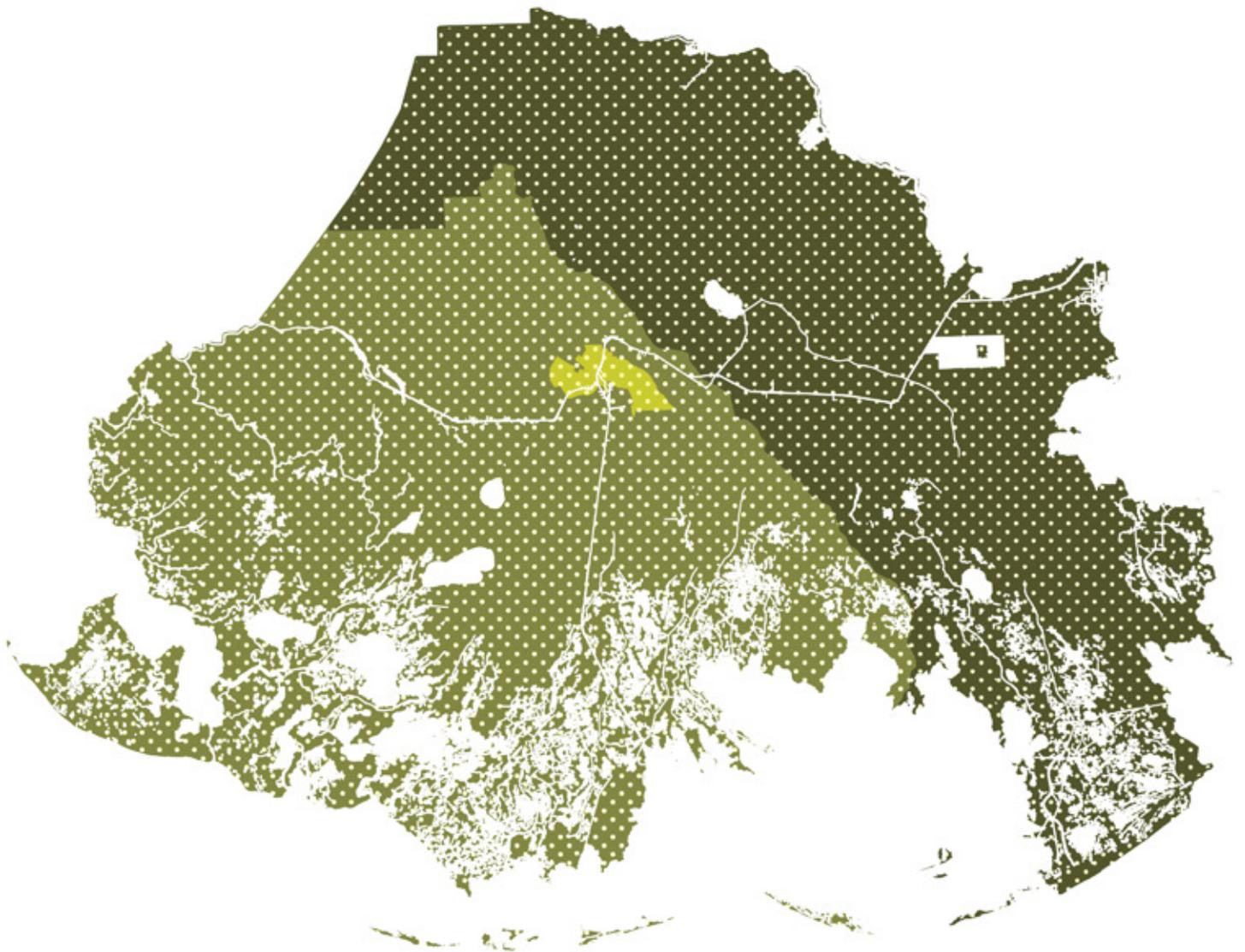


IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS

03.



HOUMA
MARKET ANALYSIS



■ TERREBONNE PARISH ■ LAFOURCHE PARISH ■ CITY OF HOUMA ■+■ HOUMA METROPOLITAN AREA

03.

Houma Market Analysis

Downtown Houma exists in the larger context of Houma and the Metro Area. What affects the larger community will impact Downtown. Understanding demographic and market trends will allow Downtown programs and development to be receptive to demand. These findings and additional ones in the attached report (Appendix 1) support the recommendations in this plan.

Riverbend Research performed a Houma Market Analysis and produced the following:

- » Demographic Analysis
- » Residential Analysis
- » Jobs & Industry Analysis
- » Surplus/Shortfall Analysis





**SOUTHDOWN MARKETPLACE
ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL**

*at grounds of Southdown Plantation
House and Museum in Houma*

IMAGE SOURCE:
[Country Roads Magazine](#)

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

- *Houma’s population is declining but the number of households are increasing.*

About 3,500 residents have left the Houma Metro since 2010, another 2,600 are projected to leave by 2027. However, there are about 4,200 more households in Houma now than there were in 2010. Also, the number of people in the average household has fallen slightly, from 2.8 in 2010 to 2.6 today.

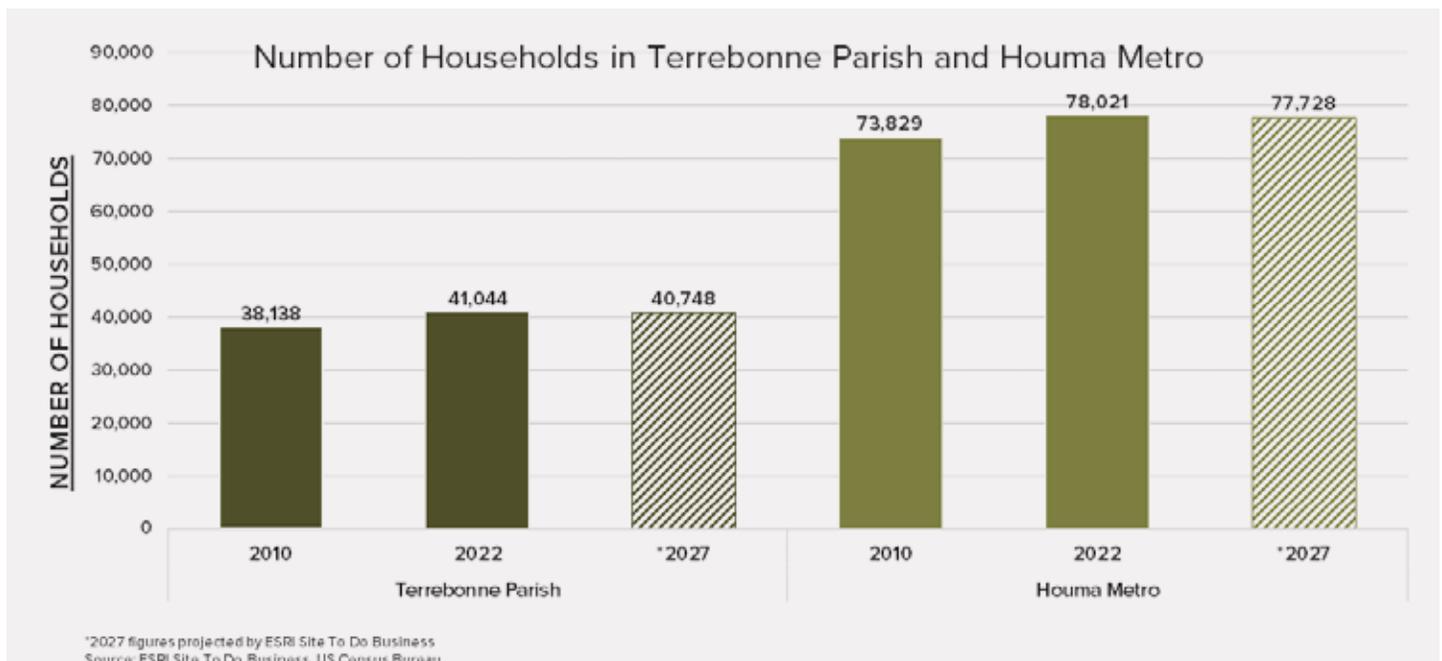
- *Houma’s population is aging.*

The number of residents age 65+ increased by more than 7,000 in the last 12 years; it’s projected to increase by another 4,000 in the next 5 years.

- *Higher education degrees are becoming more common for Houma residents.*

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Houma Metro residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher increased by about 4,500.

There are about 4,200 more households in Houma now than there were in 2010; the number of people in the average household has fallen slightly, from 2.8 in 2010 to 2.6 today.



RESIDENTIAL ANALYSIS

■ **Housing is becoming more expensive.**

In the next 5 years, the Houma Metro is projected to lose 35% of its housing stock available for purchasing at \$200k or less—meaning that previously affordable housing is becoming more expensive, and new affordable housing is not coming onto the market.

■ **Occupied multifamily housing is growing significantly faster than single-family housing.**

Occupied multifamily housing grew 18% in the last decade, outpacing the 7% growth in single-family homes which continue to dominate the residential market.

■ **There are limited affordable options for renters.**

Almost half of renters in the Houma Metro spend more than 35% of their income on housing.

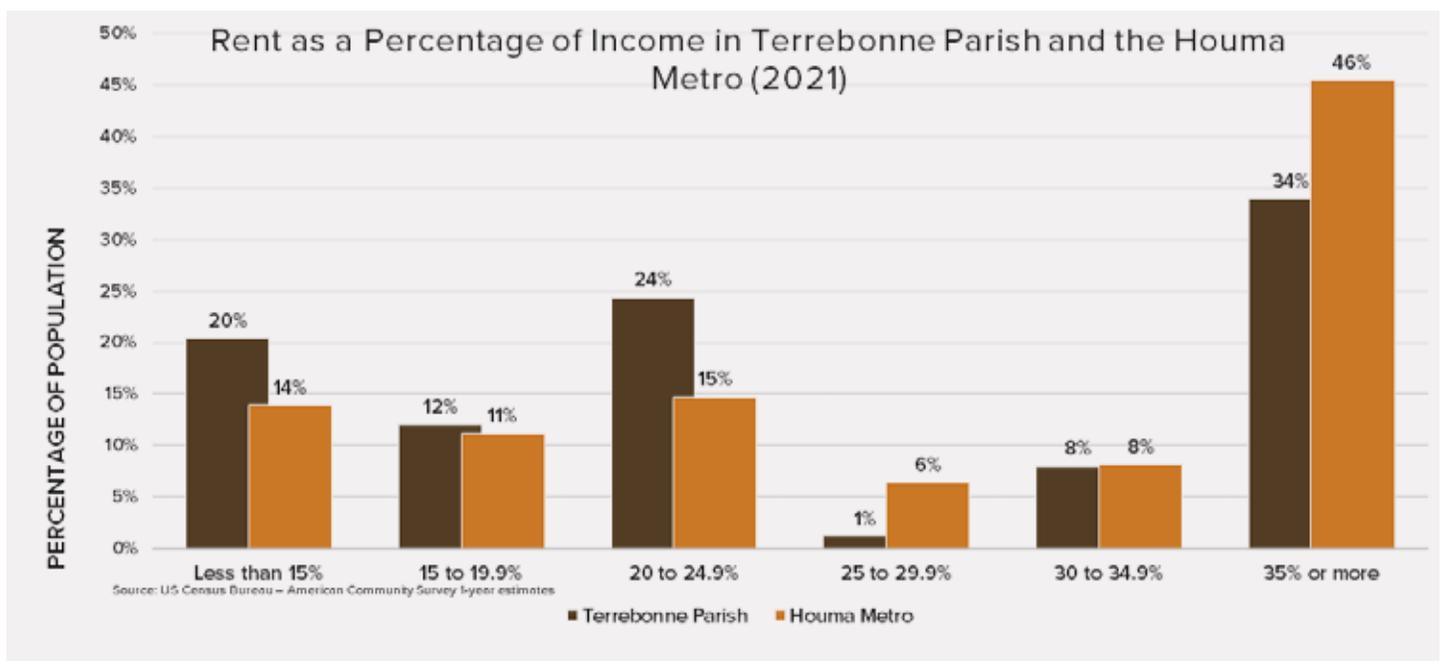
■ **Renter-occupied housing is remaining stable, while owner-occupied units are decreasing and vacancies are increasing.**

There are 2,400 more vacant units in the Houma Metro today than there were in 2010, making an 11% vacancy rate, only 3.9% of which are rentals.

Almost half of renters in the Houma Metro spend more than 35% of their income on housing.

Rental Vacancy Rates (2021)

*Terrebonne Parish: 2.4%
Houma Metro: 3.9%
Louisiana: 6.4%
United States: 5.2%*



JOB AND INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

■ *Jobs are decreasing in downtown Houma.*

Total jobs in the downtown area have fallen from 7,000 in 2002 to 3,400 in 2019.

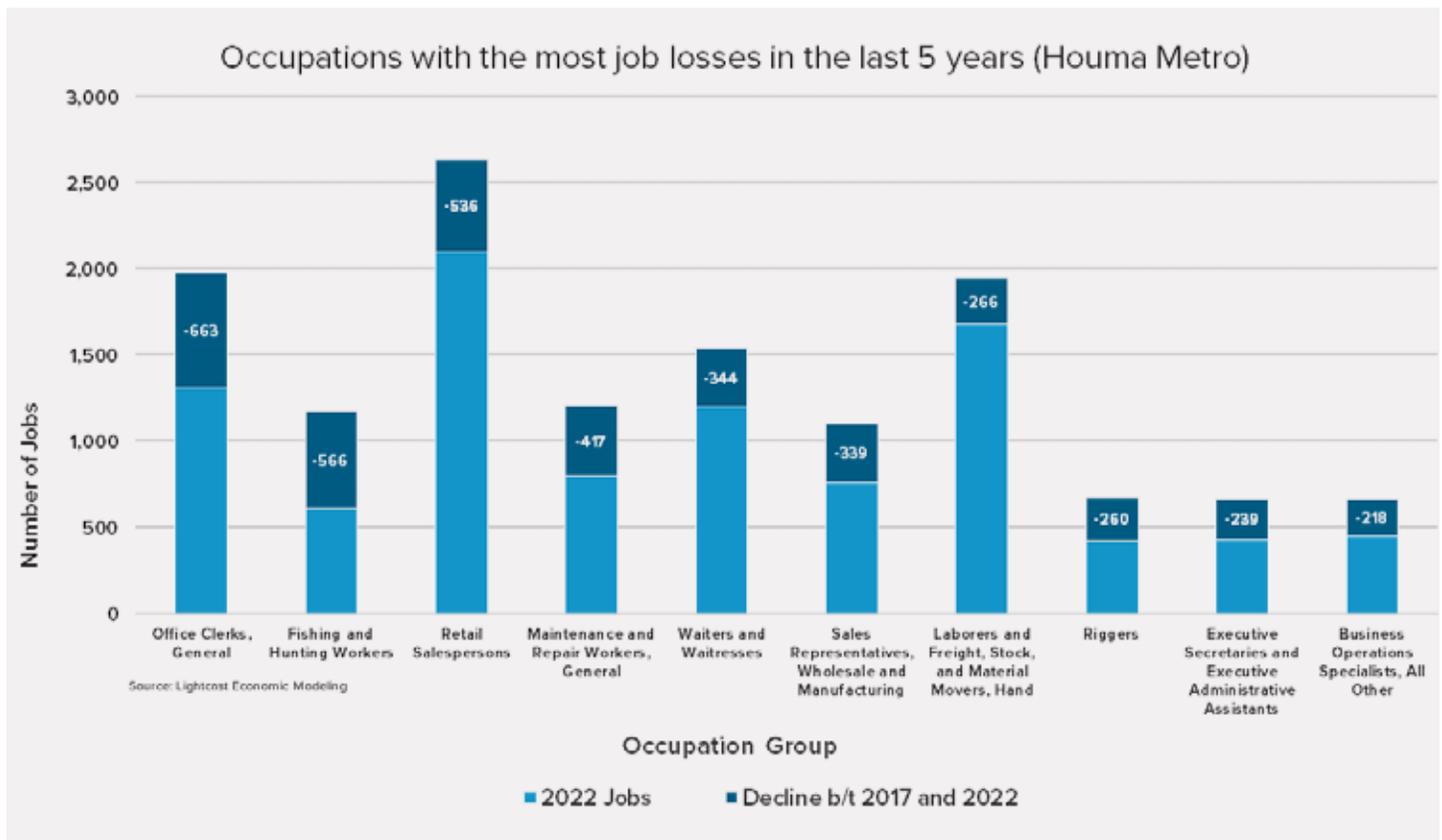
■ *Middle-income jobs are increasing in the metro area.*

Oil and gas unit operators and manager-level jobs increased more than any other occupations in the Houma Metro area in the last five years.

■ *Despite a decrease in jobs, business growth is on the rise in Terrebonne Parish.*

Terrebonne Parish ranked in the top 10% of all US counties for business application growth between 2019 and 2021; Lafourche in the top 12%, indicating that entrepreneurship is on the rise.

Office workers made up 3 of the top 10 declining occupations; service workers in retail establishments and restaurants also saw their numbers decline.

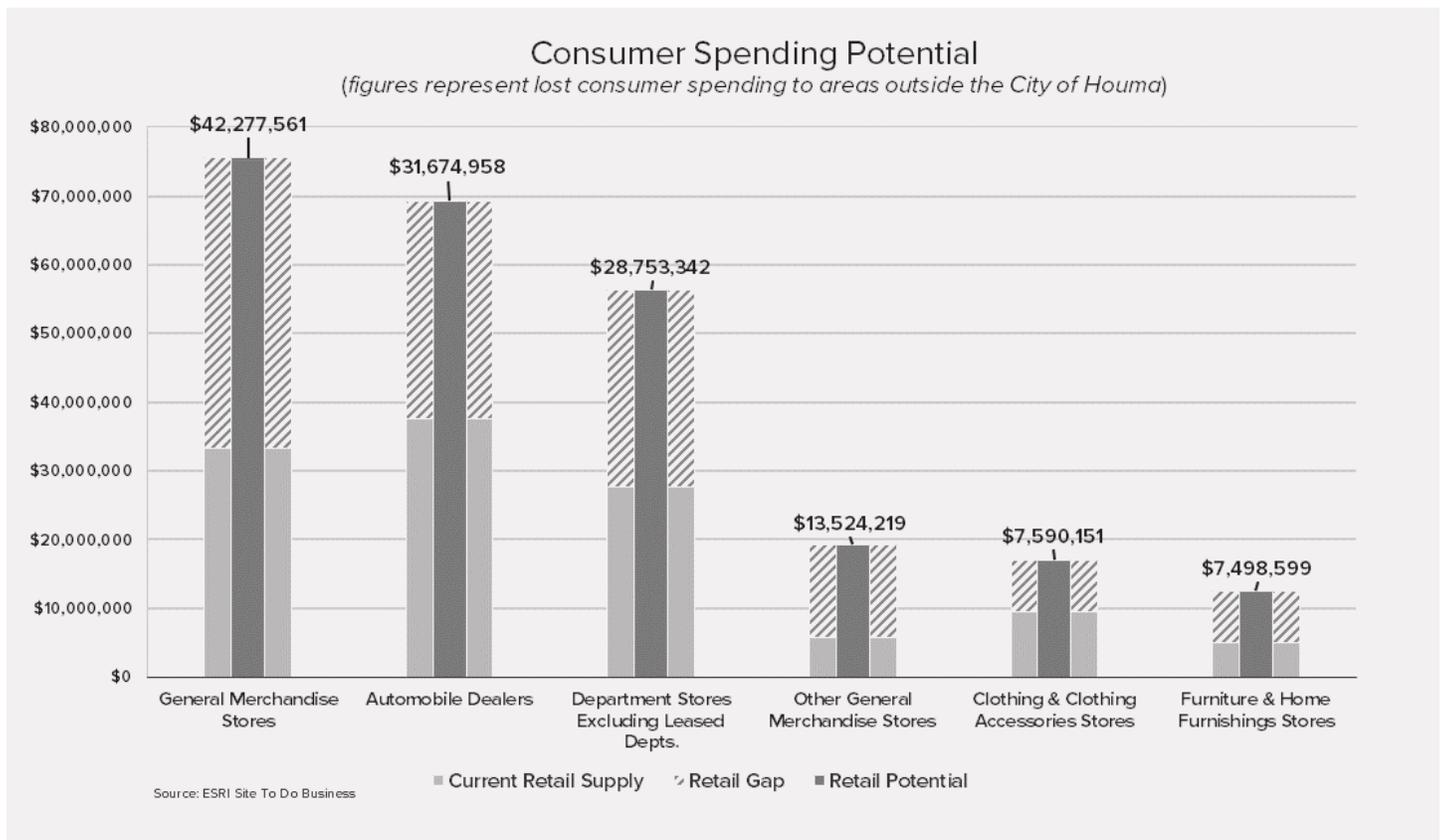


SURPLUS/SHORTFALL ANALYSIS

- *Retailers have the potential to capture millions in potential sales currently being lost to retailers outside of Houma.*

The majority of retail spending in the metro area takes place outside of downtown Houma—over \$42 million in general merchandise spending could be captured by the City of Houma.

The Houma Urban Services District is the metro’s primary urban center and, as such, it has the potential to attract additional consumer spending at businesses like general merchandisers, auto dealers, and department stores.



Market Analysis

Recommendations

1 *Encourage affordable residential development, particularly for renters in the downtown core; missing-middle style housing could appeal to young talent (which is in high demand) and retired populations alike.*

- Houma is growing middle class jobs (managers, oil & gas workers) but a lack of rental affordability and a rapidly declining stock of affordable homes coupled with household incomes that are not keeping pace with income growth nationally could jeopardize Houma residents' ability to find housing that fits their needs.

MIXED-USE LIVING CENTER

Bayou Cane apartments in Houma are multi-family, mixed-income development with accessible units and several recreational amenities for the residents.

