



EAST BATON ROUGE
REDEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan

Prepared by:
Phillips-Davis Legacy & BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc.
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EAST BATON ROUGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Walter Monsour, President & CEO

Mark Goodson, Vice President

Susannah Bing, Project Manager

Harold Briscoe, Project Manager

Vickie Smith, Project Manager

5 CIP METRO COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ulysses 'Bones' Addison - Scotlandville Gateway

Ronnie Edwards - Zion City & Glen Oaks

Denise Marcelle - Choctaw Corridor

Tara Wicker - Northdale

Donna Collins-Lewis - Melrose East

THE TEAM

Phillips-Davis Legacy

BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc.

Franklin Industries

ECONorthwest

Providence Engineering

Trahan Architects



Executive Summary

Introduction

The Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan area is defined as the length of Choctaw Drive between Foster Drive and I-110. This traditionally industrial and commercial area touches the edges of numerous residential neighborhoods. It is an older area of Baton Rouge that has been very successful in the past, but has seen many of its businesses and industries close or relocate in recent years. The Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan, lead by the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (RDA), will guide physical and economic change in the area, building toward the stakeholders' vision for the future.

The consultant Team, Phillips-Davis Legacy and BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc., employed extensive outreach techniques to engage residents and business owners, including surveys, stakeholder interviews, the RDA website, newspaper articles, radio and television news and on-air interviews, meetings with area ministers, a public Visioning Workshop, and a public Alternatives and Implementation Workshop.

The Vision

Choctaw Corridor is envisioned as a prosperous, sustainable, and vital community that embraces its legacy as a significant commercial and industrial area in Baton Rouge, while emerging as a contemporary center of commerce that physically and economically connects to East Baton Rouge Parish as a whole.

The Choctaw Corridor historically served as a major commercial and industrial thoroughfare extending west to River Road, connecting to Downtown Baton Rouge, and continuing east to other areas of the Parish, eventually terminating at Greenwell Springs Road and Lobdell Boulevard. The Canadian National Railway runs parallel to and on the south side of Choctaw Drive and two major switching yards are just to the west of the Corridor, providing the needed freight transportation link for the industrial businesses that once thrived there. The rail line is located almost adjacent to the roadway, precluding development on the south side of Choctaw Drive. The corridor is surrounded by residential neighborhoods characterized by single-family homes.

The vision for Choctaw Corridor is to build a contemporary, sustainable community for the future.

The Plan

To realize the Vision for the Choctaw Corridor, extensive improvements to both public facilities and private land throughout the area are required. The proposed Catalyst Project, including both public and private improvements, will jump start revitalization in one focused area. Once the Catalyst Project is well on its way, community-wide improvements are planned to begin, followed by development of regional connections.

Catalyst Project

The Catalyst Project site is a focused area in and around the privately-owned Choctaw Village Shopping Center on Choctaw Drive. The area extends westward to North Acadian Thruway, eastward to just beyond Ward Creek, and is bound to the north by Iroquois Street and Seneca Street.

Based on the market demand and public input, the Catalyst Project will include new commercial and mixed-use development within the existing underutilized parking lot of the Choctaw Village Shopping Center. The existing strip shopping, including the Piggly Wiggly, will receive façade enhancements to complement the new development. Residential options have also been included in the form of a senior independent living facility on Seneca Street and new single-family homes on a proposed extension of Delaware Street.

Improvements are proposed for the headway of Ward Creek, just south of Iroquois Street, as well as renaturalization of the Creek itself. Community inspired crosswalks and new transit shelters are included at the intersection of Seneca Street and North 38th Street.



Catalyst Area

Community-Wide Recommendations

The Catalyst Project will provide the initial jump start to improving the Choctaw Corridor neighborhood. Community-wide recommendations address the remainder of the area:

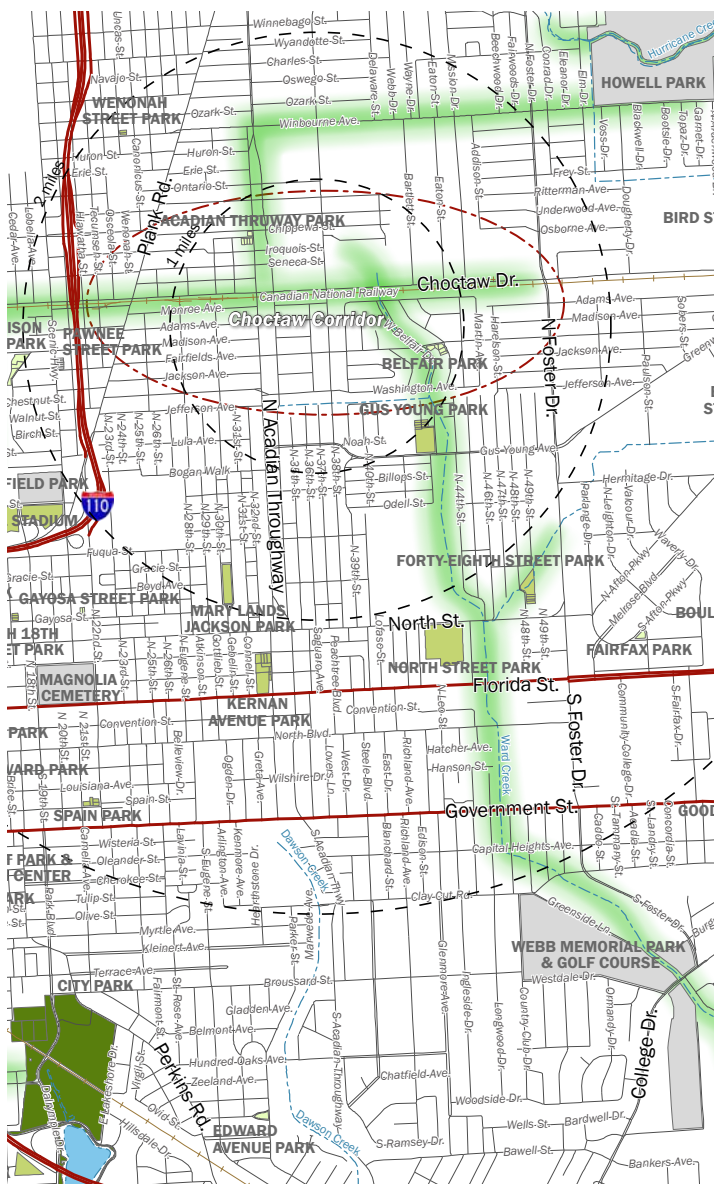
- » Refine a strategy to resolve adjudicated, blighted, vacant, and abandoned properties. The RDA has already begun acquiring adjudicated properties. Residential properties should be considered for disposition to a new Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO) when it is established. The RDA should lead and facilitate redevelopment of blighted commercial properties outside of the Catalyst Project area as market demands warrant their sustainability as new businesses.
- » Implement a robust and consistent code enforcement program. The RDA should continue to work with the City-Parish to remove blighted and dilapidated buildings, abandoned vehicles, and trash, and to ensure properties are maintained. This is critical to improving the community's image and attracting new residents and businesses.
- » Leverage public financial resources to stimulate private investment. Based on development in the Community Improvement Plan, tax credits, rehabilitation loan programs, and revenue bonds should be leveraged to attract private investment in development projects.
- » Implement/facilitate policies that enhance economic opportunities for residents. To improve economic opportunities for residents in the Choctaw Corridor area, the City-Parish and the RDA should facilitate involvement and investment by area citizens in redevelopment and public improvement projects. Locally owned businesses should be provided special consideration to relocate and expand to new development areas. In addition, policies should address residents' life skills development, workforce training, entrepreneurship, and micro-loans.
- » Improve pedestrian circulation through streetscape improvements. Pedestrian enhancements including improved sidewalks, community inspired crosswalks and transit shelters, lighting, and tree plantings are recommended along Choctaw Drive. Additionally, regulations are recommended that would limit the number and width of curb cuts for businesses along the corridor, increasing pedestrian safety.



Community-Wide Recommendations

Proposed Development

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential Infill - Light
- Residential Infill - Dense
- Existing Business
- Existing Building



Regional Connections

Regional Recommendations

Choctaw Corridor connections to the rest of the City and Parish must be strengthened and enhanced in order for the proposed community improvements to be sustainable. Proposed improvements to Ward Creek within the community, thus creating a greenway, would provide pedestrian connections to several Baton Rouge neighborhoods and area parks such as Belfair Park, Gus Young Park, and Webb Park. Additionally, utilizing the Canadian National Railway right-of-way as a greenway would allow the Choctaw Corridor to connect to North 17th Street in the Northdale CIP, which leads to the proposed Downtown Greenway connecting the area to City Park.

Implementation

A blanket change of land use and zoning to Planned Unit Development (PUD) is recommended for the entire Choctaw Corridor area. This will bring existing non-conforming developments and parcel sizes into compliance and will facilitate redevelopment, particularly on the Catalyst Project site. It is anticipated that the East Baton Rouge Parish Comprehensive Plan, known as FuturEBR, will establish new land use and development tools that would be more applicable to community-level redevelopment projects. Once they are adopted, we recommend the new tools and designations be considered for the Choctaw Corridor Community.

The Catalyst Project is proposed to be implemented in five phases, starting with the reconfiguration of the existing underutilized parking lot at the Choctaw Village Shopping Center to facilitate construction of new commercial buildings that would have frontage on Choctaw Drive and North 38th Street. Phasing would continue within the same parcel, then move east for Phase Four which includes the extension of Delaware Street to accommodate single-family housing development, and finally move west for Phase Five to include Senior Independent Living facilities and a community center south of Seneca Street.

Implementation strategies include establishing a CHODO for housing renovation and infill redevelopment and coordinating with the City-Parish and local non-profit organizations to provide workforce training, life skills development, and other needed social programs.

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RDA

In 2007, The Louisiana Legislature formed the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (RDA). According to Act 417, the RDA was created

“to provide for the formation of programs in the East Baton Rouge Parish for the use of private or public funds to eliminate or prevent the development or spread of slum, blighted or distressed areas; to allow the rehabilitation, clearance or redevelopment of slum, blighted and distressed areas; to provide for the expeditious conversion of blighted or underused property into habitable residential dwellings needed to address the influx of displaced persons into the East Baton Rouge Parish.”

The RDA is comprised of all territory within East Baton Rouge Parish including the municipalities of Baker, Baton Rouge, Central, and Zachary.

The RDA is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, appointed by the Mayor-President, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and Baton Rouge Area Chamber. The mission of the RDA is to transform the quality of life for all citizens who live, work, and play in East Baton Rouge Parish by returning blighted properties to productive use, fostering redevelopment through facilitating partnerships, and creating a vibrant, globally competitive community while preserving character of place.

The RDA offers several programs to assist business owners and developers with improving their properties and buildings. These programs include gap financing, land banking, rehabilitation of rental housing, small business façade improvement grants, and Community Improvement Plans, information about which can be obtained from the RDA website (www.ebrra.org).

In December of 2009, the RDA's Board of Commissioners selected the Phillips-Davis Legacy and BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc. Team to prepare 5 Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) for the Choctaw Corridor, Scotlandville Gateway, Zion City & Glen Oaks, Northdale, and Melrose East communities. See figure 1. Additional team members include Franklin Industries, ECONorthwest, Trahan Architects, and Providence Engineering. The 5 Community Improvement Plan areas were identified by the RDA, The Mayor-President, and the Metro Council members representing the 5 neighborhoods. The Community Improvement Areas were selected as priorities of the Metro Council members for revitalization and redevelopment within their larger districts.

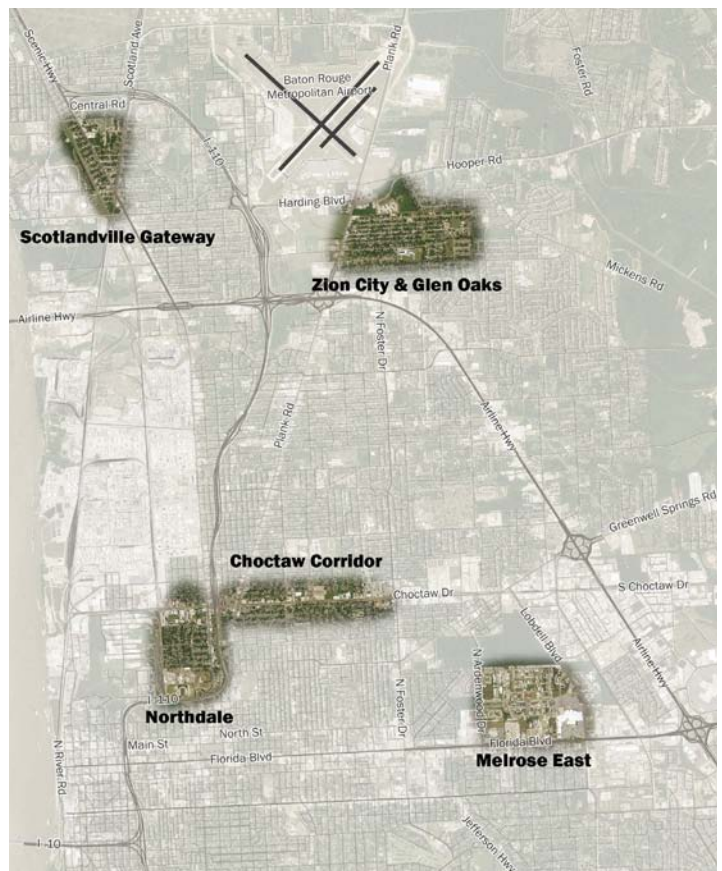


Figure 1: 5 CIP Areas

What is a CIP?

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a revitalization plan that is community-driven and provides action-oriented strategies to affect the physical environment in ways that improve the quality of life for citizens. It builds upon the momentum of other revitalization efforts currently underway and works within and complements existing and forthcoming plans such as the East Baton Rouge Parish Unified Development Code (www.brgov.com), the Louisiana Land Use Toolkit (www.landusetoolkit.com), and the FuturEBR Comprehensive Plan (www.futurebr.com). The Community Improvement Plan for Choctaw Corridor reflects Smart Growth best practices (www.smartgrowthamerica.org) and is consistent with the Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision (www.louisianaspeaks.org).

To prepare the Community Improvement Plan, extensive analysis of the Choctaw Corridor area's existing conditions and projected future growth was conducted. Additionally, public meetings and stakeholder interviews were conducted to gain valuable

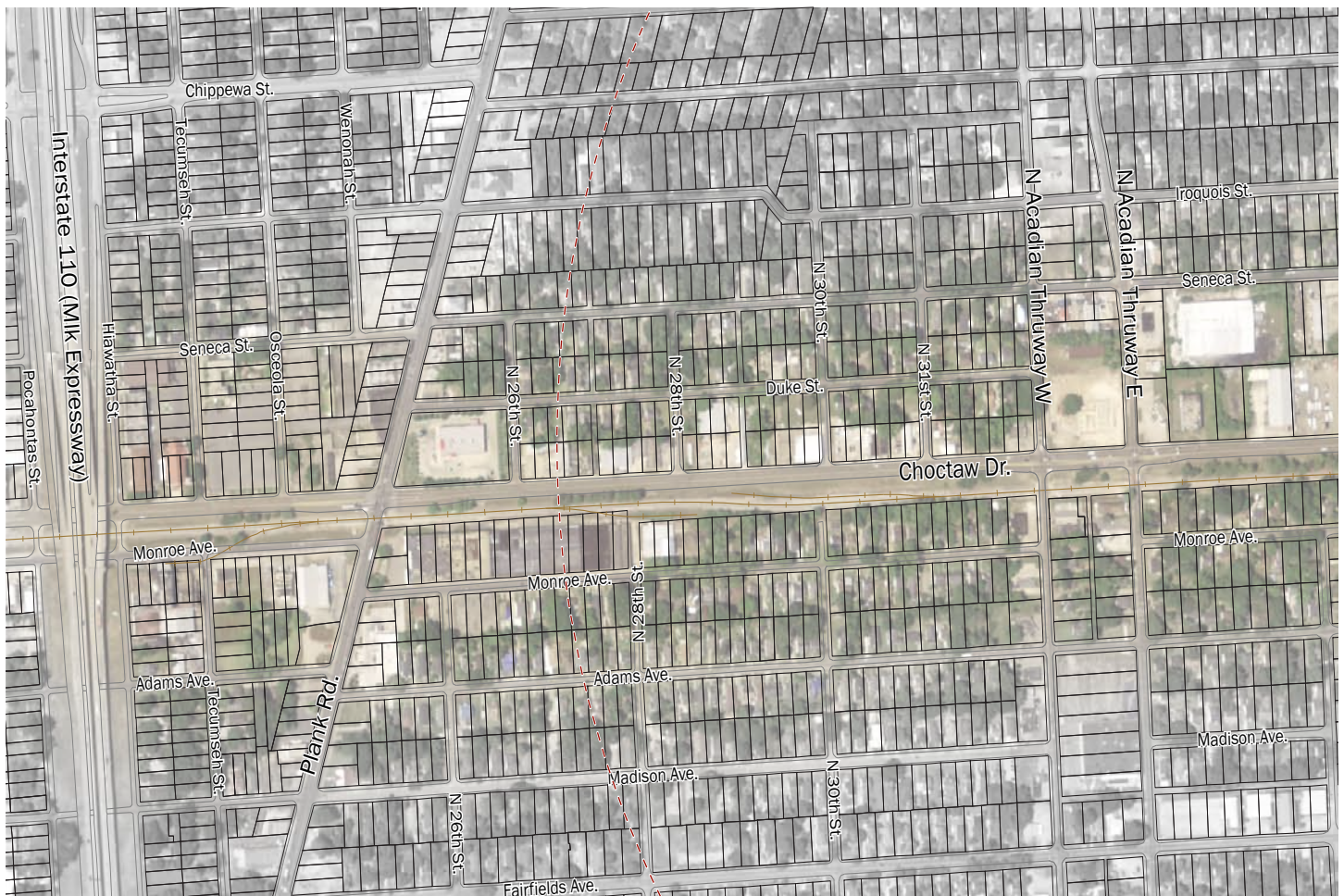


Figure 2: Choctaw Corridor

I-110 to N. Acadian Thruway

Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Parcels

feedback from the community. The results of this outreach were thoroughly analyzed to ensure the end result represented the desires and aspirations of the community. The resulting CIP not only presents recommendations for physical growth and revitalization of the area, including proposed new developments and improved infrastructure, but also sets forth recommendations for crime prevention, code and policy change recommendations, public service enhancements, and community capacity building. Accompanying each recommendation are implementation strategies outlining responsible parties and financing methods. The Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan will serve as the complete blueprint for revitalization of the area.

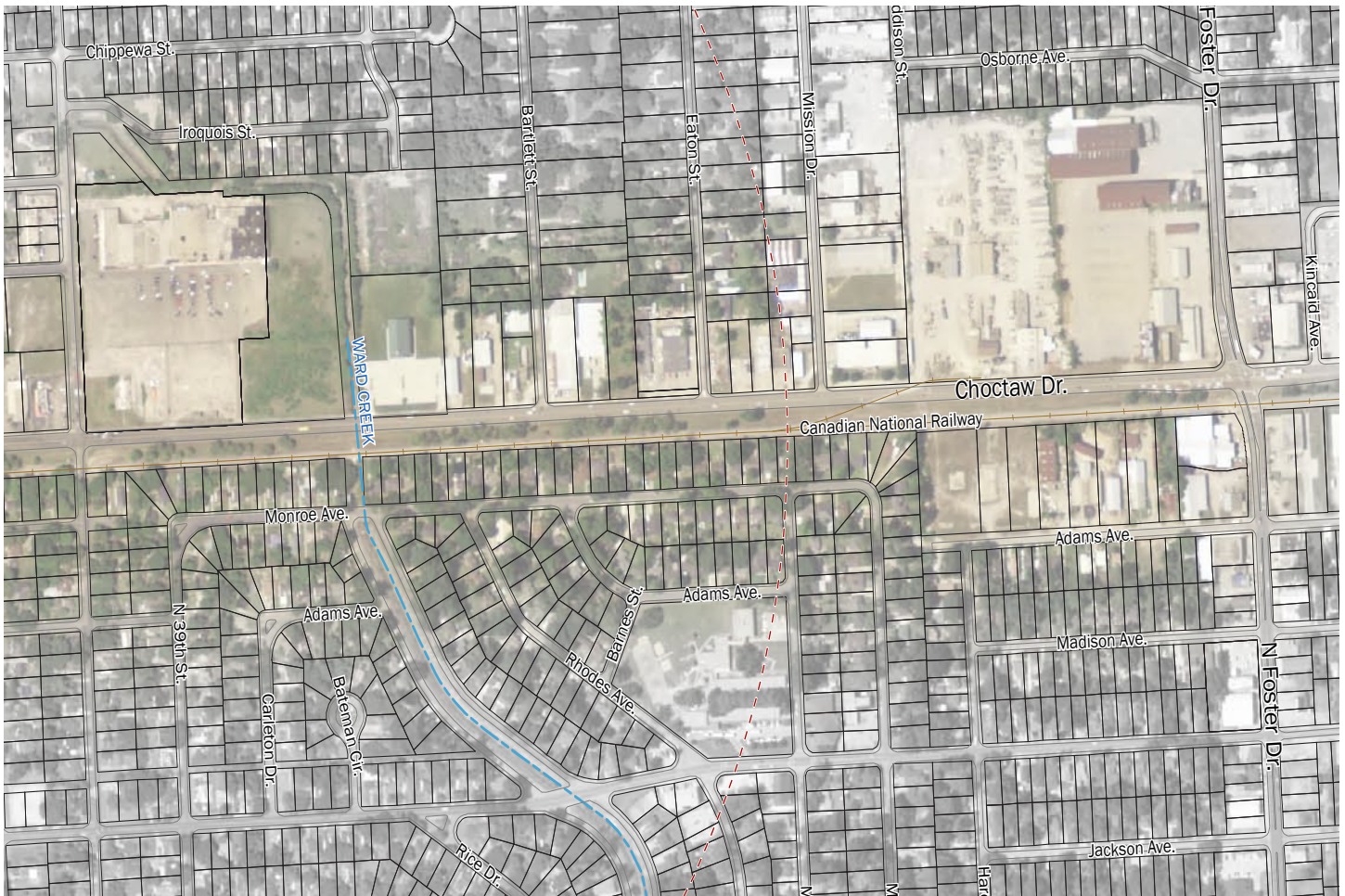
Choctaw Corridor

The Choctaw Corridor community contains the portion of Choctaw Drive that runs from Interstate 110 on the west to Foster Drive on the east. A commercial and industrial stretch of

property, this corridor touches boundaries of many established neighborhoods in North Baton Rouge including Baton Rouge Terrace, Belfort, Fairfields, Bartlet Place, and Eaton Place (East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, 2009). *See figure 3.* The Canadian National Railway runs parallel with this stretch of Choctaw Drive and can account for the area's industrial and warehousing uses.

Because this is a corridor, the 2000 Census data covers two Census tracts, and has been compiled as an average.

- Median household income is \$20,801; the average per capita income is \$9,795;
- 83% of the adult population have not completed high school or GED; 1.9% have earned a bachelor's degree;
- Aging housing stock with median year built of 1960;
- 47% of housing units are owner-occupied and 41% are rental



N. Acadian Thruway to Foster Drive

Small businesses struggle to survive in the area and many of the industrial businesses have relocated. The remaining businesses experience challenges attracting customers to the area because of safety concerns and the loss of local residents (East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, 2009).

proposals, obtaining financing and funding strategies, and prioritizing community needs. *See figure 2.*

However, while there are some struggling businesses and many vacant sites, other businesses have been in the area for more than 50 years and intend to continue their investment in the area. This resiliency and commitment to the area is echoed by the remaining businesses and residents alike and is evident in their participation in the Community Improvement Plan. The Choctaw Corridor CIP will guide physical, social, and economic change and shape a more prosperous, sustainable, and vital community. It will lead the Corridor's efforts in the areas of planning, economic development, and workforce development and will be a resource for the community to use when considering development



Figure 3: Subdivision Map

Source: City Parish Planning Commission - September 2010



Figure 4: Outreach Flyer

The Phillips-Davis and BROWN+DANOS Team employed extensive outreach methods within the 5 CIP areas in order to gain a strong insight into how the citizens would like to see their communities improved and enhanced. Successful visioning and implementation of the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan must involve residents, business owners, stakeholders, and members of the City-Parish government working in unison. Channels used to inform the public of the CIP and its workshops included inter-community promotion, media promotion and relations, e-promotion, direct canvassing, and indirect canvassing. Specific methods of gathering public input for the CIP included stakeholder interviews, a Visioning Workshop, and an Alternatives and Implementation Workshop.

Inter-community promotion within the Choctaw Corridor consisted primarily of the stakeholder interviews. Community stakeholders are critical in building confidence and trust in any community project, and they are great sources of historical and working knowledge of the communities in which they live and serve. Continual communication with these stakeholders throughout the project played a key role in the success of the community workshops.

Media promotion and relations consisted of earned media and paid media. Earned media included Press Releases and Public Service Announcements, live radio interviews, and a morning show guest appearance. Press Releases and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were released to News, TV, and Radio before and leading up to the Choctaw Corridor Visioning and Alternatives and Implementation Workshops. Earned media included WAFB TV, WBRZ TV, Fox 44, WVLA TV, The Advocate, The Weekly Press, and all local radio stations, including those broadcast by Citadel, Guarantee, and Clear Channel Communications. One week prior to the kickoff of workshops for the 5 CIPs project, a live radio interview was conducted by Walter Monsour, President & CEO of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. During the week of May 17th, Karen Phillips of the Team made a one-time appearance on WBRZ's Tune In morning show. Additionally, on July 23rd, Susannah Bing, Project Manager for the RDA, conducted a live television interview. She also made a presentation on Councilwoman Ronnie Edwards' District 5 broadcast, which aired on Metro 21. Paid Media included newsprint advertisements in The Advocate and The Weekly Press newspapers one week prior to each of the Choctaw Corridor workshops. *See figure 4.*

E-Promotion for the Choctaw Corridor outreach campaign consisted of a project website and e-blast announcements. The 5 CIPs website, http://www.ebrra.org/community_improvement_plans/index.php, managed by the Team, includes a place to sign up for email updates on the project. E-blast announcements were sent via the RDA with their logo attached. A save the date/spread the word e-blast was sent 3-4 weeks prior to the workshops and a reminder e-blast was sent 3-4 days prior.

