



EAST BATON ROUGE
REDEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

Melrose East Community Improvement Plan

Prepared by:
Phillips-Davis Legacy & BROWN+DANOS landdesign, inc.
March, 2011



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Melrose East was developed in the late 1970s in response to the expansion of Bon Marche Mall and was envisioned as a place for college students and young professionals to live. The community was comprised completely of apartments, most of which were one bedroom units, in order to attract this young demographic. Years of disinvestment and neglect have turned this once thriving residential area into a blighted, disenfranchised community located behind Florida Boulevard, west of North Ardenwood Drive. The Melrose East Community Improvement Plan, lead by the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (RDA), will guide physical and economic change in the area, building toward the citizens' 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

The Melrose East area has the potential to be a prosperous, sustainable, and vital community that can revive itself as a significant residential area in Baton Rouge. It is envisioned as a residential community that physically and economically connects to East Baton Rouge Parish as a whole, and particularly to the adjacent Baton Rouge Community College, Bon Carre Business Center, and the Florida Boulevard corridor.

Melrose East is centrally located within close proximity to employment centers in Downtown Baton Rouge and Mid City, providing the neighborhood with several important locational advantages. Additionally, the Bon Carre Business Center and the BREC Headquarters building have spurred revitalization of the area. Melrose East is primarily a residential neighborhood characterized by single-family houses and apartments with some commercial and industrial uses.

The vision for Melrose East is to improve the overall stability and viability of the area and build a contemporary, sustainable community for the future.

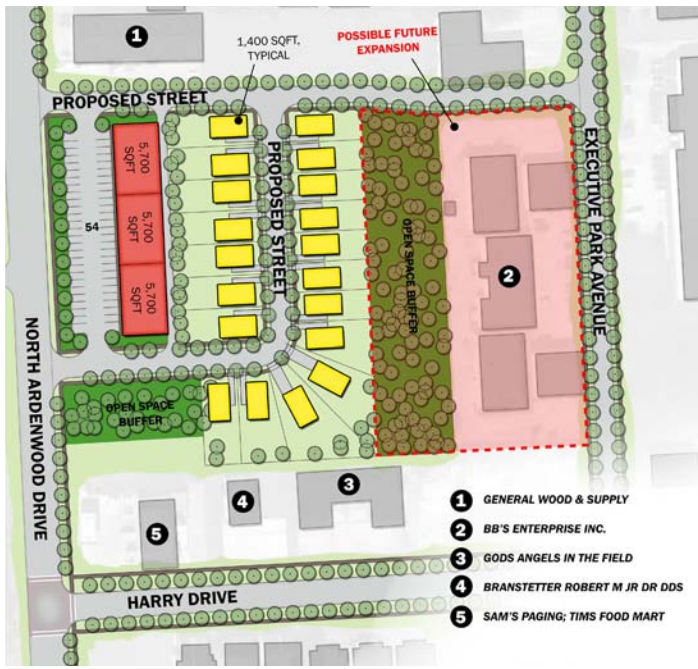
The Plan

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

Catalyst Projects

The initial Catalyst Project along North Ardenwood Drive calls for a strip of attached commercial with parking fronting North Ardenwood Drive. Providing a progression from commercial to residential uses, it also calls for 19 new single-family lots that front a new neighborhood street connecting North Ardenwood Drive to a second proposed new neighborhood street. The neighborhood streets are designed as tree lined streets with sidewalks on both sides as well as crosswalks, making the development shady, safe, and walkable for residents and patrons. An open space buffer is proposed south of the commercial development, separating the residential lots from North Ardenwood Drive. A second open space buffer is proposed east of the residential lots towards Executive Park Avenue. Both open space buffers could potentially serve as passive park space with picnic tables and trails for the residents and the employees of the retail spaces.

The second Catalyst Project along North Bon Marche Drive mirrors the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project in that it consists of both commercial and residential uses. Three parcels of detached commercial are proposed along Lobdell Boulevard south of North Bon Marche Drive. Two commercial buildings front Lobdell Boulevard with parking in the back, leading to a proposed childcare center equipped with a drive-in for drop-off and pick-up. The retail development and childcare center will not only serve the residents of the neighborhood, but will also cater to the numerous businesses and daytime employees of the Bon Carre Business Center, located in the southeast corner of the community. Further south down North Bon Marche Drive at the intersection of Harry Drive is the proposed site for 24 new single-family residential homes. These lots front a new neighborhood street designed as a tree lined street with sidewalks on both sides and crosswalks, giving the development an inviting, walkable, residential feel.



North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project

Community-Wide Recommendations

The Catalyst Projects will provide the initial jump start to improving the Melrose East neighborhood. Community-wide recommendations address the remainder of the community outside of the Catalyst Project areas.

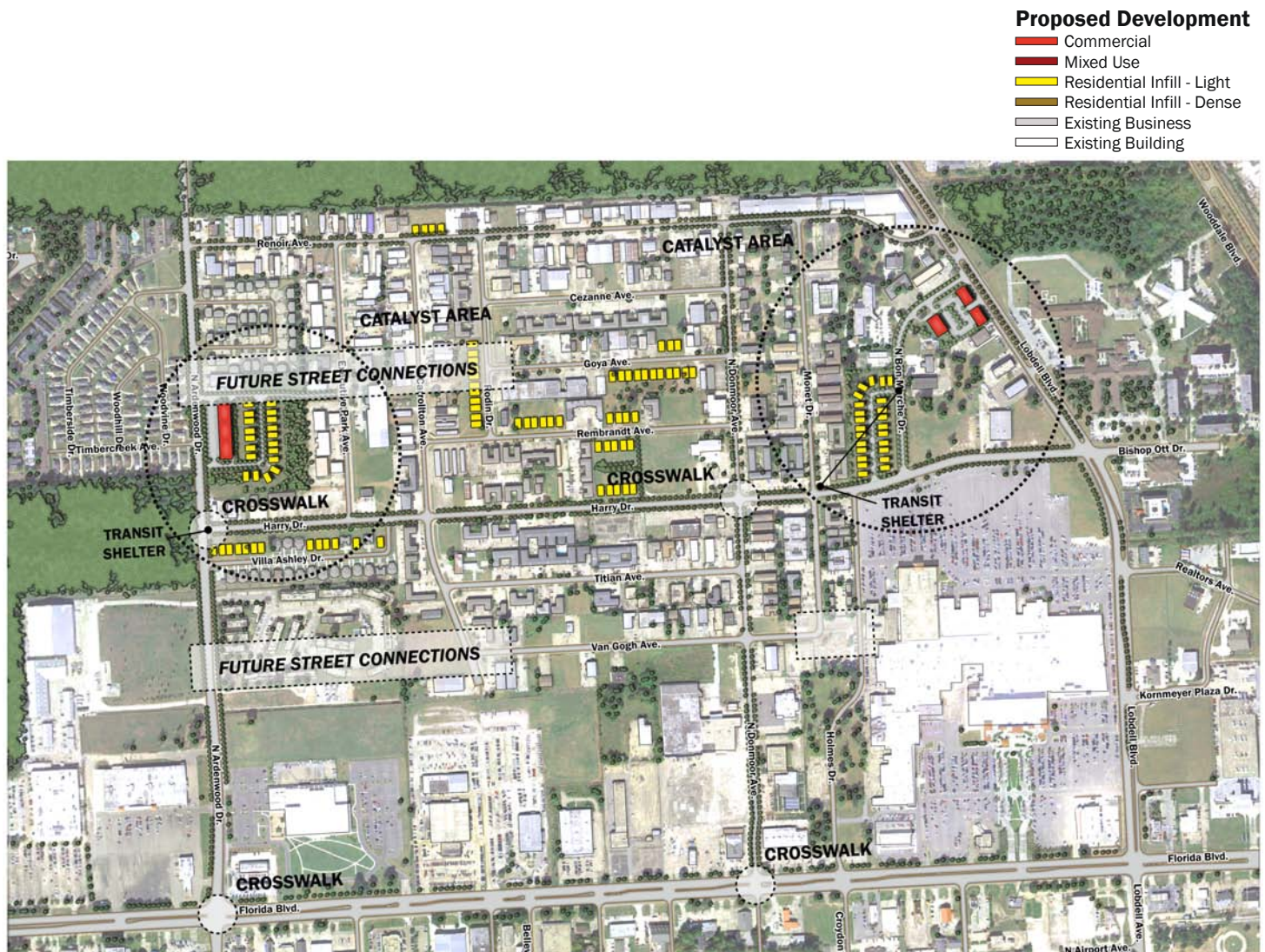
- » Refine a strategy to resolve adjudicated, blighted, vacant, and abandoned properties. There are a number of these types of properties in Melrose East that currently contribute to a sense of blight. The RDA has already begun acquiring adjudicated properties in the area, and should strategically assemble other lots for redevelopment in accordance with the CIP.
- » Implement a robust and consistent code enforcement program. Preliminary analysis, interviews, and workshop feedback suggest that Melrose East needs additional code enforcement for buildings and parcels that are in dilapidated or unsafe condition. This will help transform the image of the area for both existing residents and future investors.
- » 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 benefit the community.
- » Improve pedestrian circulation through streetscape improvements. Harry Drive travels through the length of Melrose East and does have sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian travel. However, these existing sidewalks are narrow and provide very few trees for shade. Enhancements should be made in the form of sidewalk widening, tree plantings, and lighting.
- » Connect streets within the neighborhood. To provide better accessibility for neighborhood residents and better align with Complete Streets policies, facilitating street connections is necessary. Complete Streets policies encourage street connectivity and aim to create a comprehensive, integrated network for all modes including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, and automobiles.



Lobdell Boulevard & Harry Drive Catalyst Project

Regional Recommendations

Melrose East connections to the rest of the City and Parish must be strengthened and enhanced in order for the proposed community revitalization to be sustainable. Building upon the recent improvements of Lobdell Boulevard through the Mayor-President's Green Light Program, the pedestrian amenities can be extended to connect residents of Melrose East to Independence Park. At the park, the Normandy Lateral drainageway connects to Ward Creek and could be developed as a greenway, which would provide residents with a safe and enjoyable link to Old Hammond Highway Park and beyond. Additionally, providing enhanced pedestrian amenities along Lobdell Boulevard would link pedestrians in two ways to the Downtown Development District's proposed Downtown Greenway.