IMAGE SOURCE: [Donahue Favret Contractors](#)



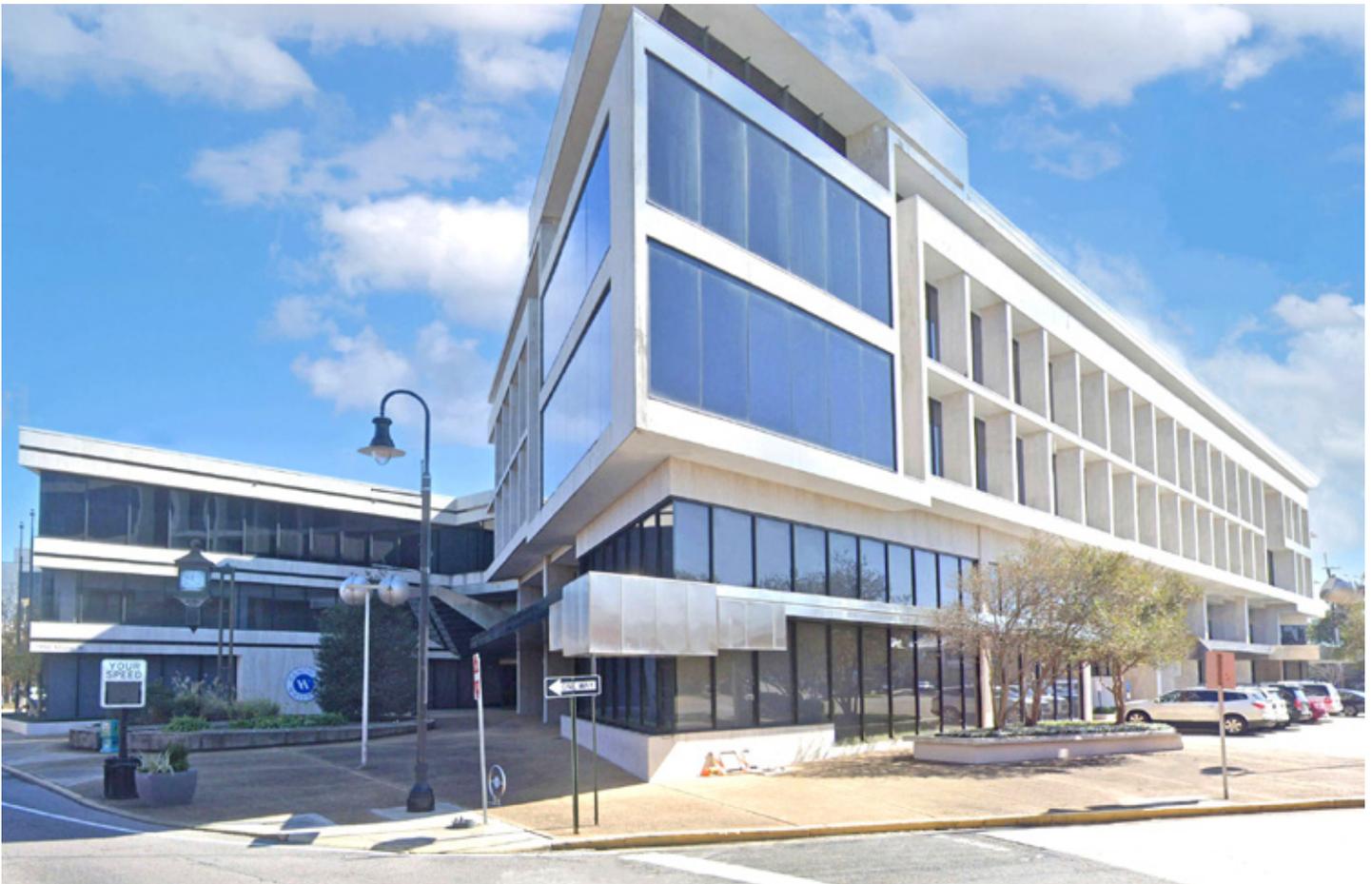
- While single-family homes still outnumber apartments, the number of apartments in Houma is growing rapidly – and the low vacancy rate shows that they are popular. Residents may appreciate more diverse options for apartment-living, particularly in areas where walkability to shops, bars, and restaurants is possible.
 - » Lean into the region’s aging population: below-average cost of living, comfortable climate, and expanding healthcare systems could support strong retirement communities.

2 *Tap into the region’s entrepreneurial spirit to spur business growth in downtown & bring back jobs.*

- Houma is among the top areas in the country for business application growth; considering Houma is losing millions in potential retail sales to other regions, residents may enthusiastically embrace programming and policies that encourage local retail development. Encouraging business growth will make downtown Houma more desirable and ultimately result in job growth.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE FOR SALE IN DOWNTOWN HOUMA

IMAGE SOURCE: [Crexi](#)



04.



CASE STUDIES



04.

Case Studies

Case studies are an important component of urban plans because they illustrate ideas discussed in the plan itself. In addition, it is useful to know what the components of successful and thriving downtowns are. What lessons and examples can be applied to Downtown Houma? Will the images spark an idea or goal for Downtown Houma?

The following case studies have been selected by Carbo and Associates to highlight successful elements that are applicable to Downtown Houma.

- » *Assembly Row, Somerville, MA*
- » *Buffalo Bayou Park, Houston, TX*
- » *Vancouver Waterfront Park, Vancouver, WA*
- » *Mellerummet, Copenhagen, Denmark*
- » *Paprocany Waterfront, Poland*
- » *Wheaton Downtown Revitalization, Wheaton, IL*





**WHEATON DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION**
Wheaton, IL
IMAGE SOURCE: CARBO

4.1

ASSEMBLY ROW

Somerville, Massachusetts

The scale of the public spaces here is a great example of what is possible in Downtown Houma. They are appropriately sized to the surrounding setting and more pedestrian centric in scale. The use of site furnishings, such as street lighting, string lights, benches, and trash receptacles contribute to the overall character without creating visual clutter. The balance of hardscape and landscape elements creates a welcoming and comfortable space for patrons of downtown.



4.2

BUFFALO BAYOU PARK

Houston, Texas

The Buffalo Bayou Park in Houston Texas is similar in character and context to the open green space along the bayou near Intra-coastal Waterway. The green space along the bayou could support more active recreational activities and gathering spaces for visitors, taking cues from some of the components along Buffalo Bayou.



ASSEMBLY ROW *Somerville, Massachusetts*



BUFFALO BAYOU PARK *Houston, Texas*



4.3

VANCOUVER WATERFRONT PARK

Vancouver, Washington

The industrial aesthetic of this place is similar to this area of Houma. This project illustrates how local context can be used for inspiration and the design can incorporate elements from the surroundings to create a beautiful, comfortable, and inviting space. This project balances hardscape elements with landscape elements and celebrates its connection to the water. The design of this park is focused more on passive activities and social interaction promoting a sense of community.



4.4

MELLERUMMET

Copenhagen, Denmark

Mellerummet is a good example of bringing nature into the city. This park is located in an urban area of Copenhagen, surrounded by buildings. Rather than designing an urban plaza with more hardscape components, this space deliberately includes more lawn areas, planting, and natural hardscape materials. This provides a nice contrast to the surrounding setting and provides a small retreat from the urban setting.



VANCOUVER WATERFRONT PARK *Vancouver, Washington*



MELLERUMMET *Copenhagen, Denmark*



4.5

PAPROCANY WATERFRONT

Poland

The industrial aesthetic of this place is similar to this area of Houma. This project illustrates how local context can be used for inspiration and the design can incorporate elements from the surroundings to create a beautiful, comfortable, and inviting space. This project balances hardscape elements with landscape elements and celebrates its connection to the water. The design of this park is focused more on passive activities and social interaction promoting a sense of community.



4.6

WHEATON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Wheaton, Illinois

The revitalization efforts in this downtown have had an incredible impact on this community. The scale, style, and overall feel of this downtown area share many similarities with downtown Houma. The spaces are organized in a way that makes the pedestrian more of a priority, while still accommodating vehicular traffic. The configuration of the streetscape elements promotes greater community interaction. The use of bulb-outs here helps with traffic calming and creates appropriately sized spaces that encourage social interaction among visitors. This also provides



opportunities for restaurants and other businesses to extend their presence outside of the building walls into the streetscape.

PAPROCANY WATERFRONT *Poland*



WHEATON DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION *Wheaton, Illinois*



05.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



**BREAKING GROUND ON THE
ROTARY CENTENNIAL PLAZA**
*by Terrebonne Parish and Houma
Rotary Club members*

IMAGE SOURCE: [Houma Today](#)

05.

Implementation Strategies

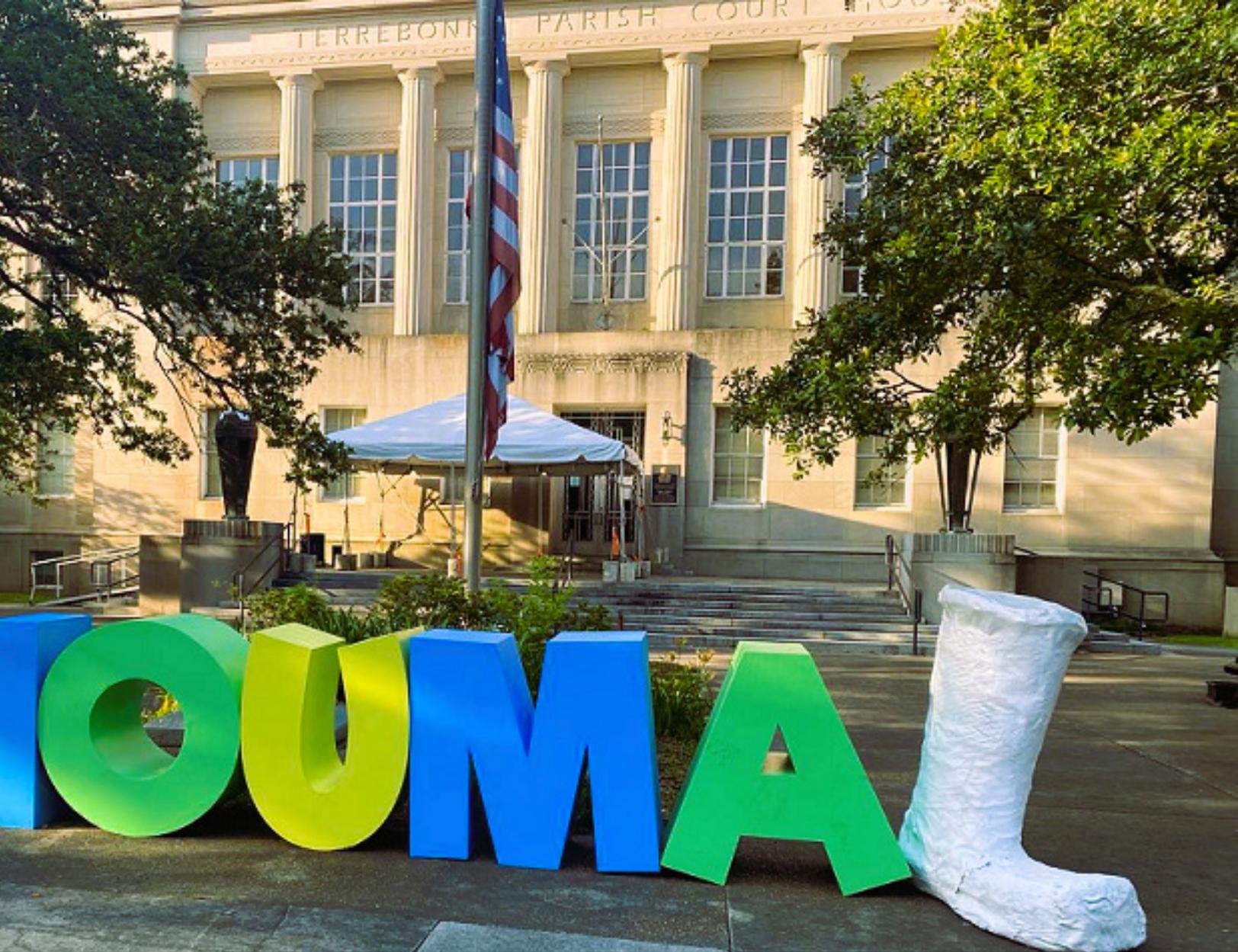
In a 2018 report , American Planning Association summarizes a successful process for downtown revitalization as one that is: **additive, incremental, cumulative, and long-term.**

When a downtown district is thriving, the resulting business activity means that investing in downtown development typically provides a higher rate of return compared to other parts of the city. With high rates of profit and efficient consumption of public resources, downtowns have a high private return on public investment.

The Downtown Vision Statement from the Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2013 remains consistent with the feedback and research conducted for this Plan. During stakeholder outreach, participants were united in their view that Downtown Houma can and will be a vibrant place again. What they want to see and believe is possible are the goals that were so well articulated in the 2030 Plan.

“By 2030, Downtown Houma will have become a desirable, safe and secure, mixed-use destination, attracting visitors, workers and shoppers to its diverse venue of businesses and shops – many of which have been established to capitalize on and promote local culture and heritage – supporting a variety of commercial and residential developments in a well-maintained, attractively landscaped, less congested, pedestrian-friendly environment.”





**WHITE BOOT
STROLL FESTIVAL**

*Annual arts and culture
event to showcase historic
downtown Houma*

IMAGE SOURCE:
[Louisiana Main Street](#)

To continue to support the goals outlined above, 6 actions need to be undertaken in coordination:

- » Increase Housing
- » Create Business and Pedestrian Friendly Streetscapes
- » Adapt Historic Structures for Reuse
- » Update Land Use Regulations
- » Improve Public Space
- » Attract New and Cultivate Existing Businesses

Throughout the Implementation section, the plan will point to existing programs that could be utilized to better effect, propose new ones specific for Downtown Houma, drawing from best practices, and discuss funding opportunities.

5.1 Increase Housing

As indicated by the market analysis, increasing the number of housing units in Downtown Houma is critical to its revitalization. Residents will draw services and new business, create pedestrian traffic, and spur investment.

Residential density in and around downtown contributes significantly to the customer base for local merchants, as residents within walking distance of retail are significantly more likely to frequent those establishments. According to a study by the International Council of Shopping Centers, residents and workers within walking distance of retail shops spend up to three times as much at those retailers. By incorporating a higher density of residents in Downtown, the purchasing activity also increases. This, in turn, creates an even more vital, desirable downtown economy. Specifically, housing contributes to the demand for additional shops, services, home-oriented products, entertainment, and food facilities.

Housing that is mixed with commercial uses also means downtown businesses and streetscapes remain active even after working hours. This enhances public safety with more eyes and ears paying attention to activity and adding people to the street during evening hours.





GALVESTON, TX

IMAGE SOURCE:
Galveston.com

Downtown housing typically targets smaller households in studios, one-, and two-bedroom units as those are what historic buildings can be adapted to accommodate. Rental and senior housing home values within a historic district rise more quickly than comparable areas because buyers are willing to pay a premium for homes in preservation zones (Advisory Council for Historic Preservation). Such historic buildings are under-supplied throughout the U.S. and unable to be replicated with new development. This makes preservation and rehabilitation very important.

EXISTING HOUSING INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The following tax incentives are already available for commercial and residential use in Downtown Houma. As map 1 shows, most of the study area is in a National Historic District, the Houma Downtown Development District, a Main Street District, and a Louisiana designated Cultural District.

In addition, a portion of the Study Area to the west of US90 and north of Bayou Terrebonne is a HUD-designated Qualified Opportunity Zone, which provides added tax incentivization potential for projects within that area.

For the tax credits to be the most impactful, it is best to pair with other programs. While Historic Tax Credits can significantly reduce out of pocket expenses for owners and developers, they are not always simple to navigate. A dedicated staff person could assist interested parties.

	FEDERAL HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT	LOUISIANA STATE COMMERCIAL TAX CREDIT	TAX ABATEMENT
Eligibility	Building listed on the National Register individually or within an NR historic district; must produce income.	Income-producing building within a Downtown Development District or Cultural District, as designated by the Division of Historic Preservation.	Renovations of existing commercial and owner-occupied residences in Historic Districts and Opportunity Zones.
% of Credit	20% of construction costs and fees.	25%	
Minimum Expenditure	Must exceed the adjusted basis of the building; \$5,000 minimum.	\$10,000	10 years of property tax abatement for renovated property.
Fees	\$250 + final fee based on size of the rehabilitation.	Fees range from \$250-\$5,000 based on estimated cost of rehabilitation.	Fee is based on the amount of exempted taxes. These exempted taxes can be between \$500-\$15,000.
Recapture	If the owner sells within 5 years, they lose 20% of the earned credit for each year short of the full 5 years	If the owner sells within 5 years, he loses 20% of the earned credit for each year short of the full 5 years.	If applicant is found to be in violation, abatement will be canceled.

NEW INCENTIVES TO CONSIDER FOR DOWNTOWN HOUMA

Houma Restoration District

The Houma Restoration District has the latitude to undertake public works, operate public facilities, pursue and accept federal, state, and local funding and grants, acquire property within district boundaries and lease or sell property to private entities committed to undertaking restoration and preservation efforts, determine the design appropriateness of new buildings and renovations of existing buildings within the district, and require approval of signage within the district.

Through the Restoration District, Terrebonne Parish could offer select parcels currently vacant or being used as parking lots for the purpose of mixed-use development or purchase private lots/properties and solicit developers through a competitive RFP process (*See Chapter 8: Project and Funding Matrix*). Through a RFP process, TPCG and the Restoration District would be able to shape the type of housing unit mix desired (a certain number of affordable units, for example) as well as design standards, thereby creating the type of development most needed.

QUALIFIED OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Opportunity Zones are federally designated areas designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities by providing preferential tax incentives for investors investing in businesses within the Qualified Opportunity Zones. This tool can be layered with any others that may apply to the given geography—such as a restoration tax abatement or other incentive programs.



1 Defer

the payment of your capital gains until Dec 31, 2026.



2 Reduce

the tax you owe by up to 15% after 7 years.



3 Pay zero

tax on gains earned from the Opportunity Fund.

IMAGE SOURCE: [The Ascent](#)

Upper Story Residential Grant Program

A program other Historic Downtown Districts have usefully deployed is an Upper Story Residential Grant Program: a grant program that could be administered by the Restoration District or other public agency to provide assistance to developers or owners creating upper story housing in new or existing buildings in the downtown area—creating desirable downtown residential opportunities and restoring historic buildings. This proposed grant program should be allocated through a competitive process and should make up gap financing for a project, not be its sole source of funding.

If commercial buildings on Main Street with 2nd stories were to utilize this program, this would double the assessed value and lead to increased property tax revenue.

PADUCAH, KY MAIN STREET

The City of Paducah, KY implemented this program as part of a suite of incentives (including new business grants, roof stabilization assistance and others) to spur development in a historic downtown area. Property owners/developers within a defined area in historic downtown are eligible to apply for financial assistance to create new upper story living spaces in new or existing buildings. The grant does not exceed 20 percent of the construction costs or a maximum of \$15,000 per Upper Story Residential Rental Unit. For a residential owner-occupied unit, the grant is either 15 percent of the construction costs or a maximum of \$15,000 per unit.



IMAGE SOURCE: PaducaMainStreet.org

5.2 Adapt Historic Structures for Reuse

An adaptive reuse program provides targeted assistance to property owners of existing buildings with significant challenges to redevelopment. While historic buildings are valued for their sense of history and authenticity, it can be complicated and expensive to adapt them to modern use. During the walking tour, attendees discussed how there is a significant desire to restore blighted buildings, but a lack of finances prevents it.

Adaptive reuse encompasses both commercial and residential structure, therefore all the tax incentives listed in the Housing section also apply.

The following existing incentives and grants could be coordinated and leveraged to encourage restoration of existing buildings in downtown Houma.

HISTORIC BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN HOUMA, LA



IMAGE SOURCE: CSRS

EXISTING RESTORATION INCENTIVES

Main Street Façade Grants

Houma is a member of the Louisiana network of Main Streets through the State Office of Cultural Development and Division of Historic Preservation. The purpose of the Main Street Program is to encourage the revitalization of historic downtowns and offers funding incentives through the State to do so. Commercial properties in eligible Main Street districts can apply for matching façade restoration grants up to \$10,000.

Restoration Tax Abatement

This is a program administered by the State of Louisiana that provides an up-to 10-year abatement of property taxes on renovations and improvements to existing commercial structures (and owner-occupied residences) in economic development districts, downtown development districts, historic districts, and opportunity zones.

MAIN STREET FACADE GRANT *Before and After images of facade restoration of a historic building at Crowley, LA*



IMAGE SOURCE: [Preservation resource center of New Orleans](#)

NEW INCENTIVES TO CONSIDER FOR DOWNTOWN HOUMA

In addition to these existing programs there are several other investment tools that can be created, leveraging the one-time CBDG-DR funds and the Restoration District seed money (See Chapter 8: Project and Funding Matrix).

Grants

The Houma Restoration District has the latitude to administer incentive grants for restoration projects within Restoration District boundaries.

Houma Restoration District Restoration Program

Restoration Grant Program, wherein matching funds could be provided for historic restoration projects. These funds could be targeted specifically to priority properties or for renovation of the rear facades of buildings facing Bayou Terrebonne, to encourage reorientation towards the Bayou, for example.

Credit/Loans

In addition, the HRD could create vehicles of investment by establishing direct loans, micro-loans, loan guarantees, and revolving loan funds. Revolving Loans are a particularly appealing tool and have been used to great effect around the country.

Revolving Loan Fund programs are tools that can be used to support small businesses and affordable housing. Revolving Loan Funds are designed to become self-funded as they are maintained by the repayment of principal and grow through interest payments.

Establishing a revolving loan fund provides access to a flexible source of capital that can be used in combination with more conventional sources. Often the Revolving Loan Fund is a bridge between the amount the borrower can obtain on the private market and the amount needed to start or sustain a business. For example, a borrower may obtain 60 to 80 percent of project financing from other sources.

All the loan products outlined above can be layered with State and Historic Tax Credits.

Recommendation: downtown program liaison

A overarching recommendation that will advance all of the implementation actions is a designated staff person, either employed by the Downtown Houma Restoration District Committee or TPCG, to be a resource for all of the programs in Downtown Houma, both existing and any new programs that result from this plan.

This employee will be a “one stop shop” for all things Downtown: knowledgeable about how to layer existing tax credits, up to date on the status of the vacant properties, able to target businesses and developers, and educated on land regulations and code enforcement.

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: CITY OF KOKOMO, INDIANA

Kokomo, Indiana offers three Revolving Loan Fund programs through their Department of Development, aimed at revitalizing the community by providing targeted, flexible low-interest financing for business growth. The programs enable borrowers to construct, expand, or renovate buildings, purchase land or buildings, purchase machinery or equipment, and access working capital. One program provides \$15,000-\$150,000 in loans to businesses impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, and requires the goal of one full-time job created per \$40,000 loaned. One program provides low interest loans to new/expanding businesses having difficulty achieving the full loan needed through conventional sources, and also requires job creation. The third program applies specifically to new and emerging businesses with less than \$1 million in expected annual gross revenue.