Direct and indirect canvassing are effective ways to create a buzz within an area over an upcoming event or project. Direct canvassing strategies for Choctaw Corridor were yard signs, a toll-free number, roadside banners, and fliers. Approximately 30 yard signs bearing the RDA logo and reading “Learn about your Community’s Improvement Plan,” followed by the website and a toll-free number, were set up for the length of the project. A toll-free number, 1 (877) 311-5862, was set-up specifically for the project, offering details on upcoming workshops through a pre-recorded message. The message was changed and updated as the project progressed. At high-traffic areas, large roadside banners were displayed before each workshop to draw attention to the particular workshop dates. For the Choctaw Corridor area, these were placed at the Intersection of Foster Drive and Choctaw Drive, the intersection of Choctaw Drive and Scenic Highway, and in front of Istrouma High School. The banners included a permanent project logo and catch-phrase as well as workshop titles, locations, and dates. Lastly, fliers were posted in high-traffic areas such as the Post Office, gas stations, banks, grocery stores, community centers, and other businesses, with permission granted. Fliers placed in student backpacks of all the schools within the Choctaw Corridor project area along with church bulletins and announcements served as indirect canvassing. *See the Outreach Strategy report in the Appendix.*

One last key component that ties into the Outreach Strategy is the 5 CIP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). For advisement and clarification on specific technical matters, the Team was in communication with the TAC members throughout the planning process. Communication through emails, phone calls, and meetings resulted in general methods and recommendations to plan the unified development of the five communities. Specific examples included neighborhood appropriate housing ideas, cost estimates of public works, and proposed zoning changes. The TAC is composed of a representative from each of the following agencies and interest groups:

- » City-Parish Department of Public Works: Jim Ferguson, Special Projects Engineer
- » City-Parish Office of Community Development: Charles P. “Chip” Boyles, II, Urban Development Director
- » Baton Rouge Fire Department: Robert Combs or Curt Monte, Fire Public Information Officer (or Asst.)

- » City-Parish Planning Commission: Lael Holton, FUTUREBR Comp Plan Advanced Planning Manager
- » Baton Rouge Police Department: Lieutenant Todd Lee
- » Louisiana Livable Communities Council, AARP Louisiana: Nancy McPherson, State Director
- » Human Development & Services, East Baton Rouge Parish: Larry St. Amant, Director, then Paula Merrick-Roddy
- » Capital Area Transit System (CATS): Kiran Vemuri, Planning Manager
- » An Alternative Housing Developer: Christine E. Nichols

Stakeholder Interviews

“The residents in this community are stuck in the mindset that their community cannot amount to anything greater than what it already is. They feel like the area has always looked like this, so they have no desire to change it. They need motivation.” –Excerpt from Choctaw Corridor stakeholder interview

Stakeholder interviews in the Choctaw Corridor were held before community workshops began in order to collect necessary human data on the project, and to subsequently encourage word of mouth communication within the community, building awareness and anticipation. Stakeholders were asked to encourage their friends and colleagues to participate in the upcoming workshops.

Team members and staff of the RDA conducted 11 stakeholder interviews during April and May of 2010, at various locations within the Choctaw Corridor.

Members of the Team interviewed individuals and representatives from both public and private entities, including City-Parish government, businesses, faith-based organizations, and local residents of the Choctaw Corridor community. Stakeholder interviews were conducted as open-ended discussions, allowing the stakeholder to speak freely about their community and the positive or negative areas they would like to see replicated or improved upon; however, a uniform briefing and list of questions were followed to ensure needed information was captured. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, with some running longer and some shorter.

The process of choosing participants for the stakeholder interviews was a joint effort of the RDA, the Mayor-President, and the Team. Beginning the interview, each stakeholder was briefed on the status of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, its mission, and current endeavor to develop the 5 CIPs for underserved areas in North Baton Rouge. Each stakeholder was also presented a map of the project area and a project schedule.

The following summarizes the results of the 11 Choctaw Corridor stakeholder interviews.

When asked what they most value in the Choctaw Corridor community, stakeholders mentioned the existing businesses, low traffic, convenient access to downtown, Istrouma High School, and the soon-to-be-built fire station.

Istrouma High School was mentioned as having value, or serving as a landmark, to the Choctaw Corridor community.

When asked what most troubled them about the Choctaw Corridor, stakeholders responded with blight and empty buildings, as well as the Louisiana Technical College's lack of involvement with existing businesses.

Examples of other concerns mentioned by stakeholders include:

- » The perception of Choctaw Drive being associated with crime
- » The train running at odd times daily, running slowly, and disrupting flow of business/traffic
- » Lack of fresh produce and healthy food options in the area
- » Infrastructure problems such as wiring, phone lines, drainage, and sewerage

Stakeholders were asked what planners should take into account when discussing improvements to the Choctaw Corridor. Their responses included providing for small business development, utilizing abandoned or neglected properties, and generally making the Corridor more visually attractive.

Stakeholders were asked what they would like to see when they think about the long-term future of the Choctaw Corridor. Responses included having a safer place to work and live, sustainable businesses, and drainage and infrastructure improvements.

Stakeholders were asked what challenges to economic development they see and experience in the Choctaw Corridor, as well as their aspirations for economic development. Challenges the stakeholders discussed were crime and a lack of vision by investors.

Aspirations mentioned were to have improvements and enhancements made to building façades and streetscapes and to have local businesses begin to employ community residents.

Stakeholders were asked to identify the top two safety concerns they have for the Choctaw Corridor area. Crime was a widely mentioned concern. Stakeholders stated that there seems to be a general disregard for people's lives and property and stated that the crime in the district was the highest in the city.

Lastly, stakeholders were asked what their hopes are for the Community Improvement Plan for the Choctaw Corridor.

Stakeholders expressed hopes of giving the Choctaw Corridor area a new vision and purpose in order to retain current businesses and attract new ones. It is also their hope that the Technical College becomes involved with this process in order to train and retain area residents for employment along the Corridor.

Stakeholders interviewed were:

Representative Michael Jackson, District 61
Public Official

C. Denise Marcelle, EBR Council District 7
Public Official

Gwen Hamilton
Former Resident

Larry Case, Ero Inc.
Business

Lindsey Lockett, Lindsey's Diner
Business

Robert Dellafiora, Cayard's
Business

Rick Peterson
Business

Harold Williams
Business

Roy Schmidt
State

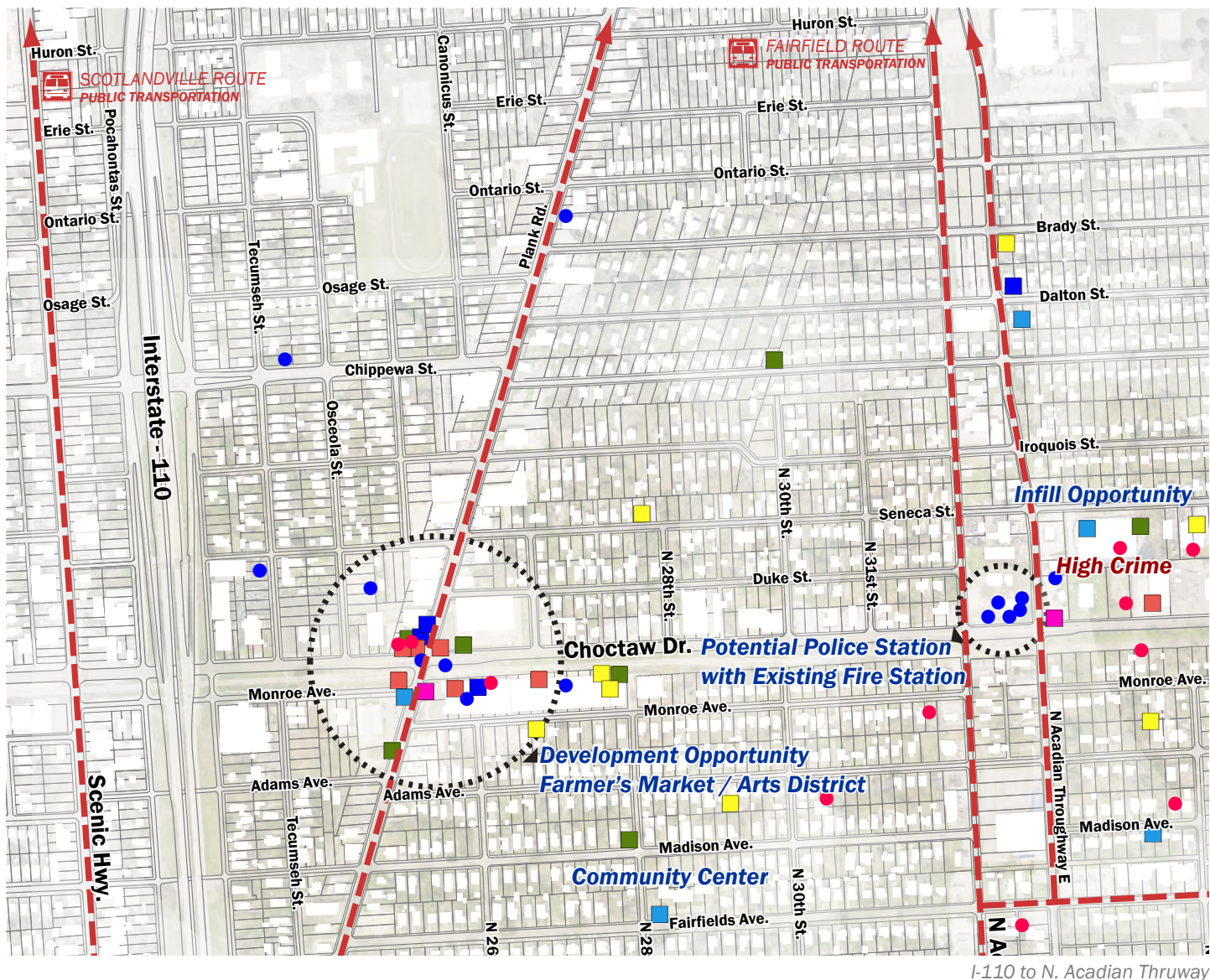
Jay Augustine
Education

Reverend Roslyn Augustine
Ministerial/Community

As previously mentioned, community stakeholders are critical in building confidence and trust in any community project. They are the producers from within the community. The Choctaw Corridor stakeholder interviews gathered implicit narratives that will be woven into the future of their community. They have helped to inform the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan and provided insight for how to orchestrate a meaningful future.

Visioning Workshop

A Visioning Workshop for Choctaw Corridor was conducted on May 18, 2010 in order to gain public input for development of the Vision for the Community Improvement Plan. During the workshop, attendees were asked to work in groups and participate in two mapping exercises intended to capture their perception of and vision for their neighborhood.



Legend

— Roads	Community Input	Community Input
— Railroads	Proposed Development	Assets & Challenges
— Streams	Commercial	Asset
— Waterbodies	Community Center	Challenge
— Parcels	Day Care	
— Buildings	Healthcare	
● Bus Stops	Housing	
— CATS Routes	Office	
	Public Service	

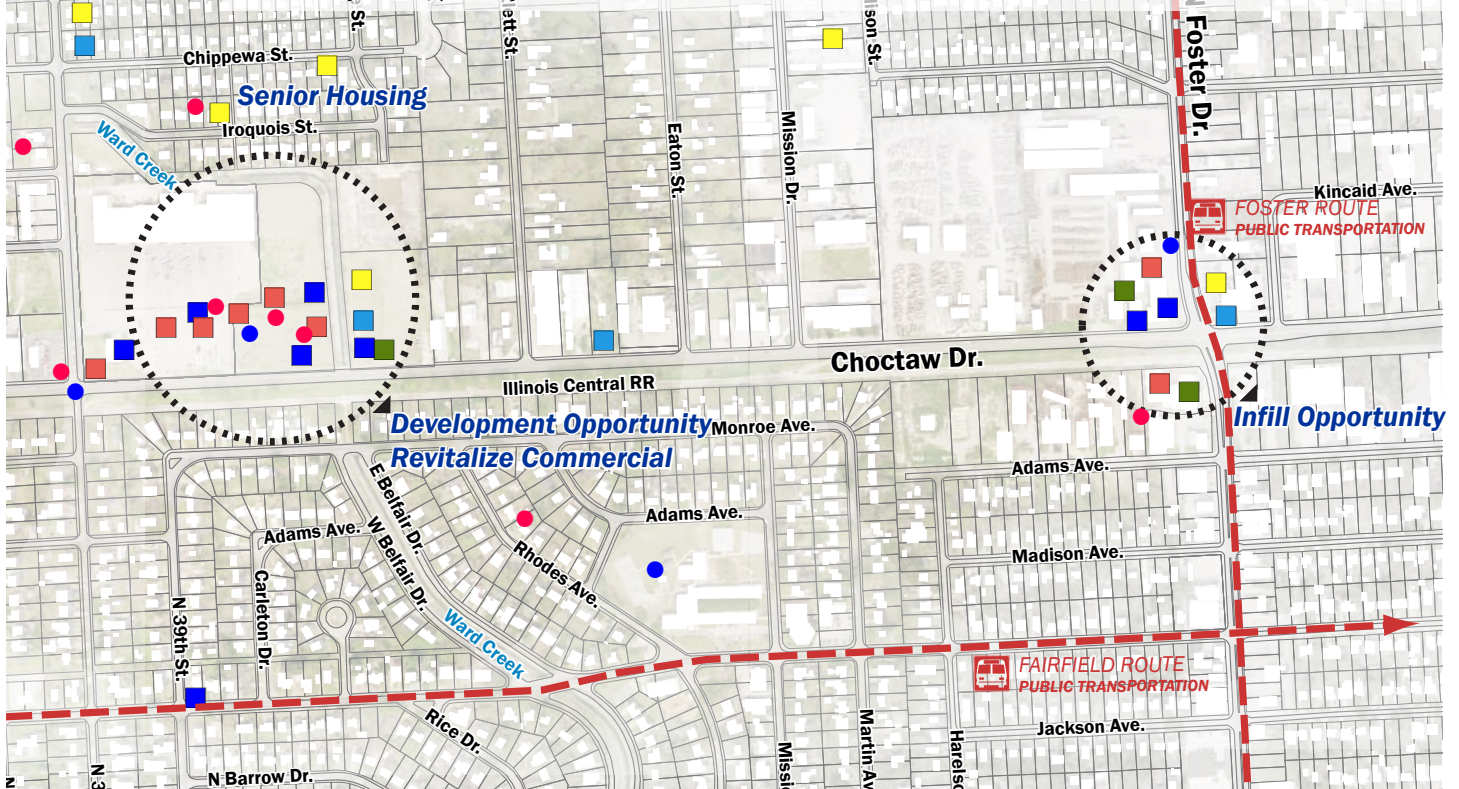
For the first Visioning Workshop exercise, participants were given a map of the area and were asked to identify and describe assets and challenges to the neighborhood using blue and red stickers, respectively. Once the assets and challenges were identified, they were asked to prioritize those into the top three of each for presentation to the room. The six groups, randomly assigned, identified many of the same assets and challenges. Among these prioritized assets were the availability of properties, the Corridor's accessibility to other parts of the city, and the Choctaw Village Shopping Center. The challenges presented to the group included blight and crime.

The second exercise was intended to determine the preferred location and types of catalyst development residents of the Choctaw Corridor want to see in their neighborhood. Groups were given new area maps and a series of color coded chips,

Figure 5: Choctaw Corridor Visioning Workshop Results Analysis

Visioning Workshop Input Results

During the Visioning Workshop in the Choctaw Corridor area, many assets and challenges were identified by area residents and stakeholders. One major asset identified is the new fire station located on Choctaw Drive between North Acadian East and West. However, attendees noted that because of high crime levels in the area, they would like to see police presence at that location as well. Empty buildings at the intersection of Choctaw Drive and Plank Road were identified as both a challenge and an asset, because although they are unsightly, they provide opportunities for development such as a farmers market, arts district, retail, and entertainment. Additionally, attendees indicated another infill opportunity in the underused buildings at the intersection of Choctaw Drive and Foster Drive. Locations identified as housing opportunities were scattered throughout the Choctaw Corridor area, and attendees pointed out specifically a possibility for senior housing north of the Piggly Wiggly shopping center. Attendees also noted a desire for a community center, possibly in the Madison Avenue area near North 28th Street.



N. Acadian Thruway to Foster Drive

each depicting a different program or land use that could be contained within a Catalyst Project. The facilities represented in the chips included healthcare, community centers, commercial, housing, and day care. The tables of participants were asked to place the chips where they would like to see new or revitalized development and then give a specific explanation of the intended use. Facilitators encouraged groups to cluster uses together in an area in order to create a substantial, highly visible improvement and to comply with smart growth principles of mixed-use and walkability. The general consensus among community members was that new development in all of the categories be focused near the existing Choctaw Village Shopping Center. According to workshop participants, this is the area most suitable for Catalyst Projects that will spur revitalization and strengthen the identity of the Choctaw Corridor CIP. Also identified was the desire to have more development at the intersection of Choctaw Drive and Plank Road and the intersection of Choctaw Drive and North

Foster Drive. These areas are considered in the overall plan for Choctaw Corridor as future areas of growth. The full Choctaw Corridor Visioning Workshop report is in the Appendix of this document. See figure 5.

Alternatives & Implementation Workshop

Following the Visioning Workshop for Choctaw Corridor, the Team conducted a thorough analysis of the community input and area market assessments. From this analysis a target area for future catalyst development was identified and two concepts were developed for the area. On August 7, 2010, an Alternatives and Implementation Workshop for the Choctaw Corridor community was conducted in order to present and receive resident feedback on those Catalyst Project area concepts. Attendees were given digital voting devices and were asked to vote on the general concepts as well as individual components within each. Their votes

were immediately displayed on the screen, which provided input to the Team for “on-the-fly” revisions to the preferred concept. After voting was completed, respondents took a brief break to visit participants of the Resource Fair while the Team made adjustments to the concepts. The Resource Fair featured non-profit and public service organizations from around the Parish.

Once attendees of the Choctaw Corridor Alternatives & Implementations Workshop reconvened at the tables, they were shown diagrammatic maps illustrating community and regional opportunities. The community opportunities map featured amenities such as crosswalks, street beautification opportunities, new street connections, and the renaturalization of Ward Creek which crosses Choctaw Drive. The regional opportunities map focused on pedestrian and vehicular connections between the neighborhood and the rest of the Parish, including the Downtown

Greenway currently proposed by the Downtown Development District. Residents were again asked to use their digital voting devices to give feedback on those options. Finally, the preferred concepts illustrating their earlier input were revealed. *See figure 6.*

The preferred designs for the Choctaw Village Area continued to be refined by the Team following the workshop. The final concepts are based off of the information received from both the Visioning and Alternatives & Implementation Workshops as well as market assessments, technical analysis, input from the RDA, and the Team’s expertise. These concepts will be developed in concert with financial analysis and will likely be further modified by developers. Furthermore, the Team will make recommendations for code or policy changes and new funding strategies that may be necessary for the success of the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan.



Figure 6: Choctaw Corridor Preferred Catalyst Concept

Data Collection

The Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan is based upon existing conditions and forecast data in the form of available published reports, studies, and mapping including census, assessor, employment, tax revenue, housing, adjudicated properties, transit, and crime data, as well as land use, building footprints, rights-of-way, vacant properties, and the RDA's Property Evaluation Tool (PET). Transportation data was collected, including street surface conditions, available daily traffic data, bus routes, railroad lines, and grade crossing signage and safety equipment. Infrastructure data collected included localized flooding and condition of infrastructure.

Field reconnaissance entailed a variety of efforts. A windshield survey assessment of vacant buildings for adaptive reuse potential was conducted on April 30, 2010. During this survey, the Team recorded land uses, apparent vacancies, building types, and visibly apparent building conditions. The reconnaissance of vacant land parcels for infill development and assemblage also took place. A subsequent windshield survey was conducted in July 2010 to assess in more detail the individual buildings within the Catalyst Project sites.

The Team conducted numerous site reconnaissance visits during the spring and summer of 2010, photographing and surveying area buildings, vacant lots, blighted properties, community uses, and conditions. GIS analytical tools were used to reveal trends, opportunities, and constraints to economic development and improved quality of life. Data collection in the form of reports, studies, maps, charts, etc. can be found within the body of this document or in the Appendix of this document.



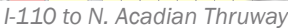
Vacant Commercial Building at the corner of Plank Road and Monroe Avenue



Jagg's Classic Corner

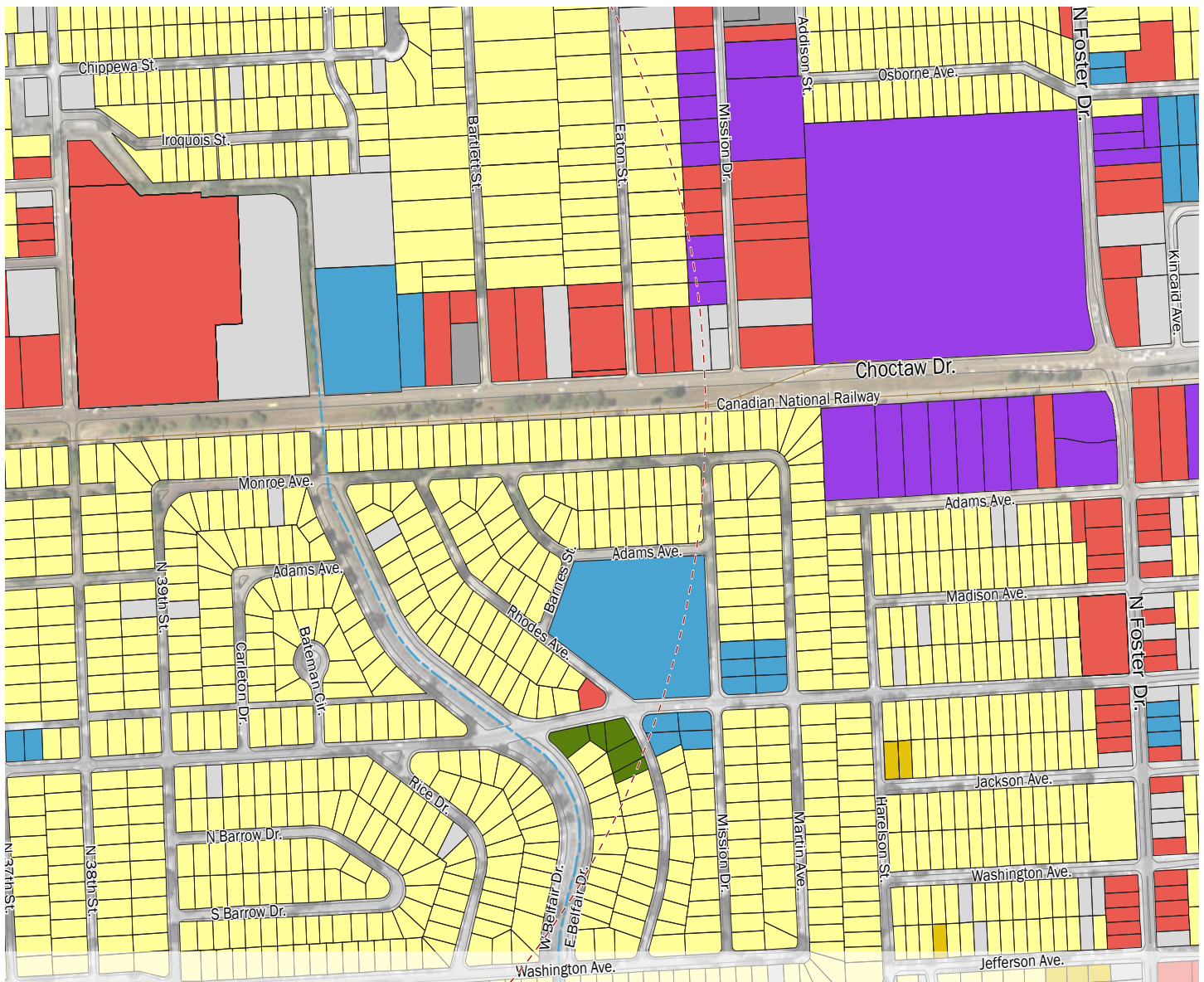


*Choctaw Village Shopping Center
Field Reconnaissance Photos*



Existing Land Use 2010

- Existing Land Use 2010**
- Roads
 - Railroads
 - Streams
 - Waterbodies
 - Parcels
 - Buildings
 - Agriculture
 - Low Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Office
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Public / Semi-Public
 - Recreation
 - Vacant
 - Trans. / Comm. / Utilities



N. Acadian Thruway to Foster Drive

Source: City Parish Planning Commission - August 2009

Analysis

Land Use

Existing land uses in the Choctaw Corridor area are varied. Directly on the north side of Chocotaw Drive, land is dominated by commercial with some industrial uses. Continuing northward, uses are varying densities of residential. South of Chocotaw Drive and beyond the Canadian National Railway, uses are primarily single-family residential with limited concentrations of commercial and public uses along the major north-south roadways of North Acadian Thruway and North Foster Drive. Plank Road, which runs diagonally along the western edge of the study area, is dominated by commercial and public land uses, as well as vacant buildings that once housed commercial businesses. *See figure 7.*

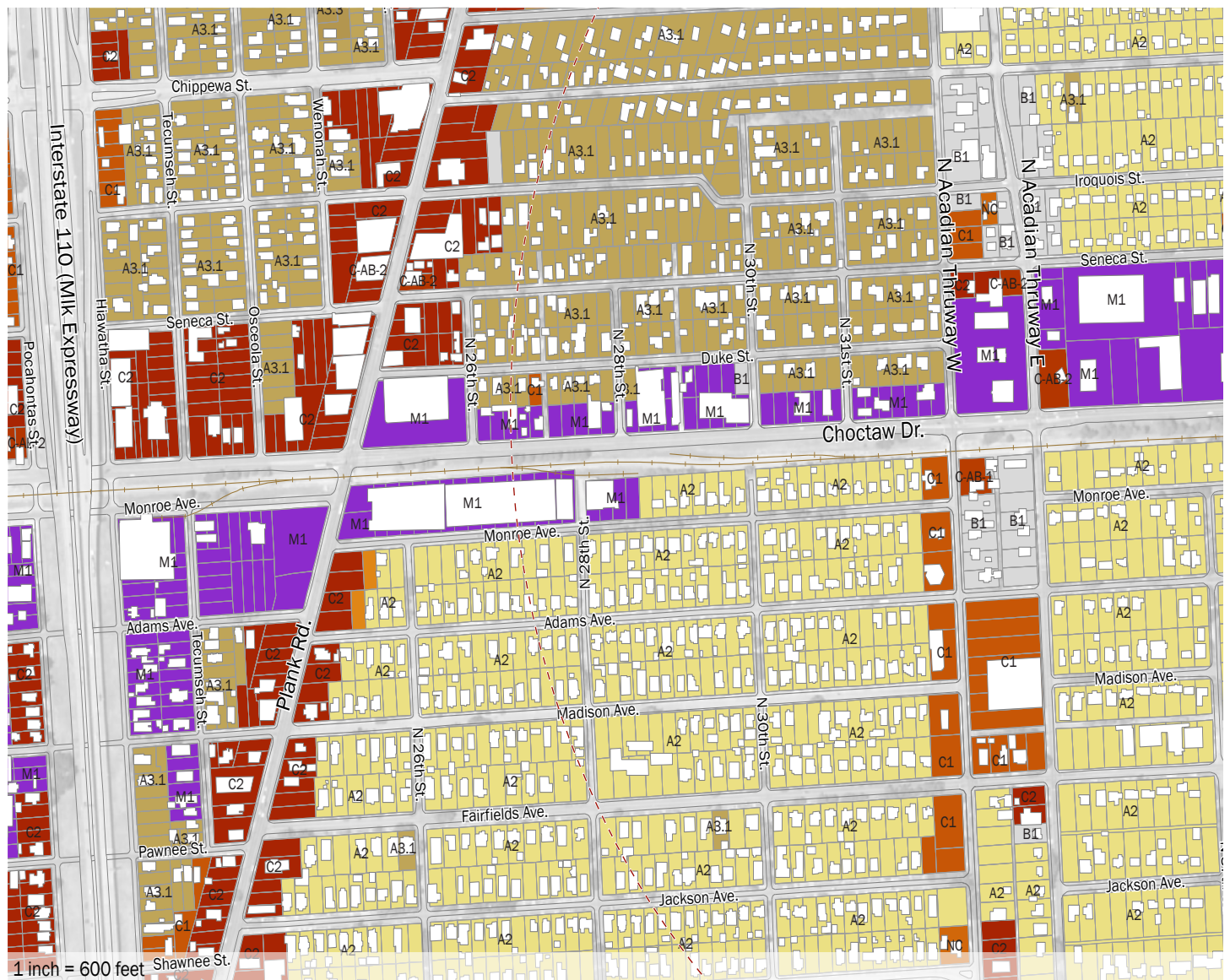
Industrial businesses that served the petrochemical industries and took advantage of rail transportation have gradually closed over the last few decades, as evidenced by the small, local commercial business that now occupy industrial zoned property.