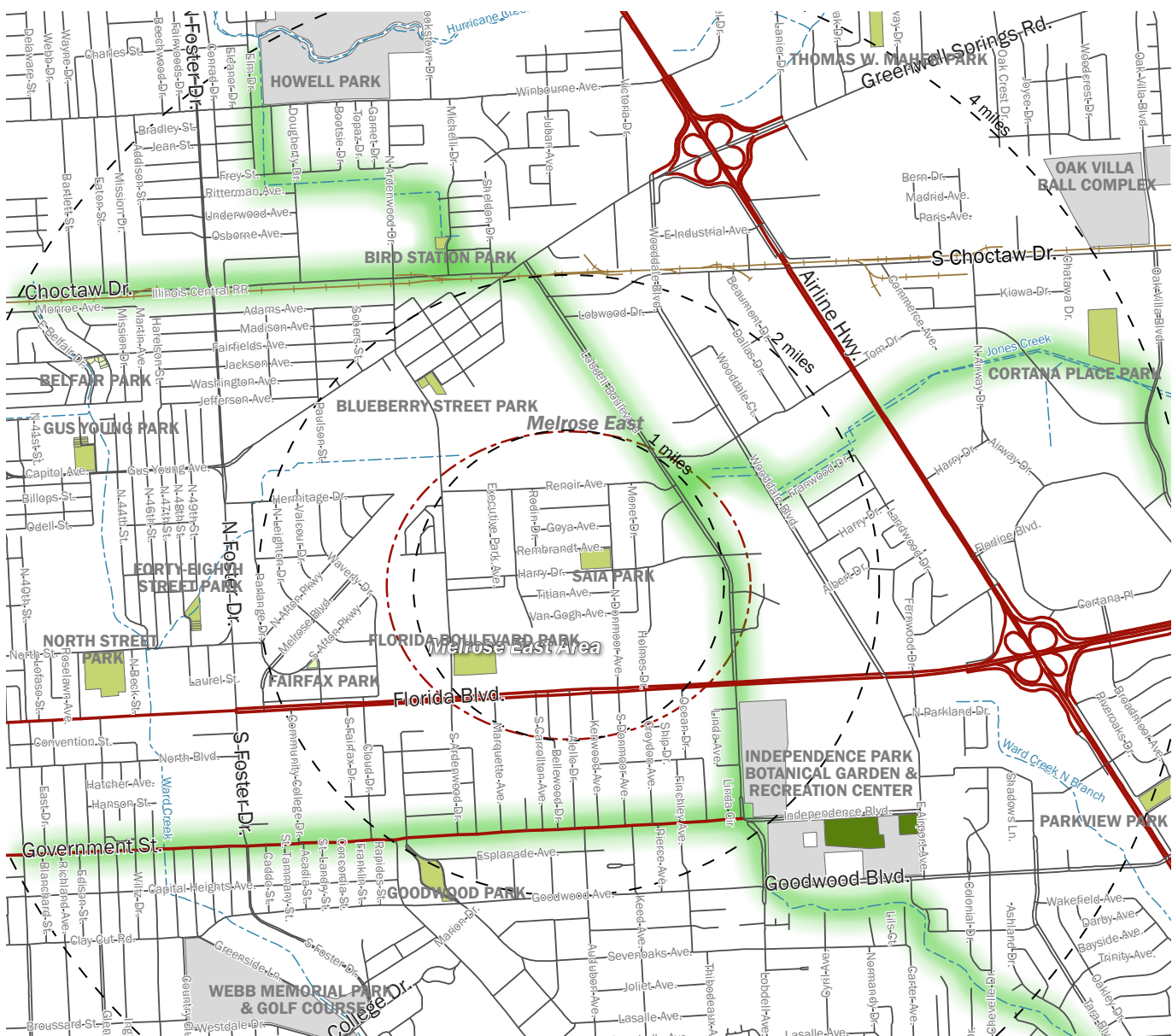


Community-Wide Recommendations

Implementation

A blanket change of land use and zoning to Planned Unit Development (PUD) is recommended for the entire Melrose East area. This will bring existing non-conforming developments and parcel sizes into compliance and will facilitate redevelopment, particularly on the Catalyst Project sites, according to the Community Improvement Plan. 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, the new tools and designations should be considered for the Melrose East community.

Implementation strategies include rebuilding the character and economy of the neighborhood, facilitating the establishment of more child care facilities, and coordinating with the City-Parish and local non-profit organizations to provide workforce training, life skills development, and other needed social programs.



Regional Connections

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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 Scotlandville Gateway, Melrose East, Choctaw Corridor, Northdale, and Zion City & Glen Oaks Communities. 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. *See figure 1.*

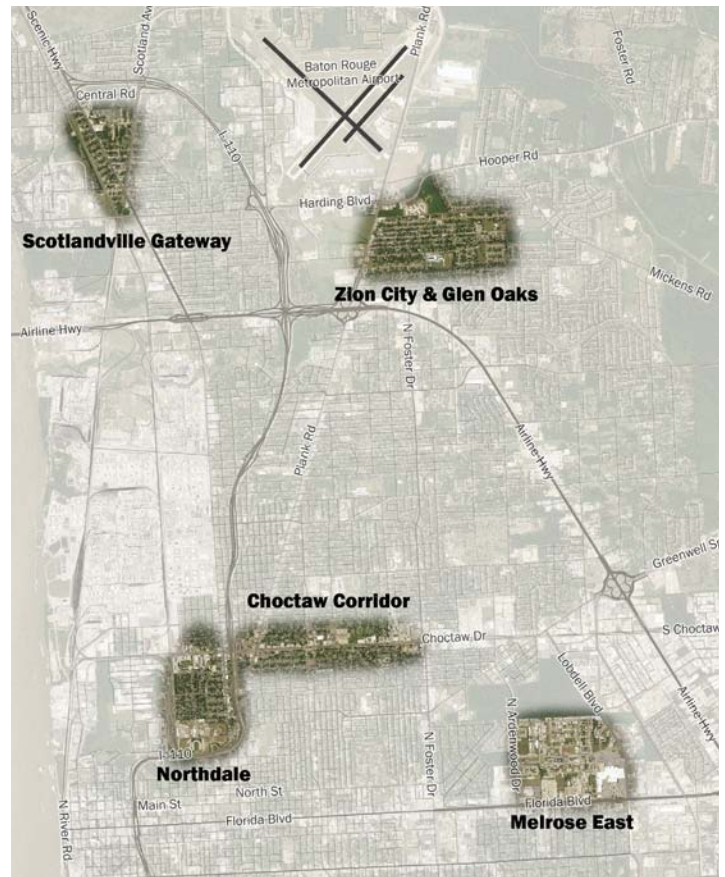


Figure 1: 5 CIP Areas

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.futureebr.com). The Community Improvement Plan for Melrose East 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 Melrose East area's existing conditions and projected

future growth was conducted. Additionally, public meetings and stakeholder interviews were conducted to gain valuable 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 presents not only 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 Melrose East Community Improvement Plan will serve as the complete blueprint for revitalization of the area.

Melrose East

Melrose East is bordered by North Ardenwood Drive to the west, Lobdell Boulevard to the east, Renoir Avenue to the north and Florida Boulevard to the south. The original vision of Melrose East was short-lived as the success of Bon Marche quickly declined as a result of the Mall at Cortana opening in 1976 followed by the Mall of Louisiana in 1997. The general shift of the population and retail centers to the east and south of this development left Melrose East open to further decline and over time, crime rates have skyrocketed and property values plummeted. Also, many property owners are now absentee landlords and the area has a concentration of very low income housing.

According to the 2000 Census:

- » Median household income is \$13,274; average per capita income is \$6,987;
- » 83% of the adult population have not completed high school or GED; 2.9% have earned a bachelor's degree;
- » Aging housing stock with median year built of 1975;
- » 64% of housing units are rental and 31% are vacant;

However, the prosperous visions of this neighborhood are once again coming to the forefront thanks to recent efforts of developers, local churches, community associations, and governmental agencies. The site of the Bon Marche Mall is now home to the Bon Carre Business Center, the Louisiana Technology Park, and Cox Communications. The Bon Carre Business Center has over 700,000 square feet of leasable office space, while the Louisiana Technology Park is a business incubator for high-tech start-up companies.

Within the neighborhood itself, the construction of new apartments and townhomes in 2008 reflected the first new construction in the neighborhood in 20 years. Since that time, several of the existing rental units have undergone rehabilitation and many more continue today. Small businesses and industries have located within the neighborhood, breaking up the strictly multi-family uses historically dominant in the community and offering shopping and job opportunities to the residents. Faith- and community-based organizations work to clean-up the neighborhood both physically and socially by hosting clean-up events and working with stakeholders and the local police force to deter crime within the neighborhood.

The Melrose East Community Improvement Plan will guide physical and economic change in Melrose East and shape a more prosperous, sustainable, and vital community. It will lead Melrose East's efforts in the areas of planning and economic development, and will be a resource for the community to use when considering development proposals, obtaining financing and funding strategies, and prioritizing community needs. *See figure 2.*