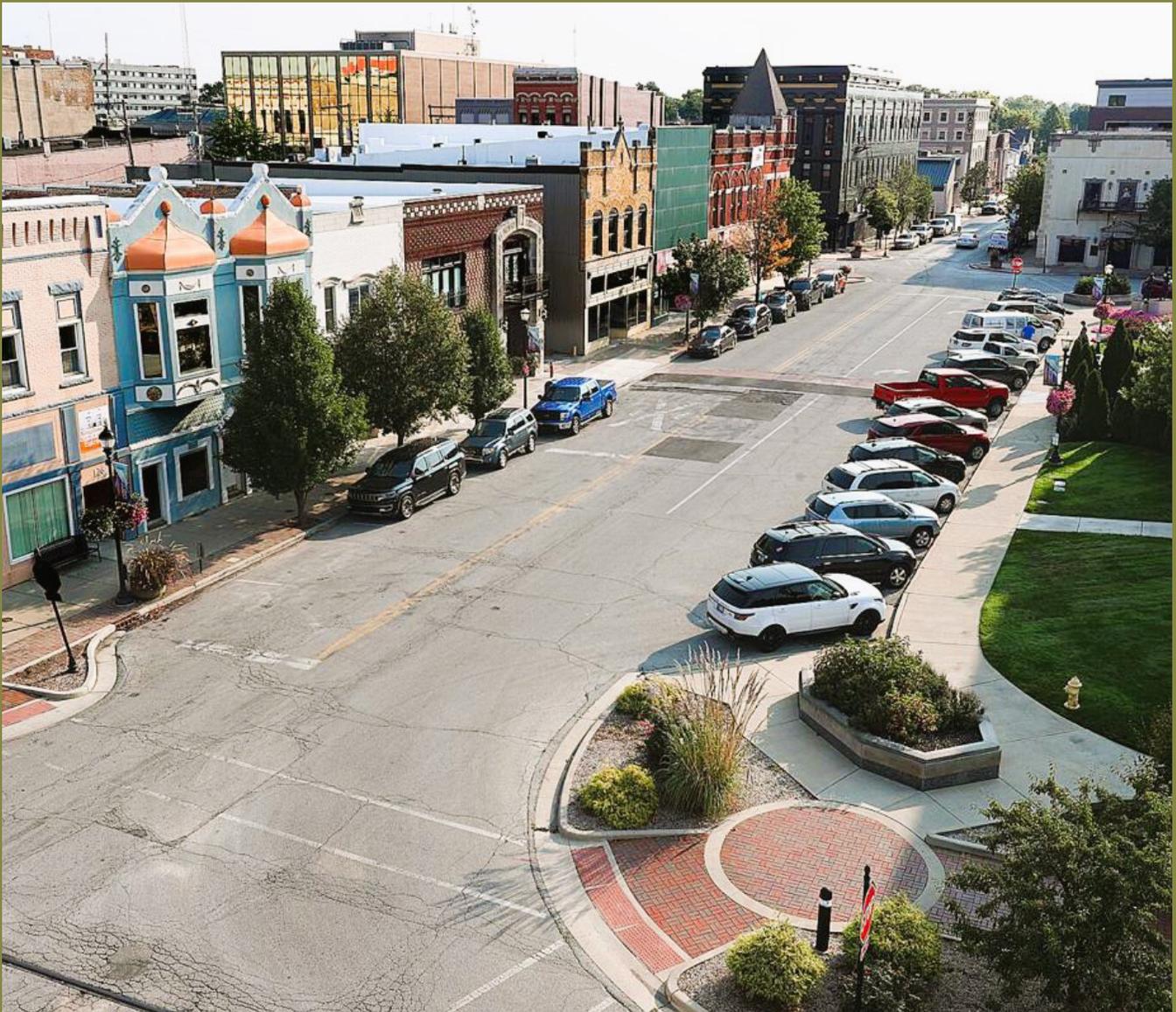


IMAGE SOURCE: [Kokomo Tribune](#)

5.3 Update Land Use Regulations

The Main Street Revitalization Plan area includes a variety of existing zoning districts—C-1, C-2, R-1, and Medical Services. Most of the Plan area falls within commercial districts: C-1 (Central Commercial District) and C-2 (General Commercial District). These two districts have similar zoning restrictions, though C-2 districts allow for a wider variety of retail goods and services that might serve the greater community, such as automotive sales and major shopping centers. Both commercial districts allow for residential (single and multi-family) use. The Medical Services District is designed to encourage an appropriate grouping of medical

EXISTING ZONING FOR HOUMA, LA



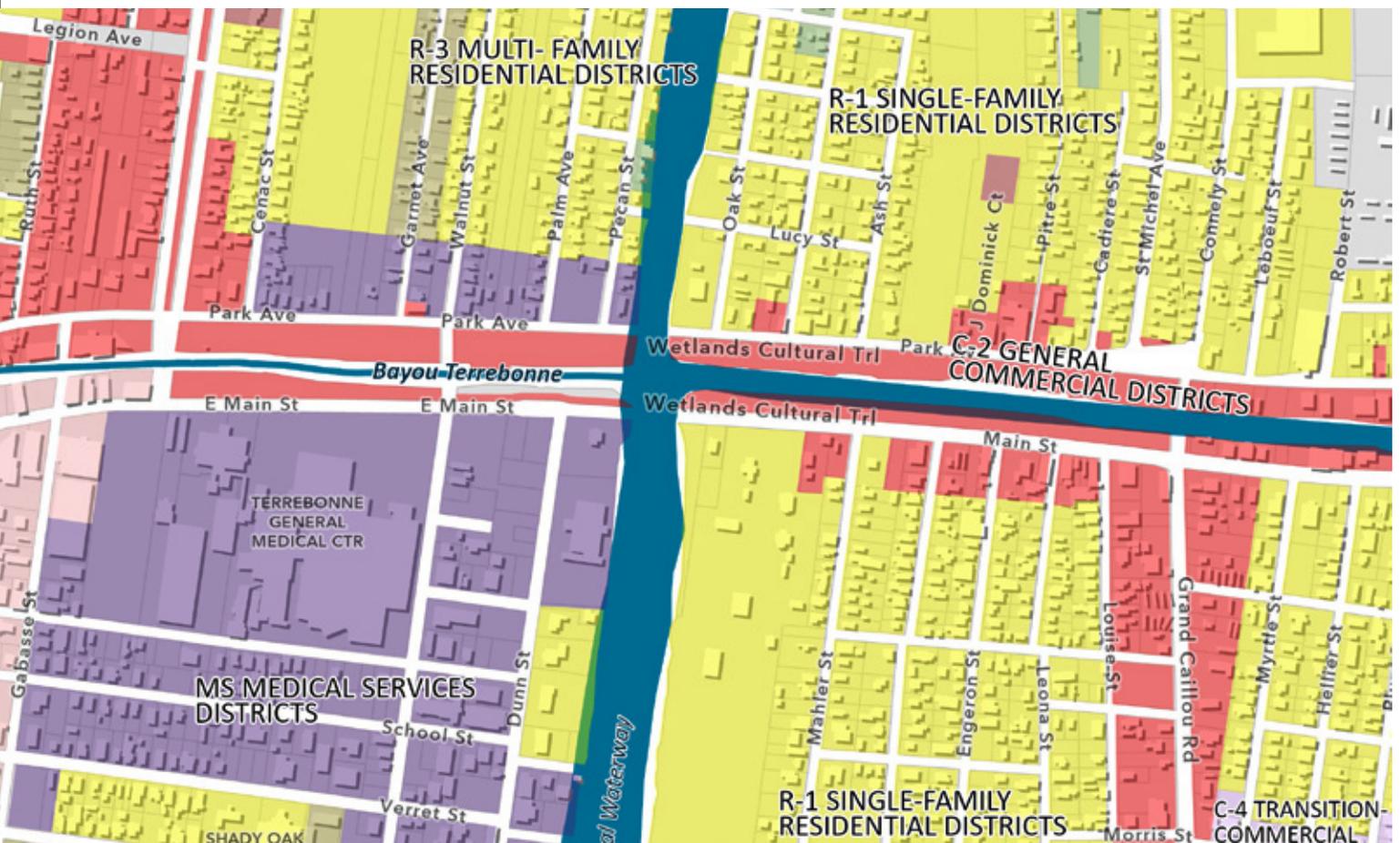
IMAGE SOURCE: [Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government: Public LandMap](#)

service facilities—in the downtown area, this District is home to Terrebonne General Health System hospital. The R-1 residential district is designed for predominantly single-family residential use, prohibiting commercial uses and multi-family housing.

Creating consistency is necessary when encouraging desired land uses. Regulatory tools, such as an overlay zone can recognize the unique character of a historic downtown and protect property values and a sense of place through well-crafted regulations.

- C-1: CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS
- C-2: GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS
- C-3: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS
- C-4: TRANSITION-COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS
- R-1: SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS
- R-2: TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS (LOW DENSITY)
- R-3: MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS (HIGH DENSITY)
- MS: MEDICAL SERVICES DISTRICTS

EXISTING ZONING FOR HOUMA, LA



RECOMMENDED FOR DOWNTOWN HOUMA: DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY ZONE

A zoning overlay for Downtown Houma is the most effective way to ensure what kind of development is appropriate to the scale and historical character of Downtown. A zoning overlay is the recommended approach, details to be determined by the Planning and Zoning staff and commissioners. An overlay zone guarantees investors that the characteristics that drew them to Downtown will remain as well as creating a level playing field. These requirements will not be seen as extra or unfairly applied if the same requirements are in place for the entire area and add to the property's value.

An overlay district (zone), is a geographic zoning district layered on top of another existing zoning district, or districts, that implements additional regulations. Overlay districts can be used in zoning codes to preserve historic buildings or promote specific types of development. Like other zoning regulations, overlay districts can control building codes and urban design, permitted land use, density, and other factors. Overlay districts can streamline the implementation of additional regulations in all applicable areas without having to amend the codes.

A Downtown Historic District Overlay Zone should:

- » Define which “by right” uses are best,
- » Align with arts and culture goals,
- » Provide design guidelines – for rehab of existing structures and infill (setbacks, space between buildings, etc.),
- » Incorporate existing Historic District guidelines,
- » Set building height and massing standards,
- » Create special requirements for development over a certain square footage,
- » Set streetscape requirements,
- » Reduce or modify parking requirements,
- » Create signage and visual consistency standards,
- » Create specific requirements for surface parking lots (decorative fencing, planting, etc.)

When a Downtown Historic District Overlay zone standard conflicts with the underlying base zoning, the Overlay Zone will always govern.

TERREBONNE PARISH 2030 GENERALIZED LAND USE PLAN
from the Terrebonne Parish Comprehensive Plan Vision 2030

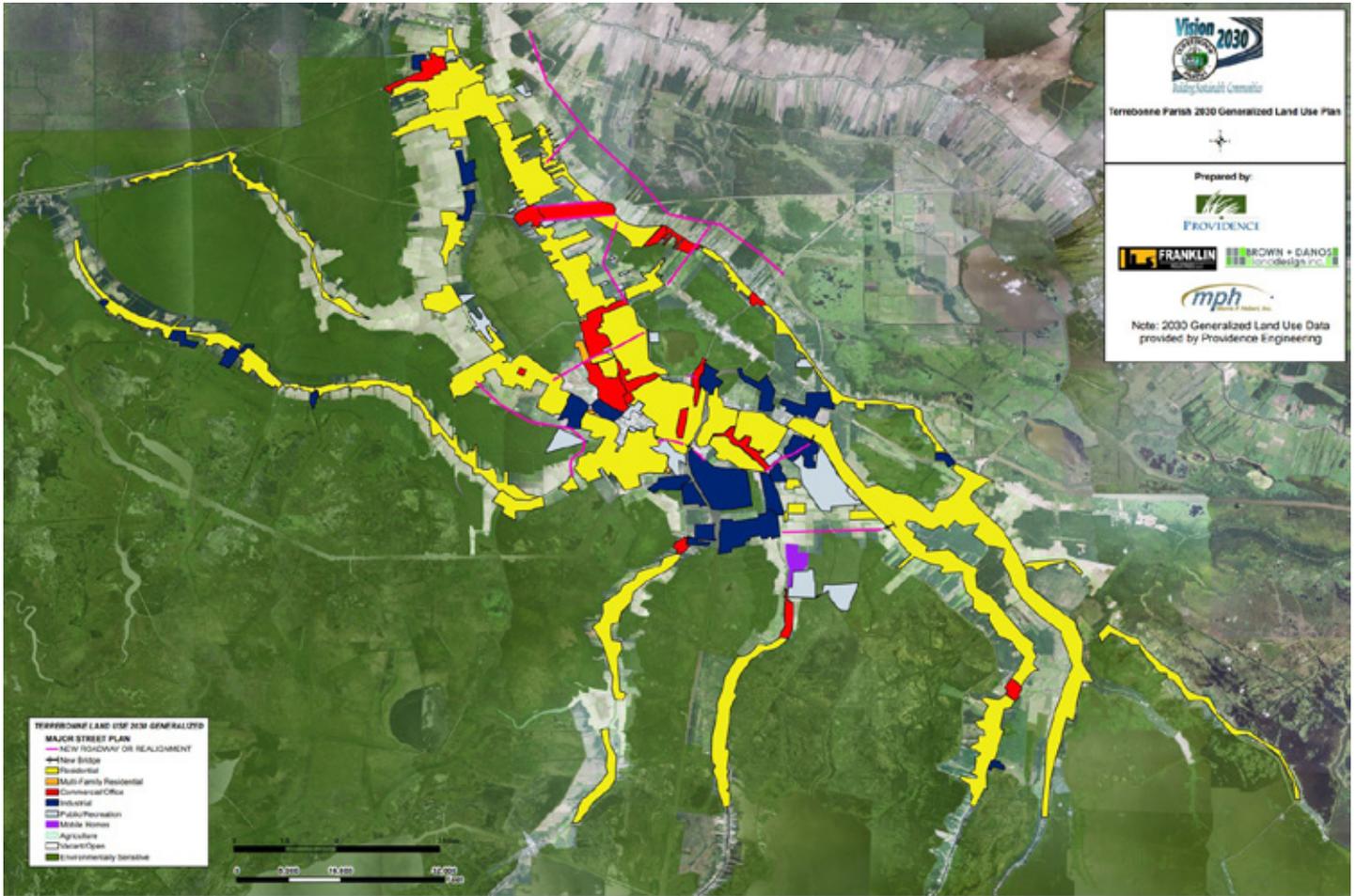


IMAGE SOURCE: TPCG.org

5.4 Create Business and Pedestrian Friendly Streetscapes

A safe, connected, and accessible transportation system is fundamental to downtown development, land use, economy, and character. Intentional streetscape design can provide a street network that is welcoming and supportive of the local economy.

The street-level pedestrian environment is primarily shaped by transportation infrastructure. Inclusive, welcoming streets contribute to vibrant downtown retail districts where people feel safe, comfortable, and engaged when they walk or bike. Streets with vacant storefronts, large blank walls, little activity, and surface parking lots create an inhospitable environment and make it difficult for businesses to thrive.

Main Street is struggling with these challenges and key to jumpstarting improvements is reducing the impact of Main Street/ LA 24. Main Street is also a state designated truck route (LA 24) and the two highly-trafficked lanes are designed to be vehicle focused, with little regard for pedestrian and bicyclists.

A “Complete Streets” approach would be ideal for Main Street. The Complete Streets model enables safe use and supports mobility for all users rather than prioritizing automobiles and fast-moving traffic. Although the guiding principle for complete streets is to create roadways and related infrastructure that provide safe travel for all users, each complete street has to be customized to the characteristics of the area the street serves.

COMPLETE STREETS

Before



After

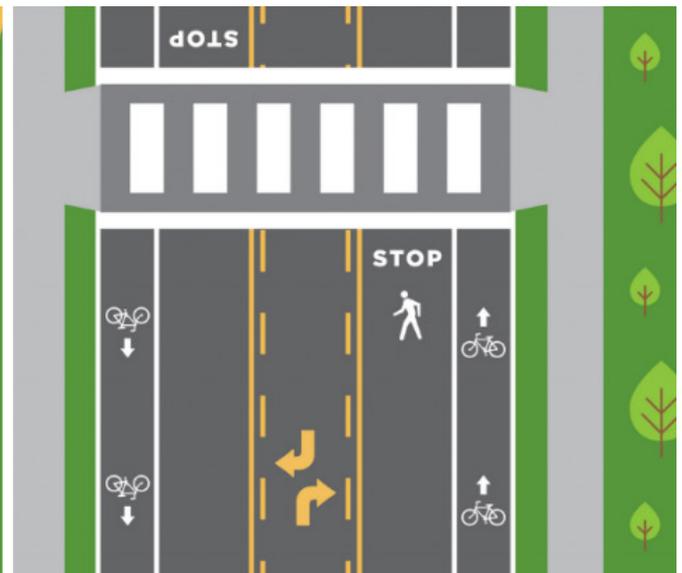


IMAGE SOURCE: [Smart Growth America](#)

A complete street plan for Main Street should include traffic calming measures, increased signage, signalized crosswalks, tree plantings, a bicycle lane, and other beautification measures. In the following section, landscape architects Carbo and Associates present options for a re-design of Main Street using these design principles and show what they would look like in Downtown Houma.

Because Main Street is a Louisiana State Road, any alterations or changes will have to be approved by LaDOTD and are subject to its Design Review.

Alternatively, Terrebonne Parish could initiate a road transfer process. Which would move the jurisdiction for the road from the State to the Parish, which would also assume the maintenance obligation.

both will require an official LaDOTD Stage 0 Feasibility study which has been requested and funded. TPCG will have a better sense of which approach to take once the 0 Feasibility study is complete.. In either case, an alternate truck route would have to be identified and approved by LaDOTD.

In either case, TPCG can and should pursue Federal Department of Transportation grants aimed at enabling communities to undertake improvements to roadways to increase safety and connectivity. Many of these grants promote and fund complete street types of projects. Initiating a road transfer process with LaDOTD does not mean TPCG cannot access these grant funds (*See Chapter 8: Project and Funding Matrix*).

There are pros and cons to each approach, but

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE TRUCK ROUTES



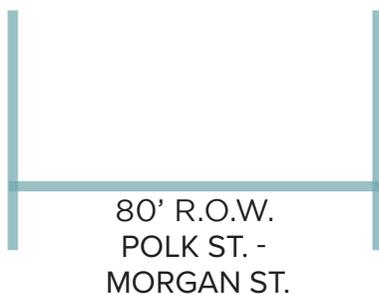
Corridor Zones & Street Sections

CHARACTER ZONES

Main Street is divided into three Character Zones:

- » Residential (50' and 80' R.O.W.)
- » Commercial (50' R.O.W.)
- » Recreational

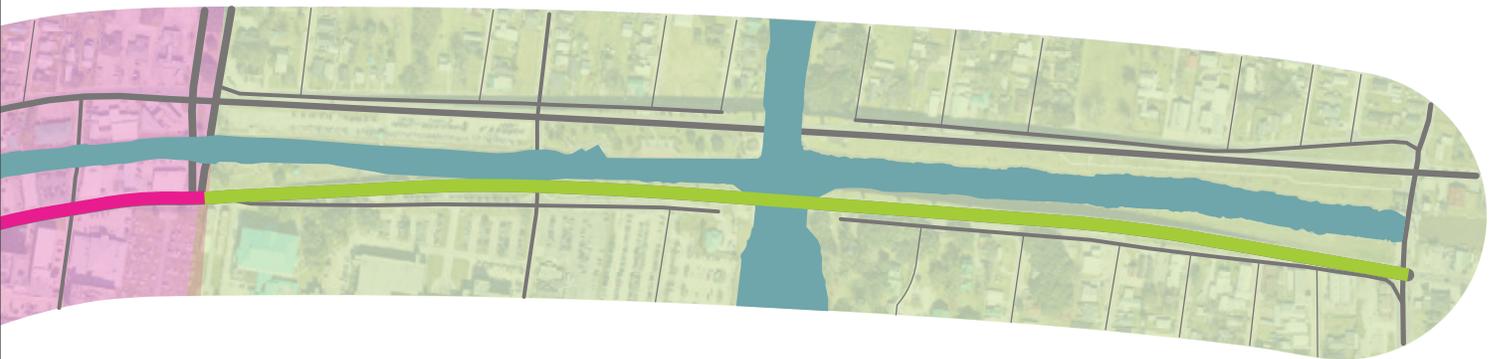
 RESIDENTIAL  COMMERCIAL  RECREATIONAL



Moving east down the corridor, toward the Intracoastal Waterway, the character changes from a more structured downtown feel to more of a loose open feel. This area focuses more on the bayou and creates more opportunities for interaction. Dubbed “Bayou Activation”, the interventions here focus less on the street R.O.W and more on the bayou, creating more opportunities for interaction and passive recreational opportunities. The R.O.W. within these Character Zones varies from 50’ to 80’.



DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK
Naperville, Illinois
 IMAGE SOURCE: [Visit Naperville](http://VisitNaperville.com)

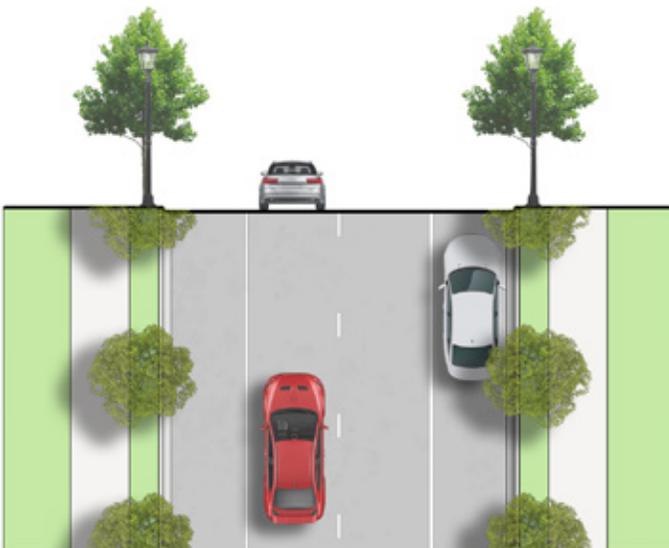


BAYOU ACTIVATION
 NEW ORLEANS BLVD. -
 CONNELLY ST.

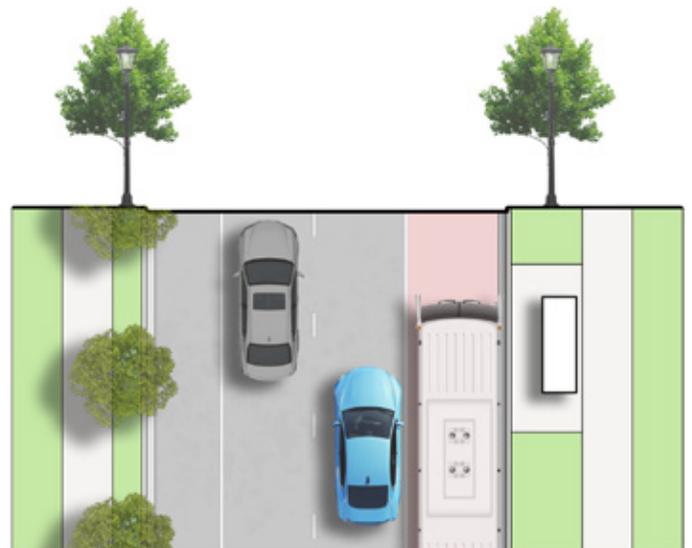
80' R.O.W

The size of the 80' R.O.W. provides more room for new streetscape elements, including buffer planting along streets and sidewalks, as well as benches, lighting, and other street furniture. The recommendations provide a range of options for the organization of the street section. Planted areas are included between the road and sidewalk to buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic on Main Street. Street trees are incorporated to provide shade as well as traffic calming to help slow vehicular traffic. The sidewalks are proposed at a minimum of 6' wide to allow for a more comfortable experience when walking through the corridor.