Several churches serve the residential community, as well as a number of public and private schools, academies, and day care centers. The City-Parish is building a new fire station, Fire Station #2, at the corner of North Acadian Thruway and Chocotaw Drive. Chocotaw Village Shopping Center, which includes a Piggly Wiggly grocery store and other small retail businesses, is located in the center of the Corridor. The property

is not well maintained and residents have complained about the quality of food products available at the only grocery store in the neighborhood.

The Canadian National Railway runs parallel to and less than one-quarter block south of Choctaw Drive, creating a long, shallow land area that is not easily developable. As a result, residential communities south of Choctaw Drive are not visually or functionally part of the street and have no connection to the neighborhoods to the north.

More than half of residential parcels in the Choctaw Corridor area are sized approximately 47 feet wide by 100 feet deep, characteristically small for North Baton Rouge. Commercial and industrial parcel sizes vary from 50 feet to hundreds of feet wide. Only two large parcels are found in the corridor: the shopping center property and the industrial parcel between Mission Drive and North Foster Drive.



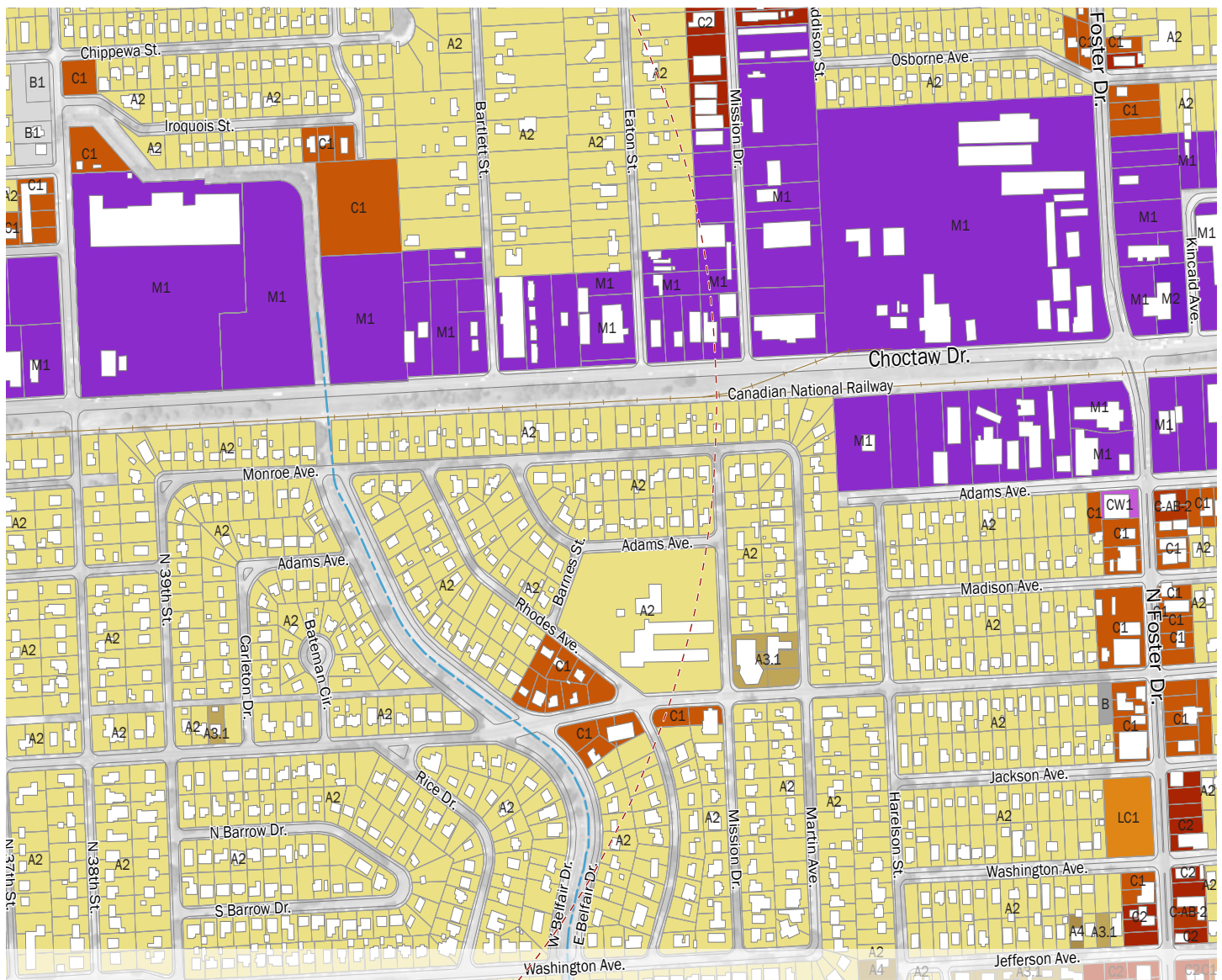
I-110 to N. Acadian Thruway

Figure 8: Existing Zoning

Unified Development Code

Existing zoning of land fronting Choctaw Drive is M1 Industrial, while the major north-south thoroughfares such as Plank Road, North Acadian Thruway, and North Foster Drive are zoned for C1 Light Commercial, C2 Heavy Commercial, M1 Industrial, A2 Residential, and B1 Transition. Within the neighborhoods to the north and south of Choctaw Drive residential zoning varies between A2 Residential and A3.1 Limited Residential. See figure 8.

The Unified Development Code (UDC) requires that residential lot sizes zoned 3.1 be a minimum of 60 feet wide and 3800 square feet in area. More than half of residential parcels in Choctaw Corridor are smaller and are therefore out of compliance with existing zoning requirements. In order to redevelop vacant parcels, lots would have to be assembled into larger parcels and redeveloped. New zoning must be instituted that allow for these smaller lots to be redeveloped as single-family housing, even if not combined, relieving housing developers of the burden of obtaining variances. Without such changes, housing redevelopment in the Choctaw Corridor area may not be feasible.



N. Acadian Thruway to Foster Drive

Source: City Parish Planning Commission - August 2009

Legend

CPPC Zoning

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| (A1) Single Family Residential | (C-AB-1) Alcoholic Beverage (Restaurant) |
| (A2) Single Family Residential | (C-AB-2) Alcoholic Beverage (Bar/Lounge) |
| (A2.7) Zero Lot Line Residential | (C2) Heavy Commercial |
| (A3.1) Limited Residential | IA |
| (A3.3) Limited Residential | (M1) Light Industrial |
| (A4) General Residential | (M2) Heavy Industrial |
| (SPUD) Small Planned Unit Development | (B) Off Street Parking |
| (LC1) Light Commercial | (B1) Transition |
| (C1) Light Commercial | |

Similarly, some commercial and industrial parcels on Choctaw Drive, Plank Road, North Acadian Thruway, and North Foster Drive could not be redeveloped given minimum lot size, buffer yard, and parking requirements. In this area of Baton Rouge, a higher percentage of the population is dependent on public transit for transportation. The high amount of parking required by the current UDC is deemed unnecessary in these communities, and also increases the cost of development and redevelopment. New UDC regulations must be instituted to address these issues and relieve commercial developers of the burden of obtaining variances. Specific recommendations can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. Without such changes, development in Choctaw Corridor may not be feasible.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Roadways

Based on available traffic counts, the roadway and street network in the Choctaw Corridor area itself does not appear to be overburdened with traffic, aside from short periods of traffic congestion at some intersections during a portion of the peak hour. The primary north-south arterials serving this area are Plank Road on its western end, North Acadian Thruway in the middle, and North Foster Drive which forms the CIP's eastern boundary. All three of these roadways are used by the City's transit service, Capital Area Transit System (CATS). Plank Road and North Foster Drive are both four-lane roads, while North Acadian Thruway is a four-lane divided roadway. All other north-south streets in the study area are two-lane roads.

East-west traffic through this corridor is carried by Choctaw Drive itself, a four-lane roadway, which intersects all three of the roadways mentioned above. Choctaw Drive is the only east-west through street in this neighborhood, with few neighborhood streets on the south side of Choctaw actually intersecting it. The primary reason for this is the Canadian National Railway and right-of-way running along the south side of and parallel to Choctaw Drive. Crossing points over the tracks are few, with major crossings limited to North 38th Street, in addition to the three major north-south arterials mentioned above. These crossings offer limited safety features with only the North 38th Street crossing having cross arms. For practical purposes, this corridor, which is quite narrow in shape, is limited to the frontages on either side of Choctaw Drive. However, the businesses and industries fronting the north side of Choctaw Drive appear to serve a greater market area than just the immediate neighborhood.

Within the boundaries of this study area, 100% of the roads are asphalt surfaced.

Traffic counts taken by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) for 2008 (most current available) in close proximity to the Choctaw Corridor neighborhood are as follows:

- » Plank Road near Adams Avenue:
10,526 ADT*
- » Plank Road near Iroquois Street (north of Choctaw):
9,004 ADT
- » Plank Road just north of Osage Street:
15,090 ADT

*ADT = Average Daily Traffic

The traffic counts shown above are bi-directional counts on these arterials. Peak hour volumes are usually 10% to 12% of the ADT with a peak hour split of 60/40 common, i.e., 60% of the peak hour volume in the peak direction. Within the neighborhood on local streets, traffic volumes are typically a fraction of these ADT volumes. No other traffic volume data were available from DOTD for this study neighborhood. However, given that Choctaw Drive is a four-lane facility and probably serves as a minor cross-town arterial, traffic volumes on this street are probably in excess of 7,000 ADT. *See figure 9.*

Traffic flow in the Choctaw Corridor area is relatively unaffected by the railroad tracks and rail traffic, at least for east-west traffic on Choctaw Drive. Temporary blockages may occur from time to time at Plank Road and the other major roadways which cross the tracks in this neighborhood.

Pedestrian access and connectivity throughout the study neighborhood is hampered by the fact that nearly 69% of the streets have no sidewalks. Additionally, only about 19% of neighborhood streets have sidewalks on both sides. Two streets, Choctaw Drive and North Acadian Thruway, have sidewalks on only one side.

Further discussion of these issues, and recommendations for addressing them can be found in the Recommendations section of this report.



Figure 9: Average Daily Traffic Count Locations

Transit Service

As of August 2010, the Choctaw Corridor area is served by three public transit routes operated by the Baton Rouge Capital Area Transit System (CATS). These are the Plank route (No. 41), the Fairfield route (No. 13), and the Foster/Gus Young route (No. 23). The Fairfield and Foster/Gus Young routes intersect at Winbourne Avenue, several blocks north of Choctaw Corridor. By use of transfers from route to route where they intersect, it is possible to travel by transit to other locations served by the CATS system, although the convenience of traveling in such a manner is greatly diminished. Just east of the study area, the Scotlandville Route (No. 10) provides north-south service along Scenic Highway. All of these routes utilize the CATS terminal on Florida Boulevard at North 22nd Street. At this location, virtually all transit lines in the CATS system are accessible due to the fact that some system transfers are allowed only at the CATS terminal. Pick up points are marked along all CATS routes, but transit shelters are not in place at all bus stop locations. *See figure 10.*

Plank Route

On weekdays, the first run of the Plank route departs the CATS terminal on Florida Boulevard and North 22nd Street at 4:45 AM and crosses Choctaw Drive within about five minutes of leaving the terminal. The service operates on 30-minute headways until 3:15 PM. After this time, the service operates on alternating 45-, and 30-minute headways through 7:00 PM. After 7:00 PM headways open to 60-minutes through the 9:00 PM run. The last bus departs the terminal at 9:45 PM, returning approximately 45 minutes later.

The Plank route operates on Saturdays between the hours of 5:45 AM (first run) and 9:45 PM (last run). Headways vary between 60-minutes from 5:45 AM through 9:45 AM, then close to 30-minutes thereafter through 3:15 PM. After 3:15 PM, headways vary according to run and use of the published schedule is strongly advised.

On Sundays, this route operates between the hours of 6:45 AM and 6:45 PM on 60-minute headways.

Fairfield Route

The Fairfield route serves the Choctaw Corridor study area Monday through Saturday, operating from the CATS terminal at Florida Boulevard and North 22nd Street. It is one of two transit routes which actually penetrate the Choctaw Corridor neighborhoods, and this line crosses Choctaw Drive at North Acadian Thruway. The other route is the Plank line.

During the week, Fairfield service begins at 5:45 AM and operates with 60-minute headways throughout the day. The last run departs the terminal at 8:45 PM and returns at 9:35 PM, according to published schedules available at www.brcats.com. Travel time to the intersection of Winbourne Avenue and North Foster Drive, where this route intersects with the Foster/Gus Young route, is approximately 12-14 minutes from the time this bus route leaves the terminal.

On Saturday, this route operates on its weekday schedule. On Sundays, this route is combined with the Scotlandville route.

Foster/Gus Young Route

This transit line begins operational service on weekdays from the Florida Boulevard and North 22nd Street terminal, crosses Choctaw Drive at North Foster Drive. The first run departs the terminal at 4:45 AM. The next run departs at 6:15 AM and then operates on alternating 30- and 60-minute headways until 9:15 AM. After this run, headways open to 90-minutes for the rest of the day. Last departure from the terminal is at 6:15 PM and returning at 7:33 PM.

On Saturdays, this route begins service at the CATS terminal at 7:45 AM and operates with 90-minute headways. Last run departs the terminal at 6:15 PM.

Sunday service is greatly curtailed, but is provided on 90-minute headways between the hours of 9:15 AM and 4:45 PM.

On the basis of this analysis, it would appear that the Choctaw Corridor study area is somewhat underserved by transit. This is based largely on the fact that there is no east-west transit connection within the neighborhood. While it can be argued that, given the land use in the corridor at this time, such a transit connection is not necessary, this will probably change as the Catalyst Project for this neighborhood reaches full development.

Passenger Rail Service

Passenger rail service is not available to the Choctaw Corridor. The Canadian National Railway runs parallel along the south side of Choctaw Drive which may cause temporary blockages along the streets which cross Choctaw Drive in this corridor. At one time there was an active spur which crossed Choctaw Drive to provide freight rail service to some of the businesses on the north side of Choctaw. If this spur is used now, it is very infrequently. The Mayors of Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and a coalition of private businesses and non-profits are actively working toward realizing sustainable passenger rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. When this is implemented, a stop in North Baton Rouge or feeder transit to a passenger rail stop should be implemented.



Water

The City of Baton Rouge is served with potable water by the Baton Rouge Water Company, a private utility company not affiliated with City-Parish government. This company is also responsible for the water distribution network or infrastructure which includes the water treatment plant facilities, water towers, and piping. The source of the drinking water for Baton Rouge, including the Choctaw Corridor community, is the 65 ground water wells completed in various sands of the Southern Hills aquifer system which underlies the City of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish. The water distribution network is backed up by auxiliary diesel pumps, generators, and elevated water storage tanks which help to prevent wide spread service outages if electrical power fails. The system's treatment capacity is rated at 102 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) with peak demand at 55 MGD. The average daily demand on the system is 43 MGD. Water service available in the Choctaw Corridor community is adequate and of a high quality, as it is throughout the rest of the city.

Figure 10: Transit Service

Storm Water Drainage

Approximately 50% of storm water runoff in the Choctaw Corridor community is carried in open ditches which run along the streets. Such a drainage system requires vigilance so that they do not become blocked with vegetation and debris. Although it is generally left to the property owner to maintain the open drainage ditch fronting his property, the larger drainage facilities are maintained by the Department of Public Works. Periodically, these facilities must be dug out to counter siltation problems and maintain design cross sections. The maintenance of open drainage facilities is a major challenge for most Public Works Departments because they are designed as deep, narrow channels instead of shallower bioswales which also filter pollutants out of stormwater runoff. An inventory of the neighborhood streets and their corresponding drainage type is included in the appendix.

Sanitary Sewer

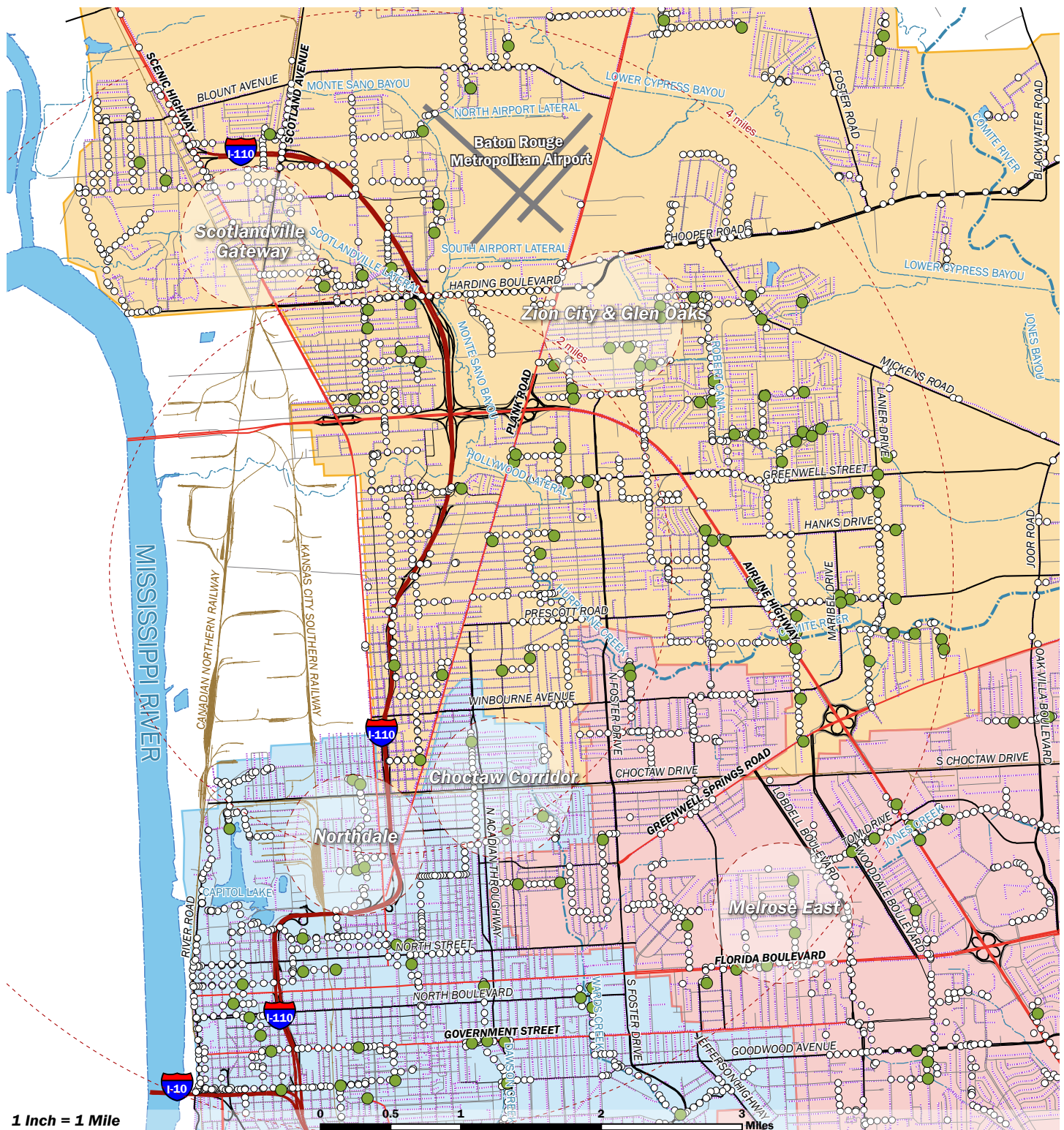
The Choctaw Corridor area is served by a community sanitary sewer system and the Central Waste Water Treatment Plant (CWTP) located near the Mississippi River just southwest of downtown Baton Rouge and west of Nicholson Drive. This plant also serves the general downtown and central area of the City. The Central WWTP generally operates within its discharge permit limitations and is expected to operate at about 95% of its capacity when all planned improvement projects are complete.

The collection system in nearly every neighborhood in Baton Rouge is comprised of a network of eight-inch sewers that drain by gravity to a pump station, and from there into larger diameter sewers, which ultimately flow to a main trunk line leading to the WWTP. This is the case in the Choctaw Corridor community.

The primary deficiency of the sanitary sewer system in the Choctaw Corridor, as it is in many other parts of the City, although not as frequent in this study area, is the sanitary sewer overflow (SSO). This condition is defined as a discharge of untreated, raw wastewater into local waterways. Discharges can originate at a number of sources in the sanitary sewer system including manholes, cracks, and other defects in sewer lines, etc. Such discharges can occur in wet conditions when the storm water drainage system is infiltrated by sewage discharge. SSOs can also occur in dry conditions and are usually caused by a collapsed sewer lines, tree root penetration, and other such impediments that impact the flow in the line, resulting in back-ups and overflows. Both types result in a threat to public health, property damage, and environmental impacts, especially when the untreated discharge reaches waterways. *See figure 11.*

Sanitary sewer overflow conditions have been identified at only one location in the Choctaw Corridor community. Nevertheless, such a condition can grow, resulting in many occurrences over time, unless steps are taken to correct their underlying cause(s). To address the SSO problem—a condition that is very common in most of the older cities in the U.S.—the City-Parish entered into a Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) in 2001 to begin a “...scheduled program of system improvements to address historical overflows...” that have occurred in the sewer collection system. Currently, there are two sewer rehabilitation projects, both part of the Consent Decree, that are scheduled to begin in 2012 and will directly impact the Choctaw Corridor community and improve conditions there. Although these projects will have little or no direct impact on the Catalyst Project for this community, these sewer improvement projects are expected to eliminate the SSO problem in the larger

community when completed. The total estimated cost for both is \$8.7 M. Both of these sewer improvement projects, however, have a much larger geographic scope than just the Choctaw Corridor community. *See figure 12.*



Legend

Service Areas

- North System
- Central System
- South System

Sanitary Sewer Overflow

- Overflow
- No Overflow
- Sanitary Sewer Pipes

Figure 11: Sanitary Sewer Overflows

Source: CDM Engineering

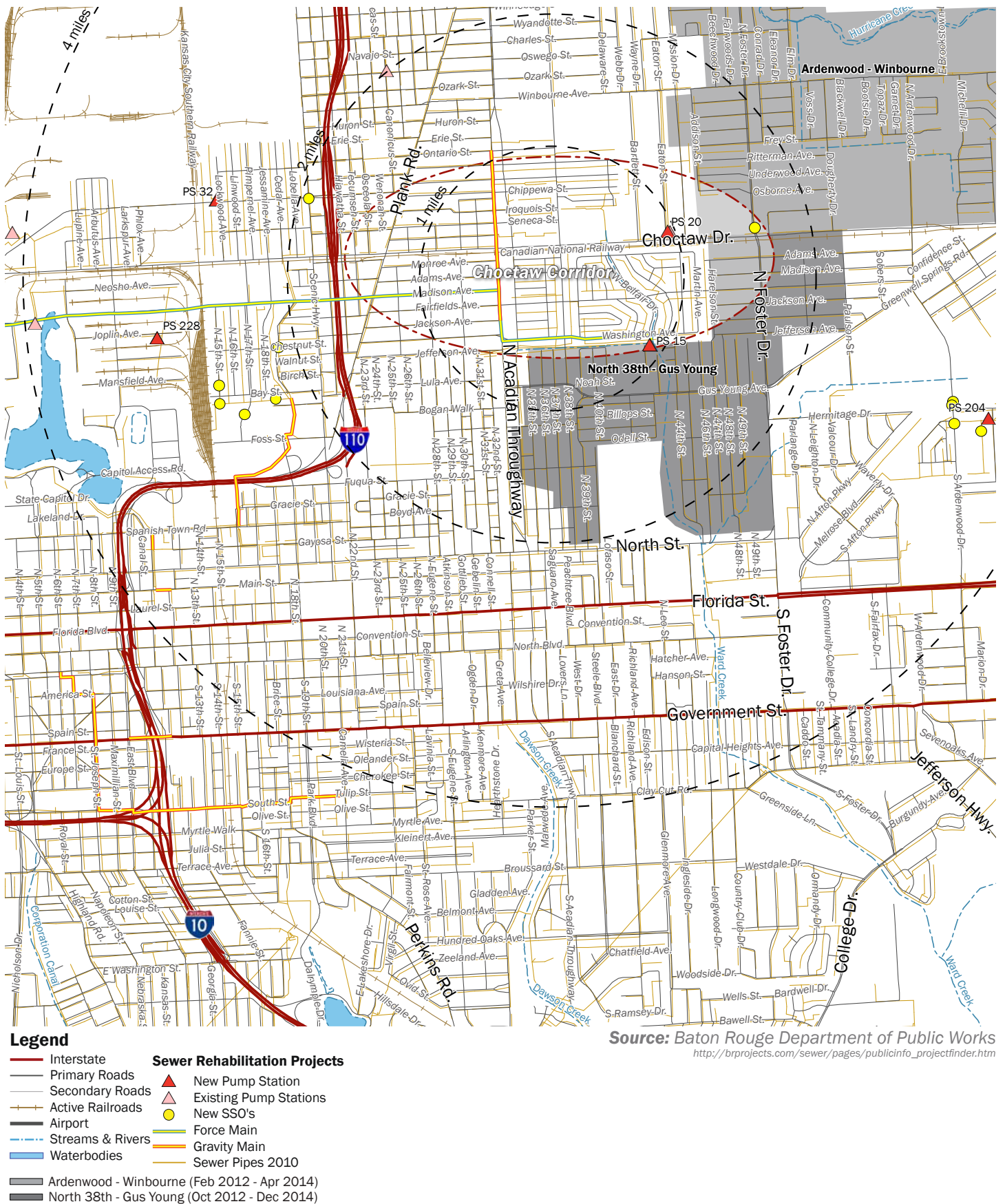


Figure 12: Sewer Rehabilitation Projects

Architectural Survey & Adaptive Reuse

In October 2010, a windshield survey was conducted examining the architectural integrity and adaptive reuse capabilities of the buildings within the Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project area. The objective of the survey was to better understand the built environment in the Catalyst Project area. Two questions were asked of each structure: “Is it apparently architecturally sound and viable for redevelopment?” and “If so, in what capacity?”