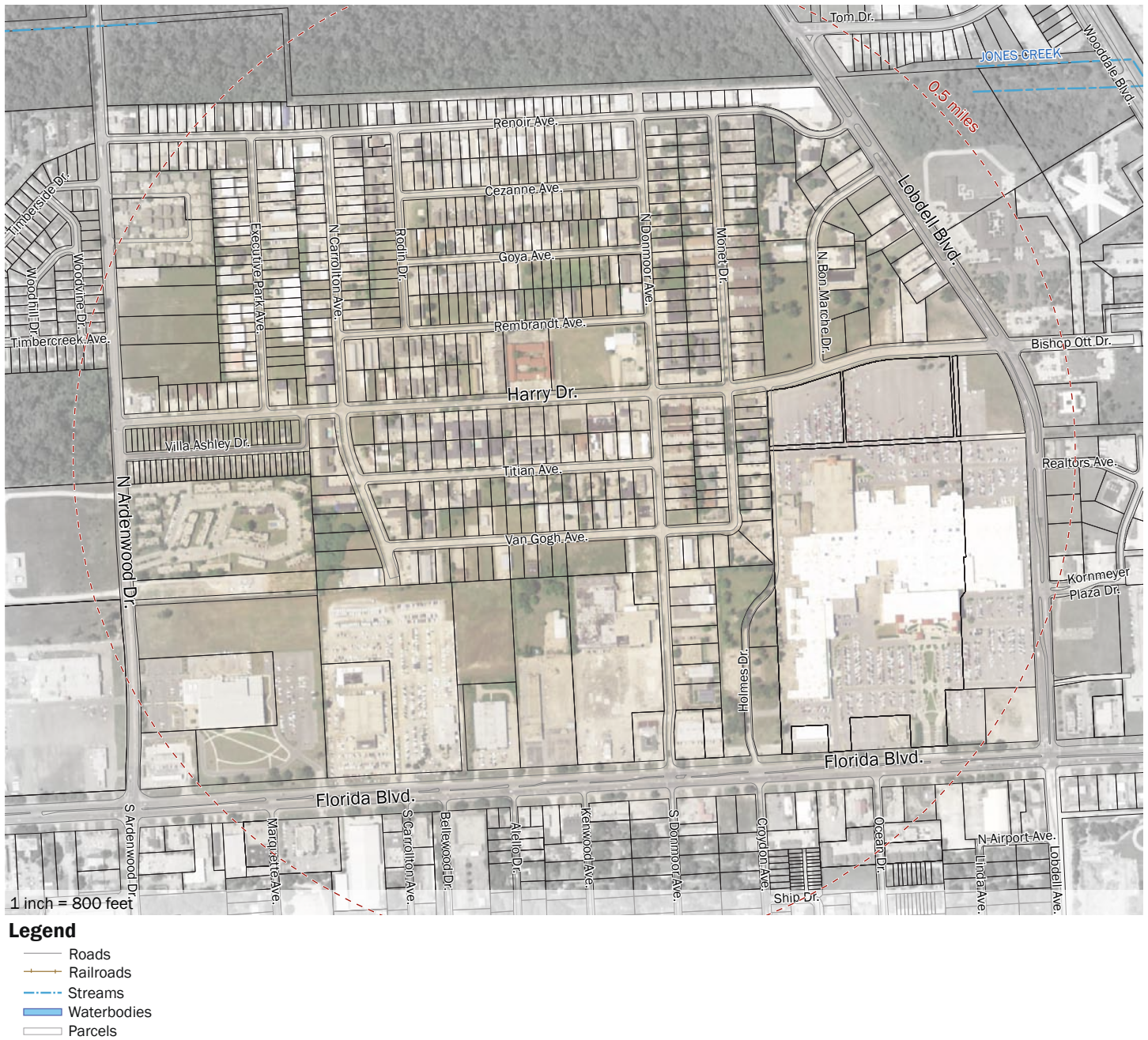
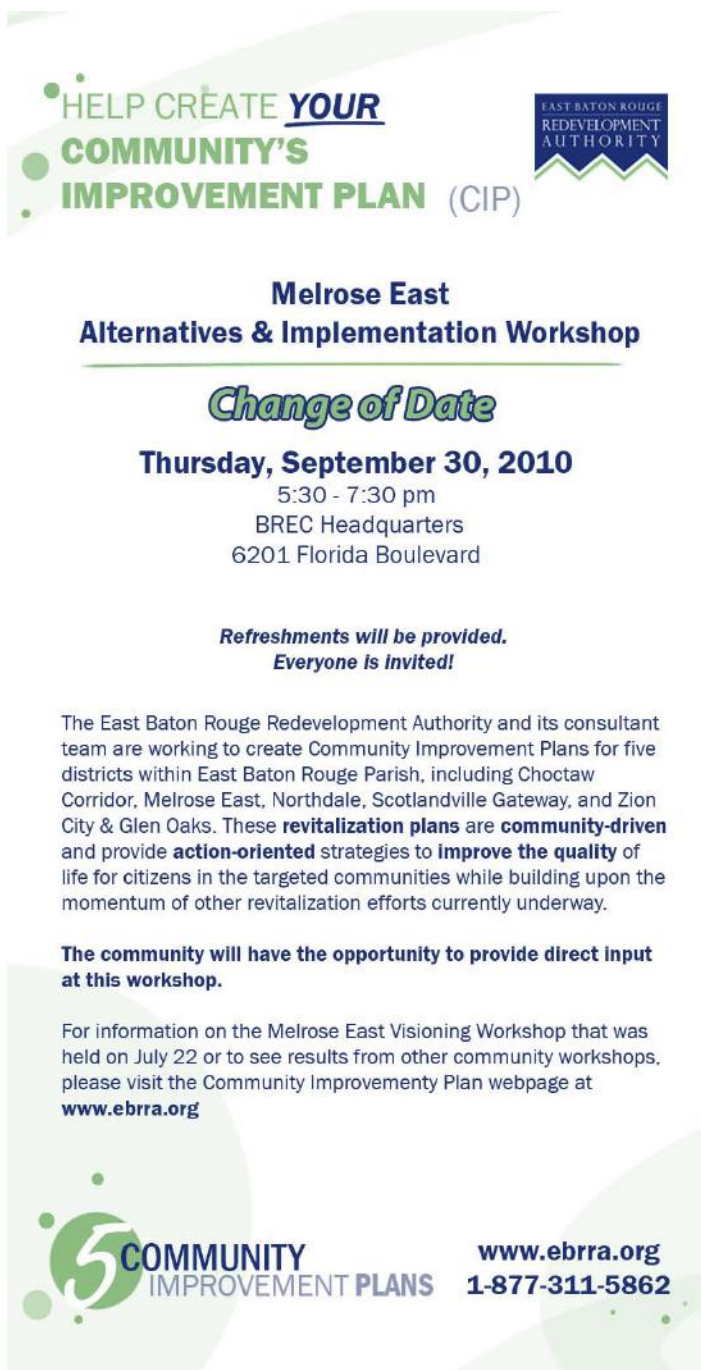


Figure 2: Melrose East



HELP CREATE YOUR COMMUNITY'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

EAST BATON ROUGE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Melrose East Alternatives & Implementation Workshop

Change of Date

Thursday, September 30, 2010
 5:30 - 7:30 pm
 BREC Headquarters
 6201 Florida Boulevard

**Refreshments will be provided.
 Everyone is invited!**

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority and its consultant team are working to create Community Improvement Plans for five districts within East Baton Rouge Parish, including Choctaw Corridor, Melrose East, Northdale, Scotlandville Gateway, and Zion City & Glen Oaks. These **revitalization plans** are **community-driven** and provide **action-oriented** strategies to **improve the quality** of life for citizens in the targeted communities while building upon the momentum of other revitalization efforts currently underway.

The community will have the opportunity to provide direct input at this workshop.

For information on the Melrose East Visioning Workshop that was held on July 22 or to see results from other community workshops, please visit the Community Improvement Plan webpage at www.ebrra.org

5 COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

**www.ebrra.org
 1-877-311-5862**

The 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 Melrose East Community Improvement Plan must involve residents, business owners, stakeholders, and members of City-Parish 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 Melrose East consisted primarily of stakeholder interviews. Community stakeholders are critical in building confidence and trust in any community project, and they are also 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 television show guest appearance. Press Releases and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were released to News, TV, and Radio before and leading up to the Melrose East 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 on WVLA. 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 Melrose East workshops. *See figure 3.*

Figure 3: Weekly Press Advertisement

E-Promotion for the Melrose East outreach campaign consisted of a project website and e-blast announcements. The 5 CIPs website, http://www.ebrra.org/community_improvement_plans/, managed by the Team, includes a place to sign up to receive e-mail 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 is an effective way to create buzz within an area over an upcoming event or project. Direct canvassing strategies for Melrose East 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 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. These 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. Flyers placed in student backpacks of schools surrounding the Melrose East 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. Communications were through emails, phone calls, and meetings and 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 Merrik-Roddy
- » Capital Area Transit System (CATS): Kiran Vemuri, Planning Manager
- » An Alternative Housing Developer: Christine E. Nichols
- » City-Parish Planning Commission: Lael Holton,

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews in Melrose East were conducted in the weeks leading up to community workshops 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 13 stakeholder interviews throughout the first two weeks of July 2010.

Members of the Team interviewed individuals and representatives from both public and private entities, including City-Parish government, businesses, faith-based organizations, community organizations, and local residents of the Melrose East community. Stakeholder interviews were conducted as open-ended discussions, allowing the stakeholder to speak freely about their community and the positive or negative areas that 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 13 Melrose East stakeholder interviews.

When asked what they most value in the Melrose East community, stakeholders mentioned the active and interested property owners, active local businesses, the Resident Opportunity Center, Greater King David Church, and the Baton Rouge Community College’s Small Business Training Center.

When asked what most troubled them about Melrose East, stakeholders responded with the negative perception and reputation of the neighborhood, high levels of crime, a lack of leadership at all levels, and poor property conditions.

Examples of other concerns mentioned by stakeholders include:

- » High unemployment and low educational attainment
- » Lack of a user-friendly library facility
- » Graffiti
- » Low availability of public transportation

Stakeholders were asked what planners should take into account when discussing improvements to Melrose East. Their responses included instituting a crime prevention district, development in Smiley Heights, and a Community Center or some other incubator for community involvement.

Stakeholders were asked what they would like to see when they think about the long-term future of Melrose East. Responses included the stability and sustainability of property owners, businesses, and tenants, improved safety, affordable home ownership options, and arts education to capitalize on the artist street names of the neighborhood.

Stakeholders interviewed were:

Senator Sharon Weston Broome, District 61
Legislator

Donna Collins Lewis, EBR City Council, District 6
Public Official

Evelyn Jackson, Melrose Civic Association
Community

Jacqui Vines, Cox Communications
Business

Will Belton, Aamagin Property Group
Business

Shirly Patty, A&D Properties
Business

Scott Ricca, Clegg's Nursery
Business

Harold Williams
Business

Lewis Dill, LEWCO
Business

Dr. Myrtle Dorsey, BRCC
Education

Catherine Moses
Tenant

Cathy Toliver
Property Owner

Kathleen Laborde, Gulf Coast Housing Partnership
Property Owner

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 Melrose East stakeholder interviews gathered implicit narratives that will be woven into the future of their community. They have helped to inform the Melrose East Community Improvement Plan and provided insight for how to orchestrate a meaningful future.

Visioning Workshop

A Visioning Workshop for Melrose East was conducted on July 22, 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.

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 Bon Carre Business Center, active businesses, churches, and the police traffic division office. The challenges presented to the group included blight, crime, lack of interest by some property owners, and lack of affordable housing.