- » The first option maintains two lanes of traffic with parallel parking along each side.
- » The two travel lanes remain in the second option and one of the parallel parking lanes is replaced with a BRT lane (Bus Rapid Transit) and bus stops to accommodate alternative forms of transportation. Wide sidewalks and vegetated buffers with street trees are also included.



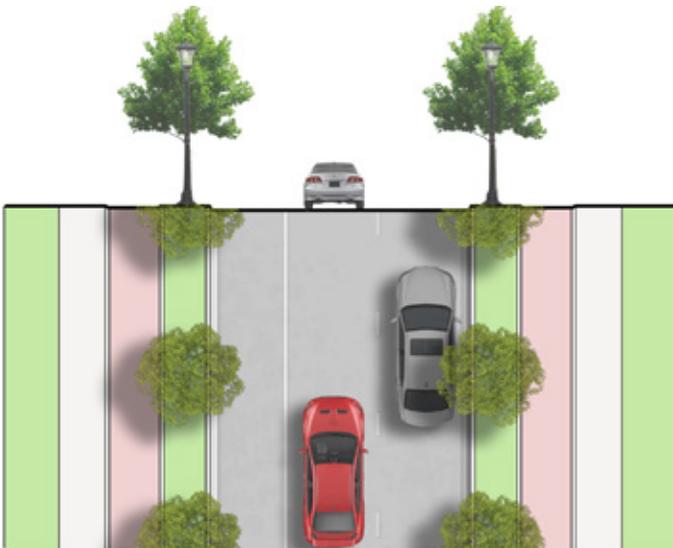
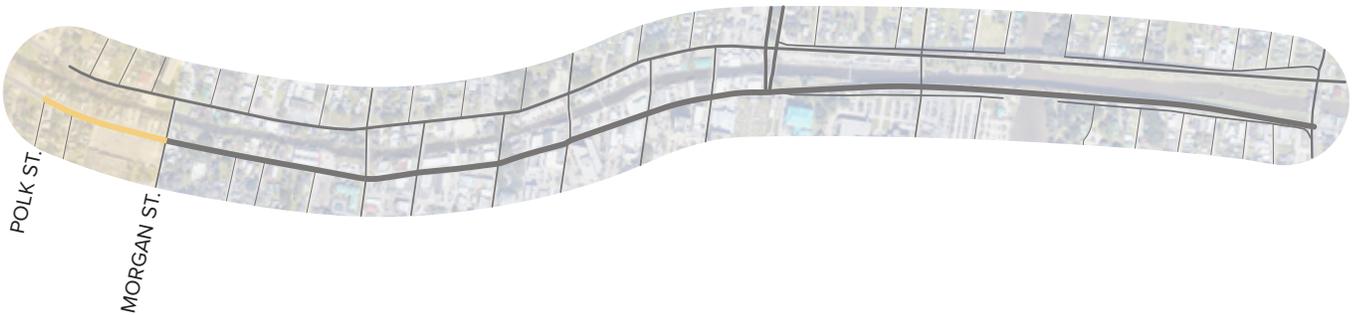
ADDING SUBSTANTIAL BUFFER BETWEEN BUFFER BETWEEN VEHICLES AND SIDEWALKS



CONVERTING RIGHT SHOULDER INTO BRT LANE

- » The third option removes the parallel parking lane on the right side, allowing for protected bike lanes to be incorporated into the streetscape. Wide sidewalks and vegetated buffers with street trees remain in this option as well.
- » The fourth option removes both parallel parking lanes and replaces them with angled parking on the right side of the street. Vegetated buffers and street trees are included along the sides of the street.

■ RESIDENTIAL



PROTECTED BIKE LANES

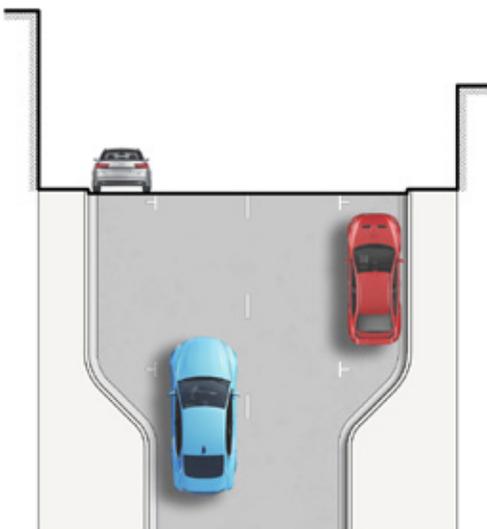


ANGLED PARKING WITH ADDITIONAL PLANTING AND SEATING

50' R.O.W

The 50' R.O.W., while narrower than the 80' R.O.W., still provides room for updated streetscape elements. The narrower width creates a more urban feel, yet still allows for 6' wide sidewalks. Street furnishings are more limited within this section, but items such as benches, lighting, and other street furniture are still feasible. The recommended approaches shown here provide a range of options for the organization of the street section. Buffer plantings can be incorporated but will be limited based on the reconfiguration of the travel lanes and parking.

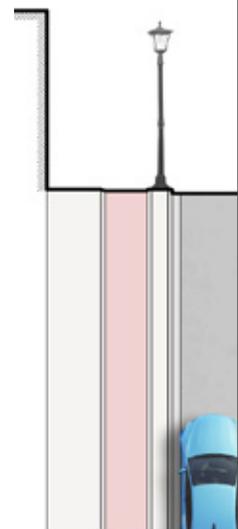
- » The first option maintains two lanes of traffic with parallel parking along each side but introduces bulb-outs at intersections and key points along the corridor. These bulb-outs are useful in traffic calming and provide shorter and safer distances for pedestrians to cross.
- » The two travel lanes remain the second option and the parallel parking lanes are replaced with angled parking along the left side. Bulb-outs are also used in this scenario, providing opportunities to create small gathering areas bordered by planters.
- » The third option removes all street parking and incorporates dual



REMOVE PARKING FOR BULB-OUTS & PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS



DUAL TRAVEL LANES WITH ANGLED PARKING

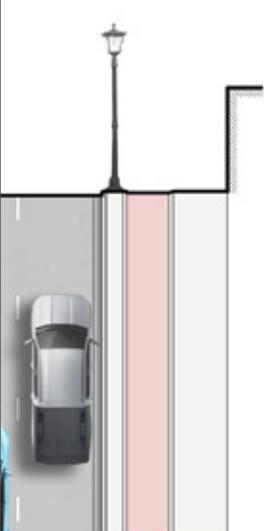
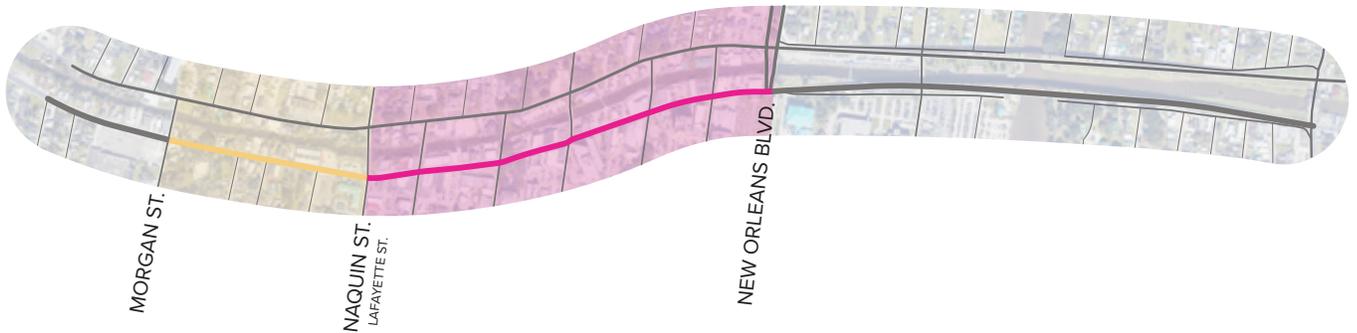


DUAL TRAVEL LANES WITH PROTECTED BIKE LANE

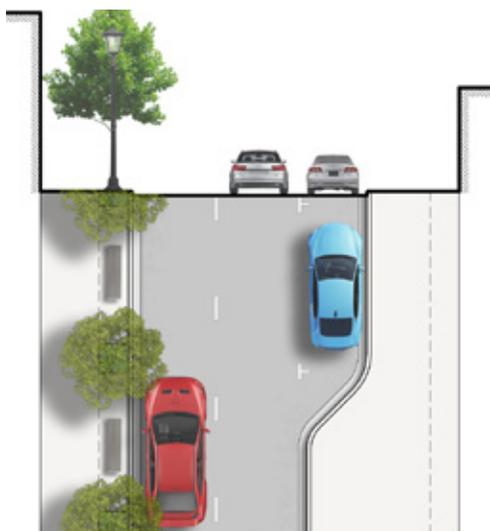
travel-protected bike lanes. This option reduces the space available for site furnishings such as benches, planters, and trash receptacles.

- » The fourth option removes one parallel parking lane replacing it with a wider sidewalk, street trees, and room for benches. Bulb-outs are incorporated as well, promoting safer crossing distances for pedestrians, and providing traffic calming.
- » Option 5 is similar to option 4, allocating more sidewalk space to the left side of the street creating a wide promenade. Bulb-outs are incorporated at intersections and used in mid-block areas to create parking zones and provide larger areas for outdoor dining or additional planting.

RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL



STREETS WITH DUAL LANES



PLANTED BUFFER WITH BENCHES AND STREET TREES

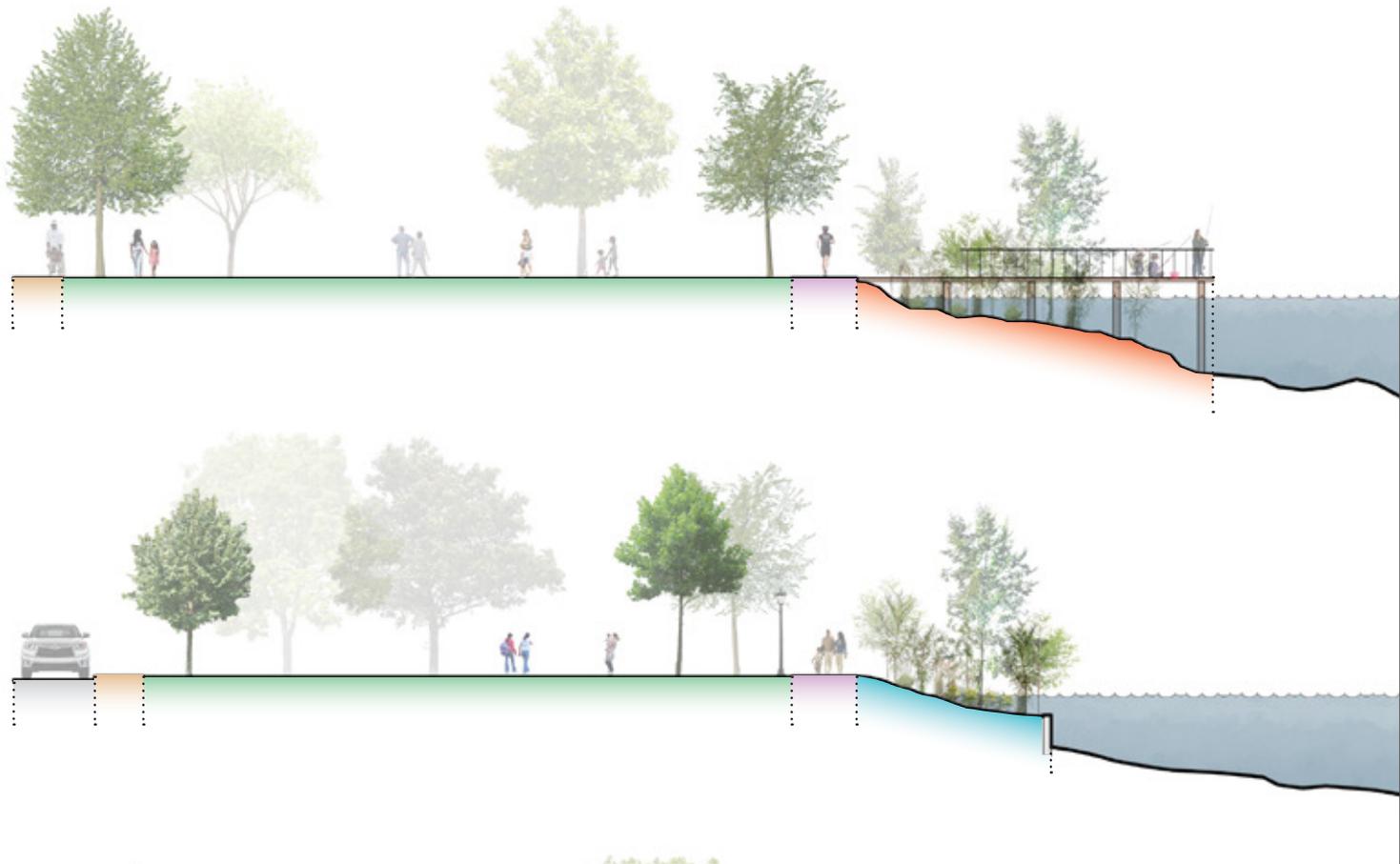


MORE SIDEWALK SPACE ALLOCATED TO LEFT SIDE OF STREET

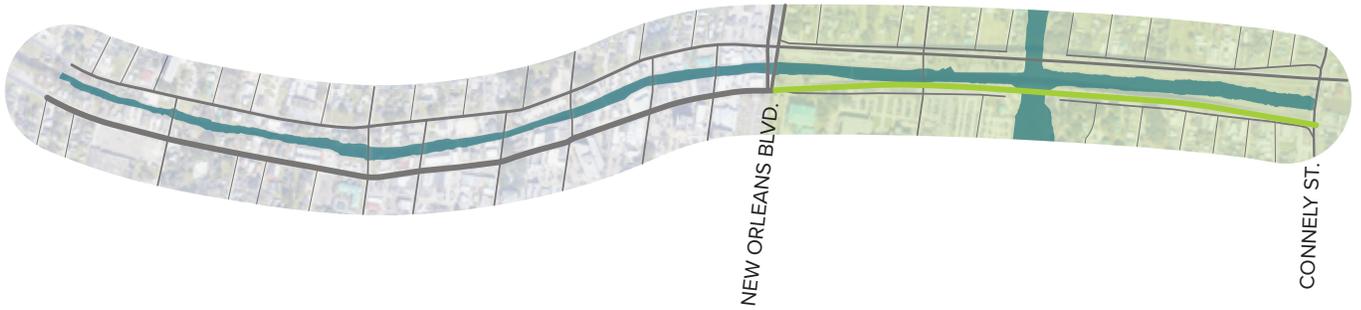
BAYOU ACTIVATION

As the corridor makes its way east toward the Intracoastal Waterway, the character changes. The south side of the street is populated with buildings, but the north side is open and offers accessible greenspace along the bayou. This area provides a passive recreational area where people can picnic, fly kites, fish, or stroll leisurely along the bayou.

- » The first section shows the addition of piers placed periodically along the bayou allowing visitors an opportunity to get closer to the water. It also provides more accessible locations for fishing. As shown in the plan, these piers are nestled into revegetated zones that soften the water's edge.
- » The second section illustrates how the wetland edge interacts with the bayou. The elevation is lowered to accommodate wetland edge plantings but also provides more floodwater storage during storm events.