Based on input from Workshop participants and analysis by the Team, the Catalyst Project area for the Choctaw Corridor was identified as the Choctaw Village Shopping Center and surrounding areas. In general, this is a single story commercial area between Choctaw Drive and a neighborhood of single-family homes. Several of the existing commercial structures have fallen into disrepair and are unoccupied. This creates an opportunity to replace the buildings, repair and reoccupy them, or adapt the buildings for an alternate use. Additionally, there is a large piece of undeveloped land directly to the east of the existing shopping

center.

To determine how a building should be addressed, a rating of A – Poor Condition, B – Fair Condition, or C – Good Condition was given to each one. In general, most of the structures within the study area received a ranking of “good” or “fair.” The full Choctaw Corridor Adaptive Reuse Survey can be found in the Appendix of this document. *See figure 13.*

Legend

- A - Poor Condition
- B - Fair Condition
- C - Good Condition

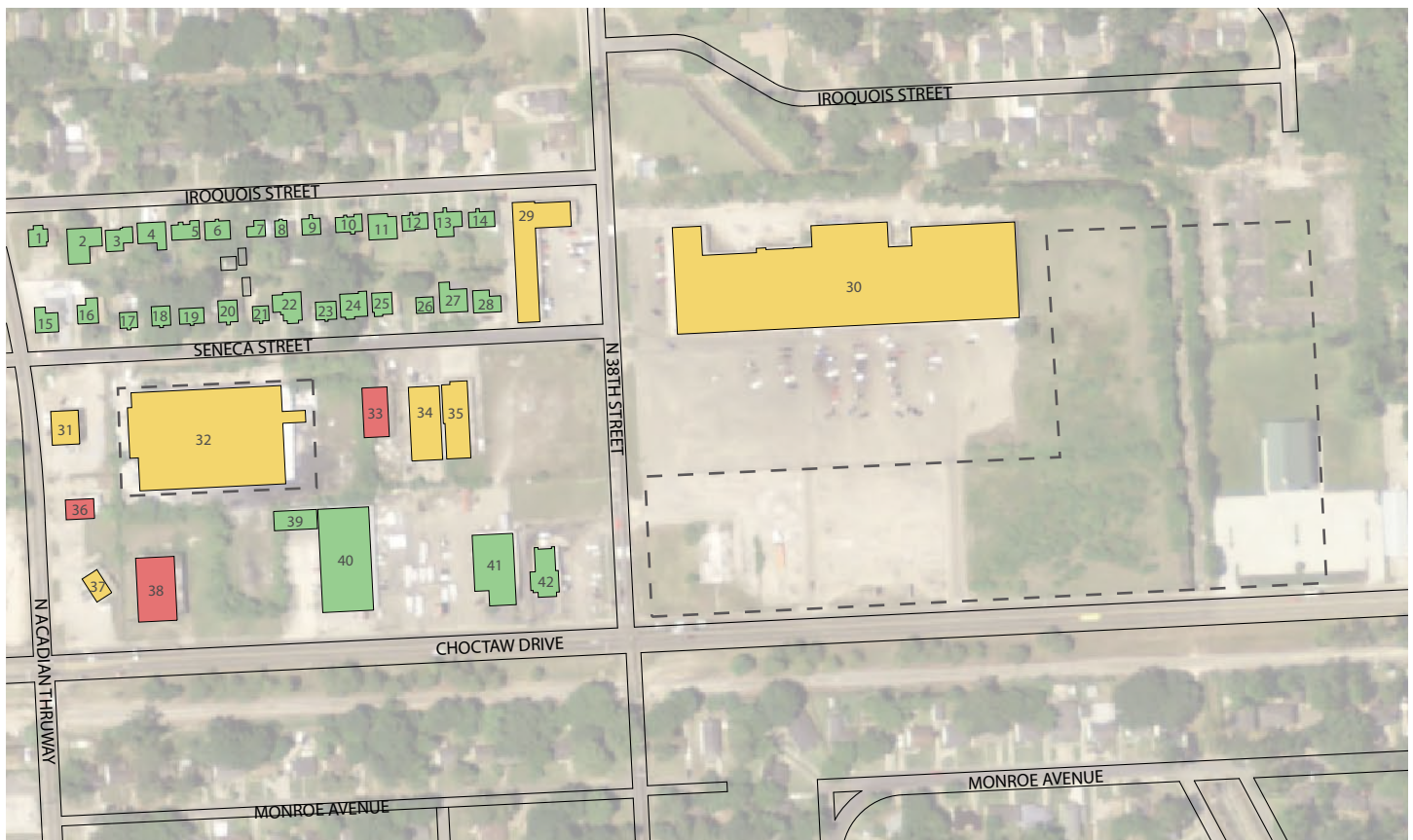


Figure 13: Architectural Conditions

Source: Trahan Architects

Green Space & Recreation

In *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, Jan Gehl (1987), the Danish urbanist and architect states, “The proper hierarchy of planning is life, space, and buildings, not buildings, space, life.” Therefore, creating a high-quality living environment and preserving the environmental integrity of the Choctaw Corridor community lies in the provision of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreational amenities. Recognizing existing and identifying future opportunities for recreation areas in Choctaw Corridor is important to the goals and strategies of the CIP. Recreation areas are also a source of many economic benefits, as they enhance property values, increase municipal revenue, bring in homebuyers and workers, and attract retirees. *See figure 14.*

BREC’s Imagine Your Parks

In 2004, the East Baton Rouge Parish Recreation and Park Commission (BREC) released a Strategic Plan entitled *Imagine Your Parks*. Its purpose is to “develop consensus with the parish for a preferred future for the park system, recreation programs, and special facilities among the Commissioners, staff, key stakeholders, and citizens-at-large.” The document outlines analysis of BREC’s existing park system and makes recommendations for its improvement and expansion. During its preparation, site visits and reviews of 153 of BREC’s 184 parks were completed in order to review and rate the condition of the facilities. Parks were given a rating of excellent, good, fair, or poor.

Within the Choctaw Corridor, one BREC mini park, Acadian Thruway Park, and two neighborhood Parks, Gus Young Park and Belfair Park, are available to residents. Both Acadian Thruway Park and Belfair Park were reviewed and given a rating of “Good” indicating that the parks’

“design and amenities are strong in appearance but are showing the normal wear and tear expected throughout a park system. Maintenance appears to be regular, the grass is mowed, play area surfacing is kept at an acceptable depth and free of weeds, structures are painted and major repairs or renovation is at least five to ten years away.”

Unfortunately, the neighborhood park, Gus Young Park, was reviewed and given a rating of “Poor.” This rating means that

“the park and its amenities, as a whole, are at the end of their life cycle. Typically, a park in poor condition is not well maintained. There may be trash on site as well as glass and weeds. The amenities are out of date and in many cases are unsafe or fail to meet current codes. Frequently, parks in this category appear to have been all but abandoned. These parks

need rebuilding following a new master plan as soon as it can be scheduled.”

As of the completion of this report, a master plan has not been scheduled for the Gus Young Park.

Acadian Thruway Park

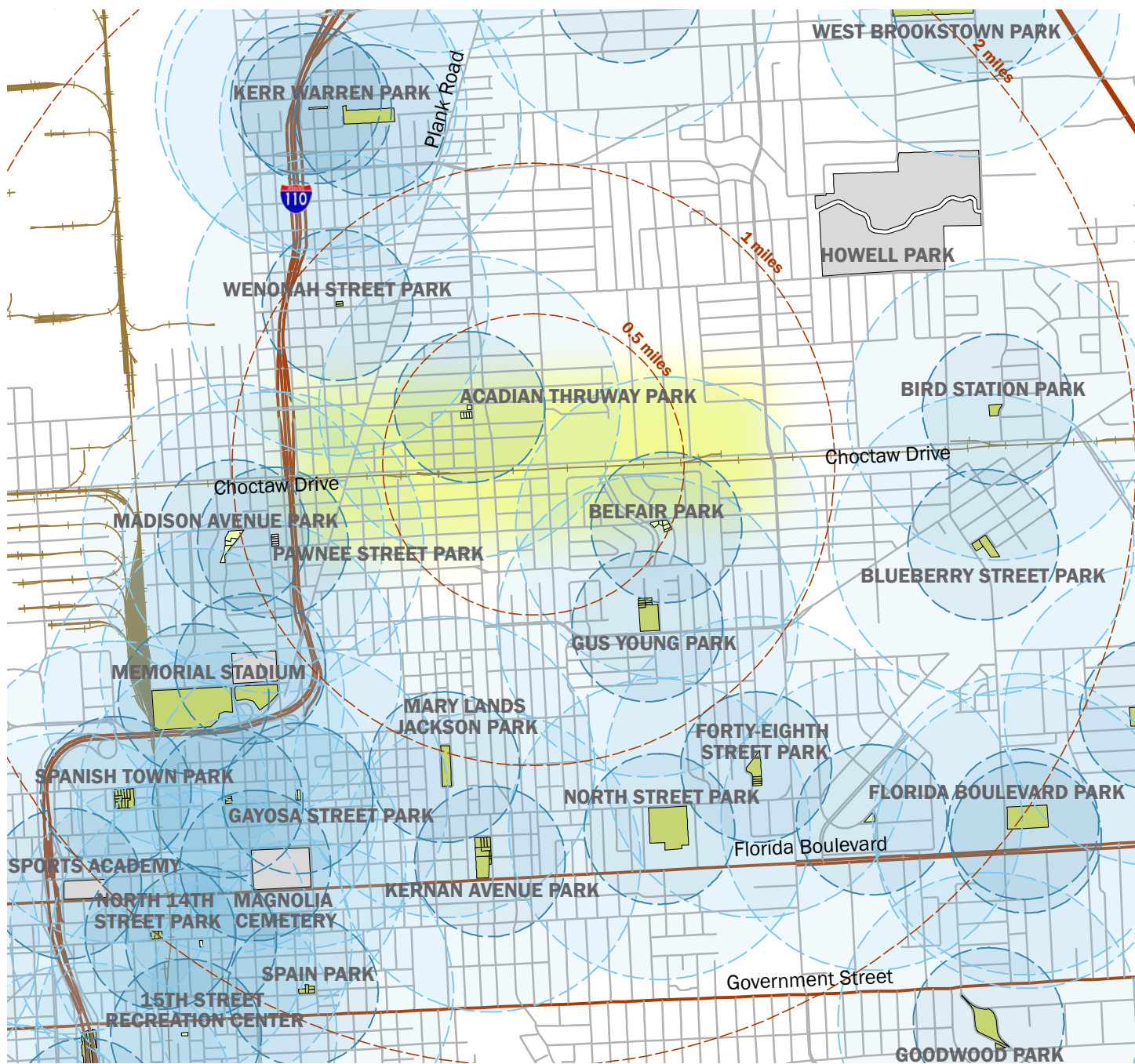
BREC’s North Acadian Thruway Park is located on the west side of North Acadian Thruway between Chippewa Street and Iroquois Street. Facilities within this 0.64 acre park include playground equipment, a picnic area, and a basketball court. The park is currently linked to the community by streets, however only the major roadway of North Acadian Thruway and three collector roadways to the park’s northeast (Ontario Street, Brady Street, and Dalton Street) have sidewalks, making walking to the park from some areas unsafe.

Belfair Park

BREC’s Belfair Park is located within Belfair subdivision south of Choctaw Drive at 4390 Fairfields Avenue. The 0.93 acre park houses the Belfair Teen Center, a playground area, and a multiple-use area. The Belfair Teen Center is dedicated to the teens throughout East Baton Rouge Parish and is a collaborative effort between BREC, the Big Buddy Program, the Boys & Girls Club, Health Care Centers in Schools, and the Louisiana Primary Care Association. The center’s schedule parallels that of East Baton Rouge Parish schools, offering area teens opportunities to take part in activities such as tutoring, enrichment clubs, arts, and sports activities in a structured, safe, and supportive environment. As of the completion of this report, about 60 teens visit the center daily. While this park and teen center are well connected to residents of the neighborhoods south of Choctaw Drive, no safe crossing exists to accommodate residents of the neighborhoods north of Choctaw Drive.

Gus Young Park

BREC’s Gus Young Park at 4200 Gus Young Avenue is located in the Eden Park area, between North Acadian Thruway and North Foster Drive. It provides citizens with a recreation center, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a playground, basketball courts, picnic facilities, and a baseball diamond. This park’s location right next to Capitol Elementary School and its proximity to other schools and several neighborhoods makes it an ideal location. However, as identified in BREC’s *Imagine Your Parks* study, this park is in need of a master plan to provide for improvements. Additionally, its connectivity is in need of improvement as there are very few sidewalks that would allow safe pedestrian access to the site.



Source: Baton Rouge Recreation & Park Commission

Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Chocotaw Corridor Area
- BREC Parks**
 - Special Use Park
 - Community Park
 - Neighborhood Park
 - Mini-Park
 - Service Radius 0.25 miles
 - Service Radius 0.50 miles

Figure 14: Park Proximity

Public Services

The Choctaw Corridor is host to a number of public services.

The Baton Rouge Fire Department Fire Station # 2 is currently located at Osage Street and Pocahontas Street. Construction of the new firehouse is nearly complete however, at the intersection of North Acadian Thruway and Choctaw Drive, placing this station even closer to the Corridor. The Corridor is served by the East Baton Rouge Police Department 1st District precinct whose office is located approximately 1.5 miles from Choctaw Drive at 4445 Plank Road. However, residents still feel that there is a need for more police presence in the community.

The Eden Park Branch Library is located at 5131 Greenwell Springs Road and was rebuilt and re-opened in January 2007. It is a great community resource with a collection of 55,000 books, 70 magazines, 10 newspapers, and 3,500 videos, DVDs, audio books, and CDs. There are 40 PCs available for public use, including instructional work stations in the meeting room, and one computer with unique equipment and software for use by blind or visually handicapped patrons. The meeting room in the library can host 93 people and can be split into two separate spaces.

There is a private chiropractic clinic located at 2832 Plank Road and two primary care clinics, Eastbank Medical Clinic at 2149 North Foster Drive and LSUHSC Mid-City Clinic at 1401 North Foster, that service the community. The nearest hospital is Baton Rouge General Medical Center, which is about two miles from the Corridor. In this same area, there are also several specialty care facilities including Promise Hospital, which is a long term care facility, Cypress Psychiatric Hospital, and Behavioral Hospital of Baton Rouge, a dependency rehabilitation facility. The community is also home to several day care options such as Wanda's Kids World, Good Shepherd Day Care Center, and Jackson's Pre School and Child Development Center. While there are services offered for small children, the services do not offer after hours care and there are no day care services offered for the aging population. The need for both of these types of facilities was identified by residents during the Choctaw Corridor Visioning Workshop.

Lastly, as previously discussed, many of the businesses that were a part of this once thriving commercial corridor have left the area, leaving the Choctaw Corridor community deprived of much needed retail services. According to the market assessment, there is a substantial opportunity gap for a supermarket within a 1-mile and 2-mile radius of the Corridor and a modest demand for retail services such as pharmacies and clothing stores. *See figure 15.*

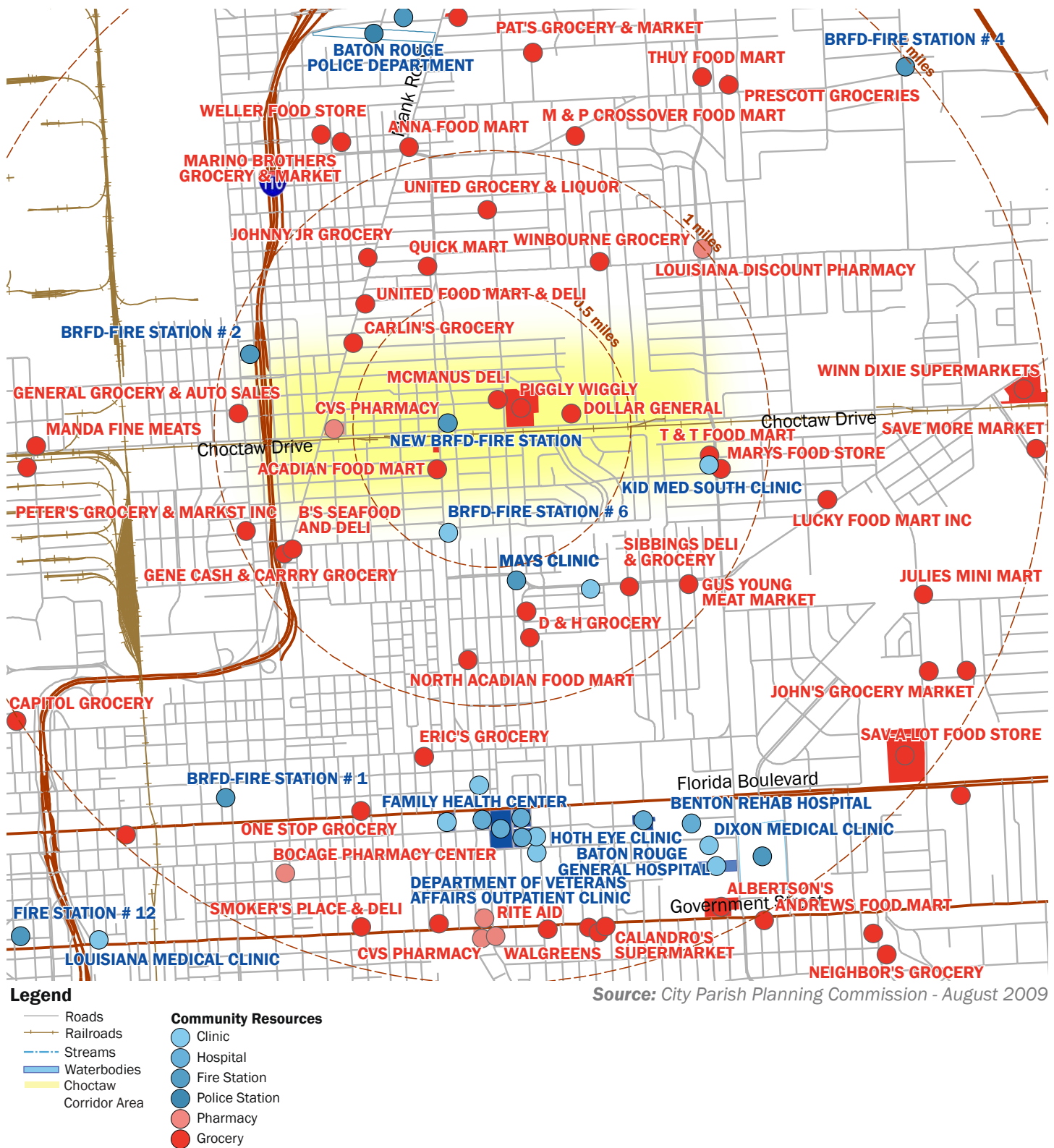


Figure 15: Community Resources

Safety and Crime

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on the principle that proper design and effective use of buildings and public spaces in neighborhoods can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life for citizens. There are four design guidelines, found on the CPTED website (http://www.cptedsecurity.com/cpted_design_guidelines.htm), that serve as the basis for audits of safety conditions in communities:

1. Natural Surveillance - “See and be seen” is the overall goal when it comes to CPTED and natural surveillance. A person is less likely to commit a crime if they think someone will see them do it. Lighting and landscape play an important role in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.
2. Natural Access Control – CPTED utilizes walkways, fences, lighting, signage, and landscape to clearly guide people and vehicles to and from the proper entrances. The goal with this CPTED principle is not necessarily to keep intruders out, but to direct the flow of people while decreasing the opportunity for crime.
3. Territorial Reinforcement – Creating or extending a “sphere of influence” by utilizing physical designs such as pavement treatments, landscaping, and signage that enable users of an area to develop a sense of proprietorship over the area is the goal of this CPTED principle. Public areas are clearly distinguished from private ones. Potential trespassers perceive this control and are thereby discouraged.
4. Maintenance – CPTED includes the “Broken Window Theory” which suggests that one “broken window” or nuisance, if allowed to exist, will lead to others and ultimately to the decline of an entire neighborhood. Neglected and poorly maintained properties are breeding grounds for criminal activity.

Recommendations found in this report using CPTED guidelines include but are not limited to streetscape improvements, wider sidewalks, community inspired crosswalks, signage, use of bollards, lighting, landscaping, public space, and overall maintenance.

Police Presence

Crime statistics reported by the Baton Rouge Police Department through June 2010 show that the district in which Choctaw Corridor is located, District 1, is highest in six out of the nine tracked crime categories including homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor theft, and arson. Each police district is then divided into zones, with District 1 having six zones. Choctaw Corridor is in Zone C and data specific to that zone shows that within the district, the Choctaw Corridor area is either the highest or second highest in six of the nine tracked crime categories including homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, larceny, and motor theft. Residents suggested putting a police substation closer to the Catalyst Project area.

Point Source Pollution and Brownfields

Point Source Pollution

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), one of the main potential sources of point source pollution for soils and water are the releases from underground storage tanks (USTs). USTs are tanks and any connected underground piping that have at least ten percent of their combined volume underground. USTs contain either petroleum or hazardous substances.

In September 2008, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LADEQ) provided the Baton Rouge Planning Commission (CPPC) with a UST dataset for East Baton Rouge Parish (EBRP). The dataset contains information for 4,104 USTs that have been installed at 1,182 sites within EBRP.

In addition to this recent data, historical research about underground storage tanks in EBRP area was performed using Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1885-1949. Created originally for the fire insurance industry for risk assessment purposes, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (Sanborn Maps) contain detailed information on such building features as size, shape, construction type, use, and street address. In general, the Sanborn maps are available for the historic or central business districts of a city. Sanborn Maps are extremely useful in identifying former or abandoned underground storage tanks and aboveground chemical storage areas.

Business Point Source Pollution

The North America Classification System (NAICS) code was used to identify businesses that could be potential sources of point source pollution in EBRP.

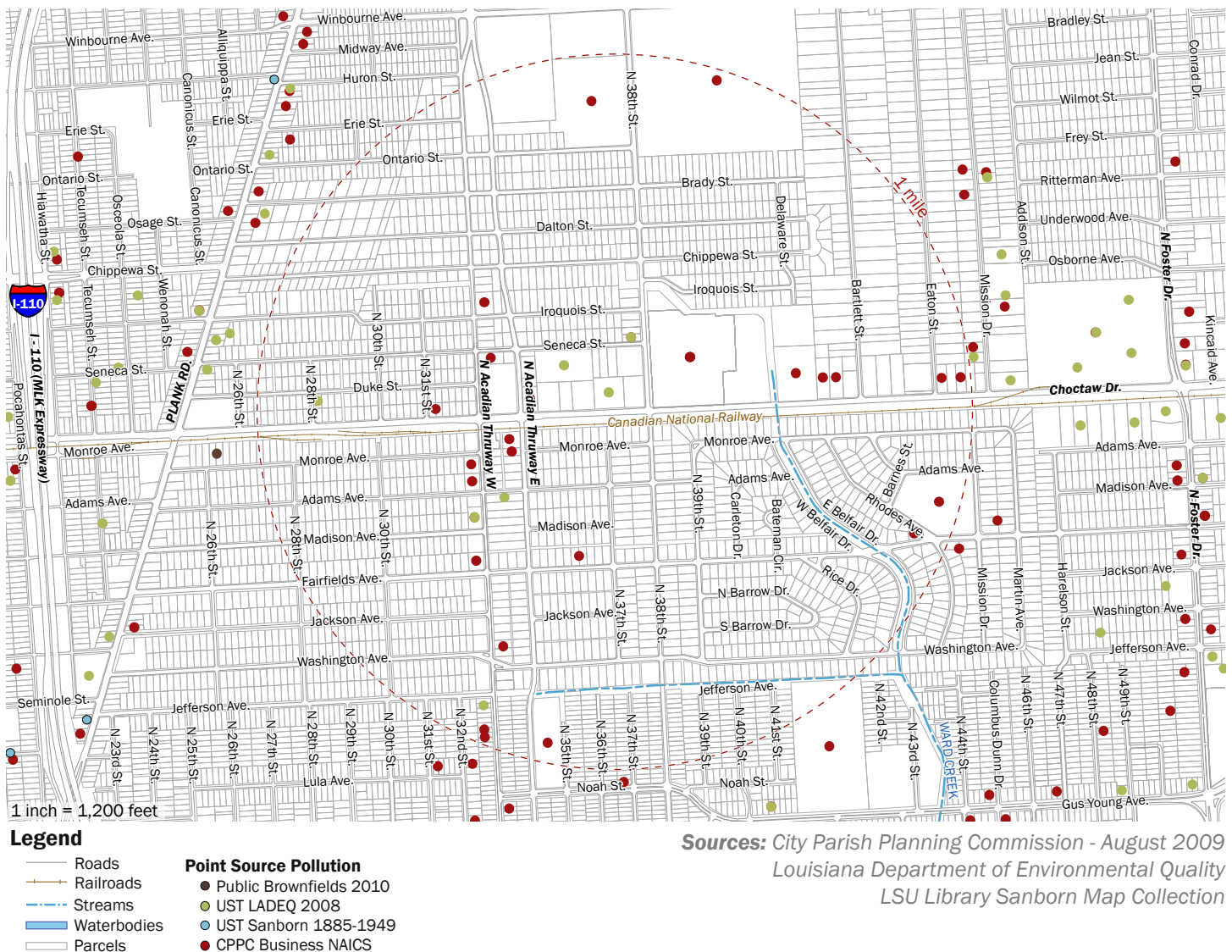


Figure 16: Brownfields & Point Source Pollution

Brownfields

The term “brownfield site” means real property that is cited as having a presence, potential presence, or perceived presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. These contaminants may result in a complication for the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of that property. In 2009-2010, the EBR City-Parish Planning Commission (CPPC) conducted an inventory of existing brownfield sites for the Parish. This database contains information about the property name, owner, address, previous uses, current use, known hazards, potential hazards, and planned phase of cleanup. See figure 16.