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

Visioning Workshop Input Results

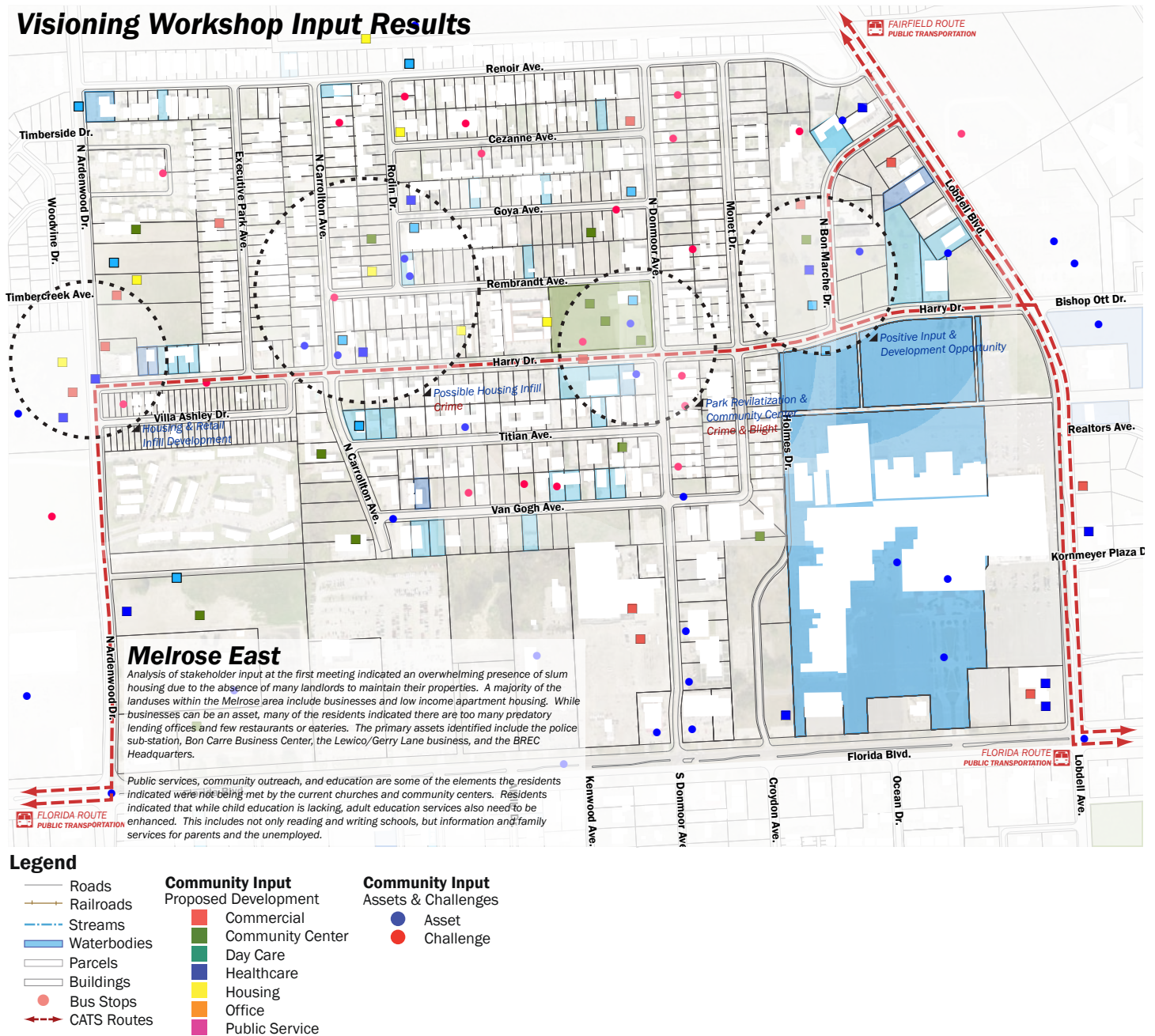


Figure 4: Melrose East Visioning Workshop Results Analysis

Analysis of input at the Visioning Workshop indicated an overwhelming desire for shopping and dining opportunities, health care facilities, single-family housing options, and community facilities such as recreation and education centers, as well as a general need for rehabilitation of existing properties. While the types of catalyst development requested were the same among the groups, the locations were spread throughout the neighborhood. There appear to be only a few buildings suitable for adaptive reuse, but several large areas of vacant property appear to be available. The full Melrose East Visioning Workshop report is in the Appendix of this document. *See figure 4.*

Alternatives & Implementation Workshop

Following the Visioning Workshop for Melrose East, the Team conducted a thorough analysis of the community input and area market assessments. From this analysis two target areas for future catalyst development were identified and two concepts were developed for each. On September 30, 2010, an Alternatives and Implementation Workshop for the Melrose East 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 while the Team made adjustments to the concepts.

Once attendees of the Melrose East 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, a greenway, and a nature park, while the regional opportunities map focused on pedestrian and vehicular connections between the neighborhood and the rest of the city. 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 figures 5 and 6.*



Figure 5: Melrose East Preferred North Ardenwood Drive Area Catalyst Concept



Figure 6: Melrose East Preferred North Bon Marche Drive Area Catalyst Concept

The preferred designs for the intersection of North Ardenwood Drive and Harry Drive and Bon Marche Drive between Lobdell Boulevard and Harry Drive 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 much further 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 to provide for the success of the Melrose East Community Improvement Plan.

Data Collection

The Melrose East Community Improvement Plan is based on 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 in September 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 November 2010 to assess in more detail the individual buildings within the Catalyst Project sites.

The Team conducted numerous site reconnaissance visits during the 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.



Saia Park



Apartment Complex



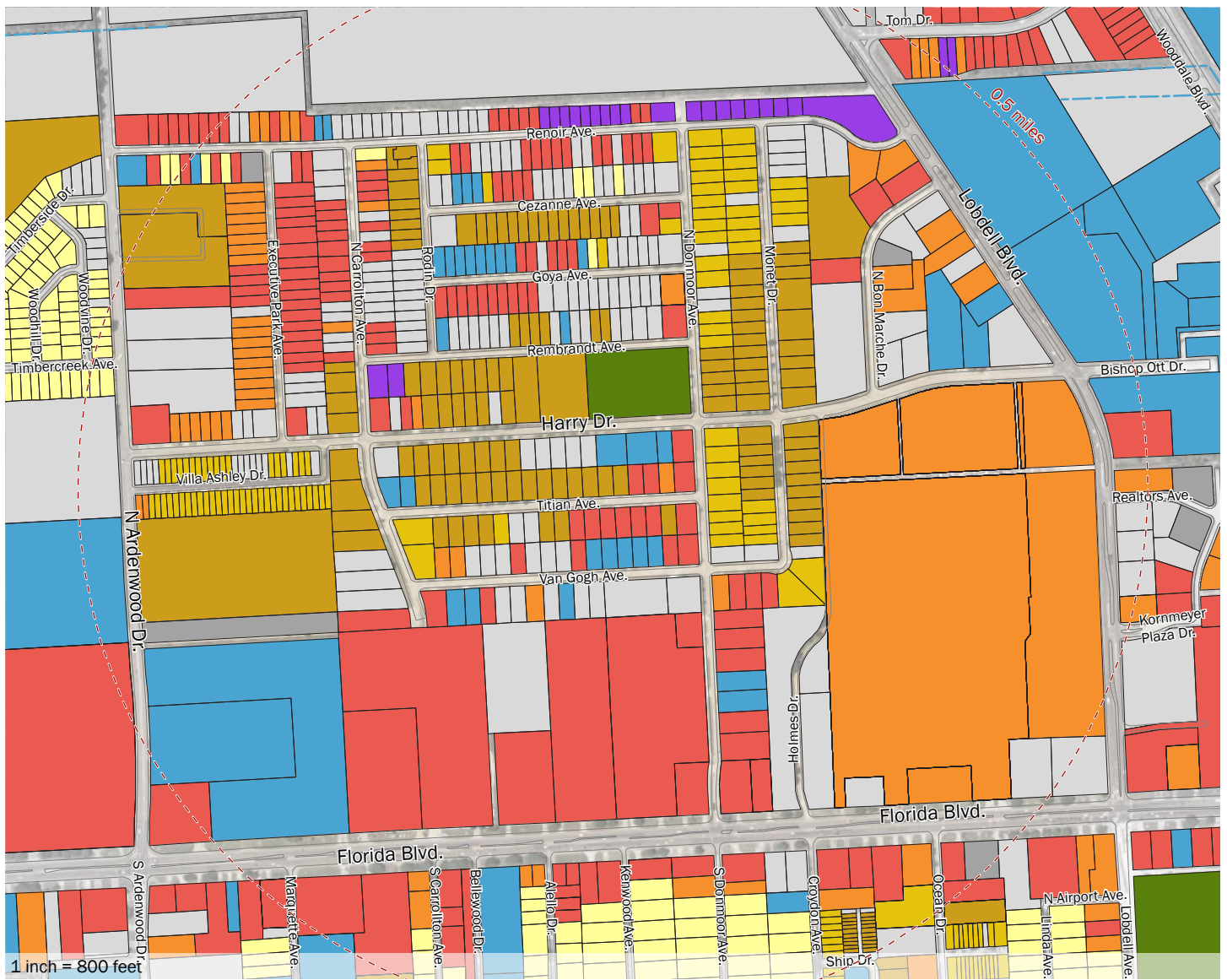
John's Grocery Market

Analysis

Land Use

Existing land uses in Melrose East are dominated by medium and high density residential and office and commercial uses. *See figure 7.* Approximately 30% of lots within the neighborhood remain undeveloped. Industrial developments are concentrated along the north side of Renoir Avenue. Commercial uses are spread throughout the community with the heaviest concentrations on Florida Boulevard, Titian Avenue, Executive Park Avenue, and Renoir Avenue. In the center of Melrose East is Saia Park which is owned and managed by BREC, whose headquarters are also within the neighborhood at the intersection of North Ardenwood Drive and Florida Boulevard. At the community's southeastern corner are the Bon Carre Business Center and Louisiana Technology Park. The community is also home to several churches and ministries spread throughout the neighborhood as well as several mental health and rehabilitation facilities.

The existing land use patterns place uncomplimentary uses next to each other and contribute to the incongruous feel of the Melrose East community. This also makes development of the vacant properties slightly more difficult.