RECREATIONAL



PARKING

SIDEWALK

OPEN SPACE

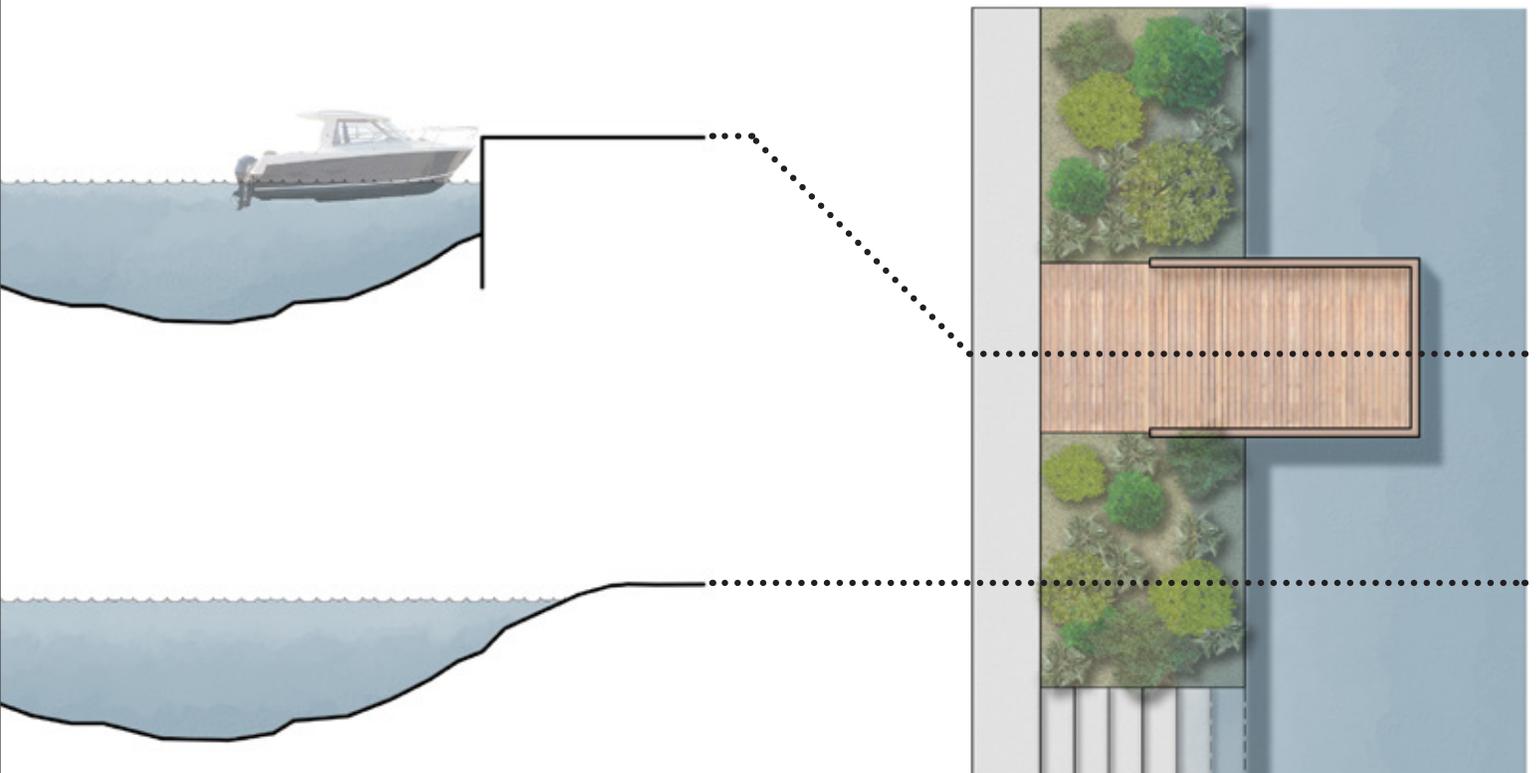
BOULEVARD

FISHING PIER

WETLAND EDGE

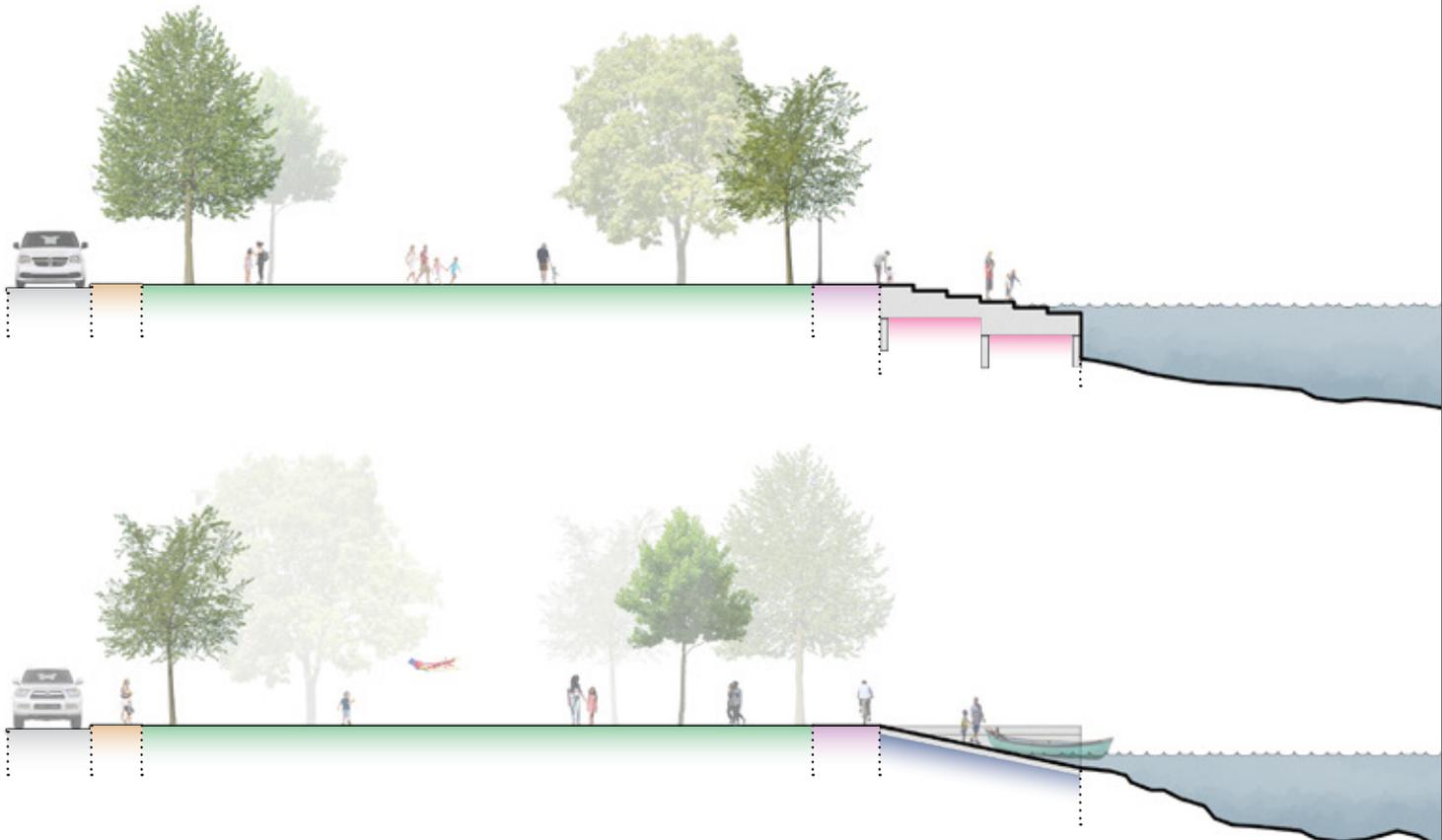
TERRACE

CANOE LAUNCH

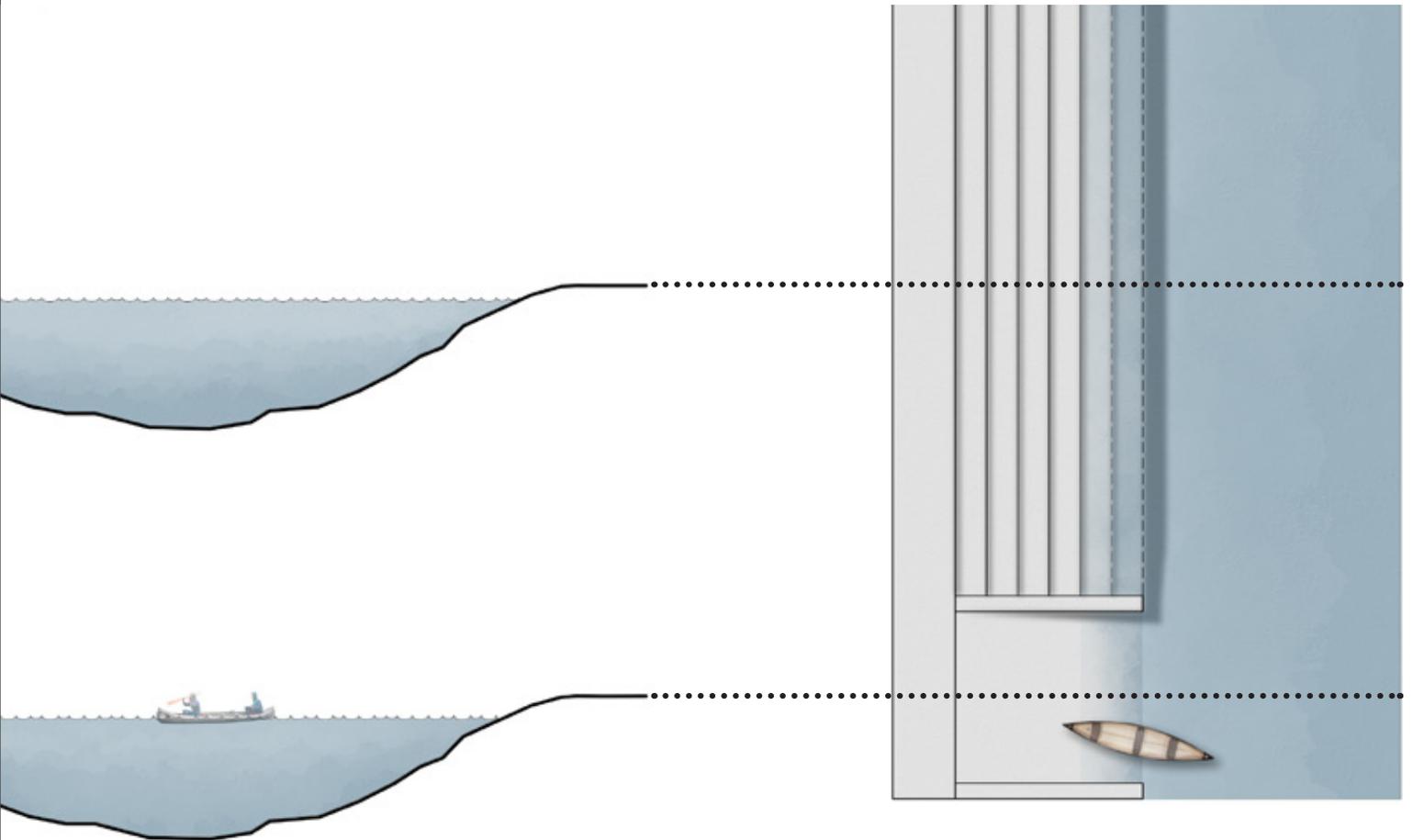
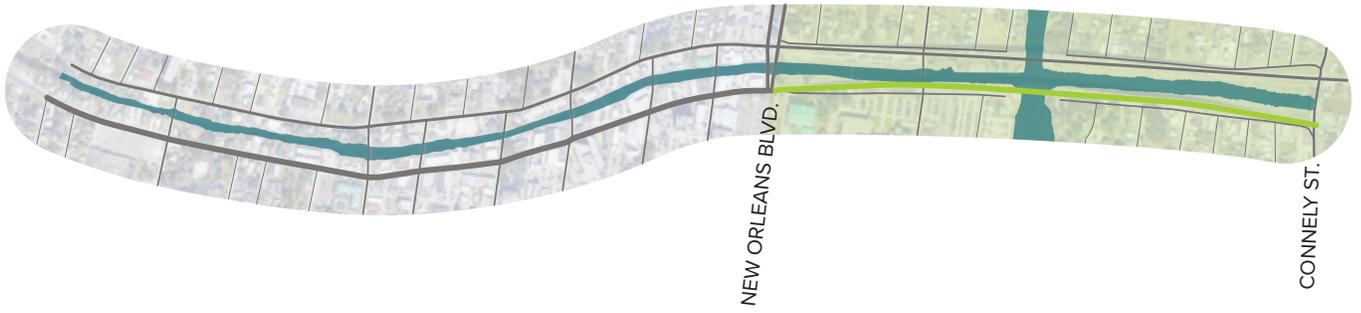


BAYOU ACTIVATION *(contd.)*

- » Section three incorporates a more rigid edge along the bayou adding paved terraces providing seating options and potential gathering spaces. The terraced effect can accommodate fluctuations in water levels while still allowing greater access to the water. The terraced profile also allows for greater floodwater storage.
- » The fourth section includes a sloped canoe/kayak launch. The gentle slope accommodates seasonal water fluctuations while maintaining ease of access to the water.



RECREATIONAL



VISION

Example images of potential updated streetscape for Main Street.



IMAGE SOURCE: *Carbo and Associates*











5.5 Improve Public Space

INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL PROJECTS

Improving existing public spaces and creating new ones has proven economic value; often correlating with increased surrounding property values and interest in commercial and residential properties. A recent study analyzing the role of public space investments in three American cities that had experienced downtown decline (Flint, MI, Buffalo, NY, and Albuquerque, NM), found that public space activation was key in changing residents’

perception of the liveliness of downtown. The events and programming that occurred in public spaces gave people a reason to go downtown, and to stay there; making it a destination for the first time in decades. This perception of a “destination” then had sourring effects for private investment in the surrounding areas (source: The inclusive economic impacts of downtown public space investments, Brookings Institute, 2021).

PUBLIC LIBRARY AT DOWNTOWN, BATON ROUGE, LA

A centerpiece of the downtown, the new library is designed to be an engaging cultural space and community amenity.

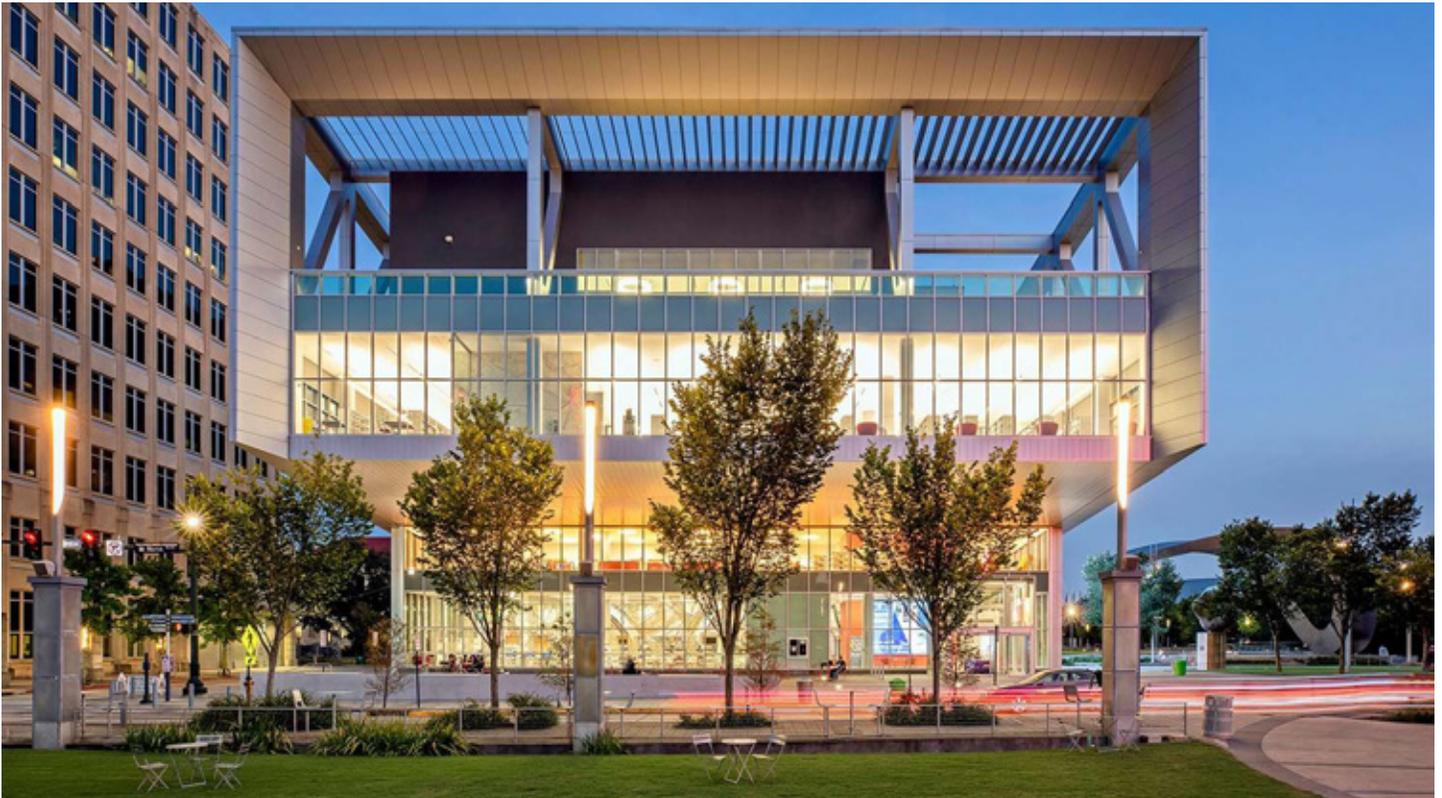


IMAGE SOURCE: [WHLC Architecture](#)

Bold, large-scale investments in downtown public space can make a big impact in changing perception of a downtown area. Greenville, South Carolina, took a controversial leap in 2001 to remove the state bridge that covered a natural waterfall and disallowed access to the river that ran through its downtown. The city went on to develop a 20-acre riverfront park complete with gardens and amphitheaters and a pedestrian bridge. This massive investment paid off, resulting in business and residential attraction that has made Greenville one of the fastest growing cities in America.

There are many opportunities for capital and infrastructure investment in Downtown Houma. Projects that have been mentioned during outreach include:

- IMPROVING AND REPLACING BULKHEADS ALONG BAYOU TERREBONNE IN ORDER TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY ALONG THE BAYOU
- EXPANDING THE BAYOU WALK
- CREATING NEW KAYAK LAUNCHES AND FISHING PIERS
- A DOWNTOWN SEAFOOD MARKET
- AN OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER.
- COMPLETE STREETS.
- RESILIENCY PROJECTS SUCH AS ADDITIONAL GREEN SPACE TO ABSORB STORMWATER.

Most of these projects would be eligible for funding identified in *Chapter 8: Project and Funding Matrix*.

FARMER'S MARKET - FLINT, MICHIGAN

The aforementioned study called out the Farmer's Market in Flint, MI as most successful in small business incubation related to public space—because it centered low-cost access and business incubation support in its mission; providing free commercial kitchen access and entrepreneurship training to vendors. The market includes outdoor space as well as permanent indoor space with kitchen access. As one public sector official explained, the goal was to help entrepreneurs “start their own business—not out of their garage, but out of downtown’s Main Street.” (Brookings Institute, '21).



IMAGE SOURCE: [Explore Flint and Genesee](#)

5.6 Attract New and Cultivate Existing Businesses

There are two approaches to business attraction, and both should be deployed to ensure that Downtown Houma has volume and diversity of desired businesses:

- » cultivating new businesses, and
- » attract existing businesses.

Attracting new business will be more successful once initial downtown revitalization is underway. For example, grocery stores are almost entirely reliant on a residential customer base -

a downtown grocery store requires a strong base of housing in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

That is not to say the groundwork should not be laid early. Restoration Board members should be the primary advocates for Downtown Houma and will have a major role to play in economic growth. Conducting outreach to businesses and developers, these advocates can market development and business opportunities, identify barriers and implement corresponding

DOWNTOWN SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA *Local businesses attracting people to historic downtown Solvang.*



IMAGE SOURCE: [The Solo Globe Trotter](#)

strategies, and become the liaison between the city and the private sector. Advocates must reach out to and involve local developers and business owners to get their buy-in, add creativity, and build support for the Downtown vision. This would be ideally supported by a staff person who also serves as a resource all Main Street projects.

Board members must be proactive in identifying the needs of businesses by working closely with business and property owners and facilitating partnerships.

Business-friendly policies can be developed while creating a Downtown Historic District Overlay Zone. This new Overlay Zone should simplify the entitlement process to ensure flexibility in the code and development approach.

Cultivating new businesses should be the strategic priority. The low cost of property will be appealing to startup businesses, in conjunction with support navigating the incentives offered for the adaptive reuse of Downtown Houma's historic buildings. The HRDC should become a clearing house for information and support for entrepreneurs wanting to locate in Downtown Houma.

In addition, if TPCG and the Downtown Restoration Board do assemble vacant downtown properties, short term leases (6 months, 1 year) could be offered for new and emerging businesses. Popup Denver, described later, is a good model for business attraction and incubation.

DOWNTOWN SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA *Exciting recreational opportunities for locals at historic downtown Solvang.*



IMAGE SOURCE: [Solvang USA](#)

BUSINESS INCUBATION

As illustrated by the market analysis results, there is a strong spirit of entrepreneurship in Terrebonne Parish. Capitalizing on this energy by incentivizing new businesses/minimizing startup risk in downtown Houma will help spur growth and build community wealth. There are numerous existing new business support programs, such as the Business Loan Guaranty Program offered by Louisiana Economic Development, which provides guarantees to banks and other financial

institutions on their loans to Louisiana-based small businesses. The Support Louisiana Small Business Development Center at Nicholls State University offers numerous free programs such as assistance with business plans, workshops on human resources and marketing as well as consultation. The new Bayou Region Incubator in Thibodaux has consolidated many of their services along with some co-working options (See Chapter 8: Project and Funding Matrix).

BAYOU REGION INCUBATOR IN THIBODAUX

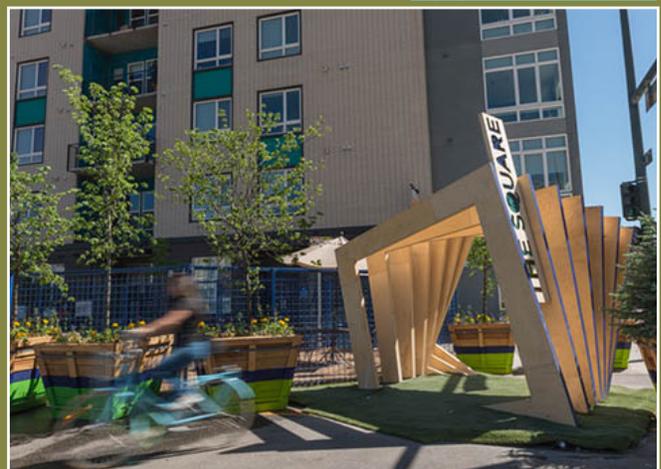
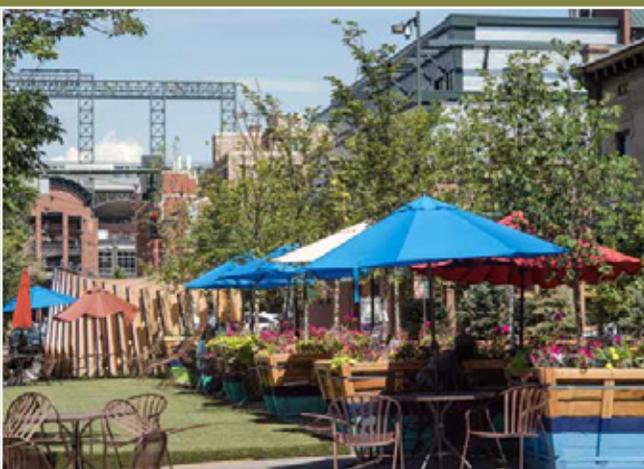


POPUP DENVER - DENVER, COLORADO

To bring businesses back to downtown Denver after the Coronavirus pandemic, the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) launched a program to place new businesses in targeted vacant store fronts—once a business or entity is approved for the program, DDP works with property managers of vacant commercial spaces to make sure that the license agreements offer a minimum of three months of free rent. Business operators still cover other costs, like utilities, but are awarded a \$20,000 package in interior design, setup, and merchandising support to get the business off the ground and increase chances of success and permanent occupancy of the storefront. Due to the success of its first year, the program renewed for a second.



IMAGE SOURCE: [PopUp Denver businesses](#)



ENTRANCE TO POP-UP PARK IMAGE SOURCE: [303 Magazine](#)

POTENTIAL PROJECTS FOR DOWNTOWN HOUMA

A comment heard on the Downtown walk was that Main Street is a great location for a co-working, or maker space. A “maker” space can function as a small-scale manufacturing space. Businesses that are making or manufacturing on a small-scale can operate in storefronts and other small facilities that are not considered “manufacturing” and do not need large industrial spaces to produce their product. Much like a co-working space set up for office workers sharing technology and meeting spaces, a maker space can provide shared tools, 3-D printer, studio space, and other equipment. Individuals that create goods, art, and other items can be housed together.

Another successful model many communities have supported are kitchen incubators or shared kitchen facilities. Kitchen Incubators offer long or short-term leases at reasonable rates on a flexible time-share basis. The kitchens provide commercial grade ovens, refrigerators, freezers, and other equipment. Often, there are programs that support emerging businesses. These are commercial kitchens, inspected and licensed that allow for commercial production and distribution of food items.

MARKER 13 COMMUNITY MAKERSPACE, JEFFERSONVILLE, IN



IMAGE SOURCE: [Maker13](#)

FLORENCE, AL CULINARY INCUBATOR



IMAGE SOURCE: [Florence culinary incubator stirs entrepreneurship dreams](#)

Entrepreneurial development can be encouraged in various startup-oriented formats, including (but not limited to) incubators, accelerators, and coworking spaces.

GAUCHO COLLECTIVE

The Gacho Collective was launched to serve the entrepreneurial and community collaborative needs of our historic downtown - Klamath Falls Oregon. Gacho is an open-concept office with a variety of semi-private and private spaces to suit occupiers' business and collaborative needs. The members of the Gacho Collective are a diverse group that work in a variety of fields with daily access to the available workspaces and provided amenities.



IMAGE SOURCE: GachoCollective.com

06.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH - CLUSTERING



06.

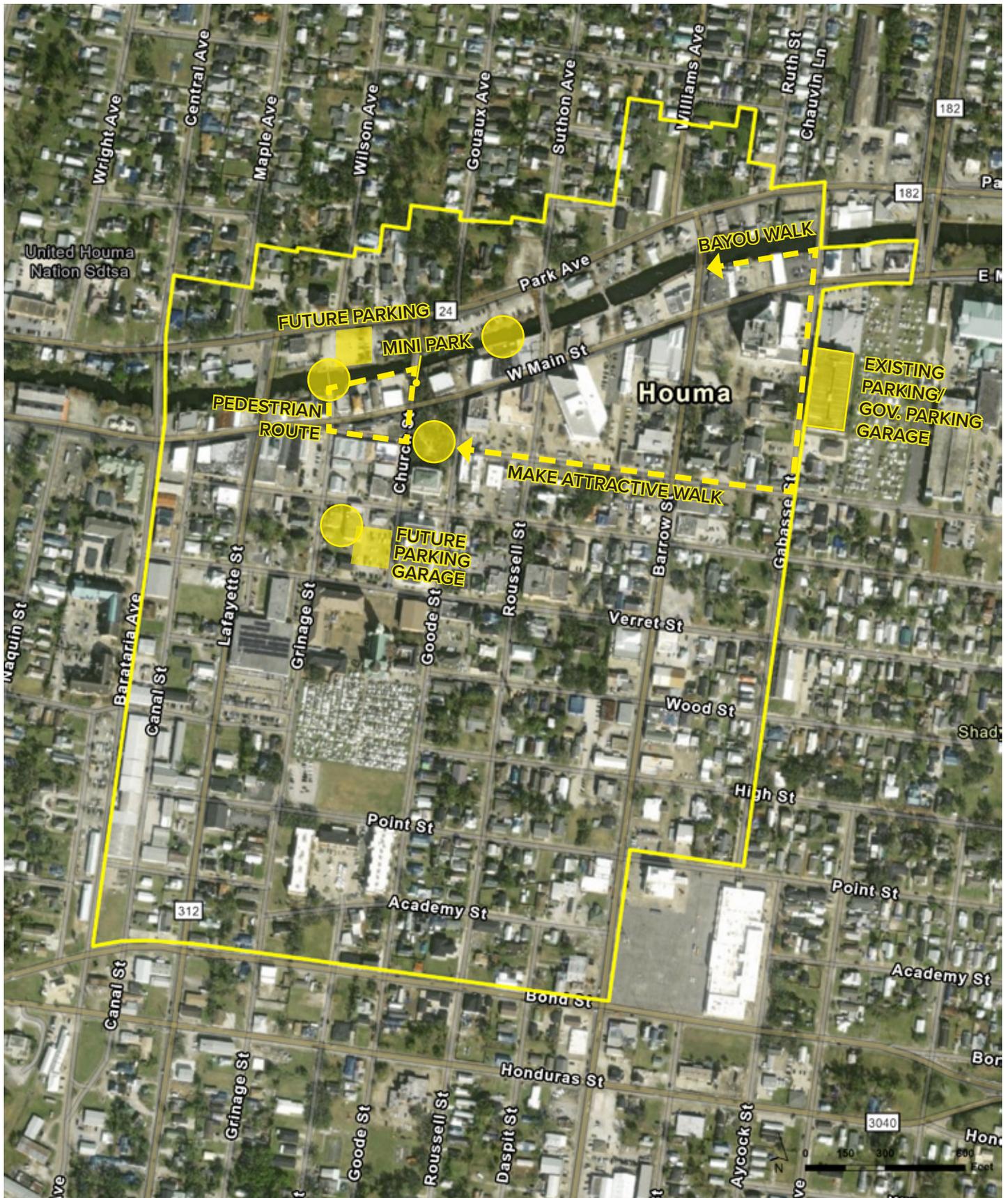
Recommended Approach - Clustering

To have the greatest impact, the aforementioned implementation strategies related to housing, public space investment, business attraction, adaptive reuse, and streetscapes, should initially be focused in a small geographic area of downtown Houma. This approach of focused investment, commonly referred to as “clustering,” creates a strong core that exemplifies the vision for downtown Houma and makes it a reality for residents and investors. Once people can see and experience a dynamic, walkable downtown center, further, similar investment will radiate out from that center.