Choctaw Corridor Summary

Inventory from all three sources of data were merged to create a database of underground storage tanks within the Parish. These locations were grouped by micro-watershed to identify the relative

impact to the local water system. There are 110 NAICS locations and 42 LDEQ UST’s cited within the Choctaw area watershed. This indicates a serious impairment to the local ground water and soil health. A detailed survey of all UST locations should be conducted for identification of any tanks that may be leaking. Special concern should be taken to any tanks located within close proximity to Ward Creek, whose headwaters are located behind the Choctaw Village Shopping Center.

There is one identified brownfield site within Choctaw Corridor. Aries Storage Building at 2635 Monroe Avenue was previously used as a creamery and chemical storage facility. While no known or potential hazards are indicated within the CPPC database, it is still recommended that a survey of the soil profile be conducted and ground water be tested for this site due to the presence of children from the Baton Rouge Christian Academy and the Kids First Day Care. Currently, there are no plans for cleanup of this site.

Market Assessment

Choctaw Corridor is located within close proximity to downtown and other employment centers relative to other neighborhoods in the Parish. This proximity gives the Choctaw Corridor an advantage over other areas in the City, as it offers shorter commute distances and better access to the cultural, employment, and recreational opportunities of the downtown area. The once thriving commerce in the area has diminished and the population is declining.

Members of the Team have prepared financial development pro formas and recommendations for redevelopment financing and implementation which will be addressed later. The market assessment provides an overview of the market and considers the factors that affect redevelopment in the Choctaw Corridor area specifically, and can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Framework

An overview of market factors can help a community prepare for future growth and change. It can assess whether public policies about land use, public facilities, financial incentives, and economic development are compatible with market forces. A market overview can help identify the degree to which likely demand for development matches the underlying ability of the area to provide built space at expected prices to meet that demand.

The analysis focuses on market factors that affect the potential development of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Many factors can influence the future supply and demand for development in a specific area. Key among them are 1) growth (or decline) in population and employment in the downtown, the city, the surrounding area, and selected neighborhoods, 2) the demographic makeup of expected growth, 3) type of new employment, 4) cost and availability of land, 5) access to land, and 6) land use regulations that determine how and where growth will occur.

Factors That Affect Redevelopment

The commercial and residential market within Choctaw Corridor must be understood in the context of the City of Baton Rouge, the Parish, and the larger region. Key demographic and market trends that affect redevelopment in Choctaw Corridor are population growth, employees by industry, racial composition, educational attainment, age, income, location and access, commercial services, groceries, drug stores, family clothing stores, housing, land ownership, zoning, and financial incentives.

The slow population growth both in the City and the Parish suggests that declining populations in North Baton Rouge neighborhoods, such as Choctaw Corridor, may continue without significant changes to policy and economic conditions. This trend is evident throughout the entire Parish.

Choctaw Corridor, composed mostly of an African American population, has a lower labor force participation rate than the Parish, a higher percentage of population without a high school diploma than the Parish, and a per capita income 47% of the Parish average.

The location of Choctaw Corridor has several advantages including its proximity to downtown, Southern University, Baton Rouge Community College, Louisiana State University, the Metropolitan Airport, and medical facilities such as the Baton Rouge General Hospital as well as convenient access to Interstate 110.

Data collected suggests that the Choctaw Corridor community is underserved by commercial services, most notably by grocery stores. There also is a moderate demand for a range of sizes of family clothing stores and pharmacies.

The housing market shows that in 2009, Choctaw Corridor was made up of a mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied households in detached single-family units. A much lower percentage of residents lived in larger apartment complexes than Parish-wide. Choctaw Corridor has a higher proportion of children under the age of 17 than the Parish and a high percentage of population within the Corridor is age 25 to 34. This indicates a large number of young families. The Corridor also has a higher percentage of 65+ seniors than the Parish. In addition to these age factors, 33% of the population in the Corridor is below the poverty level. Therefore, affordable housing units in Choctaw Corridor that are convenient and able to accommodate young families and seniors, such as modest single-family units, mixed-use opportunities, and senior housing (usually multi-family arrangement) are needed.

City-Parish policy can play a significant role in the revitalization of an area. Regulations do not necessarily have to be a barrier to redevelopment; they can place restrictions on development while helping to ensure that new development achieves the community's goals. Zoning can play a key role in the redevelopment potential of an area. Choctaw Corridor contains a wider variety of residential, commercial, and industrial zones than the majority of the Parish.

Similar to zoning, financial incentives offered by the City-Parish and the RDA can play a significant role in

revitalization. Incentives can be put in place to encourage the kinds of development a community wants. In many cases, such development requires public financial support due to market constraints or other factors that limit the feasibility of revitalization projects. Appendix A of the Market Assessment Report includes a full description of the various financial resources that may be available.

Recommendations

Using input from the Choctaw Corridor Visioning Workshop and analysis of the area's existing conditions, the Team identified a strategic site in the community to house momentum-generating developments, incorporating both vertical and horizontal mixed-uses and providing for a walkable, more sustainable community. A series of building prototypes were developed to incorporate advanced, contemporary design of sustainable architecture that responds to community needs and inspires community redevelopment. The prototypes illustrate various building prototypes and development estimates based upon average figures. In addition to architectural recommendations, infrastructure and streetscape improvements are included in the plan. Streetscape improvements will serve to not only beautify the area, but also make it more pedestrian friendly, reduce urban heat island effects, combat drainage issues, and improve safety. While the Catalyst Project will serve as the jump start to redevelopment, community-wide and regional improvements are also recommended to improve the Choctaw Corridor area. The recommendations will serve to revitalize the entire area and connect the Choctaw Corridor to the rest of the City, creating a more cohesive urban fabric throughout the Parish, and making travel by bus, car, and foot more direct.

Development Prototypes

- » Adaptive Commercial Reuse
- » Detached Commercial
- » Mixed-Use Residential
- » Attached Commercial
- » Senior Living
- » Single-Family-Using Existing Lot Size

Development prototypes are found on the following pages.

Notes:

Illustrated numbers are taken from averages of each development type within the proposed Catalyst Project area and do not represent actual available properties.

Total Project Costs figures include site acquisition, hard and soft construction costs, and 3% for sustainability.

Sources:

Building Construction Costs: local builders, brokers, developers in EBR, July 2010

Prototype Information: BROWN+DANOS, 2010

Land Estimates: local developers, July 2010

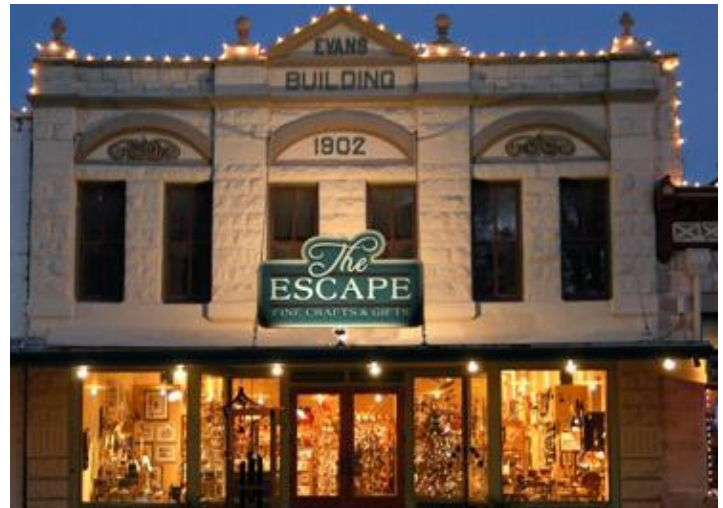
Adaptive Commercial Reuse

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	32,000 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.75 acre
Height	1 - 2 stories
Usable FAR	0.65
Residential units/acre	NA
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	3,500
Total Building Size (sf)	21,000

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ NA
Average cost/sf	\$ NA
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ NA
Average rent (sf/month)	\$ NA
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ 10
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 193,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 1,750,000



Example of Adaptive Commercial Reuse

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	NA
Retail parking/ksf	36
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	36
Open Space (%)	5

Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA
Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ NA
Retail/sf	\$ 55
Office/sf	\$ NA

Detached Commercial

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	7400 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.15 acre
Height	1 stories
Usable FAR	0.34
Residential units/acre	NA
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	2,500

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ NA
Average cost/sf	\$ NA
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ NA
Average rent (sf/month)	\$ NA
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ 12.50
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 45,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 330,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	NA
Retail parking/ksf	7
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	7
Open Space (%)	33

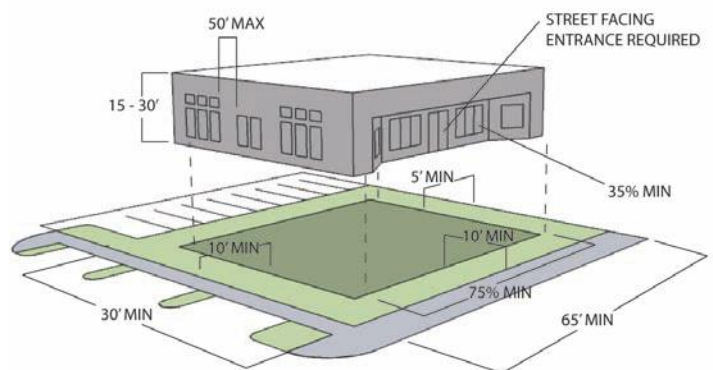
Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3,000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA

Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ NA
Retail/sf	\$ 75
Office/sf	\$ NA



Example of Detached Commercial



Recommended Prototype Diagram illustrating setbacks, facade requirements, and site coverage limitations.

Adapted From Louisiana Land Use Toolkit

Mixed-Use Residential

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	18,824 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.40 acre
Height	2 stories
Usable FAR	0.74
Residential units	5
Avg. Res. Unit Size (sf)	1000
Avg. Retail Unit Size (sf)	2400
Total Ground Floor (sf)	7000

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ NA
Average cost/sf	\$ NA
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ 1000
Average rent (sf/month)	\$ 1
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ 14
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 277,500
Total Project Costs	\$ 2,200,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

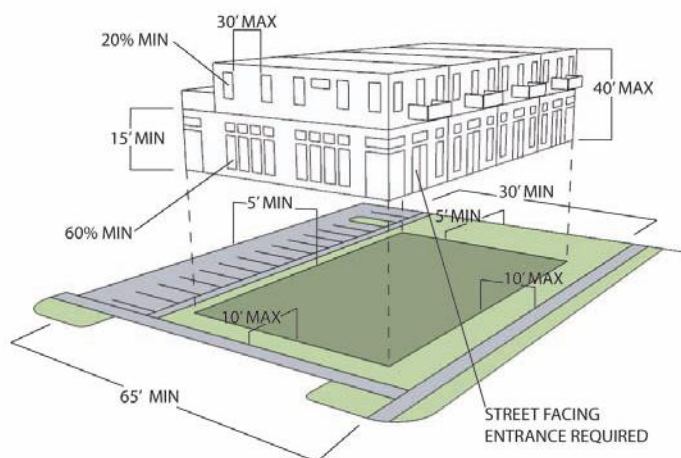
Residential parking/unit	2
Retail parking/ksf	14
Office Parking/ksf	0
Total Parking Spaces	23
Open Space (%)	20

Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3,000
Structured/space	\$ 0
Tuck-Under/space	\$ 0
Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ 135
Retail/sf	\$ 80
Office/sf	\$ NA



Example of Mixed-use



Recommended Prototype Diagram illustrating setbacks, facade requirements, and site coverage limitations.

Adapted From Louisiana Land Use Toolkit

Attached Commercial

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	26,000 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.5 acre
Height 1 stories	
Usable FAR	0.23
Residential units/acre	NA
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	2,200
Avg. Number of Units	3
Total Building Size (sf)	7,000

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ NA
Average cost/sf	\$ NA
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ NA
Average rent (sf/month)	\$ NA
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ 12.50
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 156,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 1,000,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	NA
Retail parking/ksf	5
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	31
Open Space (%)	15

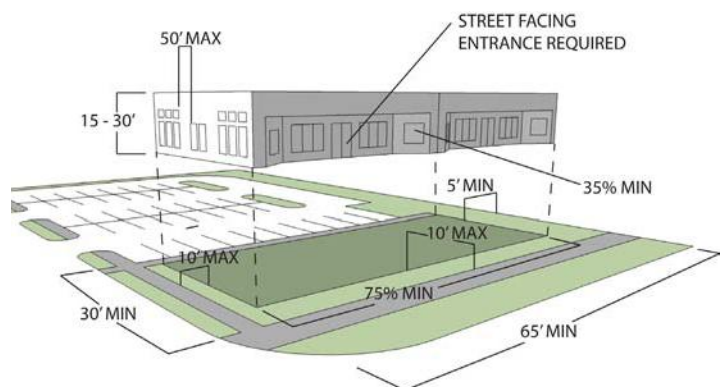
Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3,000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA

Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ NA
Retail/sf	\$ 75
Office/sf	\$ NA



Example of Attached Commercial



Recommended Prototype Diagram illustrating setbacks, facade requirements, and site coverage limitations.

Adapted From Louisiana Land Use Toolkit

Senior Living

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	20,700 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.5 acre
Height	2 stories
Usable FAR	0.40
Residential units/acre	36
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	600

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ NA
Average cost/sf	\$ NA
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ 425
Average rent (sf/month)	\$.70
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 124,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 1,000,000
Total w/3% Sustainability	\$1,400,000



Example of Senior Living Facility

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	1.8
Retail parking/ksf	NA
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	34
Open Space (%)	14

Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3,000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA
Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ 125
Retail/sf	\$ NA
Office/sf	\$ 125



Recommended Prototype Diagram illustrating setbacks, facade requirements, and site coverage limitations.

Adapted From Louisiana Land Use Toolkit

Single-family - Using Existing Lot Size

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	3000 sf
Lot Area (acres)	0.06 acre
Height	1 stories
Usable FAR	0.45
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	1360

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$ 164,000
Average cost/sf	\$ 120
Average Unit Rent/month	\$ NA
Average rent (sf/month)	\$ NA
Retail Rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Office rent (sf/year)	\$ NA
Estimated Land Value/sf	\$ 6
Estimated Land Value	\$ 18,600
Total Project Costs	\$ 177,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

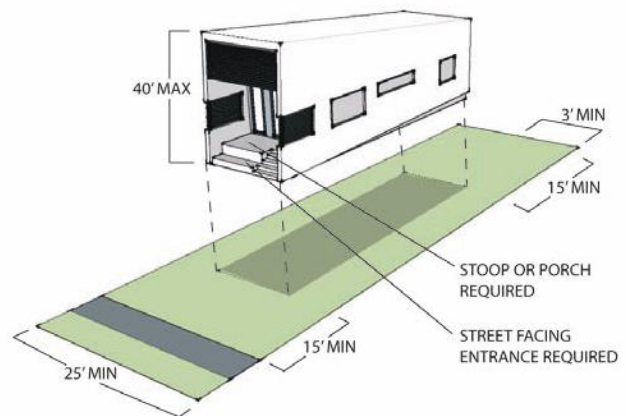
Residential parking/unit	2
Retail parking/ksf	0
Office Parking/ksf	0
Total Parking Spaces	2
Open Space (%)	38

Construction Costs

Parking Construction	
Surface/space	\$ 3000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA
Building Construction*	
Residential/sf	\$ 80
Retail/sf	\$ NA
Office/sf	\$ NA



Example of Single-family Residence



Recommended Prototype Diagram illustrating setbacks, facade requirements, and site coverage limitations.

Adapted From Louisiana Land Use Toolkit

Unified Development Code

Due to the non-conforming parcel sizes, revisions to the zoning are required to make redevelopment of both commercial and residential parcels in Choctaw Corridor feasible. The FuturEBR comprehensive planning effort currently underway is addressing UDC modifications. In the meantime, based on the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan, a blanket change of land use and zoning for the entire community to Planned Unit Development (PUD) is recommended.

This plan would become the PUD Concept Plan when the RDA applies for PUD zoning, and as such, would set forth the land uses, maximum densities, circulation, urban design, and landscape improvements to be followed as phases of the PUD Concept Plan are implemented.

The PUD designation would eliminate the issue of non-conforming uses and parcel sizes, allowing redevelopment to more readily occur. The PUD designation would offer great development flexibility and also preclude the need for individual developers to go through the unpredictable and expensive rezoning and plan review process. Because the planning concept for the area would be approved during the PUD rezoning process, only the specific development plans would need to be approved as phases are developed.

Acquiring the PUD designation would require preparation and submittal of a PUD application to the City-Parish Planning Commission. In instances with multiple land owners over a large area, a minimum of 51% of the land owners would need to provide written approval of the proposed land use and zoning change. The PUD application would utilize the Choctaw Corridor CIP plan as the PUD Concept Plan. It would need to be submitted six weeks prior to the Planning Commission meeting. If approved, it would go before the Metro Council three weeks later. Following PUD rezoning, a development plan for each phase of the CIP PUD must be submitted for review and approval by the Planning Staff. No further approval by the Planning Commission or Metro Council would be required unless a phase deviated from the Concept Plan by more than 10%. The PUD land use and zoning designations would stay in effect with the property as long as the initial phase begins construction within three years. The blanket rezoning to PUD should be accomplished through a joint effort of the RDA and the Metro Councilperson.

To ensure the urban design intent of the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan is implemented throughout each development phase of the approved PUD Concept Plan, it is recommended that a design stipulation be part of the PUD



Figure 17: Catalyst Area Context Map

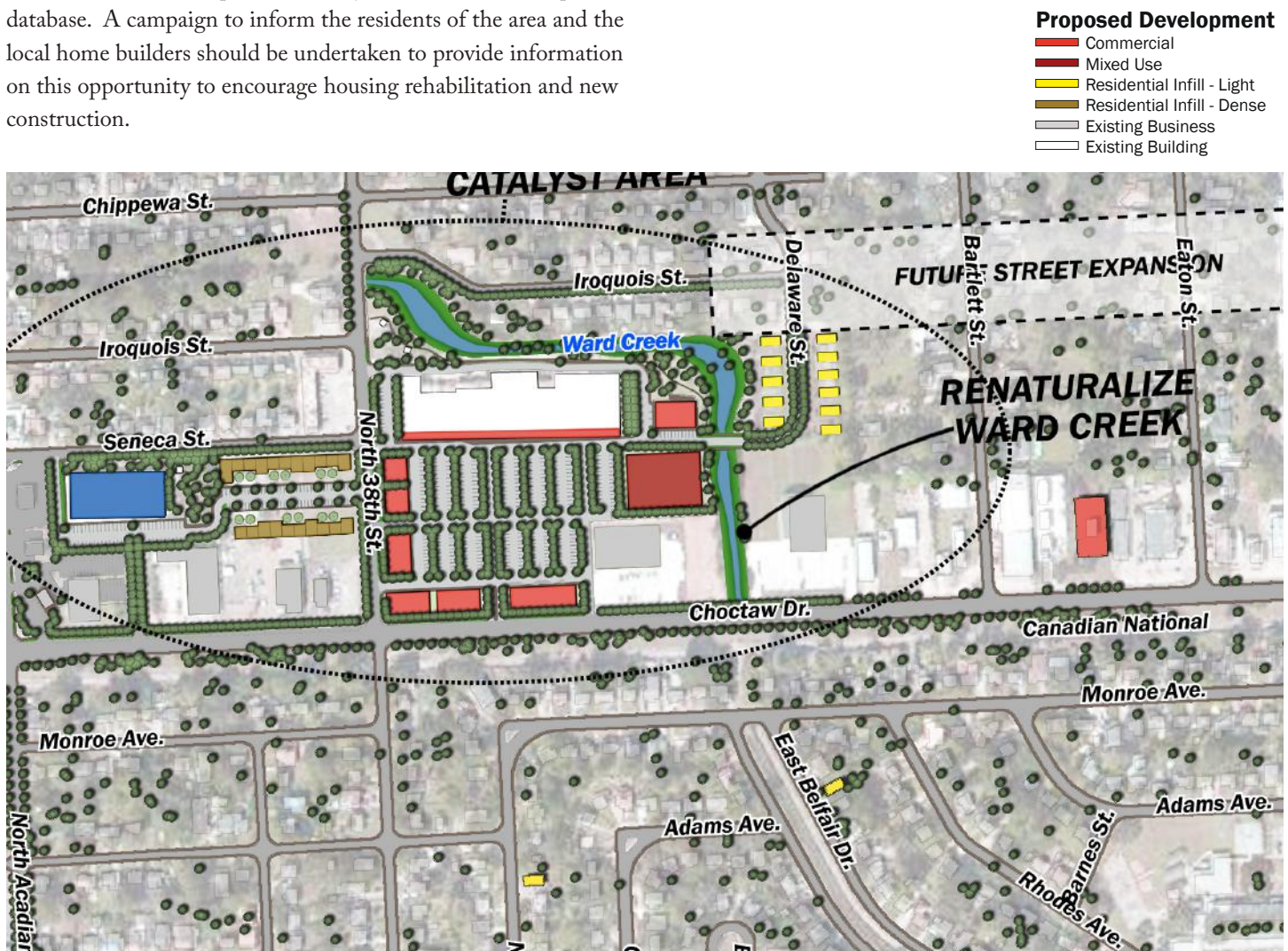
Plank Road to N. Acadian Thruway

submittal. Specifically, the PUD Concept Plan would require all implementation phases comply with the RDA's CIP Design Guidelines, to be subsequently prepared, and undergo design review under these guidelines by City-Parish Planning staff. The CIP Design Guidelines would include standards for both public and private developments including elements such as lighting levels, signage types and sizes, streetscape design, and construction materials as well as building envelopes, curb cuts, building fenestration, landscaping, and parking lot design.

We recommend that the RDA and the City-Parish strongly encourage combining adjacent lots into one residential parcel for redevelopment as a single-family home. The PUD Zoning designation facilitates this effort because it sets forth the maximum density housing allowed. Combining lots reduces density below maximum, requiring no further approvals. The East Baton Rouge City-Parish Planning Commission has an easy method for combining lots for redevelopment. The single owner of multiple contiguous lots or multiple owners of contiguous lots direct City-Parish Planning staff to combine the lots. The staff records this and updates the City Parish's online GIS parcel database. A campaign to inform the residents of the area and the local home builders should be undertaken to provide information on this opportunity to encourage housing rehabilitation and new construction.

Commercial parcels would also benefit from PUD rezoning of the entire target area, providing flexibility for redevelopment of urban infill sites and for adaptive reuse of older buildings, particularly with regard to providing reduced parking compared to that required by existing zoning. The portion of the proposed commercial Catalyst Project located on the west side of Plank Road is already zoned as PUD.

The Comprehensive Plan for East Baton Rouge Parish, FuturEBR, is currently being completed. It is anticipated that when this Plan is released, in the spring of 2011, new land use tools will be proposed. It may be that these FuturEBR recommendations would better serve the desired goals of the Choctaw Corridor CIP and should be considered at that time.



N. Acadian Thruway to Eaton Street

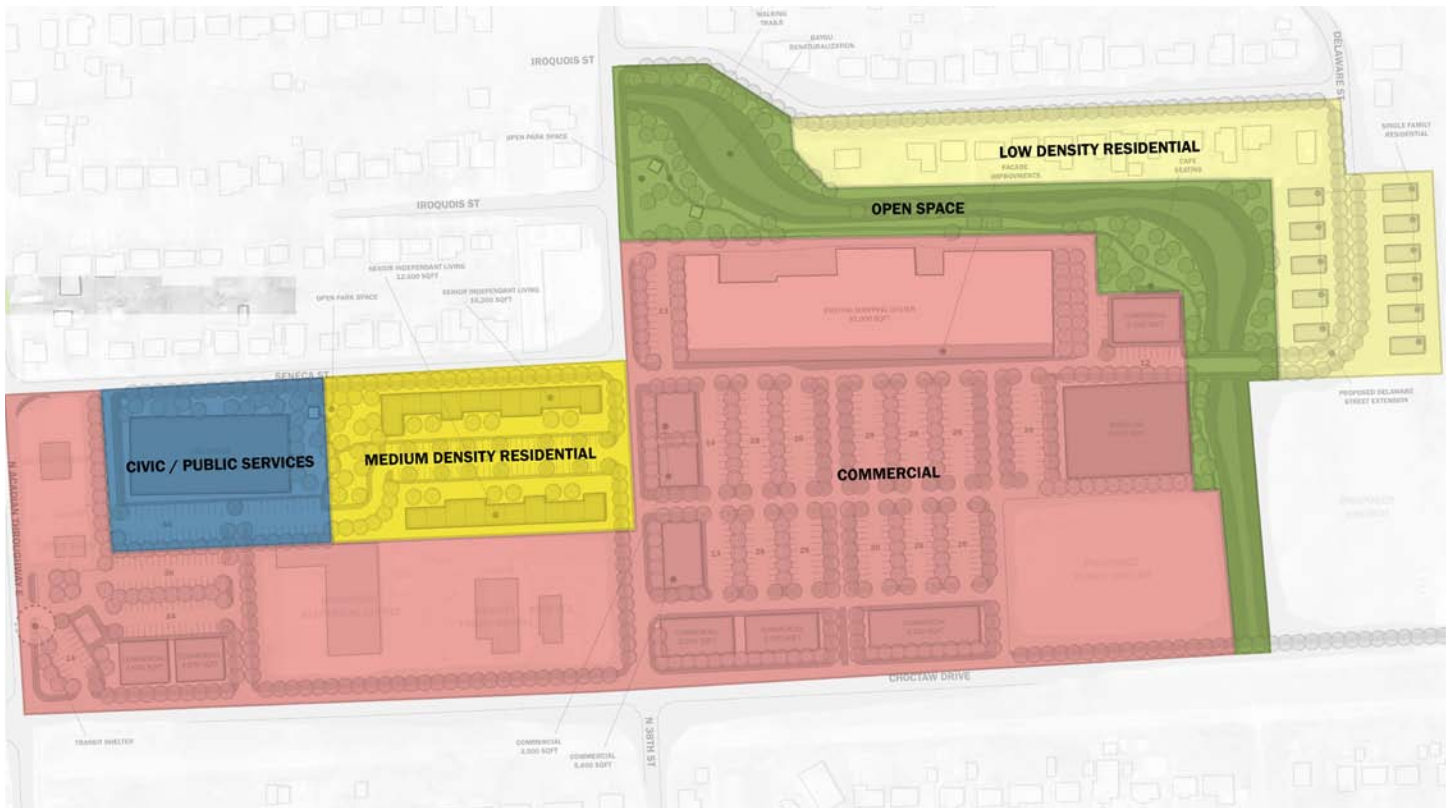


Figure 18: Catalyst Area Program Diagram

Catalyst Project

Site

The area identified as the Catalyst Project site for the Choctaw Corridor is bound on the west by North Acadian Thruway, on the east by a proposed extension of Delaware Street, on the north by Ward Creek, and on the south by Choctaw Drive. The development is centered around the existing Choctaw Village Shopping Center, providing an added mode of visibility to the project. *See figure 17.*

Program

Community input received at the Visioning Workshop indicated a desire for mixed-use and commercial opportunities as well as single-family homes, senior living facilities, and community services around the existing Choctaw Village Shopping Center on Choctaw Drive. The market assessment for the neighborhood also showed a gap in these services within the two and three mile market area radii.