Legend

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

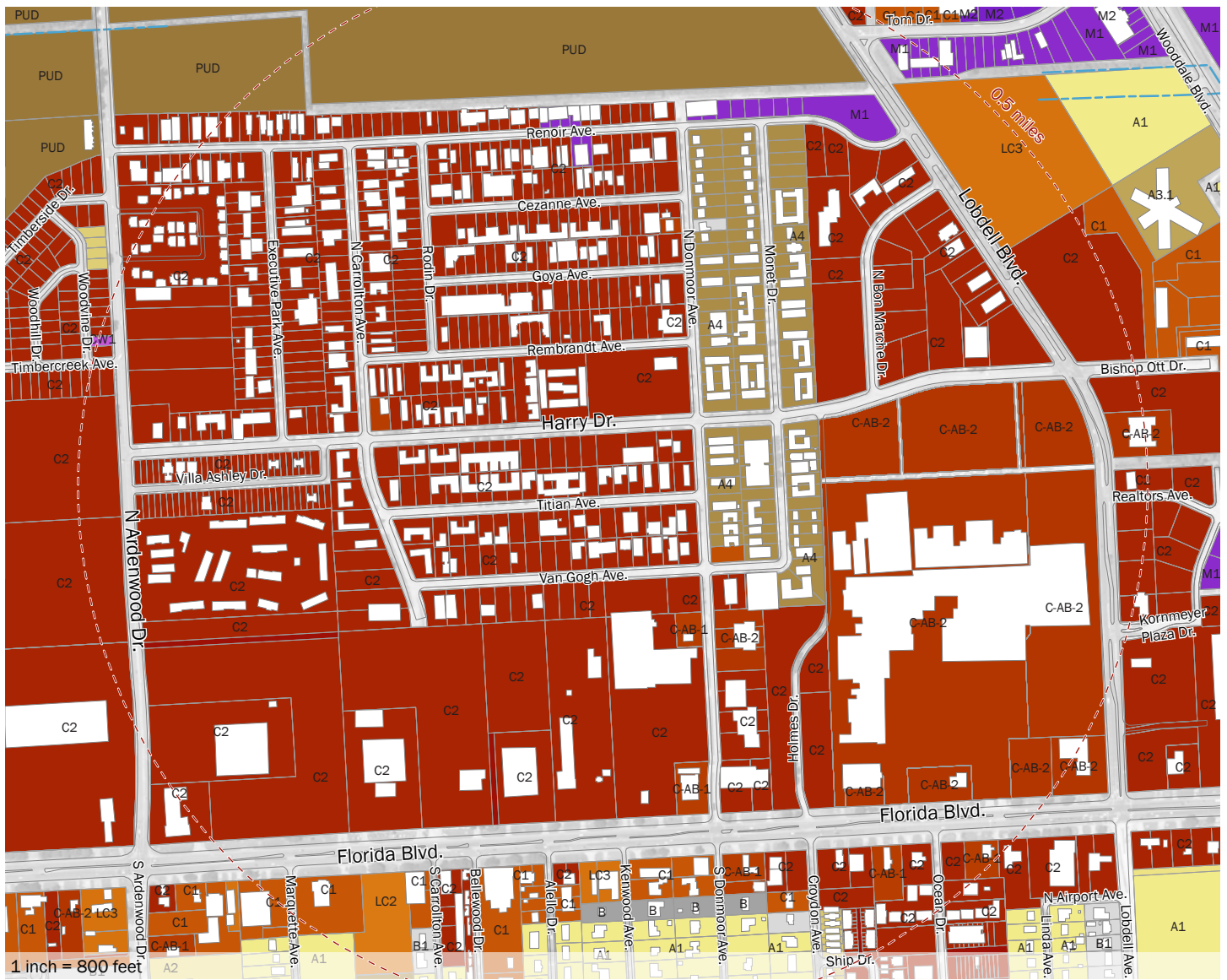
Figure 7: Existing Land Use

Unified Development Code

Existing zoning in Melrose East is primarily C2 Heavy Commercial with the exception of a small strip of A4 General Residential between North Donmoor Avenue and Monet Drive and a small strip of M1 Light Industrial north of Renoir Avenue. There are also three properties along North Donmoor Avenue zoned C-AB-1 Alcoholic Beverage (Restaurant) and several properties, including the Bon Carre Development, zoned C-AB-2 Alcoholic Beverage (Bar/Lounge). Except in the small portion of Melrose East along North Donmoor Avenue and Monet Drive that is zoned A4, the majority of residential uses are on parcels zoned C2, which are out of compliance with the current zoning code. *See figure 8.*

Existing parcel sizes range in width throughout the neighborhood. In general, properties north of Harry Drive and west of North Donmoor Avenue are 50 feet wide. Properties south of Harry Drive to the south side of Van Gogh Avenue are generally 75 feet wide and properties between North Donmoor Avenue and Monet Drive are 60 feet wide. Villa Ashley Drive has the narrowest lots within Melrose East at a width of only 30 feet. Properties with frontage along the major thoroughfares of North Ardenwood Drive, Florida Boulevard, and Lobdell Avenue range in width from 90 feet to 680 feet. Many of the buildings within Melrose East, particularly the multi-family complexes, have been developed on multiple lots that have never been re-subdivided, thus resulting in the wide range of widths.

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 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 from obtaining variances. UDC recommendations also address resolving non-conforming residential uses in the C2 zoning districts. Specific recommendations regarding these suggested changes can be found in the Unified Development Code Recommendations section of this document. Without such changes, development in Melrose East may not be feasible.



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 | |

Source: City Parish Planning Commission - August 2009

Figure 8: Existing Zoning

Transportation & Infrastructure

Roadways

The roadway and street network in the Melrose East CIP neighborhood, bounded by Florida Boulevard, Lobdell Boulevard, Renoir Avenue, and North Ardenwood Drive, does not appear to be overburdened with traffic based on available traffic counts, only experiencing short periods of traffic congestion at some intersections along the periphery of the neighborhood during the peak hour. The existing street grid is not very uniform in this neighborhood and no through or cut-through traffic is possible because none of the streets connect arterial to arterial. The street pattern in this neighborhood functions to accommodate local land use access. Two neighborhood streets, Holmes Drive and North Donmoor Avenue, connect to Florida Boulevard for east-west travel. Two other neighborhood streets, Renoir Avenue and Harry Drive, bring neighborhood traffic to Lobdell Boulevard for north-south travel. Florida Boulevard and Lobdell Boulevard intersect at the southeast corner of this neighborhood. Both of these boulevards function as arterials, particularly Florida Boulevard. The other two boundary streets, Renoir Avenue and North Ardenwood Drive, function as collectors. Of these four streets, three are multi-lane roadways (4 or 6-lanes); only Renoir Avenue is a two-lane street. There are no streets functioning as arterials which penetrate the Melrose East neighborhood. All streets in this neighborhood are two-lane roadways. Within the neighborhood, North Donmoor Avenue provides uninterrupted north-south access and Harry Drive does the same for east-west travel. Both of these streets are two-lane roadways.

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

Florida Boulevard, just east of Lobdell Boulevard
39,282 ADT*

*ADT = Average Daily Traffic

No other locations near the study neighborhood were included in DOTD's traffic count program. *See figure 9.* The ADT figure provided above is a bi-directional count on Florida Boulevard at this location. 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. However, given that both North Ardenwood Drive and Lobdell Boulevard are four-lane roadways, traffic volumes on these streets are probably in excess of 7,000 ADT.

The study neighborhood is at least marginally impacted by the Mayor-President's Green Light Project on Lobdell Boulevard between Independence Boulevard and Florida Boulevard. This project was completed in February 2010 and entailed the construction of little more than a half mile of a four-lane, curb and gutter boulevard (raised median) with sidewalks. Prior to construction, Lobdell Avenue at this location was a two-lane undivided roadway between Independence Boulevard and Florida Boulevard. The project now provides an improved north-south corridor and includes improved safety for access into BREC's Independence Park and its school bus transfer station.

Pedestrian access and connectivity throughout the study neighborhood is very good in that all of its streets have sidewalks on both sides. Only one boundary street, Florida Boulevard, has no sidewalks, but right-of-way that may have been available for this pedestrian amenity was consumed when the roadway was widened to six lanes. Within the neighborhood, only Holmes Drive lacks sidewalks on both sides of the street. Sidewalks are present only along the east side of this street.



Figure 9: Average Daily Traffic Count Locations

Transit Service

As of October 2010, the Melrose East neighborhood is served by three public transit routes operated by the Baton Rouge Capital Area Transit System (CATS). These are the Fairfield route (No. 13), the Florida route (No. 44), and the Cortana Express route (No. 45). By use of transfers where these routes intersect with others in the system, 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. All of these routes utilize the CATS terminal on Florida Boulevard at North 22nd Street. At the CATS terminal, virtually all transit lines in the 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.*

Fairfield Route

On weekdays, the first run departs the CATS terminal on Florida Boulevard and North 22nd Street at 5:45 AM and turns into the Melrose East neighborhood at Bon Marche Drive from Lobdell Boulevard approximately 20-25 minutes later. This route accesses the study neighborhood from Lobdell Boulevard along Bon Marche Drive. It makes a left turn on Harry Drive, followed by another left turn at Lobdell Boulevard. Bi-directional service is not provided on this transit route. The service operates on 60-minute headways throughout the day. The last bus departs the terminal at 8:45 PM, returning approximately 50 minutes later.

The Fairfield route operates on Saturdays between the hours of 6:45 AM (first run) and 8:45 PM (last run) on 60-minute headways.

This route does not operate on Sundays.

Florida Route

This route originates at the CATS terminal on Florida Boulevard at North 22nd Street and, on the outbound leg, accesses the study neighborhood from Florida Boulevard at North Ardenwood Drive. The route then turns right onto Harry Drive and traverses the neighborhood to Lobdell Boulevard where it again turns right onto Lobdell Boulevard and then left on Florida Boulevard. On the inbound leg of this route, the bus turns right at Lobdell Boulevard from Florida Boulevard, turns left at Harry Drive, turns left again at North Ardenwood Drive, and turns right at Florida Boulevard to continue its journey to the terminal. This route provides service to the neighborhood seven days a week. Thus, service is provided on a bi-directional basis in the study neighborhood. Weekday service begins at 4:45 AM when the

first run begins at the CATS terminal at Florida Boulevard and North 22nd Street. Between 4:45 AM and 9:45 PM, when the last run leaves the terminal, the service operates on alternating 30 and 60-minute headways.

On Saturday, the same route and headways are followed. However, the first run leaves the terminal at 6:15 AM, with the last bus departing at 9:45 PM.

Sunday service begins at 6:45 AM and ends with the last departure from the terminal at 7:00 PM. During the day headways are on a 60 and 30-minute alternating schedule.

Cortana Express Route

This is a bi-directional transit service in the study neighborhood using North Ardenwood Drive, Harry Drive, and Lobdell Avenue. From Florida Boulevard it follows the same route through the neighborhood as the Florida route. However, the Cortana Express route only operates on weekdays, and then with 45-minute headways throughout the day. The first run leaves the terminal at 5:00 AM and the last at 7:15 PM.

On the basis of existing transit service, it would appear that the Melrose East study neighborhood is relatively well served by transit. On weekdays, three transit lines can be accessed within the neighborhood along Harry Drive. On weekends, transit service in the neighborhood is provided by two lines. Transit service, especially on weekdays, could be enhanced by closing headways to 15 or 20 minutes, particularly for the Cortana Express route.

Water

The City of Baton Rouge is served with potable water by the Baton Rouge Water Company, a private utility company which is 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 Melrose East 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 Melrose East community is adequate and of a high quality, as it is throughout the rest of the city.