While programs offered should be available to all in the District, investment should be focused on a specified geographic area to apply all applicable programs – each building, parking lot, bayou frontage, and streetscape in that focused area will be analyzed for improvement. Investments should include streetscape improvements, incentive zoning programs, façade improvement programs, etc., as well as site-specific actions like public-private partnerships, site acquisition, and reduced parking requirements. **Private investment will maximize when public investment is strategically focused in specific target areas rather than dispersed across a large area.**

There are many potential locations on Main Street that would benefit from this approach and catalyze investment. The identification of such an area (2-4 blocks, on both street sides and including bayou access) will have to be done with careful consideration and specific knowledge of the buildings and owners. A clustering approach also allows TPCG and the Restoration District to be proactive and strategic by initiating programs in a focused area, versus reacting to proposed changes spread out among the area that do not necessarily align with revitalization priorities.

EXERCISE FROM COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS ASKING PARTICIPANTS TO IDENTIFY AREAS WITH ASSETS | Map adapted from TPCG Vision 2030



07.



QUICK WIN
PLACEMAKING
INTERVENTIONS



07.

Quick Win Placemaking Interventions

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER

The program and infrastructure recommendations in the previous pages, while achievable, will take significant time and investment to implement. While these longer-term strategies are getting off the ground, a “lighter, quicker, cheaper” strategy can also be implemented. Lower risk, lower cost projects that capitalize on the creative energy of the community can efficiently generate new uses and revenue for places in transition to produce successful public spaces. Also, implementation of small projects will indicate to the community that change is happening, and garner community support and buy-in as people start to experience a changing downtown. The following are examples of “quick win” initiatives that easily be implemented in downtown Houma:

EXAMPLES OF POP-UP ELEMENTS



Bike Lane



Crosswalk



Traffic Calming



Pop-Up Shop



Public Seating



Food Truck



Activities



Planters



Wayfinding



Landscaping



Parklet



Community Stage

IMAGE SOURCE: AARP Pop-Up Placemaking Tool Kit

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Creative placemaking means creating spaces that are distinctive, engaging, and that attract people, even on a temporary basis. Placemaking reflects and bolsters the identity of a place, whether it is a block, a district, or a city. It is a multidisciplinary approach that can take many forms, including art, events, streetscape, signage, landscaping, logos, temporary installations in vacant storefront windows, and social media and marketing. Pop-up projects help foster community identity and inspire the type of activities that make a downtown a more inviting place to live, work, and play.

Examples:

- PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS
- POP-UP MARKETS IN PARKING LOTS OF VACANT LOTS
- DOWNTOWN BRANDING AND SIGNAGE
- TEMPORARY ART INSTALLATIONS IN VACANT STOREFRONTS

ALLEY ACTIVATION AT PITTSFIELD, MA

Before (left) and after (right) of how an umbrella canopy turned a shabby alleyway into a destination.



IMAGE SOURCE: [AARP Livable Communities](#)

RIGHT-OF-WAY

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Many projects can be implemented on a temporary basis, or as “pilot” projects, with lower-cost materials. This allows road users to get used to changes and provide feedback before more fixed and costly changes are made. An example of this type of “quick-build” project is painting and installing temporary bollards around bike lanes at dangerous intersections (See *Chapter 8: Projects and Funding Matrix*).

Activation Programming

Programmed events complement built environments, a method of “continuous placemaking” –can activate vacant parcels and parking lots: outdoor movies, art markets, and other events. Many cultural events already take place in downtown Houma—keep these occurrences consistent and often will nourish a sense of liveliness downtown, and keep people coming back.

PARKING TO PARKLET | *London, UK*



PAVEMENT TO PARKLET | *Groveland, FL*



POP-UP COMMUNITY SPACE FOR PLAYFUL ACTIVITIES

IMAGE SOURCE: participatory.org



COMMUNITY GARDENS AS A PLACEMAKING APPROACH FOR RECLAIMING UNDERUTILIZED PUBLIC SPACES



IMAGE SOURCE: participatory.org

STREET FURNITURE, PLANTER, AND REPAINTED PAVING MAKING STREETS PEOPLE-FRIENDLY | *Barcelona, Spain*



IMAGE SOURCE: barcelona.cat

“PIANO” CROSSWALK AS A TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURE FOR IMPROVING PEDESTRIAN SAFETY | *Rochester, NY*



IMAGE SOURCE: npr.org

08.



FUNDING AND
PROJECTS MATRIX



PROJECT CONCEPT	POTENTIAL FUNDING	AWARD RANGE
Conversion of historic structures into Downtown housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mix of State and Federal Tax Credits 	20% to 25% of construction costs
Upper Story Grant program for housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration District seed funding 	Ideally, gap financing - \$15,000 to \$30,000
Renovations/Conversion of historic buildings for residential or commercial use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana Restoration Tax Abatement 	10 years abatement on property taxes based on renovation costs
Reuse of historic structures for commercial uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana Main Street Façade Grants/ Supplemented with CDBG-DR funds 	Up to \$10,000 or more if supplemented with CBDG-DR funds
Purchase and packaging of targeted properties for development through an RFP process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	<p>Must be part of TPCG’s approved proposal for its \$24.7M CDBG-DR allocation.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M</p>
Revolving Loan fund- potentially administered by Restoration District to be used for business growth- construction and working capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	<p>Must be part of TPCG’s approved proposal for its \$24.7M CDBG-DR allocation.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M</p>
Maker Space/Small business Incubator/kitchen incubator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	<p>Must be part of TPCG’s approved proposal for its \$24.7M CDBG-DR allocation.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M</p>
Business Location Incentive Program – including program that offers short term (6-12 month) leases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	<p>Must be part of TPCG’s approved proposal for its \$24.7M CDBG-DR allocation.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M</p>
Complete Streets for Main and Park Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) –IIJA DOT competitive grant program • Safe Streets and Roads for all Grant Program- IIJA DOT competitive grant program • Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – LaDOTD Program 	<p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$45M.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$25M.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – LA has \$13.5M to distribute.</p>
Extension of Bayou Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG-DR Hometown Revitalization Program • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	<p>Must be part of TPCG’s approved proposal for its \$24.7M CDBG-DR allocation.</p> <p>Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M</p>
Bulkhead construction/ New Kayak Launches/Fishing Piers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDA Disaster Supplemental program – Economic Development Administration 	Competitive grant process – max award is \$30M
Quick win Placemaking Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Endowment for the Arts- Our Town Grant • Fundraising/Philanthropy/Partnership with Bayou Regional Arts Council 	<p>Competitive grant process – wards range from \$25,000 – to \$150,000.</p> <p>Created dedicated fundraiser/apply for local grants</p>

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING PROGRAMS

CDBG-DR HOMETOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

funds originate with the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are allocated to states based on scope of disaster. Louisiana's Office of Community Development (OCD) administers these funds to eligible parishes based on approved proposals and plans. The amount allocated to Terrebonne Parish based on Hurricane Ida is \$24.7M and all projects must meet the eligibility requirements set by HUD and OCD.

FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDITS are administered through the National Park Service and are eligible only to properties that fall within the boundaries of the National Register of Historic District, which in Houma overlaps with the boundaries of the Houma Downtown Development Corporation (see Map 1).

LOUISIANA HISTORIC TAX CREDITS (State Commercial Tax Credits) are administered by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. These credits are available for properties that fall within the National Register of Historic Places, and the two Cultural Districts in Downtown Houma (see Map 1).

THE RESTORATION TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM is administered by the Louisiana Economic Development office and is eligible for use in both National and State Historic districts and Opportunity Zones (see Map 1).

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION'S DISASTER GRANT PROGRAM (EDA) is a competitive grant program administered by the US Department of Commerce for areas that has been issued

a Presidential declaration of major disaster in the calendar years of 2021 and 2022. Parish, city, federally recognized tribal governments, and non-profits are eligible to apply.

REBUILDING AMERICAN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY (RAISE)

grants are administered by the federal Department of Transportation. Parish, city, and federally recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply. This is an annual grant program authorized through the IIJA bill until 2026.

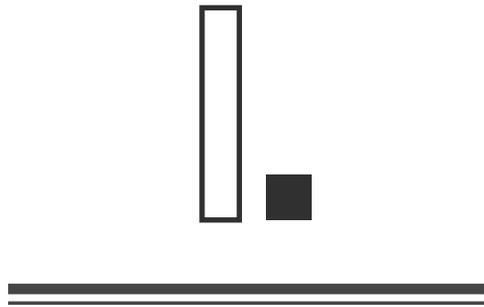
SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL

grants are administered by the federal Department of Transportation. Parish, city, and federally recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply. This is an annual grant program authorized through the IIJA bill until 2026.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

(TAP) is a competitive grant program administered by LaDOTD on a bi-annual basis. Parish, city, and federally recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply. Increased funding for this program (in Louisiana, the amount went from \$6M to \$13M) has been authorized through the IIJA bill until 2026.

OUR TOWN grants are administered by the National Endowment for the Arts annually. Parish, city, federally recognized tribal governments, and non-profits are eligible to apply.



APPENDIX: HOUMA MARKET ANALYSIS

Houma Market Analysis



Sections

Demographic Analysis

Residential Analysis

Jobs & Industry Analysis

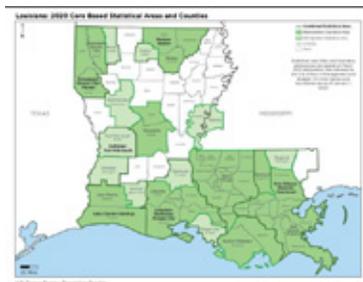
Surplus/Shortfall Analysis

Recommendations



Defining the Houma Metro

- The Houma-Thibodaux Metro includes Terrebonne Parish and Lafourche Parish. The term “Houma Metro” is used throughout this report.



Source: US Census Bureau

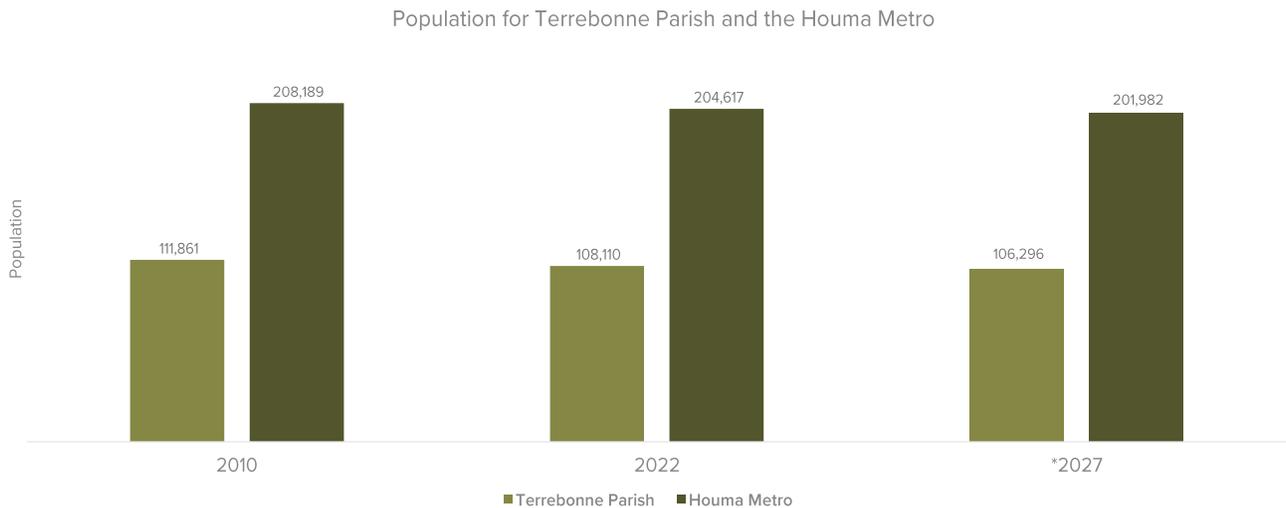


Demographic Analysis

Is Houma’s population growing? Getting younger or older?
 Is the number of households increasing? In which direction are household incomes trending?
 Are education levels increasing?



About 3,500 residents have left the Houma Metro since 2010; another 2,600 are projected to leave by 2027

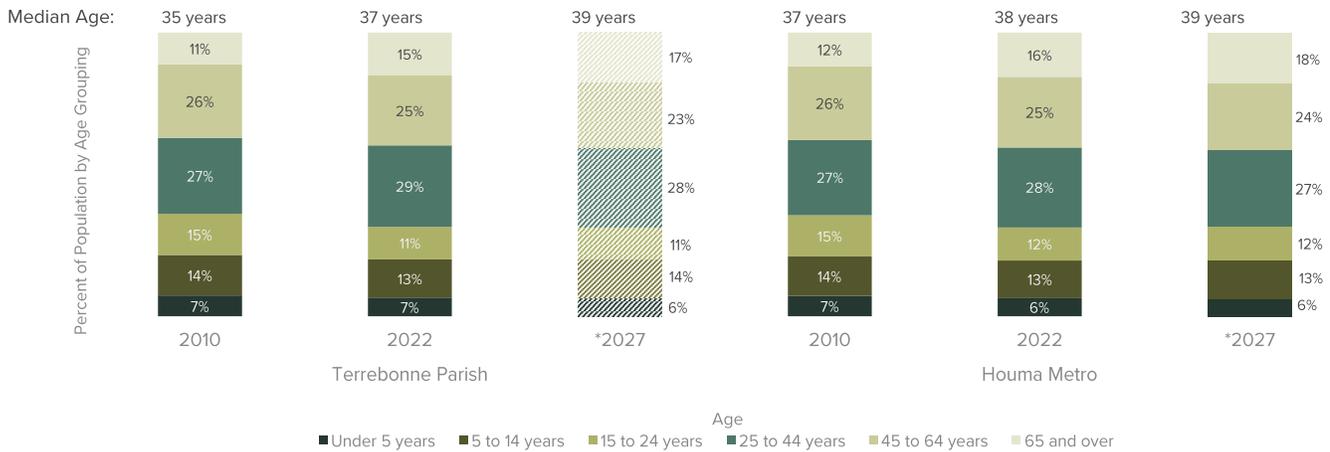


*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
 Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



Houma is aging: the number of residents age 65+ increased by more than 7,000 in the last 12 years; it's projected to increase by another 4,000 in the next 5 years

Age Distribution for Terrebonne Parish and the Houma Metro

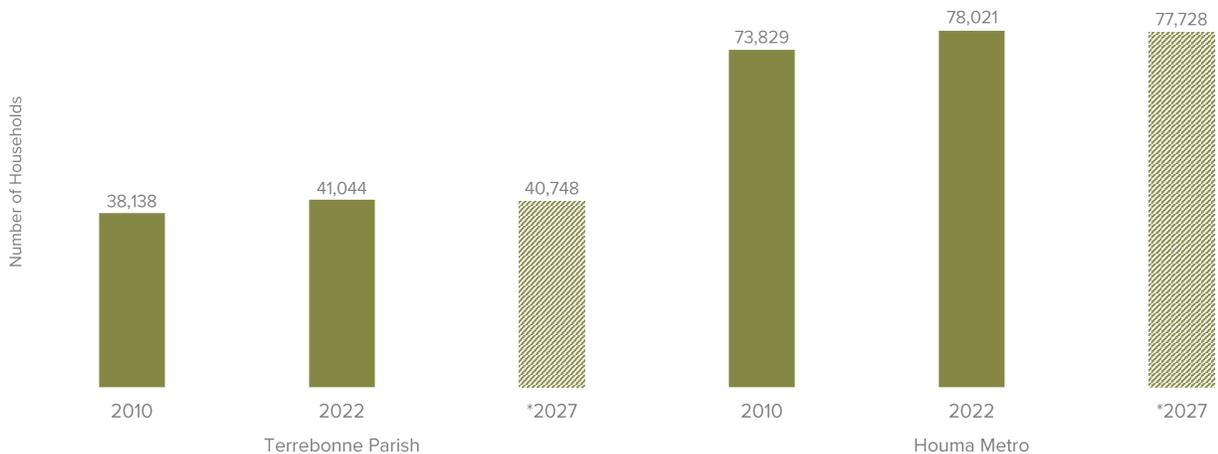


*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



There are about 4,200 more households in Houma now than there were in 2010; the number of people in the average household has fallen slightly, from 2.8 in 2010 to 2.6 today

Number of Households in Terrebonne Parish and the Houma Metro

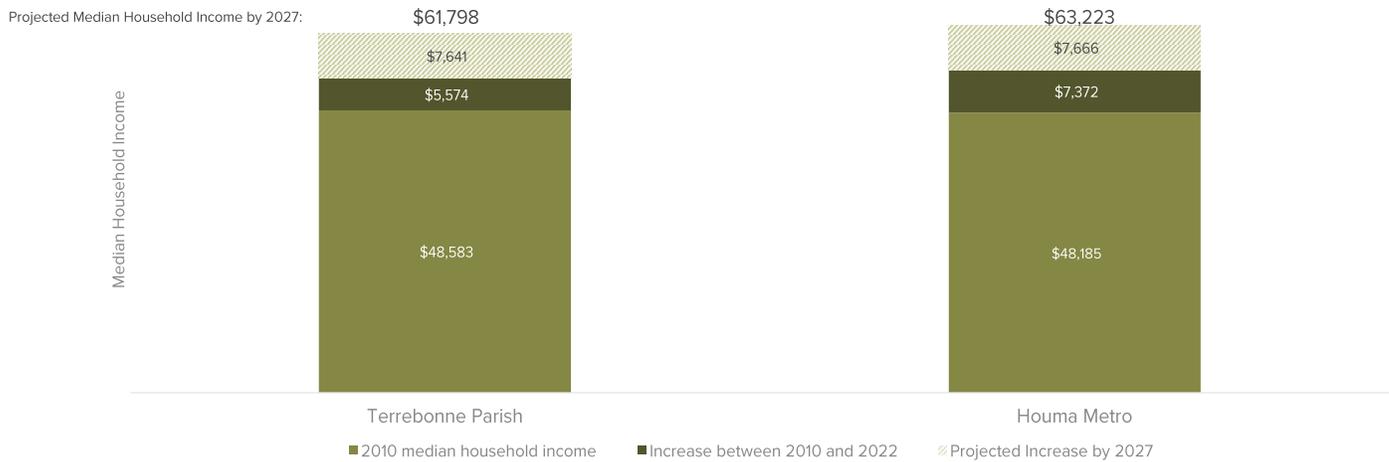


*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



The median household income increased 15% in the Houma Metro in the last 12 years, and it's projected to increase another 14% over the next 5 years

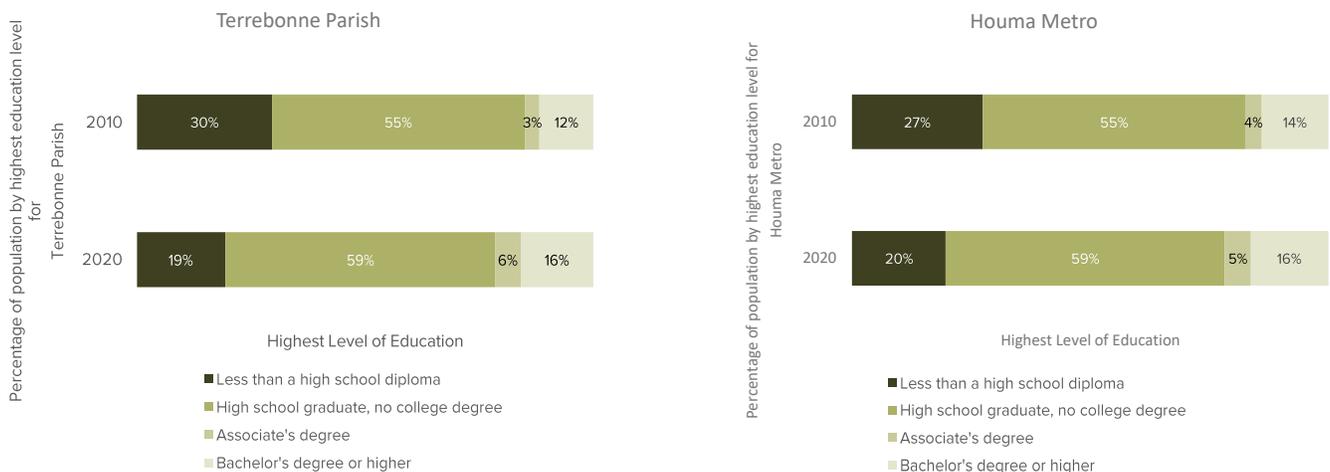
Household Income (Current & Projected) for Terrebonne Parish and the Houma Metro



*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Houma Metro residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by about 4,500



Source: US Census Bureau – American Community Survey 5-year estimates



Residential Analysis

Are vacancy rates increasing?

Is Houma expanding its housing supply? How does the housing supply differ for homeowners versus renters?

What types of multifamily units are being developed?

Is housing affordable for homeowners and renters?