The Catalyst Project plan seeks to build on the familiarity of the Choctaw Village Shopping Center and take advantage of the available tracts of land near it. *See figure 18.*

First, intense efforts are recommended to work with the owner of the existing shopping center to improve the facilities with façade upgrades and joint marketing efforts by an invigorated merchants association. At the same time, vacant and underutilized parcels adjoining this property would be slated for acquisition and the development of new mixed-use facilities (commercial space on the ground floor with housing on the second floor), parking, and new single-family housing. The existing parking lot is proposed to be realigned and resurfaced, providing safer and more attractive access to the property.

Strengthening the commercial presence of the Choctaw Corridor is a key component of the Catalyst Project. The installation of several new commercial facilities along Choctaw Drive and North 38th Street will make a visible and important impact on the effectiveness of the Catalyst Project. Following public workshops and during preparation of this report, property and business owners began refurbishing existing buildings and improving properties. Specifically, these enhancements include façade improvements to the building near Lindsey’s Diner, site improvements on the adjacent lot, and the construction of a new Dollar General Store just west of Ward Creek. With these activities underway, community residents, local businesses and

builders, as well as developers and business from outside of the Choctaw Corridor will be encouraged to invest in the changes to this community.

Building on this momentum, the proposed senior living facility and the adaptive reuse of the existing warehouse on Seneca Street into a civic center will be generated using public-private partnerships.

Catalyst Project

The plan developed for the Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project area will be anchored by enhancements to the existing commercial building and property. The renaturalization of Ward Creek along the property's eastern side is recommended and will provide both ecological and recreational benefits to the community and its residents. Similar renaturalization projects completed in other areas have served to increase property values and attract new investments to the area. A park is proposed at the headway of the Creek that includes lighting, outdoor seating, and a trail. Community inspired crosswalk designs, lighting, and railroad safety crossing will be proposed where Ward Creek crosses Choctaw Drive and continues into Belfair Subdivision. Within the proposed Catalyst Project are several more commercial and mixed-use opportunities. Property to the west of North 38th Street is proposed to house a senior living facility and a community center. East of Ward Creek, an extension of Delaware Street is proposed, providing direct access to the new development and allowing for additional single-family homes. *See figures 19 and 20.*

Graphic representations are included showing urban design elements proposed for the Catalyst Projects. *See figures 21-23.*

Transportation & Infrastructure

Roadways

The roadway and street network in the immediate vicinity of the Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project will experience additional traffic when the proposed project is fully developed. This is based on the level of additional traffic that will be generated by the proposed addition of approximately 50,000 square feet of new commercial space to complement the existing 81,000 square foot shopping center on the site, nearly 30,000 square feet of senior independent living space, a 27,000 square foot Civic Center, and 11 new single-family residential units. However, land uses on the site are not specific enough to allow traffic projections at this time. At full build out it may be necessary to improve the Choctaw Drive - North 38th Street intersection, which will serve

as a primary (but not exclusive) main entrance into the Catalyst Project area. Another site access point will be on North Acadian Thruway. Seneca Street will also afford site access, as will a proposed Delaware Street extension into the site and North 38th Street coming from the neighborhoods north of the Catalyst Project.

Internal vehicular circulation and parking on the Catalyst Project appear to be adequate and quite functional, minimizing excessive site-generated traffic on neighborhood streets such as Seneca Street, Iroquois Street, and Delaware Street. For this reason, ingress and egress for truck traffic and deliveries to the Catalyst Project should be confined to the Choctaw Drive - North 38th Street intersection.

A traffic impact analysis should be performed to validate the need for improvements to the Choctaw Drive - North 38th Street intersection. However, in order to generate traffic projections, it will be necessary to specify the types of commercial uses that will be located on the site. Care must be taken to avoid the overuse of the North Acadian Thruway - Seneca Street intersection for site ingress/egress, as this could have an adverse impact on the adjacent residential properties.

Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access to the Catalyst Project is lacking south of Choctaw Drive. Such access is hampered by the Canadian National Railway as well as the width and traffic on Choctaw Drive, a four-lane roadway, both of which act as barriers for pedestrians. Pedestrian access from the neighborhood north of the Catalyst Project should flow easily into the site, taking advantage of the proposed landscaped sidewalks and new walking trails proposed for the headway of Ward Creek at the intersection of Iroquois Street and North 38th Street.

The Choctaw Drive - North 38th Street intersection, however, will need to be made much more pedestrian-friendly if the site is to offer access to pedestrians from south of the railroad track. A community inspired crosswalk is proposed for this area which would include pedestrian-activated crossing signals and proper advance signing on all approaches to this intersection.

An additional option for pedestrian visitors will be the re-naturalized Ward Creek that will connect North 38th Street with areas south of Choctaw Drive. It is recommended that as this re-naturalization is completed and expanded to reach into areas farther south of the immediate Choctaw Corridor vicinity, a pedestrian crossing at Choctaw Drive be implemented. A pedestrian actuated signal on either side of Choctaw Drive would need to be installed due to the 4-lane width of Choctaw Drive at



N. Acadian Thruway to N. 38th Street

Figure 19: Catalyst Plan



N. 38th Street to Delaware Street



Figure 20: Catalyst Plan Tilt Up Before and After

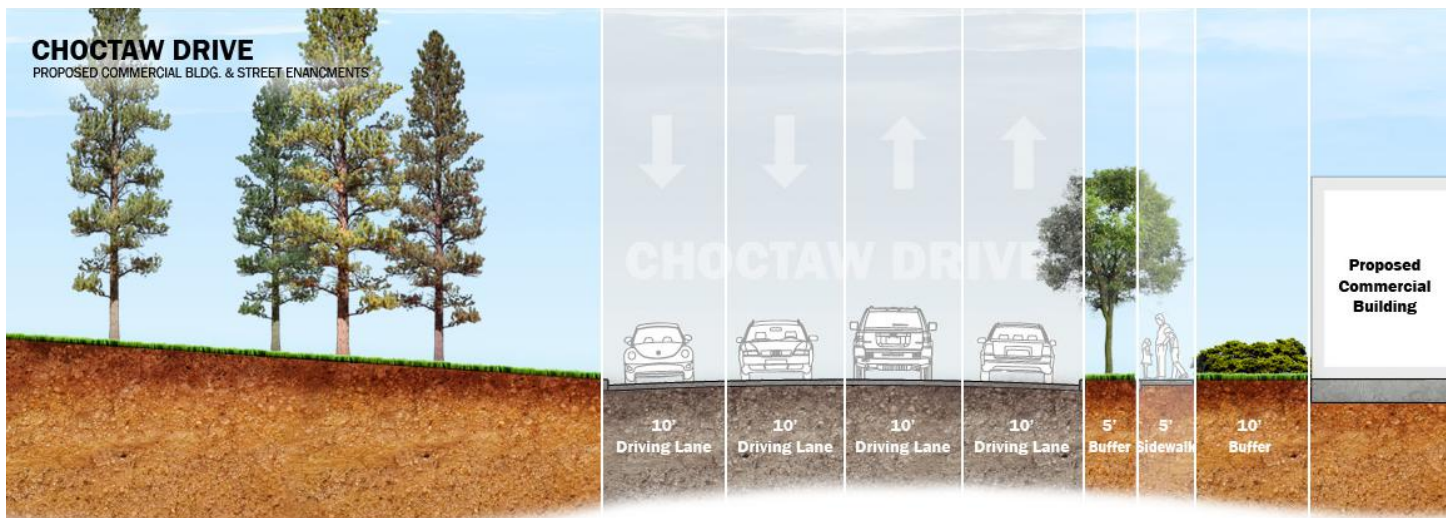


Figure 21
NEW ADDITIONS



Figure 22
NEW ADDITIONS



Figure 23

NEW ADDITIONS

this location. It may also be necessary to install a small median area to allow safe refuge for pedestrians who may not have fully crossed within the allotted time.

Finally, an additional community inspired crosswalk is proposed at the intersection of Seneca Street and North 38th Street. This will facilitate circulation by the future residents of the proposed senior living facility as well as users of the proposed community center west of North 38th Street.

The suggested placement of crosswalks and other pedestrian-oriented features must be accompanied by other improvements designed to ensure safety and enhance the pedestrian experience to and from the Catalyst Project. *See figure 18.* These recommendations include:

- » ADA compliance in the location of pedestrian-actuated crosswalk signal buttons
- » Inclusion of ADA compliant wheelchair ramps and ramp locations
- » Inclusion of crosswalk signage of a design and placement in accordance with Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards
- » Sidewalk improvements constructed to a minimum 5' width, wider where permitted by existing right-of-way
- » The use of bollards and planting to clearly delineate pedestrian-only travel paths
- » Provision of a safe pedestrian crossing of the railroad tracks at North 38th Street using Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines as a minimum standard

The overall design of the Catalyst Project promotes pedestrian access and neighborhood connectivity, two very desirable features. To reinforce community identity and articulate entrance into the area, community-inspired designs for all crosswalks are recommended. Colorful designs created by artists in the

community would be installed in the roadway with bricks or colored concrete, or painted by community members themselves using low VOC epoxy paint made for such applications.

Transit Service

The proposed Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project is directly served by only one CATS transit line (Fairfield route). A transit shelter is proposed on North Acadian Thruway north of Choctaw Drive to serve riders of the Fairfield route, however better overall transit access would be afforded by implementing a minor modification to the Fairfield route. The route could be altered to have it enter the Catalyst Project at Seneca Street and make a right turn on North 38th Street, with another right turn on Choctaw Drive. The bus would then turn right at North Acadian Thruway to resume its normal route. This route alteration would add no more than two to three minutes to the route, but it would greatly increase the transit accessibility of the Catalyst Project site. Transit shelters have been included at the Catalyst Project entrance on North 38th Street at Seneca Street in anticipation of this route modification. *See figure 24.*

Infrastructure

From an infrastructure standpoint, water and storm water drainage are adequate to handle the additional demand (marginal in the case of drainage) generated by the proposed Catalyst Project. If the Catalyst Project succeeds in causing the neighborhood to grow, water and drainage should not be constraints on this growth. The water system has a great deal of excess treatment capacity. Regarding the drainage system, a considerable amount of new growth would need to take place before the City-Parish would be faced with the need to improve drainage in a substantial way. It should be noted, however, that at



Key Map for Figures 21 - 23



Figure 24: Transit Stop Locations & Proposed Route Change

Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Bus Stops
- New Bus Routes
- Proposed Bus Stops

least part of the Catalyst Project appears to fall within the 100-year flood plain. See the *FEMA Flood Zone Map in the appendix of this document*. Therefore, care should be taken in the design of specific buildings to meet base floor elevation requirements and to otherwise minimize the chances of flooding on the site. The proposed renaturalization of Ward Creek includes the removal of the concrete lining and a widening of the canal banks. This will also alleviate some of the threat of flooding.

Sanitary Sewer

Regarding sanitary sewer service, the City-Parish is currently engaged in a massive sewer system comprehensive rehabilitation program according to the terms of the Consent Decree it signed

along with the EPA and LDEQ in 2001. There are currently two projects underway in the Choctaw Corridor schedule to begin in 2010 that will greatly benefit this community as well as the Catalyst Project.

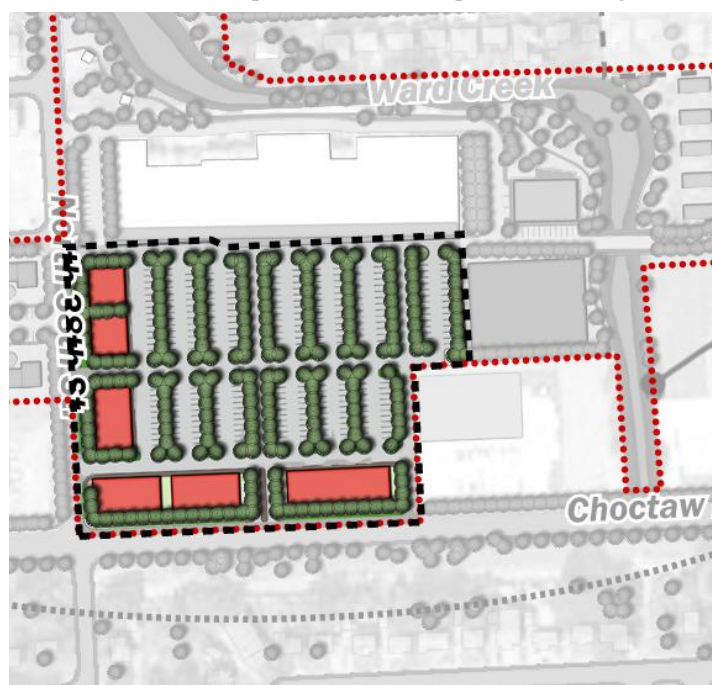
To the extent the Catalyst Project is successful in spurring new residential and commercial growth, it should be understood that there is only “limited available capacity for future growth.” An assessment of the existing sewer treatment system using hydraulic modeling produced an expected peak hour flow at the Central WWTP of 62 MGD following program completion. This facility’s current peak hour design capacity is 65 MGD. This plant, therefore, has adequate treatment capacity and enough additional capacity to handle a certain amount of future growth.

The additional demand to be directly generated by the Catalyst Project should have no noticeable impact on the Central WWTP. At some point in the future, particularly when the Catalyst Project reaches full build out and performs as hoped, generating infill development in the larger Choctaw Corridor community, the flow into the Central WWTP could approach the plant's capacity.

average size of 8,000 square feet per building and a construction cost of \$85 per square foot, the construction of each building would total approximately \$1.3 million. This figure also takes into account parking, land purchase price, and soft costs. The complete financial pro formas can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Financial Analysis

In an effort to determine the feasibility of the Catalyst Project, financial pro formas investigating several different financing options for each development type were performed and are included in the Appendix of this document. The following is an example financial analysis based on the development types included in Phase 1. *See figure 25.* The components of Phase 1 of the Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project are centered within the existing Choctaw Village Shopping Center property on Choctaw Drive. It will consist of reconfiguration of the existing parking lot and construction of new commercial outparcels closer to Choctaw Drive and North 38th Street. At the Visioning Workshop and during interviews, stakeholders identified this shopping center as both an asset and a challenge, recognizing its prominence but also seeing the potential for upgrades. Reconfiguration of the parking lot to accommodate these new buildings would provide an additional 36,000 square feet of retail space. Assuming an



Proposed Development

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential Infill - Light
- Residential Infill - Dense
- Existing Business
- Existing Building

Figure 25: Phase One Implementation

Community-Wide Recommendations

The Choctaw Corridor Catalyst Project establishes the spark needed to begin the revitalization effort in the area and provides the framework for a prosperous, sustainable, and smart future. It will be a resource for the RDA and City-Parish departments to use when considering development proposals, providing financing and funding strategies, and prioritizing community needs. It will help expand the Choctaw Corridor's economic role while protecting and enhancing its rich cultural and ecological resources. However, to achieve true revitalization of the Corridor, we must look beyond the Catalyst Project boundaries at the community as a whole. The following recommendations set forth the steps required to most effectively revitalize and rebuild the Choctaw Corridor community. The successful implementation is dependent on the effective partnership of the public sector, the community, and private investment. Additionally, innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship are to be encouraged, nurtured, and supported. This fuels initiative, builds wealth, and leads to a more diversified and self-sustaining economic base for the community at large. *See figure 26.*

Refine a strategy to resolve adjudicated, blighted, vacant, abandoned, and brownfield properties.

There are a number of adjudicated, abandoned, unmaintained, and otherwise vacant properties in the Choctaw Corridor that currently contribute to a sense of blight. The RDA has already begun acquiring adjudicated properties in the area, and should strategically assemble other lots for redevelopment in accordance with the CIP. Since the corridor has historically been the location of many industrial uses, it is likely that some sites may be contaminated. A number of brownfields have been identified but more are possible, *see figure 16*. The City-Parish Planning Commission should focus the efforts of the Brownfield Steering Committee on the Choctaw Corridor to identify any additional potential brownfields, conduct Initial Assessments, and take steps to remediate in order to bring these properties back into commerce.

Implement a robust and consistent code enforcement program.

Preliminary analysis, interviews, and workshop feedback suggest that the Choctaw Corridor needs additional code enforcement for buildings and parcels that are in dilapidated or unsafe condition. This will help turn around the image of the area for existing residents and businesses as well as future investors. The City has recently implemented a code enforcement court and boosted the

number of inspectors.

Leverage public financial resources to stimulate private investment.

A number of financial resources are available, not only through the RDA, but also through the City-Parish, the state, and federal programs. These resources such as tax credits, rehabilitation loan programs, and revenue bonds can be leveraged to attract private investment in development projects that earn reasonable returns for private investors and provide projects that will enhance and benefit the community.

Implement/facilitate policies that enhance economic opportunity for residents.

To improve economic opportunities for residents in the Choctaw Corridor area, the City-Parish and the RDA should facilitate involvement and investment by area citizens in redevelopment and public improvement projects. Locally owned businesses should be provided special consideration to relocate and expand to new development areas. In addition, policies should address residents' life skills development, workforce training, entrepreneurship, and micro-loans.

Improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation through streetscape improvements .

Throughout most of the corridor, Choctaw Drive does not have sidewalks or bicycle paths to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel. The sidewalks that do exist are narrow, overgrown with vegetation in many places, and provide no trees for shade. Additionally, the entrances to most of the existing commercial properties along Choctaw Drive do not have actual driveways, but rather roll over curbs the length of the property, making pedestrian travel even more dangerous. Enhancements should be made in the form of bike paths, new sidewalks, widening of existing sidewalks, barrier curbs, tree plantings, and lighting. Regulations should also be made regarding any new driveway installments and upgrades to existing facilities that would disallow the current standard of concreting the entire frontage and using rollover curbs.

North Acadian Thruway is the primary north-south connector between the Choctaw Corridor and surrounding areas. A plan utilizing the Mayor-President's Green Light Program funds is in place for a tree planting project in the North Acadian Thruway median between Winbourne Avenue and Chippewa Street. As additional funds and properties become available, this plan should be continued the length of the median and enhanced to include



Figure 26: Community-Wide Recommendations

Plank Road to N. Acadian Thruway

pedestrian elements such as sidewalks and lighting, allowing it to serve as a major pedestrian corridor.

Other recommendations include working with Baton Rouge Green to initiate a tree planting program on major arterials, encouraging the railroads to allow planting of right-of-way banks with wildflowers, groundcovers, or other low maintenance vegetation to beautify right of way that impacts the area, and adding a paved walking trail/bike path at the base of the railroad track embankment to help turn the right-of-way into a community asset.

Connect streets within the neighborhood.

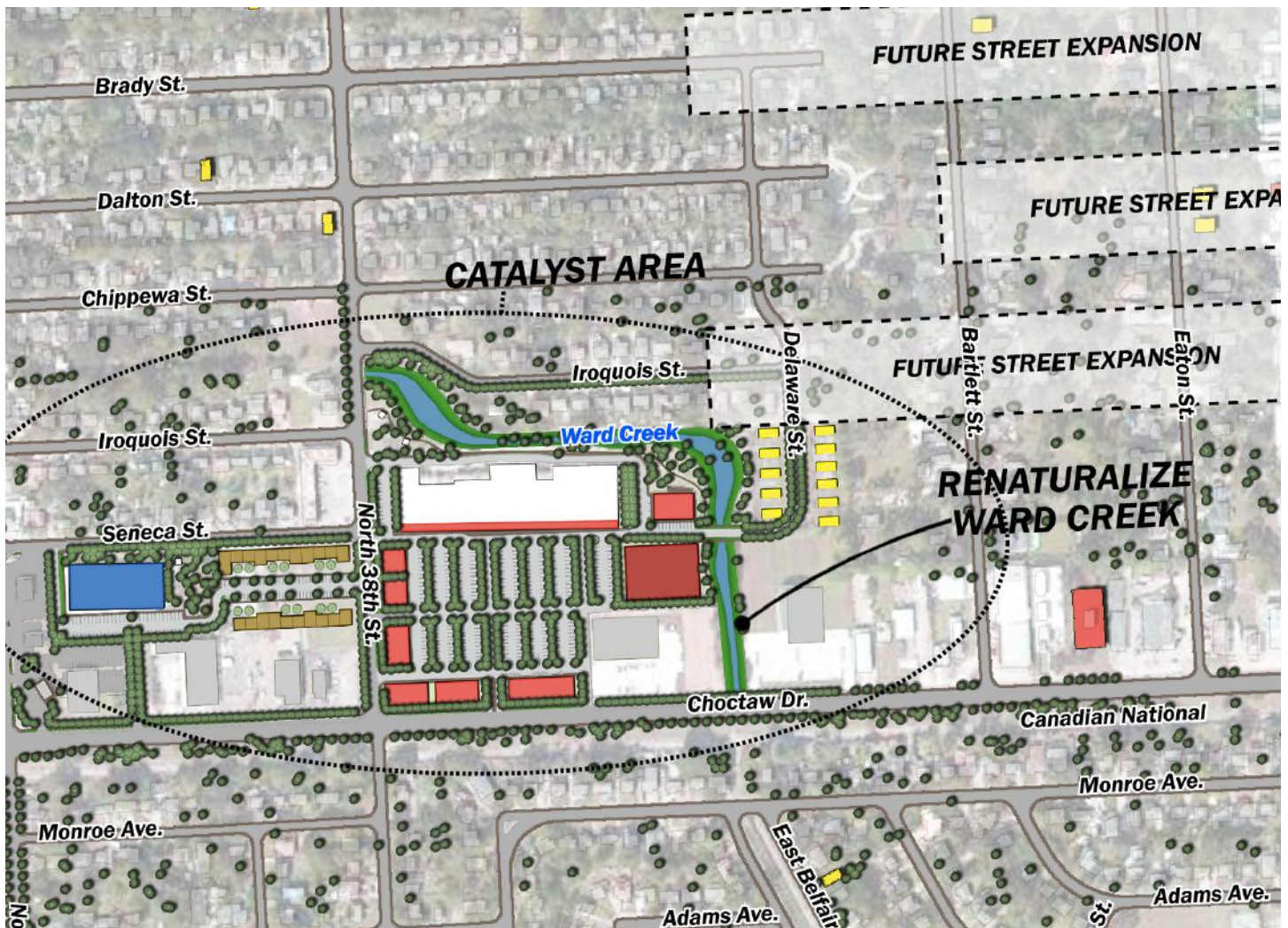
North of the Catalyst Project, there are several east-west streets that dead end just beyond Delaware Street. Extending these streets to connect with Addison Drive would allow the connection of several neighborhoods. To provide better accessibility to neighborhood residents and better align with Complete Streets policies facilitating these street connections is necessary.

A similar issue exists to the northwest of the Catalyst Project where there are no north-south connectors between Iroquois Street and Ontario Street. Properties that could facilitate these connections should be acquired as they become available.

Regional Connections

Blight in the Choctaw Corridor community is the manifestation of economic disinvestment in a area that is not adequately linked to the mainstream economy. To address conditions in Choctaw Corridor, this plan seeks to connect the target area to environmental, economic, and societal systems beyond the community, particularly to nearby downtown Baton Rouge.

Choctaw Corridor residents have access to several major roadways, connecting them by vehicles both in an east-west and north-south direction to the remainder of the Parish. However, for pedestrians and bicyclists, these connections are much less



N. Acadian Thruway to Eaton Street

developed, but can be provided. Ward Creek's headway is within the community at the intersection of North 38th Street and Iroquois Street. The Creek passes through the eastern end of the proposed Catalyst Project then crosses beneath Choctaw Drive, passing through several neighborhoods and connecting area parks such as Belfair Park, Gus Young Park, and Webb Park. Providing a naturalized greenway along the banks of this creek featuring walking and biking paths would provide residents of the Choctaw Corridor a safe and enjoyable connection southward to Webb Park.

Additionally, if the streetscape improvements recommended along Choctaw Drive were continued westward beyond the study area boundaries, they would connect to North 17th Street enhancements recommended as part of the RDA's CIP for the Northdale Community project. This streetscape improvement

project is proposed to connect Choctaw Corridor to BREC's Memorial Stadium and the future Downtown Greenway proposed by the Downtown Development District, which in turn is planned to connect southward under I-110 and I-10 to City Park. Northward, pedestrian improvements for North Acadian Thruway up to Winbourne Avenue are proposed. These improvements would be similar to those about to be under construction on North Acadian Thruway south of Choctaw Drive under the Mayor-President's Green Light program. Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle paths along Winbourne eastward would connect the community to Howell Park and Hurricane Creek.