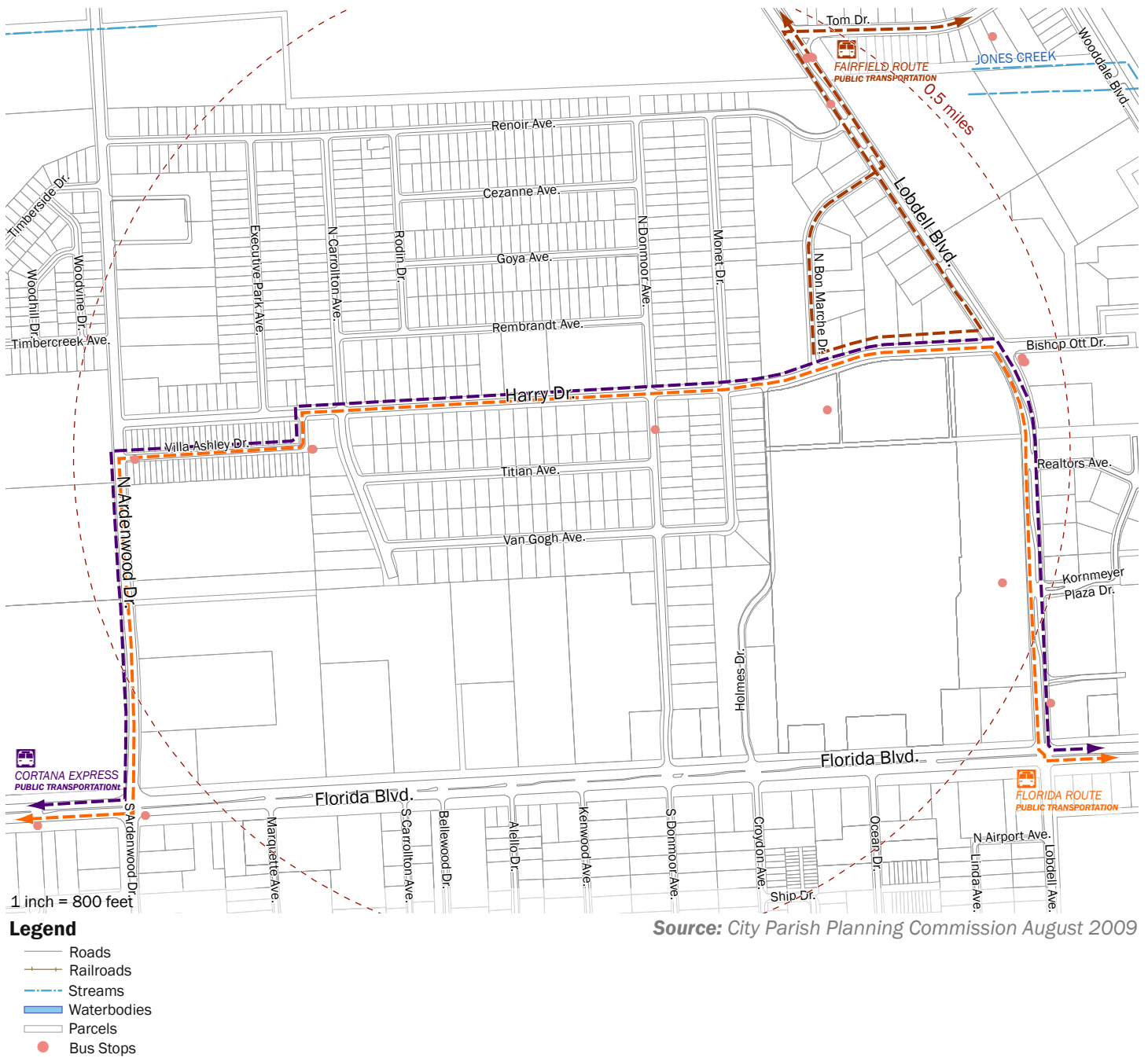


Figure 10: Transit Service

Storm Water Drainage

Some storm water runoff in the Melrose East study community is handled almost exclusively by curb and gutters with storm drains. Roadside drainage ditches were found only along Florida Boulevard. The neighborhood appears to be able to adequately handle storm water runoff. Because of the lack of open roadside drainage ditches in this neighborhood, drainage maintenance issues are minimal and the 10-year storm event should be handled with ease.

Sanitary Sewer

The Melrose East neighborhood is served by a community sanitary sewer system and the South Waste Water Treatment Plant (SWTP) located near the Mississippi River a few miles south of downtown Baton Rouge, on Gardere Lane near its intersection with Nicholson Drive (LA 30). This plant also serves all of Baton Rouge south of I-12, and a portion of the city north of I-12 and east of the downtown area. Problems have been identified at this WWTP and projects are underway to resolve these issues. For example, the South WWTP continues to operate in violation of its discharge permit limitations. Following the completion of improvements developed for the Revised Remedial Action Plan, flows predicted for the South WWTP will be much above the capacity of the plant. This deficiency will not be able to be overcome or managed through pump station and flow control improvements alone. According to results of the hydraulic modeling done for this plant, the expected peak hour flow (in MGD) is more than twice the plant's current peak hour design capacity.

Current sewer system improvement plans call for flows to the South WWTP to be increased. These improvements are designed to alleviate the modeled system deficiencies that could produce Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) in many areas served by the SWWTP. But without capacity improvements to the plant itself, problems with the plant's ability to handle peak flow conditions and to meet its discharge permit requirements will only get worse.

For these reasons the City-Parish has undertaken a series of projects designed to considerably upgrade the capabilities of the South WWTP. These include a number of Immediate Action Projects (IAP) which are designed to bring the plant into compliance with current discharge limits. These projects are slated for completion in January 2011 and carry a cost of approximately \$25.6M.

In addition to these improvements, the City-Parish has two major capacity projects in the works for the SWWTP. Among other things, these projects will improve the plant's wet weather

treatment capacity to handle peak flows of 200 MGD and increase wet weather storage capacity, effluent pumping, and preliminary treatment. These improvements are expected to be completed in May 2013 at a cost of approximately \$90M.

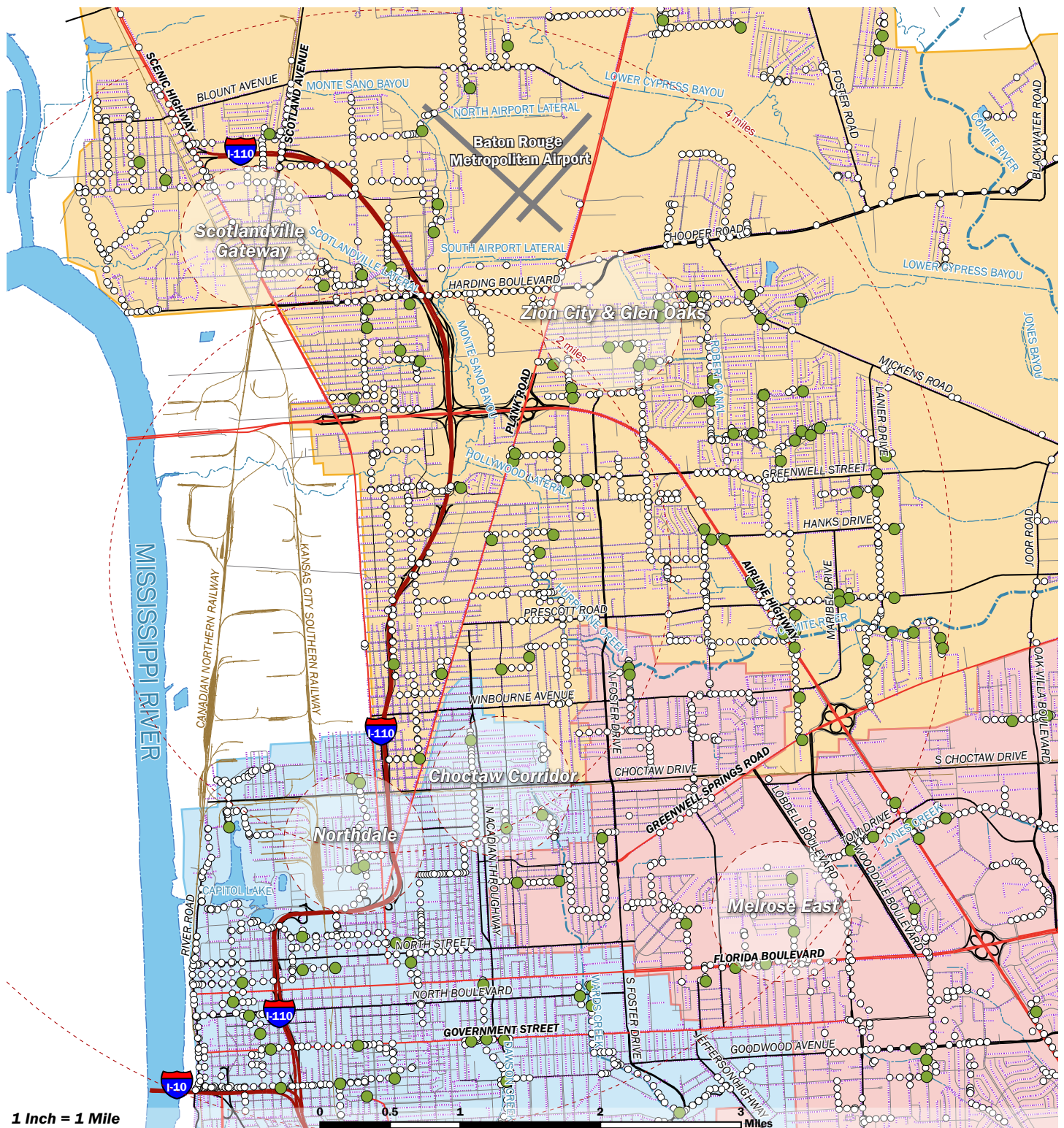
In May of the following year, the Phase II project at this plant will have been completed at a cost of another \$90M.

The collection system in nearly every neighborhood in Baton Rouge is comprised of 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 truck line leading to the WWTP. This is the case in the Melrose East neighborhood where a large number of gravity mains comprise the collection system.

The primary deficiency of the sanitary sewer system in the Melrose East neighborhood, as it is in many other parts of the city, 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.*

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.