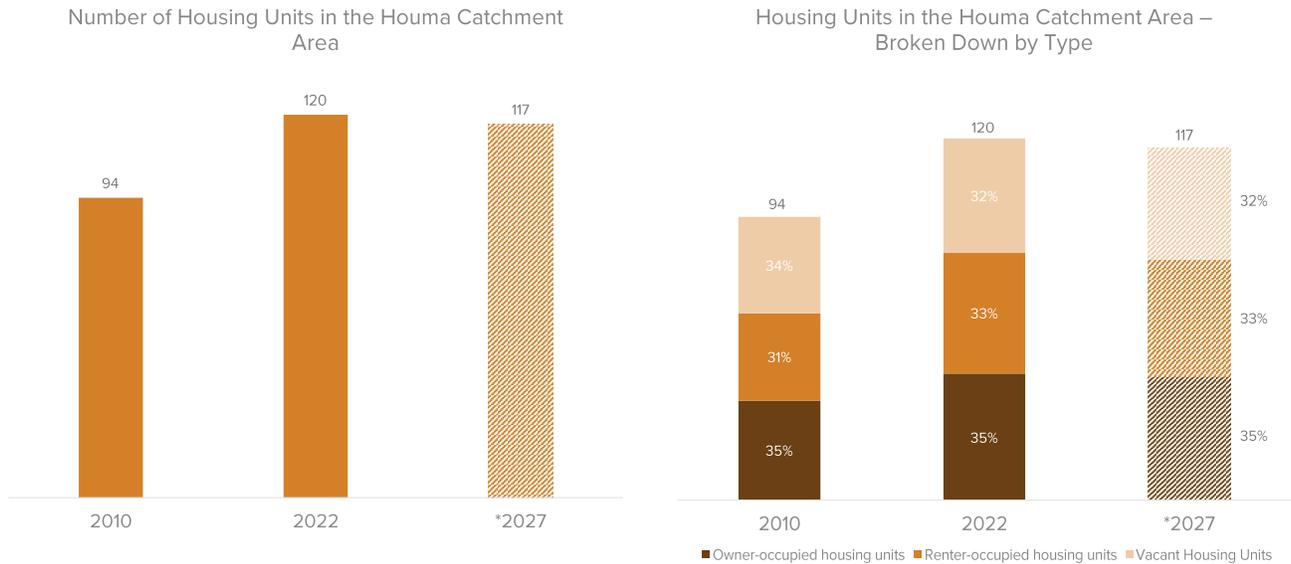
Houma Catchment Area (for next slide)



Source: CSRS



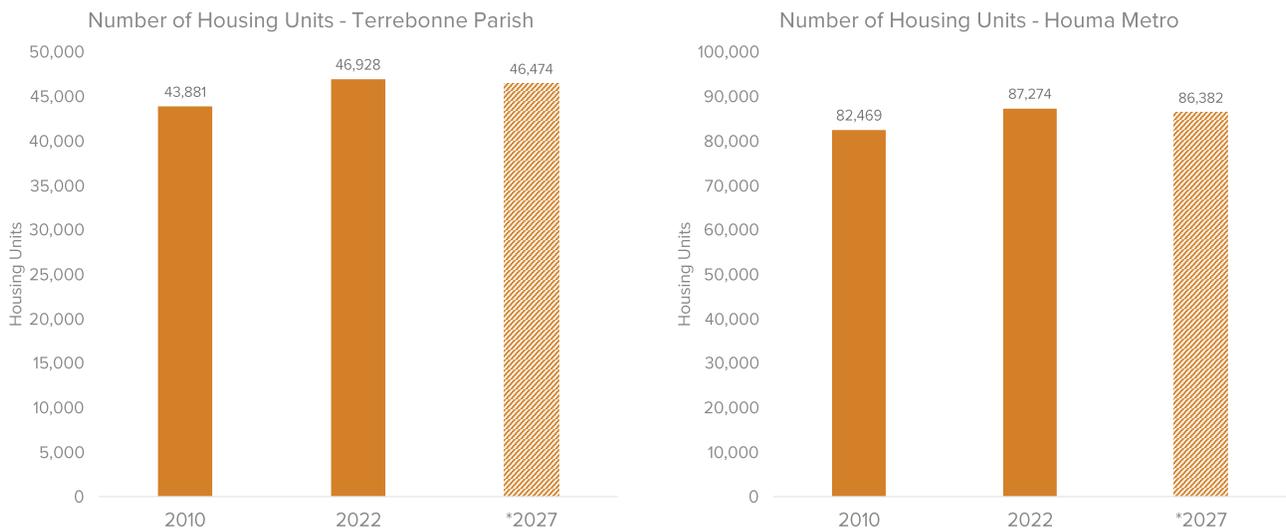
The number of housing units in the Houma Catchment Area increased over the last 12 years; about 1/3 of the 120 units are vacant



*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



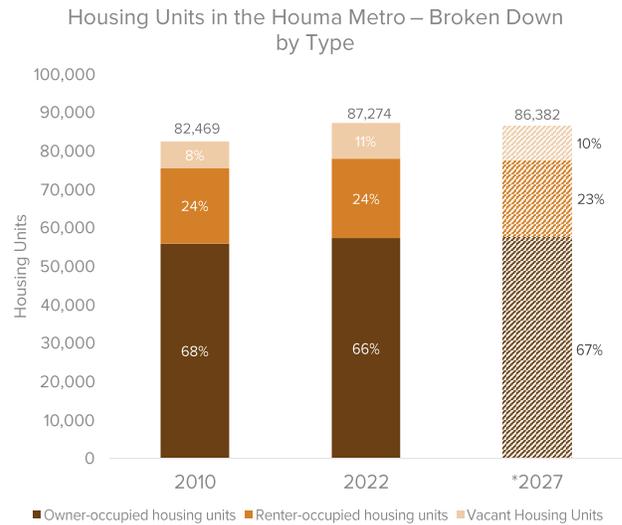
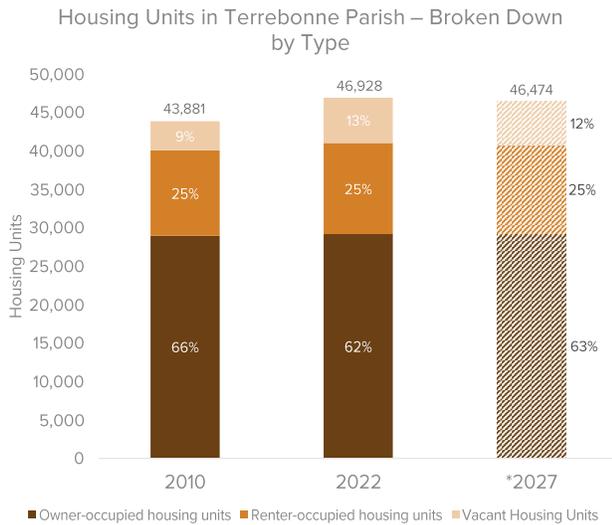
The number of new housing units (4,800) surpassed the growth in households (4,200) over the last 12 years



*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



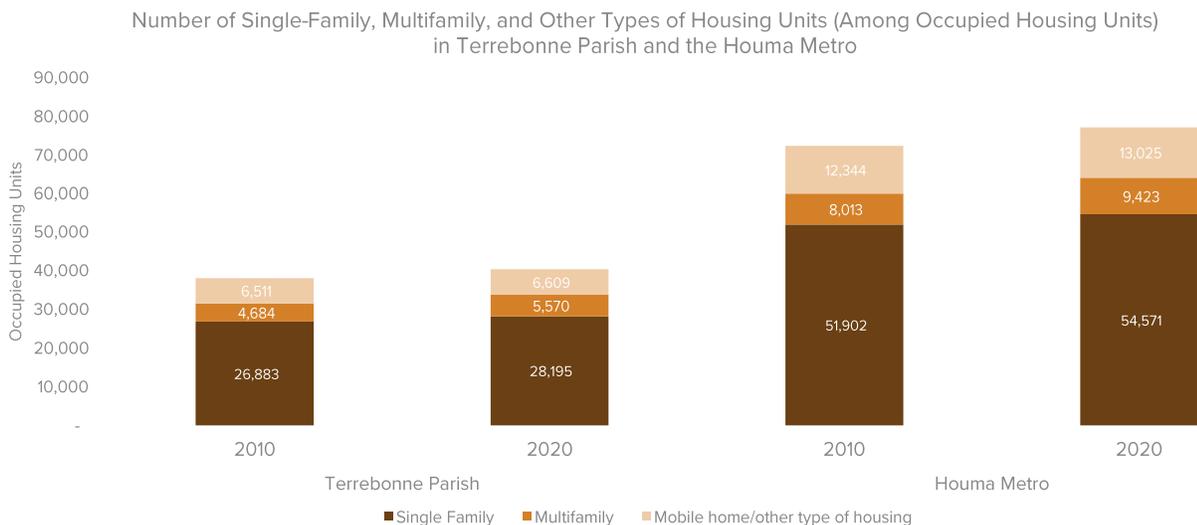
There are 2,400 more vacant units in the Houma Metro today than there were in 2010; about two-thirds of all units are owner-occupied



*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



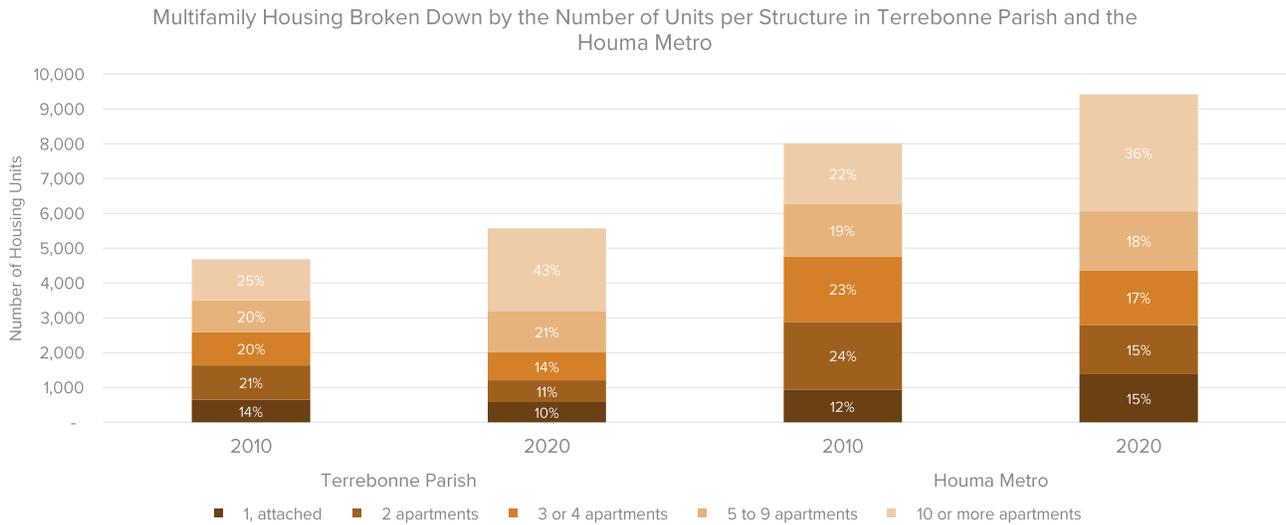
Occupied multifamily housing grew 18% in the last decade, outpacing the 7% growth in single-family homes which continue to dominate the residential market



Source: US Census Bureau – American Community Survey 5-year estimates



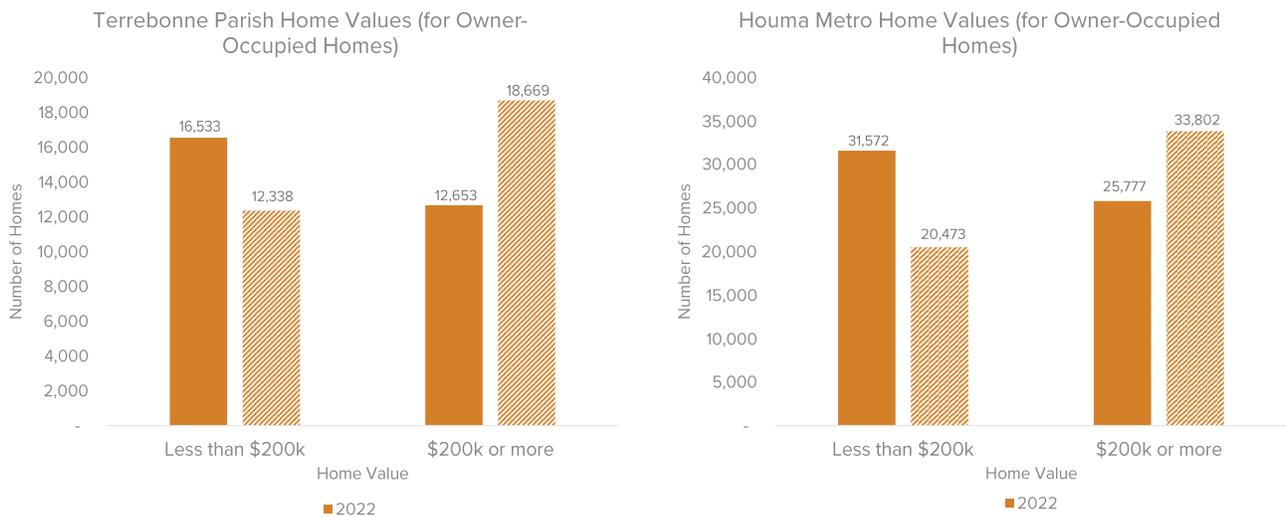
Growth in multifamily-style housing has been driven by larger structures with 10 or more apartments



Source: US Census Bureau – American Community Survey 5-year estimates



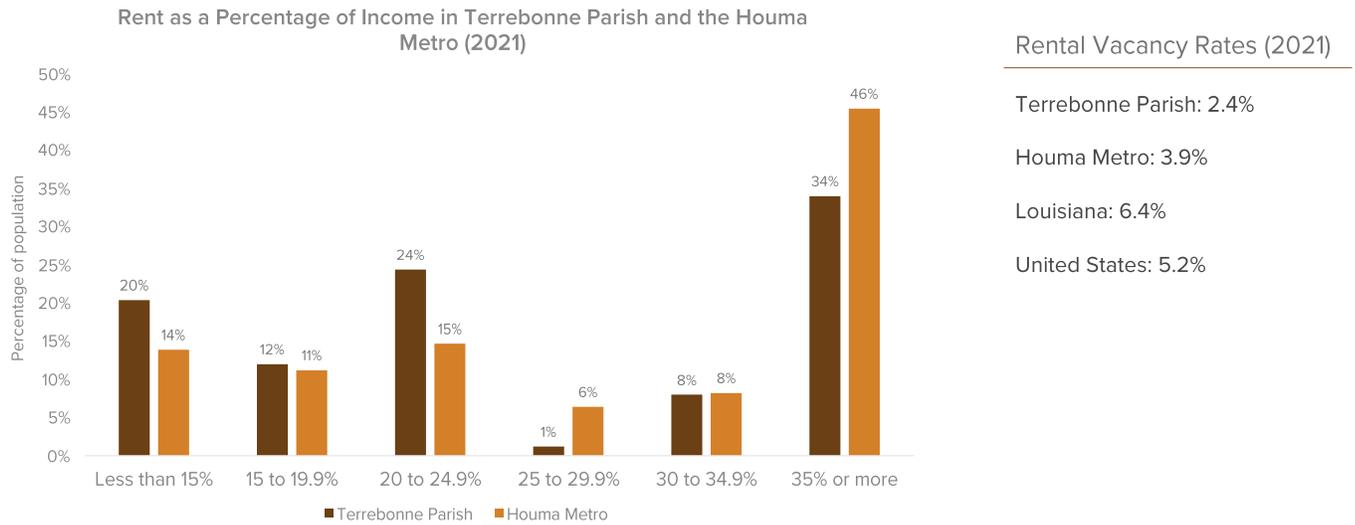
In the next 5 years, the Houma Metro is projected to lose 35% of its housing stock available for purchase at \$200k or less



*2027 figures projected by ESRI Site To Do Business
Source: ESRI Site To Do Business, US Census Bureau



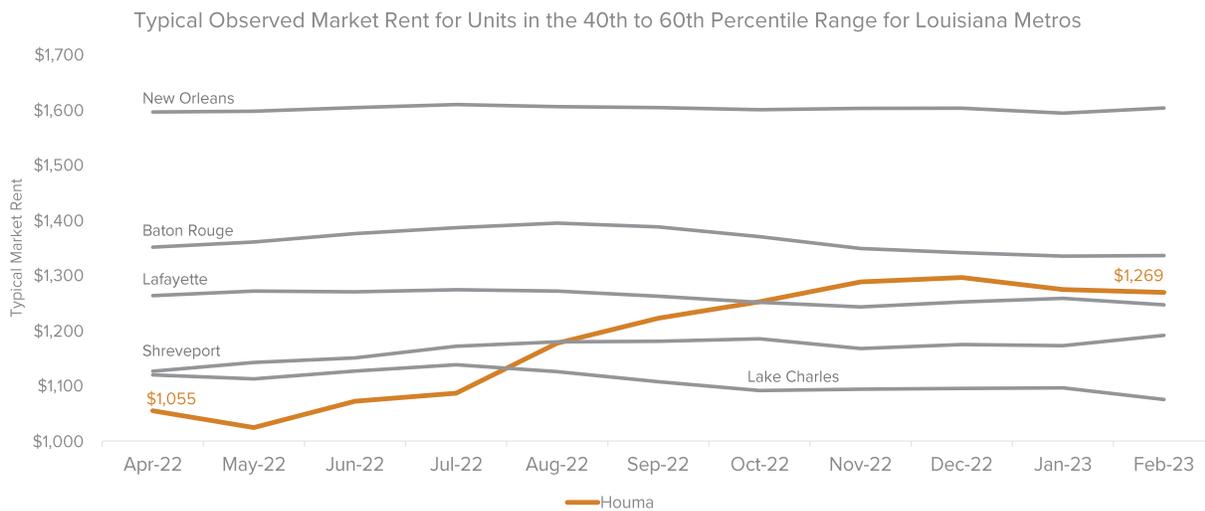
Almost half of renters in the Houma Metro spend more than 35% of their income on housing



Source: US Census Bureau – American Community Survey 1-year estimates



Rents in the Houma Metro have increased about 20% in the last year

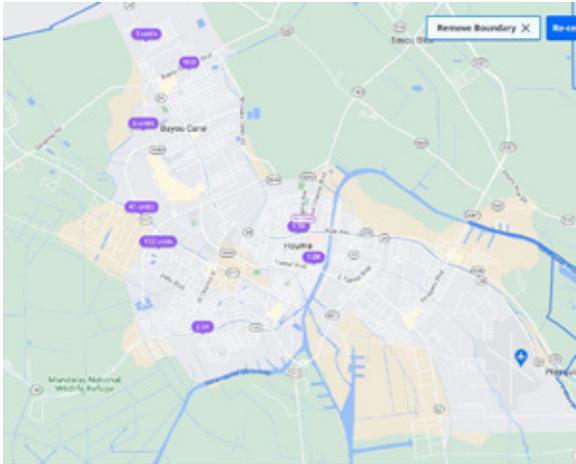


Source: Zillow Observed Rent Index (ZORI)

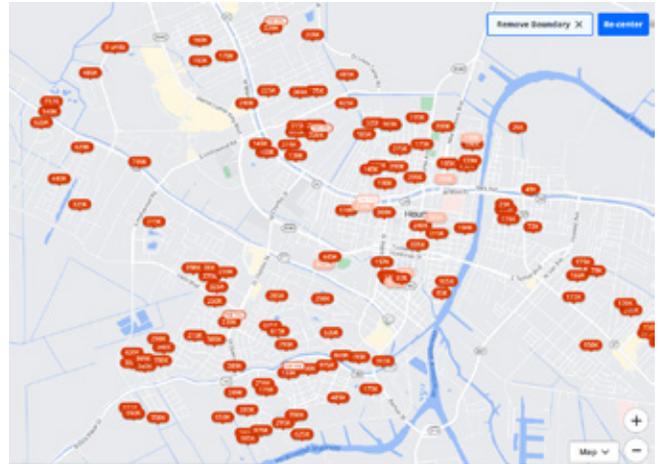


Homes for sale are abundant in Houma, while options for renting are limited

Units for rent



Units for purchase



Source: Zillow; screenshots taken in January 2023

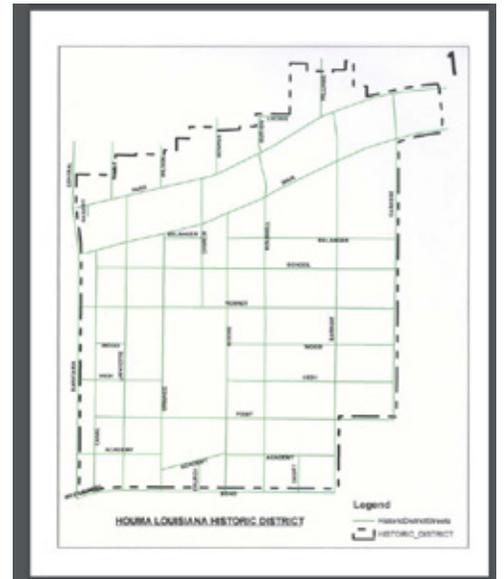


Job and Industry Analysis

How have jobs trended over the past two decades in the Houma Historic District? In the Houma Restoration District?

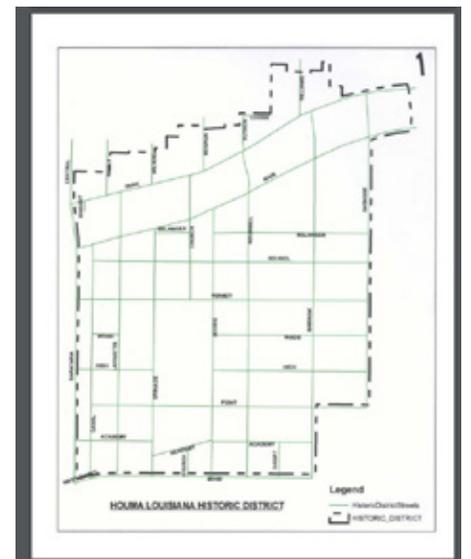
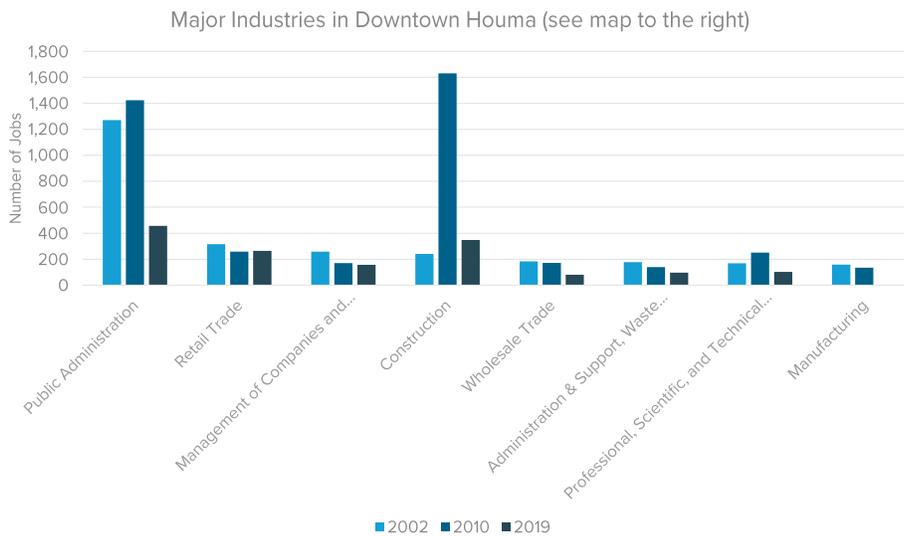
For the Houma Metro - which occupations are growing in numbers? Shrinking?