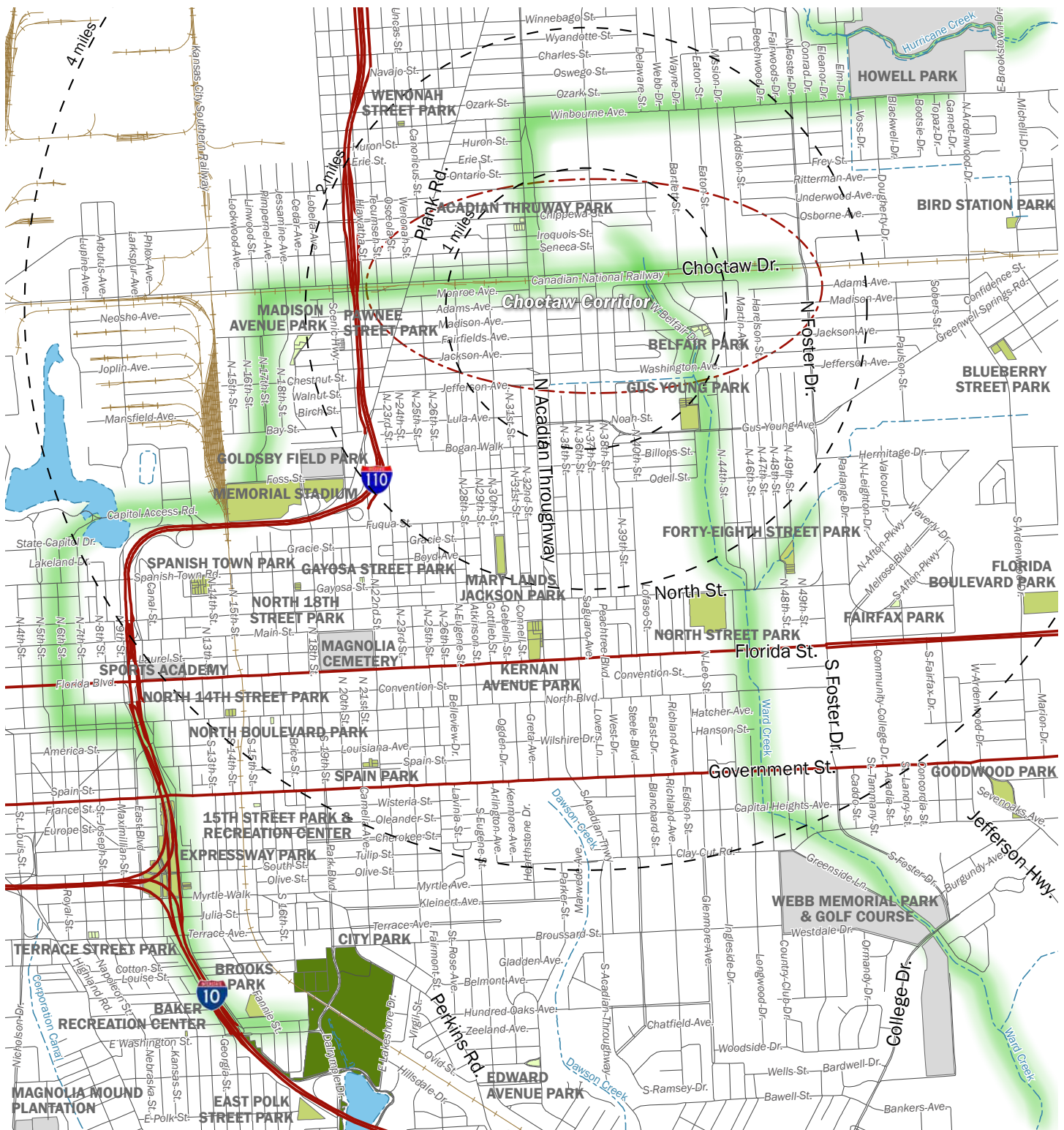
See figure 27.

Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies

Proposed Development

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Residential Infill - Light
- Residential Infill - Dense
- Existing Business
- Existing Building



Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- BREC Parks**
 - Special Use Park
 - Community Park
 - Neighborhood Park
 - Mini-Park
 - Greenway

Figure 27: Regional Connections

CIP | Implementation Strategies

Implementation Priorities & Responsibilities

The Choctaw Corridor consists of commercial businesses with industrial uses scattered throughout the target area. There are a few small shopping centers providing limited goods and services for the residents of the surrounding community, and some specialty commercial establishments at the major intersections with Choctaw Drive including Plank Road, North Acadian Thruway, and Foster Drive. The market assessment for this area identifies the need for neighborhood retail establishments to serve the community, especially since approximately 15% of the population does not have access to automobiles.

The first steps by RDA in implementing the CIP should focus on working with the City-Parish Department of Public Works to make improvements to the Choctaw Corridor streetscapes. This work will assist in establishing a stronger, more positive identity for the Choctaw Corridor community. Because of its retail and industrial character and the existing rail line, the Corridor functions as a barrier between the primarily single-family neighborhoods on either side of Choctaw Drive. Small public improvements like repairing existing sidewalks, establishing visible pedestrian crosswalks, and improving the street lighting would signal the positive changes that are in store for the Choctaw Corridor. Along with RDA investments, these improvements would help bring together businesses, the Canadian National Railway, and residents in order to improve the economic conditions within this community. By having these improvements underway, the community will gain confidence in the redevelopment process as the RDA begins to implement the rest of the plan.

Business owners, both those who were and who were not participants in this CIP's community planning process, are important elements to the implementation process. A separate meeting for them should be arranged to present the plan and tools available from the RDA. In an effort to accommodate business owners' schedules, consideration should be given to hosting this meeting as a breakfast or lunch gathering. Follow-up meetings will probably require visits to each business in order to identify specific upgrades to their facilities that would improve the character and economic viability of the Choctaw Corridor. Beginning with minor actions to the façade and street frontage, commercial and industrial uses can access RDA programs to improve their building appearances. Curb cuts should be consolidated, entrances and exits visually enhanced, fences or screens of unsightly areas should be constructed, roll down gates

should be eliminated so that merchandise is visible, and sidewalks and parking areas should be better illuminated.

Implementation Phase One

With the stage set for the overall Choctaw Corridor upgrade, the first phase of the Catalyst Project will then move forward. The Choctaw Village Shopping Center is currently privately held property, which will dictate all renovation and revitalization efforts. The RDA will assist the current or future owners in implementing the CIP recommendations using New Market Tax Credits and/or its other programs. Ultimately, the Choctaw Village Shopping Center is to be transformed into the commercial center of the community with rehabilitation of the existing strip of stores and redevelopment of the site, including additional retail in a mixed-use complex. However, it is important that existing business activity in the community be able to continue during the transformation so that the limited existing neighborhood retail services are undisturbed. The large underutilized parking area would initially be reconfigured to allow for new retail structures to be constructed at the intersection of North 38th Street and Choctaw Drive. To increase the visibility of the businesses along both Choctaw Drive and North 38th Street parking would be located at the interior of the space. Relocating parking behind retail businesses and away from the street requires fewer curb cuts into the busy thoroughfares and creates a more pedestrian-friendly environment. This location could attract national franchises, regional stores, or even tenants in the existing strip mall who have seen the success of this new concept of retail development. The plan proposes that the two structures that face Choctaw Drive be designed with outdoor seating to accommodate foodservice uses. *See figures 28 and 29.*

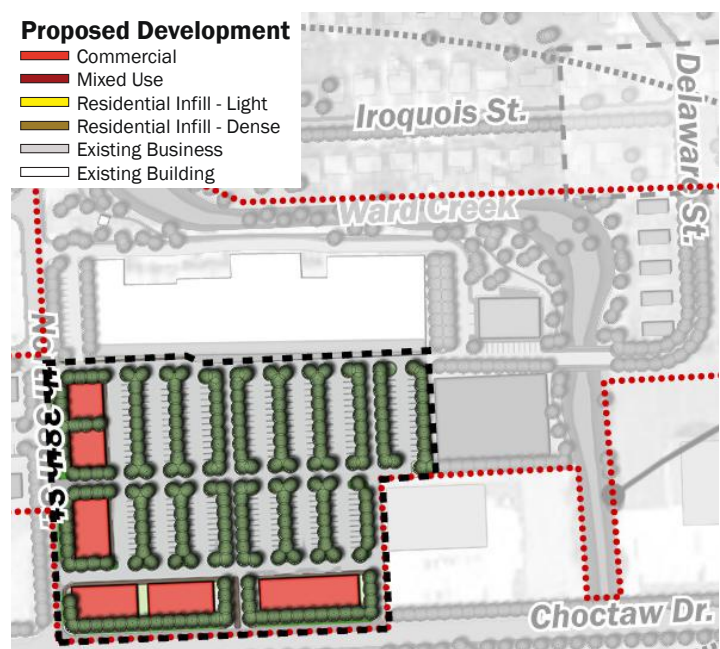


Figure 28: Implementation Phase One



Figure 29: Before and After Implementation of Phase One

Implementation Phase Two

Relocating smaller businesses to the new Phase One corner development frees up additional space for rehabilitating the existing grocery store into a new, more efficient business operation, and better allows for façade improvements in the second phase of the Catalyst Project. Expanding and improving this grocery store space should attract more upscale tenants and create opportunities for additional employment for community residents. Along with providing quality food at affordable prices, this type of retail has been used as an economic development tool for stabilizing neighborhoods due to its numerous entry-level positions. As tenants for the redevelopment are identified, the RDA should engage experienced workforce development entities to establish training programs that include work readiness skills, literacy upgrades, GED preparatory courses, and customer service skills. See figure 30.

In the residential portions of the surrounding areas, the conditions of the existing housing stock need to be addressed in the early stages of CIP implementation. Though not located directly on Choctaw Drive, improving these predominately single-family areas will help to solidify the community. Abandoned or vacant houses are havens for crime and illicit activities, and have an adverse impact on property values in the neighborhood. Getting these properties rehabilitated or redeveloped puts them back on the tax rolls and occupied with residents who provide a market for neighborhood commercial businesses. A process for housing development on scattered properties should be created that utilizes local entities when feasible. The RDA should work with the Office of Community Development to identify non-profits to become Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), and to identify qualified construction contractors or subcontractors to participate in the housing production process in the Choctaw Corridor community.

Implementation Phase Three

The restructuring of the parking lot and façade enhancements to the supermarket building set the stage for the third phase of the Catalyst Project. The parcel to the east of the supermarket building on the banks of Ward Creek would be developed as 25,000 square feet of mixed-use space with retail on the ground floor and office space and/or housing on the second level. This would be an ideal location for physicians' offices or loft style apartments. This development would share the parking area with Phases One and Two of the Catalyst Project. Just north of the mixed-use component in Phase Three and east of the supermarket building, a commercial building that would include at least one restaurant or café would also be constructed as part of Phase

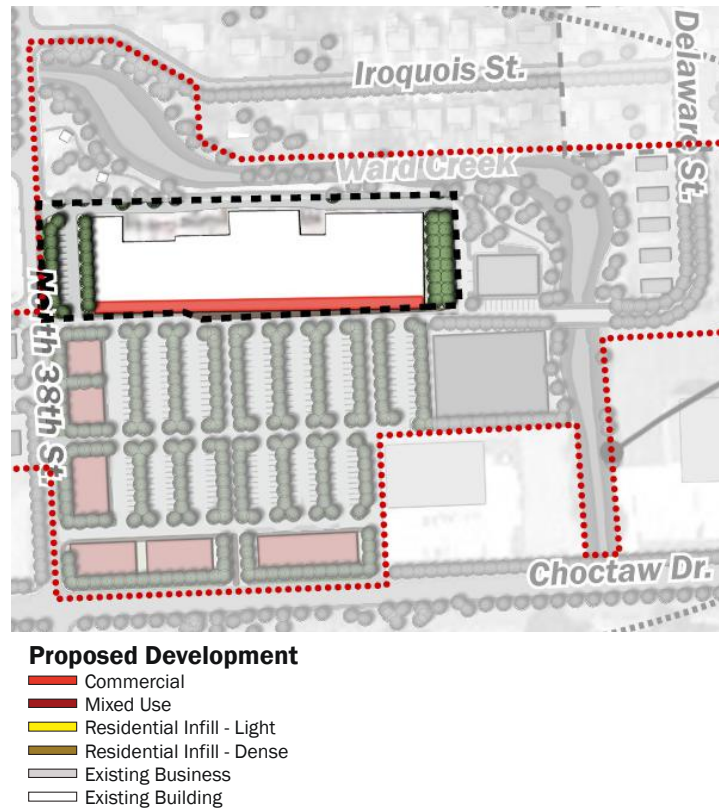


Figure 30: Implementation Phase Two

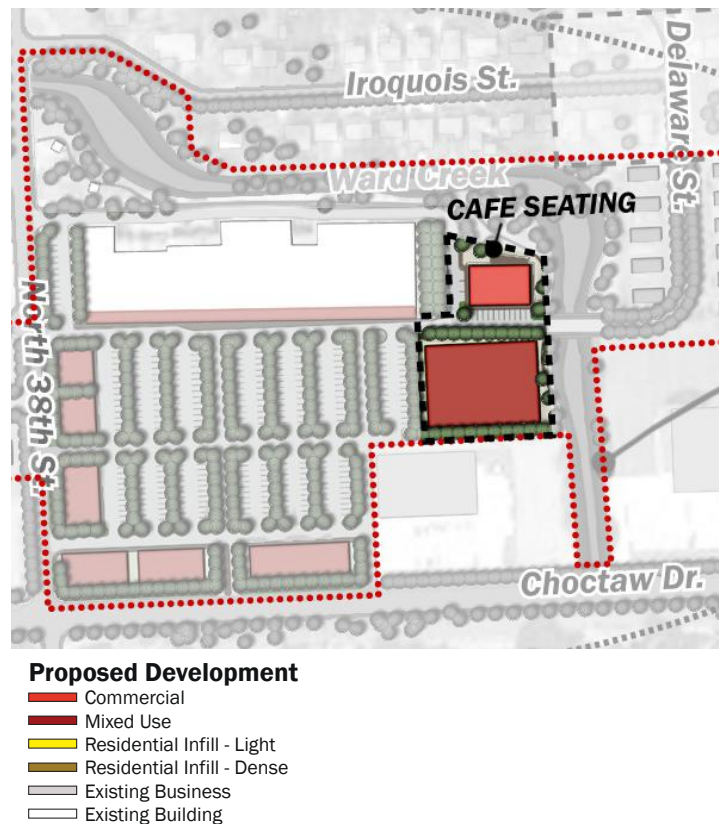


Figure 31: Implementation Phase Three

Three. Café seating located at the rear of the building would take advantage of the renaturalized Ward Creek, proposed in Phase Four. See figure 31.

Implementation Phase Four

In Phase Four of the Catalyst, a vacant site just east of Ward Creek has been identified for a single-family housing development. Following completion of the shopping center redevelopment, Ward Creek, a major water body in the Parish that runs behind the commercial site, will be re-naturalized and developed into an open space for the existing homes, and will act as a buffer between the residential site and commercial uses. The Creek's headway, at the intersection of Iroquois Street and North 38th Street will be developed into Ward Creek Park and will feature seating areas and walking trails. Access to the new homes would be via a proposed extension of Delaware Street which would then cross over Ward Creek and into the newly redeveloped Choctaw Village Shopping Center. See figures 32 and 34. In the longer term, as properties become available, the east-west streets just north of this area, which currently dead-end at Addison Street and Delaware Street, should be reconnected across Bartlett Street, Eaton Street, and Mission Drive to improve circulation and link neighborhoods as discussed in Community-Wide Recommendations.

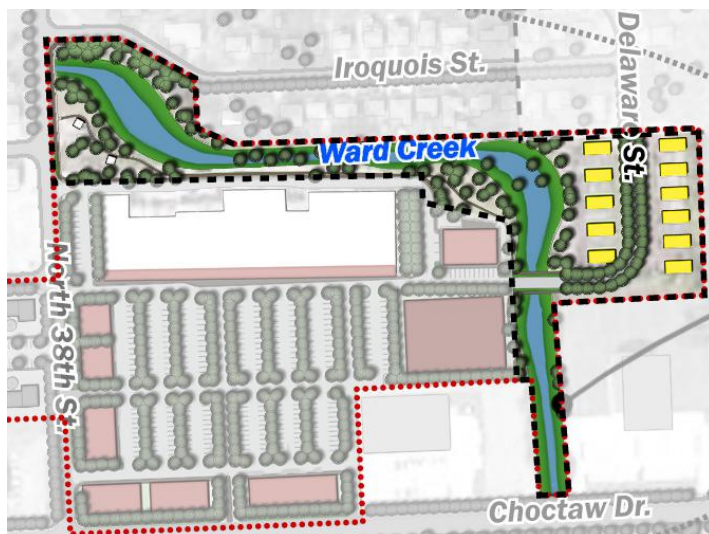


Figure 32: Implementation Phase Four

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

Implementation Phase Five

Another housing development site is proposed across 38th Street from the supermarket on Seneca Street, just north of the commercial area on Choctaw Drive. It will be implemented as Phase Five of the Catalyst Project. This location is proposed for a senior housing development. Similar to the garden apartment complex across from Istrouma High School, this project is intended to serve an independent elderly population in two story buildings of one bedroom and studio units. Residents of this development will have excellent access to commercial services in a walkable community. Eventually, the existing vacant warehouse building on Seneca Street would be adapted and reused as a Civic Center/Senior Center for the community. See figures 33 and 35.

While the Catalyst Project is being put in place in the center of the Choctaw Corridor, the RDA should be marketing vacant commercial and industrial sites for new light industrial and commercial uses. Several large vacant structures could easily be adaptively reused as live-work studios for artists and craftsmen or for incubator spaces for start-up companies. The new businesses would benefit from RDA-sponsored business development training and potential financing for expansion. These investments provide opportunities for economic development since there is the potential for successful start-up to grow into businesses that hire community residents.

Additional graphic representations of recommended urban design elements are found on the following pages in addition to the Implementation Strategies Matrix, which discusses responsible parties and time frames for implementation. See figures 36 and 37.

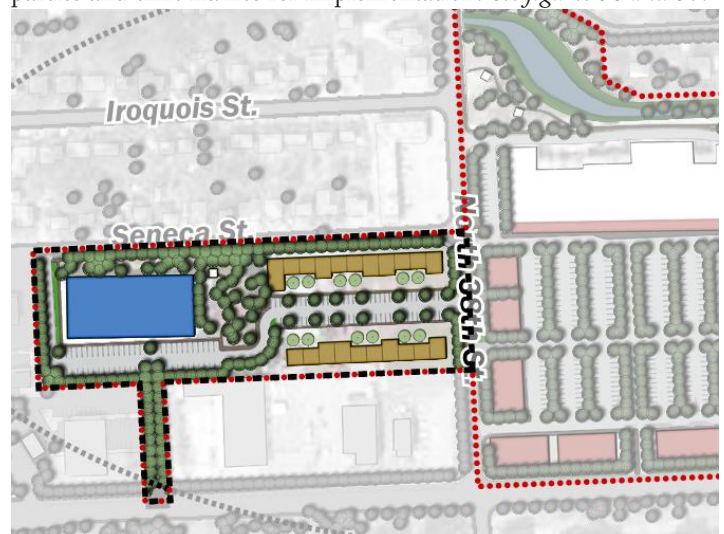


Figure 33: Implementation Phase Five

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

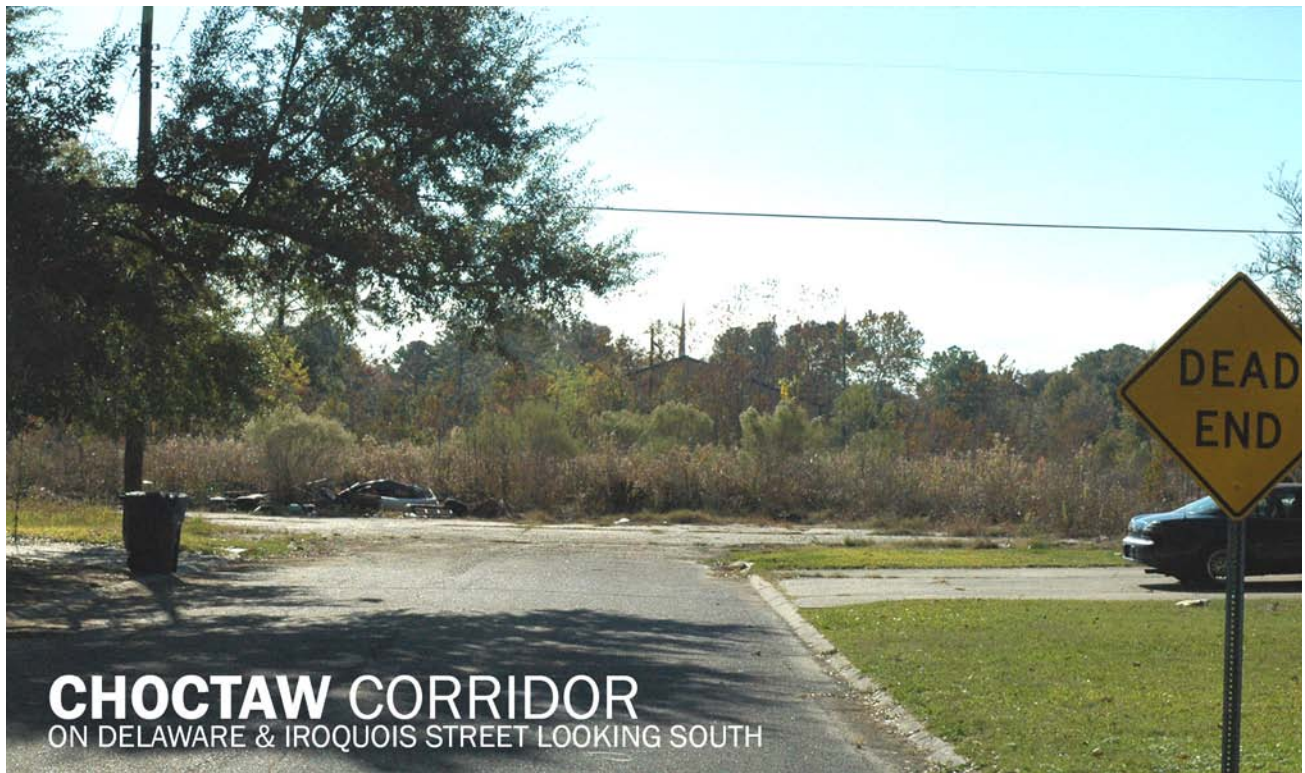


Figure 34: Before and After Implementation of Phase Four



Figure 35: Before & After Implementation of Phase Five

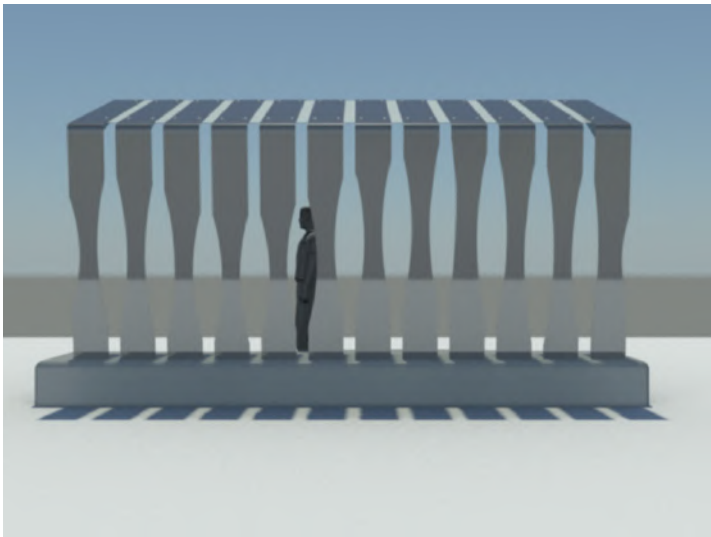
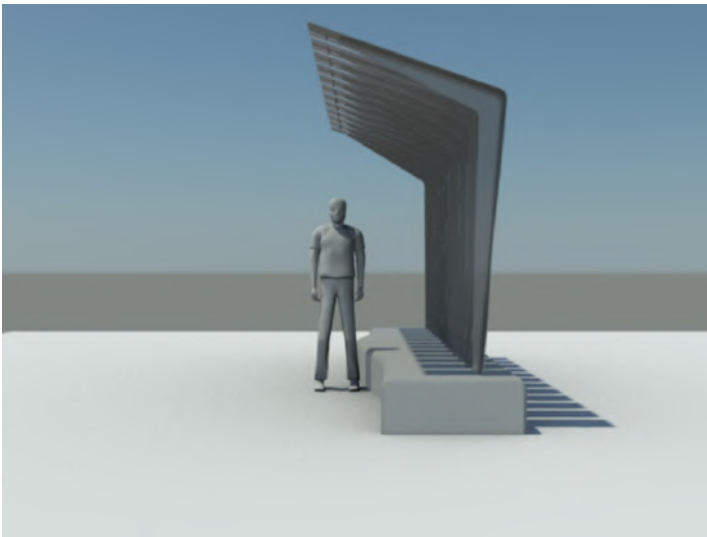


Figure 36: Transit Shelter Concept

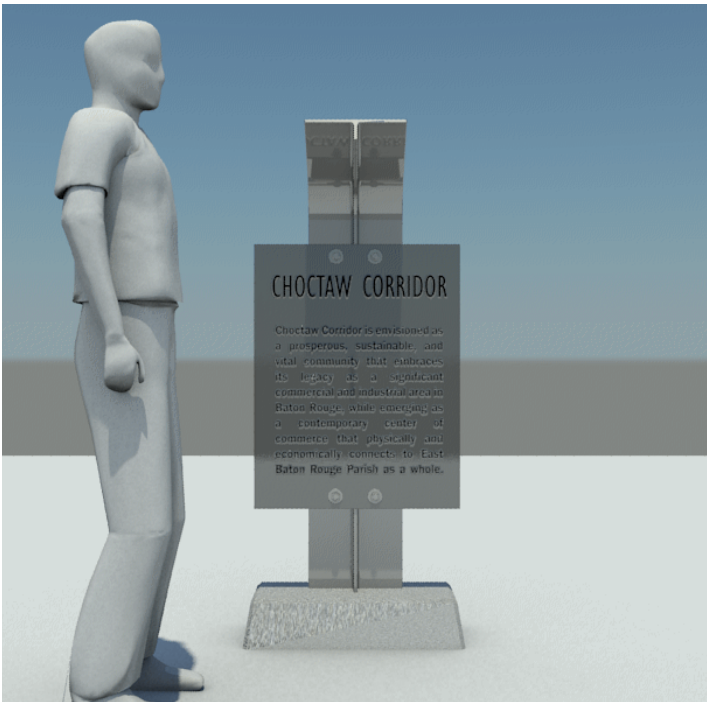


Figure 37: Neighborhood Signage Concept

CIP | IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES MATRIX KEY CODE

<u>Color</u>		<u>Description</u>
	Burgundy	Catalyst
	Grey	Transportation / Infrastructure
	Blue	Outreach / Community Involvement
	Tan	Code of Ordinances
	Green	Recreation
	Orange	Rehabilitation / Infill
	Lavender	Land Rehab