Three sewer rehabilitation projects, all part of the Consent Decree, were programmed for the vicinity of the study neighborhood that will directly impact the Melrose East community, improving conditions and eliminating the SSO problem that has been identified there. These comprehensive sewer system rehabilitation projects are estimated to cost about \$34.7 M combined. One is the Scenic Highway-Spanish Town Road Sewer Rehabilitation Project which will directly impact all of the study area through physical inspection. The other project, South Boulevard-St. Joseph Street/25th Street-North Acadian Thoroughway, will provide capacity improvements that will directly benefit the



Source: CDM Engineering

Figure 11: Sanitary Sewer Overflows

Melrose East neighborhood. It will provide a new gravity main from Bay Street and 19th Street to a location south of I-110. The third project is scheduled for completion in November 2011. This is the Capital Lake Drive-Gayosa Street/25th Street-North Acadian Thruway project. It will provide a new force main

following Madison Avenue through the study neighborhood. All of these sewer improvement projects will address and help to eliminate previously identified SSO problems in the Melrose East neighborhood. See figure 12.



Figure 12: Sewer Rehabilitation Projects

Architectural Survey & Adaptive Reuse

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

Using input from Workshop participants and analysis by the Team, the Catalyst Project areas for Melrose East were identified as North Ardenwood Drive north of its intersection with Harry Drive and North Bon Marche Drive between Lobdell Boulevard and Harry Drive. In general, most of the structures within the study area were occupied commercial units receiving a rating of either good or fair. *See figure 13.* The full Melrose East Adaptive Reuse Analysis document can be found in the Appendix of this document.



North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project Area **Source:** Trahan Architects

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



North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Project Area **Source:** Trahan Architects

Figure 13: Architectural Conditions

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 Melrose East Community lies in the provision of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreational amenities. Recognizing existing and identifying future opportunities for recreation areas in Melrose East is important to the goals and strategies of the CIP. Recreation areas are also a source of positive economic benefits. 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) (www.brec.org) 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.

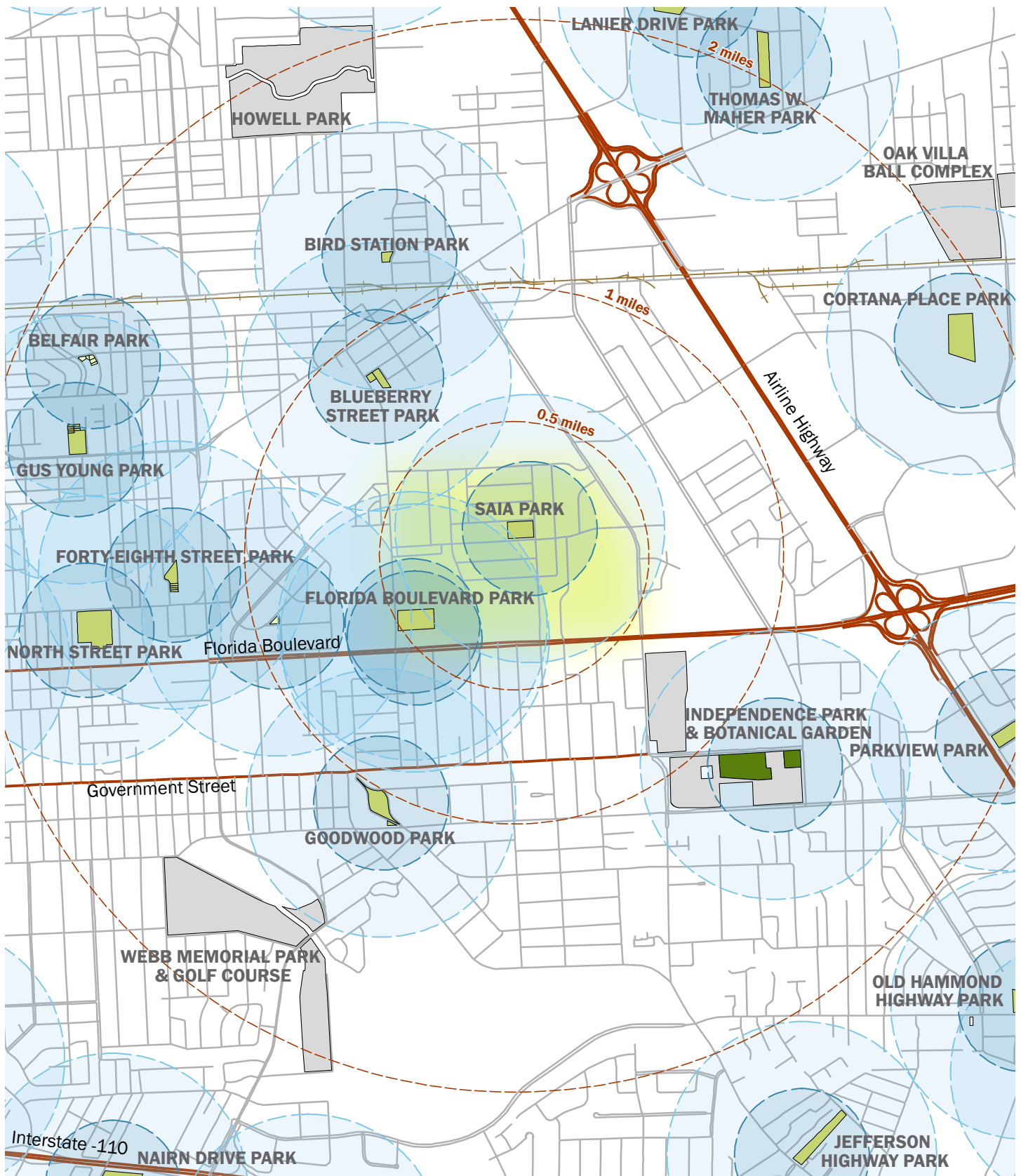
The Melrose East community contains one neighborhood park, Saia Park. The park was reviewed within the Strategic Plan and given a rating of “fair.”

“Fair is a rating in which the property itself may very well be attractive but the amenities are in a state of decline. Maintenance is less frequent or at least cannot turn back the clock on normal decline. Play equipment is still safe but may be rusting, bleaching, or covered with mildew; structures such as restroom buildings are in need of repairs such as paint, shingles, or cleaning of graffiti; ball fields are playable but the infields are grass covered, creating a hazard, fencing is warped or rusting, dugouts are undersized or may flood when it rains, and bleachers are not up to code. These parks need major repairs or renovation within three to five years.”

As of the completion of this report, no renovation plans are known for Saia Park.

Saia Park

This neighborhood park is on 3.74 acres located at 855 North Donmoor Drive. It has an indoor and an outdoor basketball court, a tennis court, and a baseball diamond as well as a recreation center, a children's playground, and a multi-use play area. In addition to the documented need of repair or renovation to this park, neighborhood stakeholders indicated that it is in need of increased security, stating that illegal activities regularly occur there.



Source: Baton Rouge Recreation & Park Commission

Figure 14: Park Proximity

Public Services

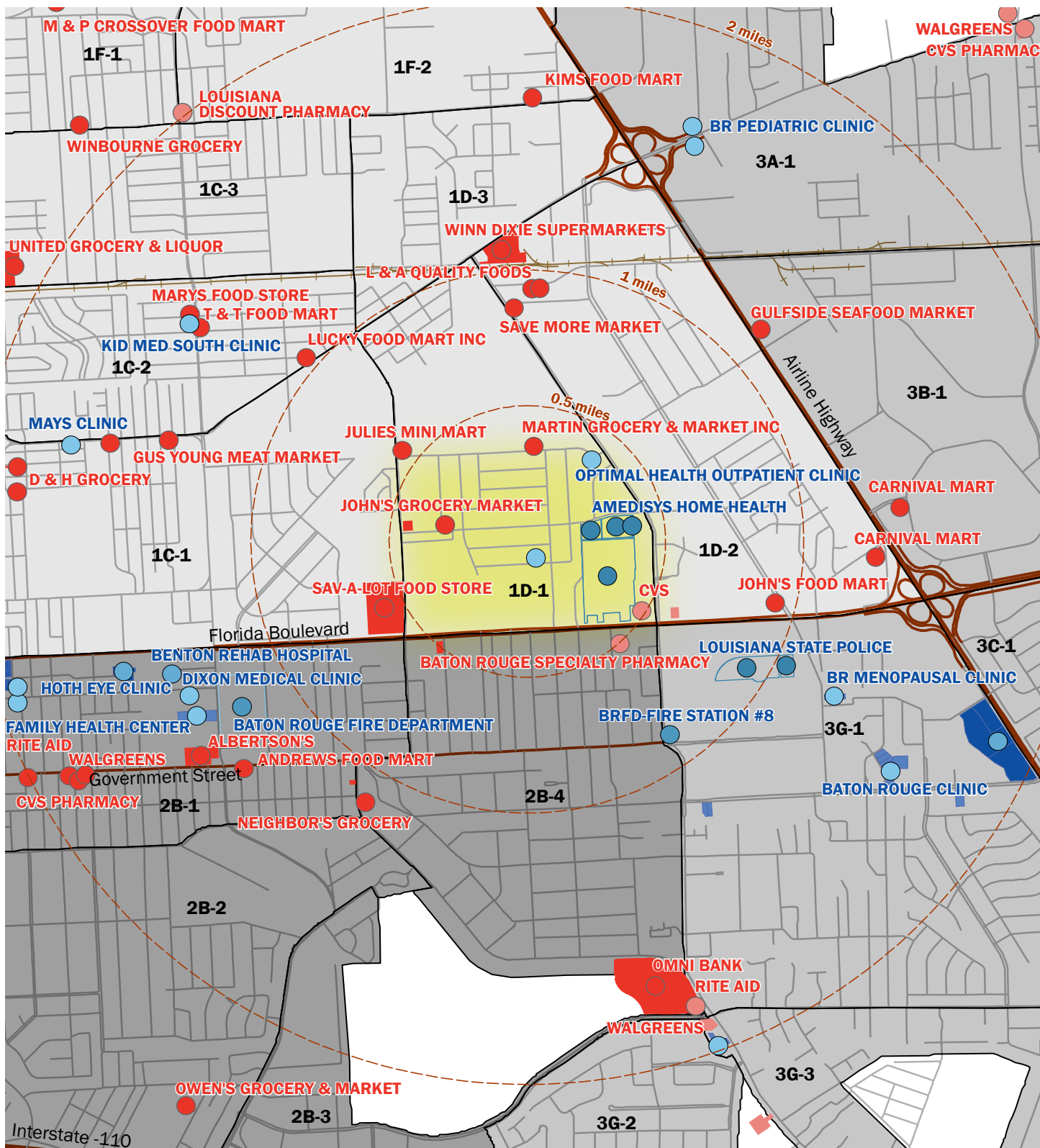
The Melrose East community is close to a moderate number of public services. Two Baton Rouge Fire Stations are within a 2 mile radius of the community: BRFD #7 at the corner of Claycut Road and Jefferson Highway and BRFD #8 at 545 Lobdell Boulevard. The Louisiana State Police Headquarters are located less than one mile away from the neighborhood center and the Baton Rouge Police Department has a traffic division office in the Bon Carre Business Center within the community. However, even with the close proximity, residents pointed out known criminal activity at specific locations in the area and still feel that there is a need for more police presence in the community.