For the Houma Metro - which types of industries are expanding? Contracting?



Top image: Houma Historic District, Bottom image: Houma Restoration District
Source: CSRS, Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

Total jobs in Downtown Houma have fallen from 7,000 in 2002 to 3,400 in 2019



Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) OnTheMap



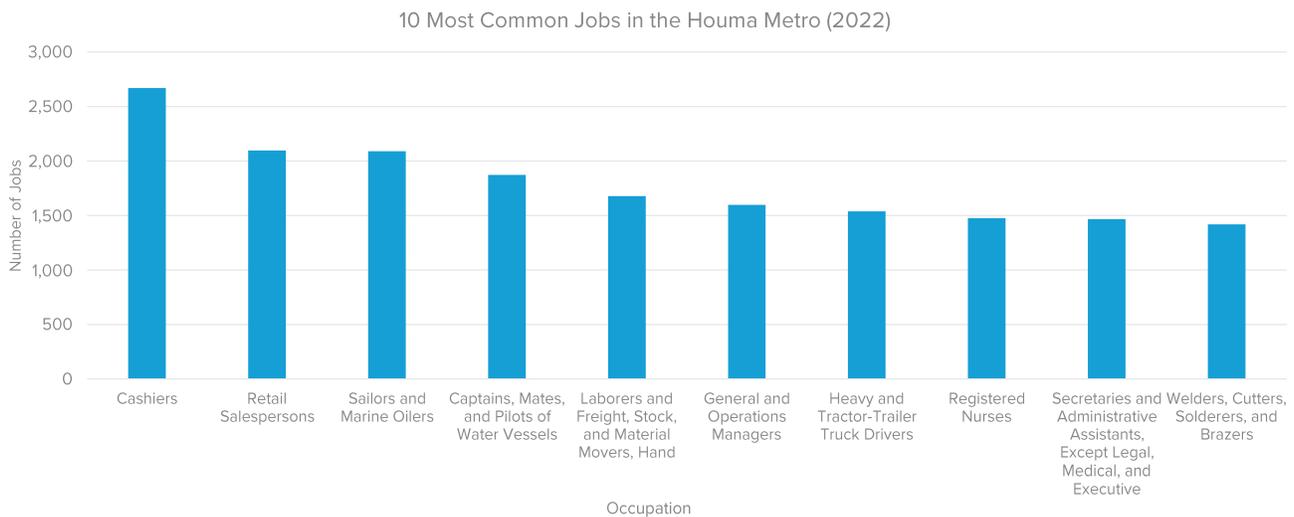
Total jobs are up 1,100 in the Houma Restoration District thanks to 1,200 new health care jobs created over an 18-year span



Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) OnTheMap



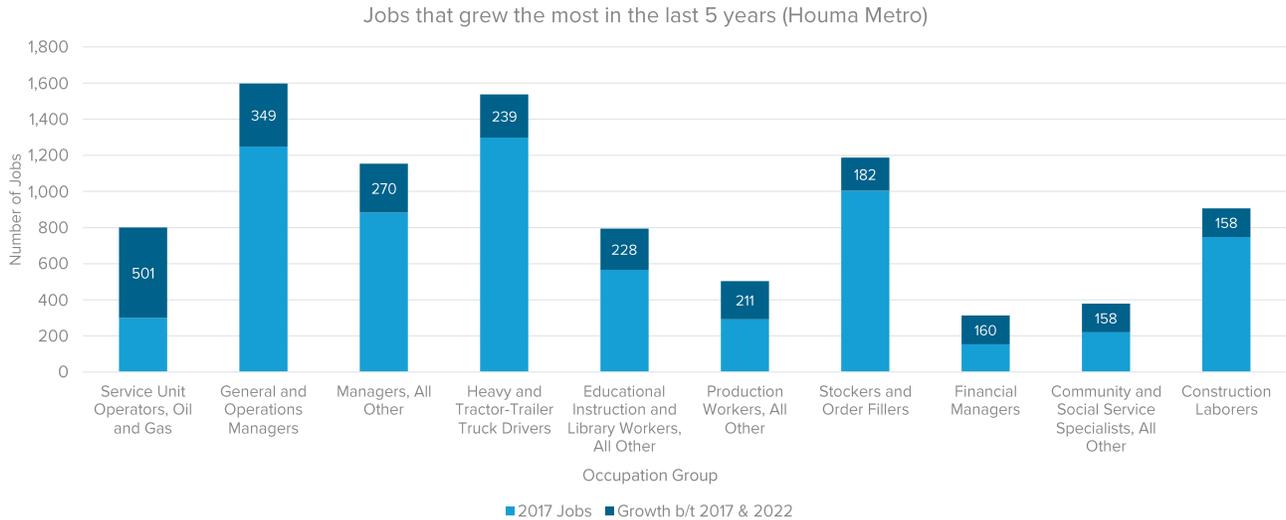
Houma has the highest concentration of both sailors/marine oilers and captains/mates of any metro in the country



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



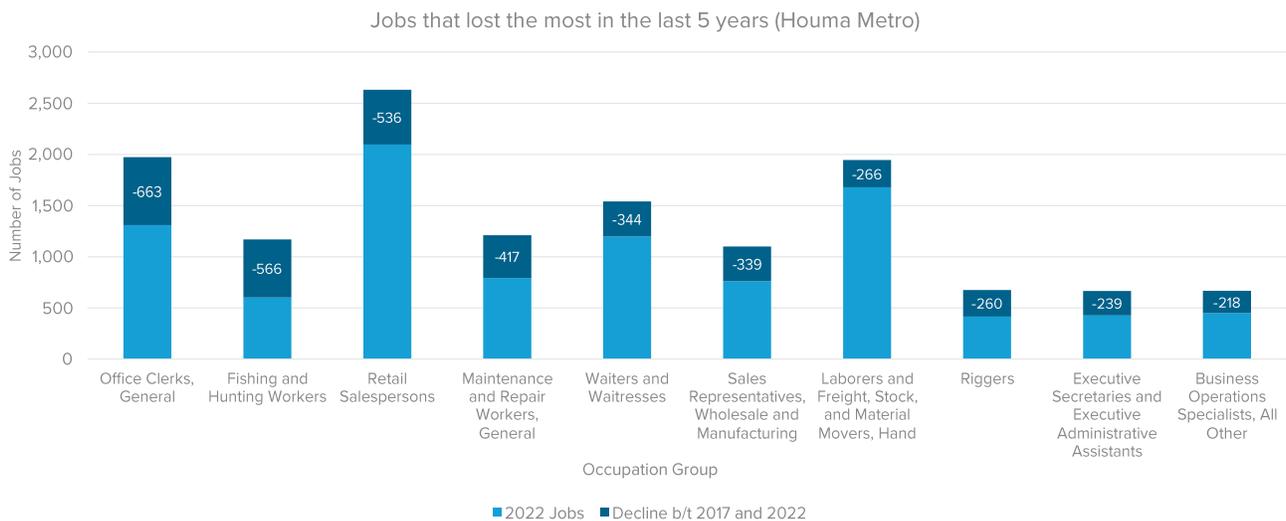
Jobs for service unit operators (oil & gas) grew more than any other occupation over the last 5 years; managers made up the 2nd and 3rd fastest-growing occupations



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



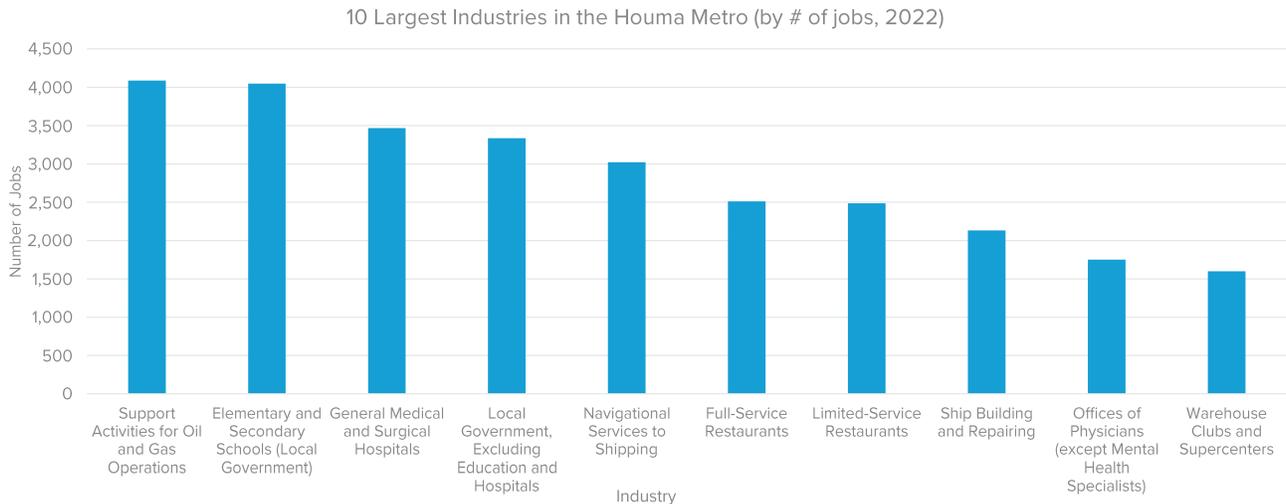
Office workers made up 3 of the top 10 declining occupations; service workers in retail establishments and restaurants also saw their numbers decline



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



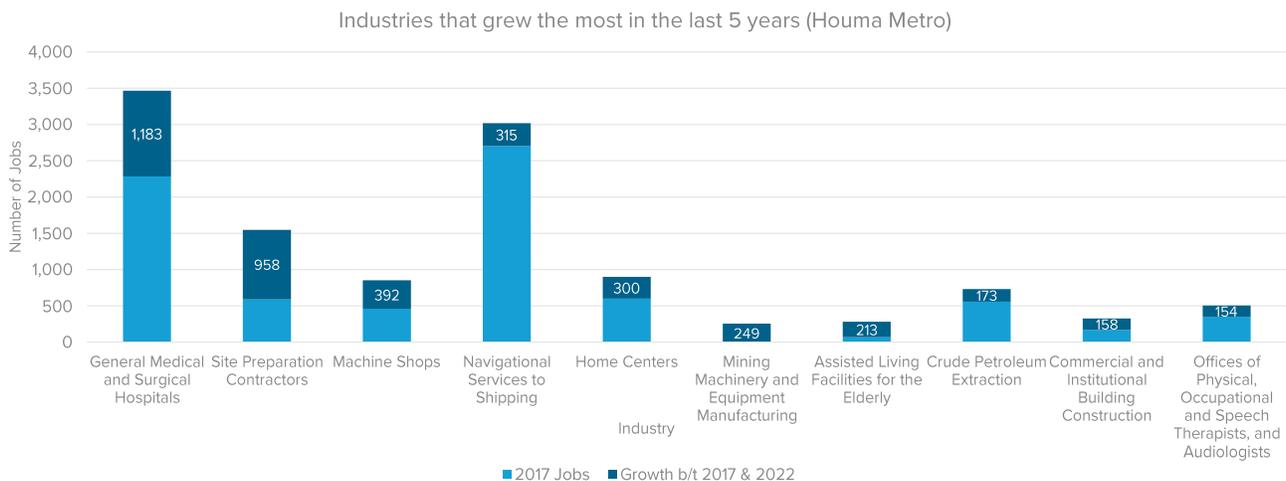
Oil & gas, education, healthcare, and the maritime industry dominate Houma’s local economy



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



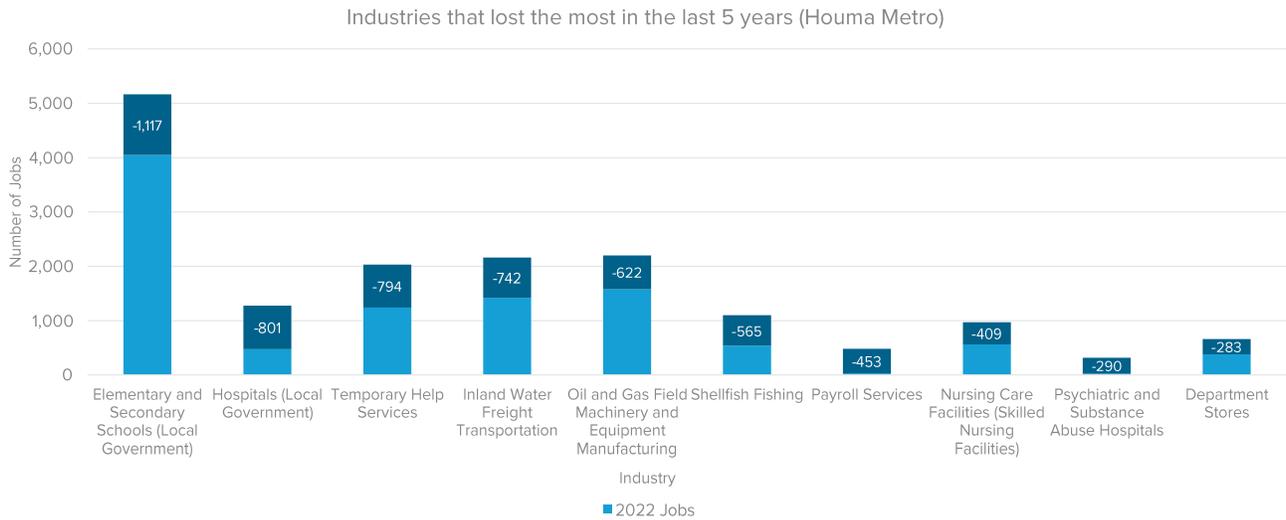
Hospitals, which made up 1.9% of Houma’s gross regional product (GRP) in 2017, make up 3.5% of GRP today after seeing explosive job growth over the last 5 years



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



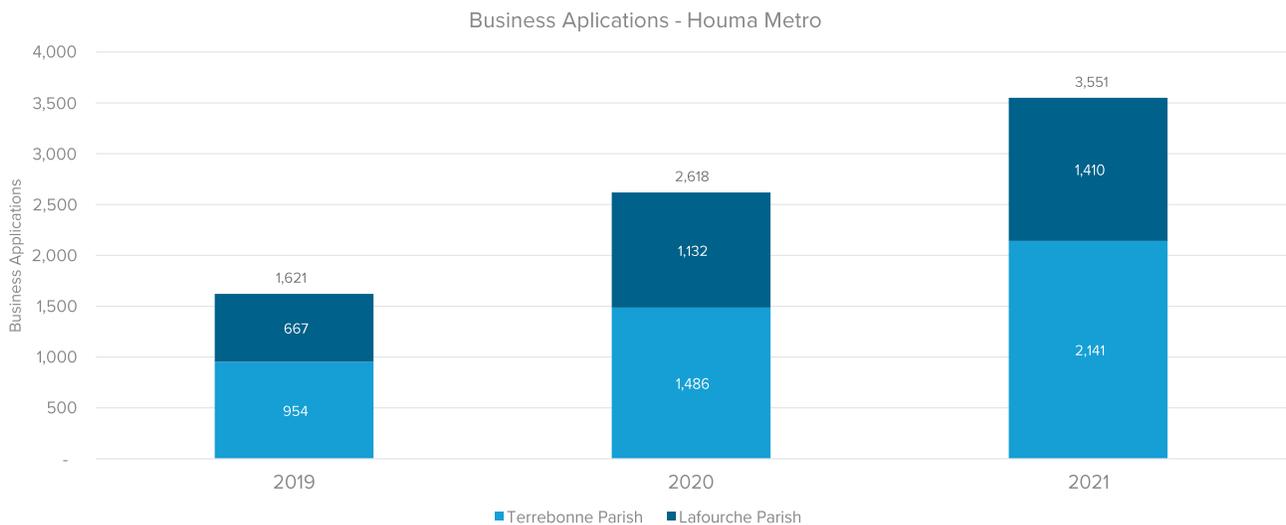
Declining employment in local schools tracks with the region's declining school-age population



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling



Terrebonne Parish ranked in the top 10% of all US counties for business application growth between 2019 and 2021; Lafourche in the top 12%



Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling

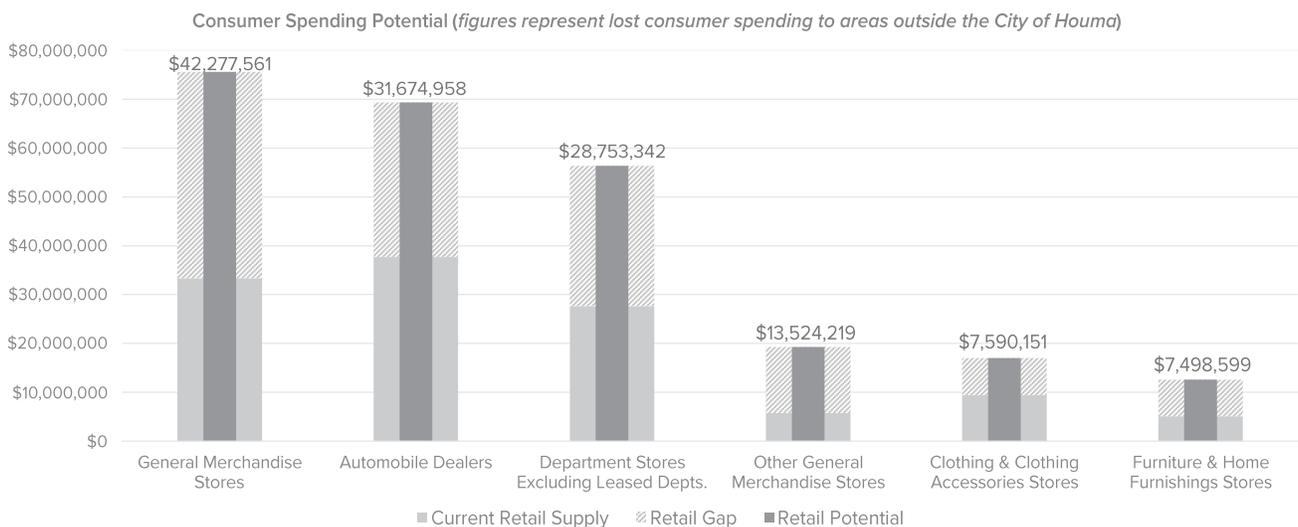


Surplus/Shortfall Analysis

Based on consumer spending patterns, where is there opportunity for Houma to recapture sales that are being lost to retailers outside the region?



The City of Houma is the metro’s primary urban center and, as such, it has the potential to attract additional consumer spending at businesses like general merchandisers, auto dealers, and department stores

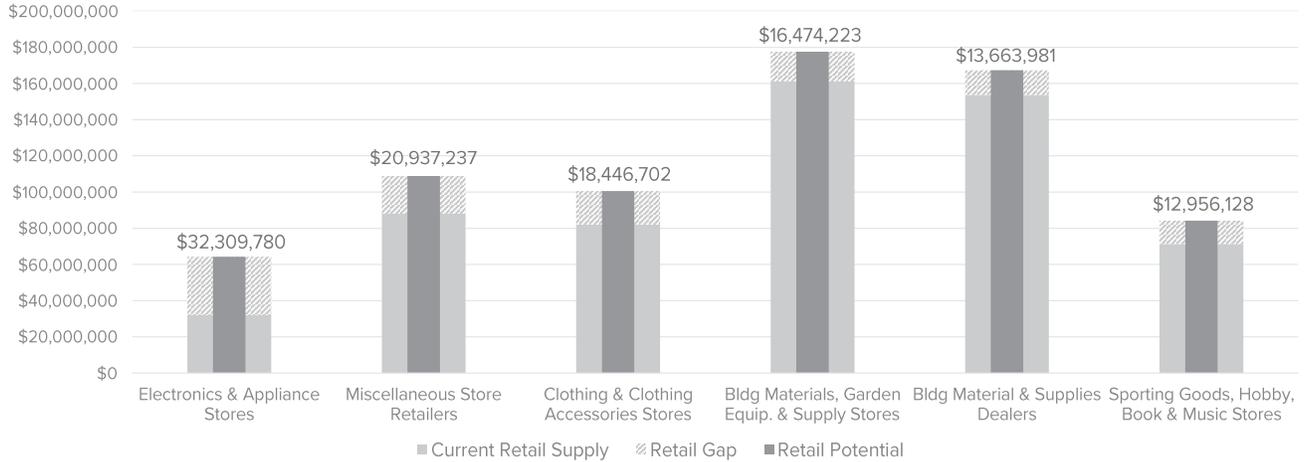


Source: ESRI Site To Do Business



Retailers selling a wide range of goods – electronics, clothing, building materials - have the potential to capture millions in potential sales that are currently being lost to retailers outside the region

Consumer Spending Potential (figures represent lost consumer spending to areas outside the Houma Metro)



Source: ESRI Site To Do Business



Recommendations

Encourage residential development

Lean into the region's growing population of retirees

Bring jobs back to Downtown Houma

Utilize the region's entrepreneurial spirit

Beautify Downtown Houma with a particular focus on the waterfront



Recommendations (1/2)

- Encourage affordable residential development, particularly for renters in the downtown core; missing-middle style housing could appeal to young talent (which is in high demand) and retired populations alike.
 - Houma is growing middle class jobs (managers, oil & gas workers) but a lack of rental affordability and a rapidly declining stock of affordable homes coupled with household incomes that are not keeping pace with income growth nationally could jeopardize Houma residents' ability to find housing that fits their needs.
 - Median income growth in Houma over the last 12 years (up 15%) has not kept up with inflation (up between 30 - 35%).
 - While single-family homes still outnumber apartments, the number of apartments in Houma is growing rapidly – and the low vacancy rate shows that they are popular. Residents may appreciate more diverse options for apartment-living, particularly in areas where walkability to shops, bars, and restaurants is possible.
- Lean into the region's aging population: below-average cost of living, comfortable climate, and expanding healthcare systems could support strong retirement communities.



Recommendations (2/2)

- Bring jobs back to Downtown Houma.
 - The number of jobs in the Houma Historic District boundaries has fallen by half over the last 2 decades.
 - Developing new retail and office space could make Downtown Houma a more desirable place to live and visit.
- Use the region's entrepreneurial spirit to help spur retail development.
 - Houma is among the top areas in the country for business application growth; considering Houma is losing millions in potential retail sales to other regions, residents may enthusiastically embrace programming and policies that encourage local retail development. Examples include:
 - Short-term leases, particularly in downtown areas of the city.
 - Making small business services easily accessible (closest Small Business Development Center is located at Nicholls in Thibodeaux).
- Create a Downtown Houma that residents want to visit.
 - Focus on beautifying Bayou Terrebonne, particularly in Downtown Houma
 - See Greenville, SC, which removed a four-lane bridge in the early 2000s from its downtown waterfront. The initiative helped spur significant downtown revitalization.





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