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Organization Name</u>
RDA	East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority
OCD	Office of Community Development
DPW	Department of Public Works
CPPC	City Parish Planning Commission
BREC	East Baton Rouge Recreation & Park Commission
DOTD	Department of Transportation & Development
CATS	Capital Area Transit System
BRHA	Baton Rouge Housing Authority
BRPD	Baton Rouge Police Department
METRO	Metro Council Member

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY: CHOCTAW CORRIDOR

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE ENTITY*</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
4th Q 2011					
OUTREACH		Host community meeting to review plan/timetable	RDA	Manage expectations of community and clearly define roles	64
OUTREACH		Coordinate capacity building proposal in CIP area with existing system	RDA/OCD	Implement plan to involve community in CIP process	64
REHAB		Identify and obtain applications for 2 façade improvements	RDA	Focus near Catalyst Project area	47
TRANSPORTATION		Coordinate streetscape improvements for Choctaw Drive	RDA/DPW	Evaluate numerous curb cuts, improve right-of-way, drainage, street trees, bikeways and sidewalks	48
OUTREACH		Select / assign Project Manager for tasks in community coordination	RDA/OCD	Approximately 1/3 time of Project Manager to oversee process of engaging community	64
OUTREACH		Meet with police department on addressing public safety concerns	RDA/BRPD	Assess the cost of establishing mobile police units at high crime locations	64
RECREATION		Coordinate Choctaw Drive RR ROW bike/pedestrian trail	RDA/DPW/BREC	Meet with railroad and identify potential public funding sources	49
LAND REHAB		Identify brownfields sites within the Corridor	CPPC	CPPC research and identify potential brownfields sites within the Corridor	49
1st Q 2012					
TRANSPORTATION		Plan & implement community inspired crosswalks	RDA/DPW	Assess major north-south streets: Plank Road, N. 38th Street, N. Acadian Thruway & N. Foster Drive	45
CODE		Institute building code enforcement	DPW/RDA	Target area around Catalyst Project site first	38
CATALYST		Begin discussions to assemble sites for Catalyst Project	RDA	Work with local property owners for investing/land lease options	53
REHAB/INFILL HOUSING		Establish housing rehab and construction program in surrounding neighborhoods	RDA/OCD	Assess property conditions and financial requirements	47
TRANSPORTATION		Plan streetscape improvements & funding for Choctaw Drive	DPW/RDA	Prioritize improvements with DPW plans and budgeting for target area	48
CATALYST		Facilitate redevelopment of Choctaw Village Shopping Center	RDA	Work with existing owner to Identify incentives for redevelopment or aid in sale to interested developer	53
CODE		Land use and zoning change to PUD	CPPC/RDA	RDA submits PUD application to CPPC	38
TRANSPORTATION		Review proposed transit operational improvements & coordinate with CIP	RDA/CATS	Establish goals for specific transit service improvements as CIP is implemented	45
LAND REHAB		Initial Assessment of brownfields	CPPC	Brownfields Steering Committee conduct Initial Assessments of identified brownfields	49
2nd Q 2012					
OUTREACH		Engage owners with planning on revitalization of existing commercial businesses	RDA	Meet with property owners and business operators to establish a Business Association	64
RECREATION		Plan and design improvements to publically controlled open spaces	BREC/RDA	Existing Gus Young Park, proposed Ward Creek Park, and Creek renaturalization	51
TRANSPORTATION		Groundbreaking for streetscape improvements along Choctaw Drive	DPW	Repair sidewalk on north edge of Choctaw Drive, improve lighting, and consolidate curb-cuts	48
TRANSPORTATION		Plan transit stops/shelters at key intersections	CATS/DPW	Seneca Street at North 38th Street and North Acadian Thruway at Choctaw Drive	45
CATALYST		Meet with Choctaw Village property owners on plans	RDA	Negotiate redevelopment of site	53
CODE		Land use and zoning change to PUD	CPPC/RDA	CPPC staff submits proposed changes to City-Parish Planning Commission & Metro Council	38
LAND REHAB		Remediate brownfields	CPPC	CPPC acquire EPA funding and remediate identified brownfields	49
3rd Q 2012					
CATALYST		Issue RFP for Phase One	RDA	Redevelopment of Choctaw Village Shopping Center site	53
OUTREACH		Follow up with business owners on façade improvements	RDA	Review all RDA programs and business needs for expansion, relocation, and local employment potential	64
REHAB/INFILL HOUSING		Meet with local developers/builders for housing rehab and infill	RDA/OCD	Establish eligibility & requirements; market to small & minority companies; host bid preparations workshop	47
RECREATION		Plan for Choctaw Drive RR ROW bike/pedestrian trail	RDA/DPW/BREC	Work with Railroad to establish plan for pedestrian amenities along ROW	49
OUTREACH/TRAIN		Coordinate with appropriate agency for job training	RDA	Begin workforce training to include literacy, work readiness + skills	64
CODE		Land use and zoning change to PUD	CPPC/RDA	CPPC and Metro Council approve PUD designation	38
4th Q 2012					
CATALYST		Select developer for Phase One	RDA	Construction of commercial space at 38th Street and Choctaw Drive	53
REHAB/INFILL HOUSING		Begin rehab/infill of blocks closest to corridor	RDA / OCD	Coordinate with property owners to assemble larger sites for new construction	47
RECREATION		Groundbreaking planned improvements for public open spaces	RDA/BREC	Existing Gus Young Park, proposed Ward Creek Park, and Creek renaturalization	51
OUTREACH		Schedule community clean up event	RDA/METRO	Organize churches, residents, and businesses in work day as a signal of change	64
1st Q 2013					
CATALYST		Plan senior housing for site on North 38th Street at Seneca Street - Phase Five	RDA/OCD	Evaluate need in area, potential financial sources, and developers	56
TRANSPORTATION		Conduct pilot express stops at key intersections	CATS/RDA	Study of 2 hourly AM & PM limited stop lines to downtown	45
CATALYST		Issue RFP for Phase Two	RDA	Supermarket operator in place; façade and interior improvements to existing building	55
CATALYST		Ground breaking for Phase One	RDA	Commercial new construction	53



2nd Q 2013				
OUTREACH	Evaluate community capacity building efforts	RDA / OCD	Goal of developing sustainable community leadership	64
OUTREACH/TRAIN	Coordinate with appropriate agency to provide financial literacy/homeownership workshops	RDA	Plan workshops	64
CATALYST	Select developer for Phase Two		Select supermarket operator and entity for improvements	35
3rd Q 2013				
CATALYST	Issue RFP for Phase Three	RDA	East of supermarket - new construction of 2 story mixed-use and 1 story commercial	55
OUTREACH	Community spring cleaning/community gardens	RDA/METRO	Start community gardens on some vacant lots	64
CATALYST	Groundbreaking for Phase Two	RDA	Façade and interior improvements to existing building	55
OUTREACH	Coordinate with appropriate agency to host small business training	RDA	Entrepreneurial workshops with experienced provider	64
OUTREACH	Work with appropraite agency to host employment training for supermarket position	RDA	Work with experienced workforce development entity; provide work readiness and customer services; prepare workers to get experience at other locations before new supermarket opens	64
4th Q 2013				
RECREATION	Ribbon cutting for park improvements	RDA/BREC	Gus Young Park, Ward Creek Park, and Ward Creek renaturalization	51
OUTREACH	Meeting with businesses for progress update	RDA	Begin discussions of business association for shared services, etc.	64
RECREATION	Groundbreaking for RR ROW bike trail	RDA/DPW/BREC		49
TRANSPORTATION	Groundbreaking transit stops/shelters	CATS/RDA	Seneca Street at North 38th Street and North Acadian Thruway at Choctaw Drive	45
CATALYST	Select developer for Phase Three	RDA	East of supermarket - new construction of 2 story mixed-use and 1 story commercial	55
CATALYST	Issue RFP for Phase Four	RDA/DPW	Extend Delaware Street south, new construction of single-family homes on vacant land	56
OUTREACH	Coordinate with appropriate entity to host workshop in financial literacy and homeownership	RDA/OCD	Preparing potential buyers for new homes	64
1st Q 2014				
REHAB / INFILL HOUSING	Ribbon cutting for infill and rehab housing	RDA/OCD	First group of residences	47
CATALYST	Groundbreaking for Phase Three	RDA	mixed-use and commercial east of supermarket	55
CATALYST	Apply for housing program to finance senior housing - Phase Five	RDA/OCD	Submit HUD 202 or Low Income Housing Tax Credit with sponsor	56
CATALYST	Select developer for Phase Four	RDA/DPW	Extend Delaware Street south, new construction on vacant land	56
TRANSPORTATION	Ribbon cutting for transit stops/shelters	CATS / RDA	Seneca Street at North 38th Street and North Acadian Thruway at Choctaw Drive	45
2nd Q 2014				
RECREATION	Plan greenway connection to Downtown Greenway	RDA/DPW/BREC	Pedestrian enhancements on Choctaw Drive to North 17th Street	51
REHAB / INFILL HOUSING	Continue rehab/infill	RDA/OCD	Throughout community	47
CATALYST	Ribbon cutting for Phase One	RDA	New construction complete at 38th Street and Choctaw Drive - Holiday opening	53
CATALYST	Ribbon cutting for Phase Two	RDA	Supermarket complete - Holiday opening	55
3rd Q 2014				
OUTREACH	Community spring cleaning/community gardens	RDA/METRO		64
CATALYST	Ground breaking for Phase Four	RDA/DPW	Extend Delaware Street south, new construction of single-family homes on vacant land	56
CATALYST	Ground breaking for Phase Five	RDA/OCD	Senior independent living including space for community services	56
OUTREACH	Planning for adaptive re-use and marketing vacant commercial properties	RDA	Along the rest of the Choctaw Corridor	64
4th Q 2014				
RECREATION	Ribbon cutting for RR ROW bike/pedestrian trail	RDA/DPW/BREC		49
OUTREACH	Kick-off of adaptive re-use of commercial properties	RDA		64
REHAB / INFILL HOUSING	Ribbon cutting of houses with pre-approved buyers	RDA/OCD	Homeownership counseling graduates prepared for purchase as houses completed.	47
1st Q 2015				
CATALYST	Ribbon cutting for Phase Three	RDA	Construction completed when tenant identified for retail and 1/2 of mixed-use	55
2nd Q 2015				
CATALYST	Ribbon cutting for Phase Four	RDA / DPW	Delware Street extension and new single-family homes	56
CATALYST	Ribbon cutting for Phase Five	RDA / OCD	Open senior independent living and services to community	56

Financing Matrix & Funding Strategies

To ensure successful implementation of the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan, attractive development tools must be established. The Team has identified specific financing methods and techniques for the 5 CIP areas. These financing opportunities are available for the private and public sector and include Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), tax credits, federal and state loan and grant programs, revenue bond programs, foundation funding, and state incentive programs. The full financing matrix identifying the authorizing entities can be found in the Appendix of this document. A list of financing opportunities from the matrix is provided below:

- » Gap Finance - Affordable Housing (RDA): Provides permanent mortgage funds at below-market interest rates for acquisition and development of property within a targeted area
- » Gap Finance - Commercial (RDA): Provides permanent mortgage funds for commercial developments within a targeted area
- » Rehabilitation of rental properties (RDA): Provides forgivable financing for repair and rehab of residential rental property to be offered at affordable rental rates
- » Land Bank Program (RDA): Acquires vacant, abandoned, tax delinquent, and underutilized property, clears the title, and markets the property for redevelopment
- » Small Business Facade Improvement Grant (RDA): Reimbursable, matching grant program as an incentive to building owners and small businesses to improve facades within targeted areas
- » Tax Increment Financing (TIF) (RDA): Mechanism that captures future tax benefits of real estate projects to pay for present cost of improvements
- » Low Income Energy Assistance Program (Louisiana Housing Finance Agency - LHFA): Helps pay energy bills for eligible low-income households
- » Weatherization Assistance Program (LHFA): Helps pay for weatherization improvements to owner occupied homes and single- and multi-unit rentals
- » Multifamily Revenue Bond Finance Program (LHFA): Issues bonds to provide financing to developers to acquire, construct, and rehab affordable housing
- » Tax-Exempt Revenue Bonds (LHFA): Issues bonds to provide funding to public housing authorities for construction and rehab of public housing developments
- » Housing Rehabilitation Grant Program (Office of Community Development - OCD): Provides grants for homeowners who live in their homes, anywhere in the Parish
- » Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (OCD): Provides low interest mortgage loans for substandard housing
- » Rental Housing Rehabilitation Loans (OCD): Provides mortgage loans to rental properties with up to \$1,000 in repairs

- » Weatherization Program (OCD): Repairs and upgrades plumbing, electrical, painting, and foundation based on need
- » Section 108 Loan Guarantee (OCD): Financing for economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities rehab, construction or installation for the benefit of low- to moderate-income persons
- » New Markets Tax Credits (Community Development Financial Institutions Fund - CDFI): Allows taxpayers to receive a credit against federal income taxes for or making equity investments in designated Community Development Entities. The RDA currently manages the East Baton Rouge Community Development Entity, which received a \$60 million allocation in December 2009
- » Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (National Park Service): Allows a 20% tax credit for certified rehabilitation projects on income producing historic buildings
- » Louisiana Historic Preservation Tax Credits (Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism): Provides a 25% state tax credit to historic commercial and residential property for rehabilitation over \$20,000
- » Low Income Housing Tax Credits (Housing and Urban Development - HUD): Provides tax credits for acquisition, rehab, and new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households
- » HUD 221 (d) (4) loan program (for-profit): Provides financing guarantee for up to 90% of development project costs for new construction or rehab of privately owned multi-family housing
- » HUD 221 (d) (3) loan program (non-profit): Similar to 221 (d) (4), non-profit entity may received up to 100% financing
- » HUD 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly: Provides interest-free capital advances to nonprofit sponsors to finance housing development for low-income seniors
- » EB5 Investor Green Cards (Department of Homeland Security): Green cards for foreign nationals who invest money in economic development projects in the US
- » Non-profit 63-20 and 501c3 Bonds: Allows public agencies and non-profit corporations to issue tax- exempt debt to finance the cost of a facility for a tax-exempt purpose

Community Capacity Building

Capacity building is an approach to development that builds independence. It involves increased power for those who have previously not had it, through change and training. Capacity building increases the range of people, organizations, and communities who are able and available to address problems facing the Choctaw Corridor community. Community development is a capacity building process that requires an assessment of everything required to carry out the plan,

role, or action at hand. To build community capacity, a solid understanding of the skills & knowledge required for various capacity building roles is necessary. It is also necessary to identify the gaps in these skills and knowledge. Strategies should be developed for filling in the gaps. Some commonly used strategies for the development of skills and knowledge are:

- » Training workshops
- » Accessing training opportunities offered within the community
- » Mentoring and coaching
- » Self-directed learning
- » On-the-job training

The target area for the Choctaw Corridor has not benefited directly from community development activities that could have provided for the development of skills and knowledge because of its lack of a residential population. Several major commercial streets dissect the community, but provide limited or insufficient retail services for the residents. The community surrounding the corridor is made up of several subdivisions, many of which still function as neighborhoods that retain their own distinct character. These adjoining neighborhoods have been served by community and civic organizations focused on improving conditions in North Baton Rouge in general. Another strong source of capacity building in this community has been the faith-based institutions and their leaders.

The RDA should establish partnerships with the faith-based institutions which serve the area around the Choctaw Corridor. These institutions will be a key component in outreach, since they have been active in similar activities and have members with skills, potential resources, and knowledge of the area. Though many members no longer live in the neighborhoods surrounding the target area, they grew up there, own property, or still have family and friends residing there. Most importantly, they have a commitment to the area by virtue of their church home. Partnerships can be forged with these churches, who often have outreach programs in the community, and could assist the RDA with initial coordination with the appropriate agencies who will promote literacy and job training, market new affordable housing projects, host meetings, and possibly be sponsors of the new senior housing development.

Though the Catalyst Project is focused on economic development and seeks to improve the goods and services provided to the residents and expand the potential job base, an immediate need for the Choctaw Drive Corridor is directly related to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. Gaining the support and participation of the residents entails addressing the pressing needs for improvements to the character of residential areas and housing

conditions. Attention to these needs is also a great method of generating business for small, local companies that can provide services for housing rehab and construction. Those firms are more inclined to hire residents of the community, participate in activities in the area, and support neighborhood institutions.

The local business community located in the Choctaw Corridor should have direct involvement in the redevelopment. This effort is more important in this CIP than others because the target area is a commercial corridor. The predominate business activities here are industrial uses, which are large employers. Attention to their needs should be an early step, in the form of individual meetings between businesses and the RDA. Group meetings are often not always practical for business owners other than initial introduction to the plan since detailed discussions could involve financial and operational concerns of a company. For Choctaw Corridor, industries that interface with residential areas should be a special concern because of the need to reduce the impacts on housing. In some cases housing and retail are incompatible with many of the activities of these types of businesses. RDA financing and assistance might be beneficial to the expansion or planning for relocation of businesses in the future. However, having these businesses involved in the redevelopment of the area can encourage improvements to the appearance and operations of existing businesses, and hopefully result in additional employment opportunities. The RDA investments in businesses should be linked to creating and retaining jobs for neighborhood residents when job readiness and training programs have been implemented.

It is recommended that RDA establish a Project Manager position to oversee the community component of the redevelopment process in all 5 CIPs. This role is an important element to the sustainability of the phased redevelopment projects and will help to obtain support and investment of residents and community leaders in the process. The role would have at its focus coordinating the message of RDA activities and managing the expectations of the community.

The first steps would begin when the plan is unveiled, by insuring that all stakeholders, participants in planning workshops, civic and community organizations, and religious institutions are informed of the release. A series of planned sessions would include a clear explanation of the process and opportunities with qualifications for participation in the programs and projects. After the initial presentation, follow-up presentations would be organized in the target area as part of an outreach strategy to forge support for implementation of the CIP plan by the RDA. Through this “on-the-ground process,” the RDA would determine if there are local

entities that can assist in the process of bringing change to the Catalyst Project area and contribute to rehabilitation of the target area. Some of the activities that will facilitate the community building efforts in the neighborhood are:

- » Coordinating commercial development with community interest and participation
- » Providing business development and improvement services to existing entities
- » Guiding the provision of workforce development programs to fit the needs of businesses
- » Improving the delivery of community and social services
- » Directing resident engagement activities

In Choctaw Corridor, the community building activities that focus on business and resident engagement in the implementation of the CIP plan are as follows:

- » Setting up meetings for presentation on the implementation progress
- » Contacting owners about new code enforcement and assisting with upgrades of properties
- » Informing occupants about relocation alternatives and the availability of affordable houses
- » Encouraging businesses to utilize the Small Business Façade Improvement Grant program and assistance of services to improve operations
- » Identifying local businesses that can qualify for contracts in implementation of projects
- » Organizing community engagement activities like clean up campaigns and block celebrations
- » Monitoring municipal service delivery and advocating for community needs

Redevelopment Partnerships

As noted in the Implementations Strategies, the effectiveness of the CIP will depend on the partnership of the public sector, the community, and the private sector. Below is the summary of the partners who should be involved.

For Profit

Existing businesses

These small businesses and large industries have been the mainstay of the Choctaw Corridor business district, many of them for years. Their participation and involvement in CIP implementation are the first steps in rebuilding the economic base of the Corridor. Intensive outreach is needed to ensure that local businesses benefit from the change.

Railroads

The Canadian National Railway has a tremendous impact on this community. Efforts to inform and involve the Railway company in the redevelopment might include planning for the pedestrian/bike path crossing at North Acadian Thruway, North 38th Street, and Ward Creek and connecting them with state highway departments that have used naturalized wildflowers to reduce maintenance cost.

Developers

Commercial and housing developers should be recruited to work with the RDA and the community on the redevelopment of the Choctaw Corridor. At the completion of the CIP, informational sessions should be held with a variety of groups to identify the appropriate, capable, and qualified companies to effectively undertake the projects. Because of the small size of the phases and the character of the area, community connected groups like 100 Black men, Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Masons, in addition to real estate trade associations and the Louisiana Home Builders Association and the Capital Region Builders Association, should be contacted in order to invite their members. These sessions should outline the phasing, scope of work, and timetable for development and clearly define the selection criteria and required qualifications of bidders. Additionally, these groups could be asked to organize and facilitate workshops that assist existing community based companies in preparing upgraded operations to insure that they meet qualification standards to be competitive in the process.

New Retail Businesses

Though developers are ultimately responsible for obtaining retail tenants for commercial spaces they create, the area requires that proactive marketing to appropriate retail stores begin before CIP implementation commences. The RDA, working with local real estate brokers, should research and inform national, regional, and local chains or franchise retailers as well as small local businesses operating successfully in other areas of the opportunities that will be available. Restaurants, copy centers, clothing stores, laundromats, and convenience stores are examples of small businesses or franchises that could be attracted to the Catalyst Project area with incentives and local investors. The RDA is in the process of creating a Gap Finance-Commercial program that would fulfill the need for a small loan program for small businesses who have feasible plans to relocate or start up on appropriate business in the Catalyst Project area. This fund would cover build-out and a computer linked inventory and

financial system. There are also below market rate loan funds available throughout the City-Parish. Awareness programs on the availability of these funds should be offered.

Exxon Company

As the largest corporate neighbor, the plant administration should be informed of the CIP plans. Direct Communication arrangements should be developed for updates and future planning for marketing the area to their workforce in order to utilize the area for lunch, shopping, services, and future housing opportunities.

Non-Profit

Churches

Faith-based institutions in economically distressed and minority areas are often the only large entity owned and controlled by the residents. These congregations could be a source for not only business customers and future occupants of housing, but also potential developers, construction firms, business operators or franchisers, suppliers, and employees. Existing community or social services like childcare should be encouraged and assisted in preparation and expansion as response to development in the Choctaw Corridor.

College Campuses

Being roughly equidistant to three universities, an obvious source of business customers and potential residents, Choctaw Corridor is at a major advantage. Louisiana State University, Southern University, and Baton Rouge Community College students and staff need to be informed of the transformation of the Corridor into the main commercial center serving the area. A marketing campaign should also target alumni who have historic connections with the Corridor.

Habitat for Humanity of Baton Rouge

The RDA should continue its strong relationship with Habitat for Humanity in order to expand their impact in Choctaw Corridor with construction of infill housing. This organization could potentially be a major player in the proposed residential development on the recommended Delaware Street extension.

Community Improvement Benchmarks

In an effort to track the success of the Choctaw Corridor Community Improvement Plan, the Team recommends a series of benchmarks. These benchmarks will be tracked at various intervals and will illustrate the degree of success of not only the physical revitalization of the neighborhood, but also economic improvements achieved by implementation of the recommendations. For the benchmarking program to be a viable method of measurement, each of the recommended reports needs to be recorded immediately, providing a baseline by which to compare future data.

Building Permits

Within East Baton Rouge Parish, all new structures, general remodeling, structural remodeling, construction additions to existing facilities, or detached accessory buildings require a building permit. These permits are required for both residential and commercial construction. Tracking the number and type of permits issued in Choctaw Corridor and the surrounding area, with assistance from the Permit and Inspection Division of the Department of Public Works, will serve as a gauge of how much physical development is occurring within the community. The Department of Public Works should provide this information on a quarterly basis.

Certificate of Occupancy

While tracking the number of applied for building permits will help to determine new growth, it alone will not be enough to gauge the success of physical development. Often times, speculative investors construct new buildings, but are unable to attract the necessary tenants. Tracking the number of issued certificates of occupancy will show not only newly occupied businesses, but also whether or not those buildings are owner occupied, illustrating the number of locally owned buildings. Working with the Department of Public Works, this information should be compiled on a quarterly basis.

Property & Sales Tax Revenue

When improvements are made to property in East Baton Rouge Parish, field inspectors for the EBR Parish Assessor's Office make an inspection of the improvements and adjust the tax rolls to reflect them. Therefore, an increase in property tax in the Choctaw Corridor area would indicate new physical changes in the community. The East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office generates all tax bills from computer data furnished by the

Assessor's Office in November of each year and should provide an annual comparison report to the RDA.

The Revenue Division of the City of Baton Rouge Finance Department prepares a sales & use tax report monthly for the City-Parish. This report should be used to show changes in collected sales tax for the Choctaw Corridor area, indicating an increase in spending for the area.

Crime Levels

The Baton Rouge Police Department tracks daily the locations of certain types of crimes and reports official statistics through the Uniform Crime Reporting program overseen by the FBI. District 1 is the precinct that oversees the Choctaw Corridor area and can serve as an invaluable asset in order to track the locations, types, and number of occurrences of crimes within the area. The data should be analyzed on a monthly basis to determine if crimes are being generally reduced, indicating success of the recommended improvements. Clustered locations of crimes over time would indicate areas that need additional CPTED and policing improvements.

Blight & Code Enforcement

Blight was consistently identified as a major challenge within the Choctaw Corridor community through stakeholder interviews, workshops, and other meetings. The RDA's focus on the Choctaw Village Shopping Center area, which is the center of the Choctaw Corridor, could bring neighborhood retailers and large industry back to the area. Outreach to the existing business owners along the Corridor regarding the Small Business Façade Improvement Grant program could create an immediate change in the character of the area. Improving the perception of this area will also help create a stronger link between the community and the remainder of East Baton Rouge Parish. An increase in the number of applied for and issued grants would indicate that business owners are becoming more invested in the neighborhood.

The Baton Rouge Code of Ordinances already has policies in place regarding maintenance of private property. Overgrown lots, excess garbage, dangerous and dilapidated structures, and inoperable vehicles are all prohibited within the code and penalties are in place, however these are rarely enforced. Streamlined reporting and more timely enforcement will be necessary to abate these issues. With the visible improvements within Choctaw Corridor, residents and merchants will be more engaged in the continuation of the character change, and should be encouraged to report code violations to the City-Parish and track enforcement actions. The city should then be able to

generate semi-annual reports to the RDA that will indicate the level to which blight in the private realm of Choctaw Corridor is being eradicated.

These benchmarks, when monitored over the short- and long-term, will reveal changes in economic conditions and quality of life in the Choctaw Corridor community. Analysis of changes and trends will reveal actions and improvements that have proven most effective, as well as those which need modifications or redirection.