The Eden Park Branch library, located at 5131 Greenwell Springs Road, is within the one mile radius of the Melrose East community. It was rebuilt in January 2007 and according to the East Baton Rouge Parish Library's website is a great community resource with a collection of over 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 has the capacity to host 93 people and can be split into two separate spaces.

The Melrose East community houses several mental health clinics and rehabilitation services but is without a sufficient number of easily accessible general health clinics. The nearest hospitals are Baton Rouge General Medical Center and Woman's Hospital, both of which are about two miles from the neighborhood. Near the Baton Rouge General, there are also several specialty care facilities including Promise Hospital (a long term care facility), Cypress Psychiatric Hospital, and Behavioral Hospital of Baton Rouge (a dependency rehabilitation facility). The need for general health clinics as well as pharmacies being in close proximity to the community was identified by residents during the Melrose East Visioning Workshop.

Lastly, the Melrose East community is home to several small convenience stores and one grocery store, Sav-A-Lot, at the west corner of North Ardenwood Drive and Florida Boulevard.

While at first glance the community seems to be fairly well served by public services and community resources, a closer examination shows that several of these services are of poor quality and most are located outside of a one mile radius of the community center. For a community which relies heavily upon pedestrian travel or public transit, this is less than ideal. *See figure 15.*



Legend

- Roads
- Railroads
- Streams
- Waterbodies
- Melrose East

Community Resources

- Clinic
- Hospital
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- Pharmacy
- Grocery

Police Districts

- District 1
- District 2
- District 3

Source: City Parish Planning Commission - August 2009

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 CPTED 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 Melrose East 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. A crime statistics map can be found in the Appendix of this document. Each police district is then divided into zones, with District 1 having six zones. Melrose East is in Zone D and data specific to that zone paint a slightly brighter picture for the neighborhood than that of the District as a whole. Within the district, the Melrose East zone is highest in three of the nine tracked categories: rape, larceny, and motor theft. The community ranks near the middle of the remainder of the categories, however, the individual numbers of each occurrence are still higher than would be desirable. Residents feel that there should be a greater police presence and suggested more visible and frequent patrols of the neighborhood. According to some property owners, attempts have been made at establishing a Crime Prevention District; however, since apartment complex owners typically own several lots, the cost of this proposal on the owners was too severe.

Point Source Pollution and Brownfields

Point Source Pollution

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), one of the main potential point source pollutants 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.

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 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.*

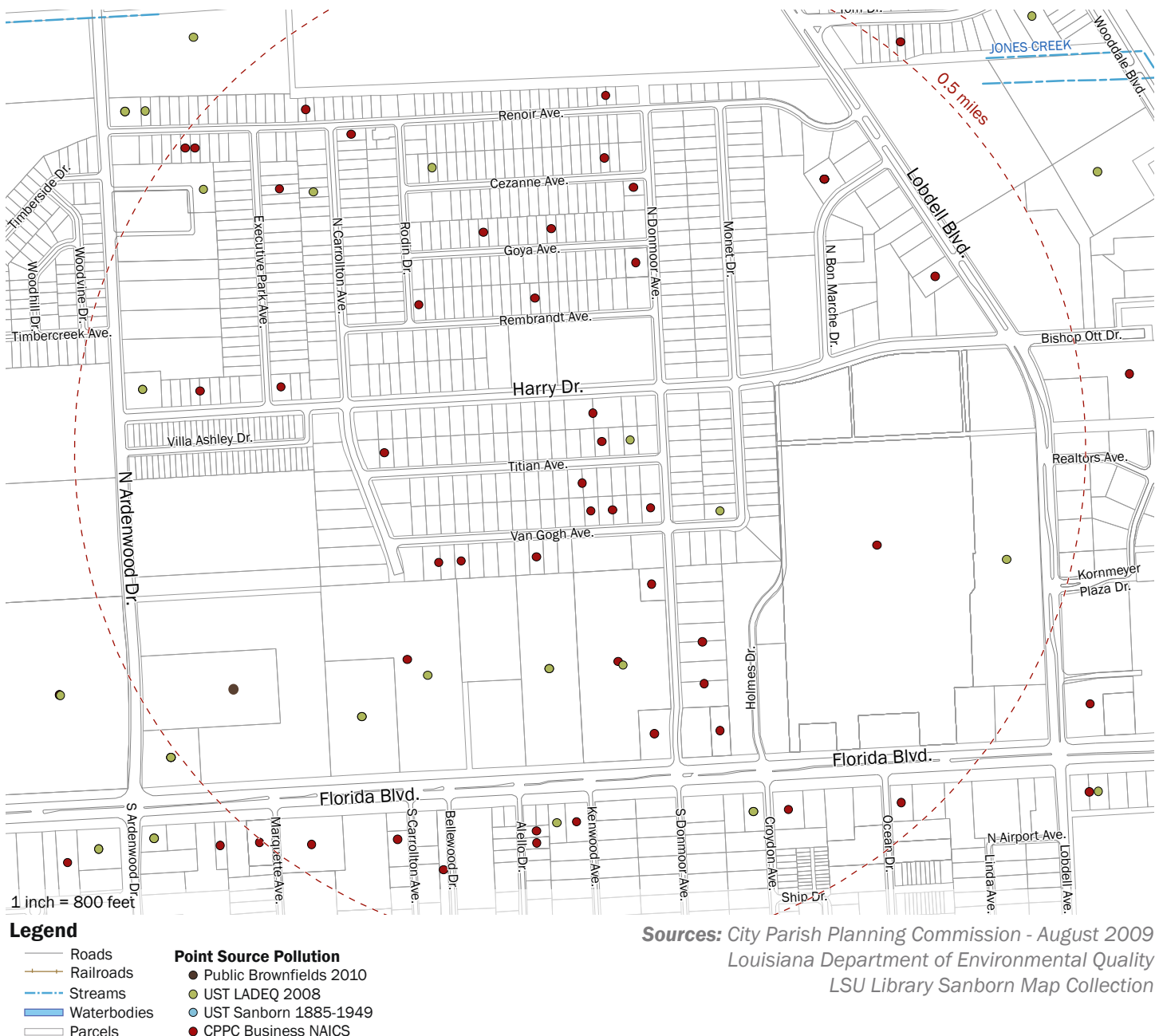


Figure 16: Brownfields & Point Source Pollution

Melrose East 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 41 total business USTs and 20 LADEQ USTs cited within the Melrose East 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.

There is one location within the Melrose East area that is cited as a brownfield site. However, the site, formerly used as a Sears department store, has been redeveloped by BREC for their headquarters building. Due to the redevelopment of this property, no further action is required.

Market Assessment

The Team was tasked with identifying factors that affect redevelopment in the 5 CIP areas. The Team has 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 Melrose East 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 Melrose East 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 Melrose East are population growth, employees by industry, racial composition, educational attainment, age, income, location and access, commercial services, housing, and financial incentives.

The slow population growth in the City and the Parish suggest that declining populations in North Baton Rouge neighborhoods may continue without significant change to policy and economic conditions. This trend is evident throughout the entire Parish.

Melrose East, 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 less than a third of the Parish average.

Melrose East has several important locational advantages including its proximity to downtown and Mid City, proximity to the Florida Boulevard corridor, proximity to Baton Rouge Community College, access to medical facilities such as Baton Rouge General Medical Center, access to highways, and transit access.

Data collected suggests that Melrose East indicates opportunities for a small grocery store as well as family clothing, shoes, and sporting goods, although the consumer demand for these uses is on the lower end of what is necessary to support small to medium-size stores.

The housing market shows that in 2009 Melrose East was made up predominantly of renter-occupied, multi-family units. This represents a significant contrast with the Parish as a whole, which is made up of predominantly owner-occupied, single-family units. There are indications that the conditions of much of the multi-family housing in the neighborhood are a concern to residents.

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 but instead can place restrictions on development while helping to ensure that new development achieves the community's goals.

Lastly, 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. The Implementation Strategies section of this document includes a full description of the various financial resources that may be available.

Recommendations

Using input from the Melrose East Visioning Workshop and analysis of the area's existing conditions, the Team identified strategic sites in the neighborhood to house momentum-generating developments that provide for a 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 development prototypes illustrate various building types and development estimates based upon average figures. They were based on both the architectural design of existing community developments and on setback and building envelope standards set forth in the Louisiana Land Use Toolkit, which is also being used in the development of the East Baton Rouge Parish Comprehensive Planning (FuturEBR) efforts currently underway.

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 Projects will serve as the jump start to redevelopment, community-wide and regional improvements are also recommended to improve the Melrose East area. The recommendations will serve to revitalize the entire area and connect it 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

- » Attached Commercial
- » Detached Commercial
- » Single-Family

Development Prototypes are found on the following pages.

Notes:

Illustrated numbers are taken from averages of each development type within the proposed Catalyst Project areas 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

Attached Commercial

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	33,000 sf
Lot Area (acres)	.75 acre
Height	1 stories
Usable FAR	.32
Residential units/acre	NA
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	3,500
Avg. Number of Units	3
Total Building Size (sf)	10,500

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	\$ 198,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 1,300,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	NA
Retail parking/ksf	5
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	50
Open Space (%)	9

Construction Costs

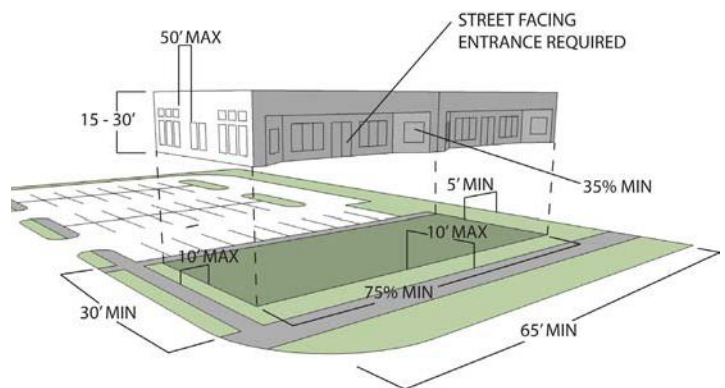
Surface/space	\$ 3000
Structured/space	\$ NA
Tuck-Under/space	\$ NA

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

Detached Commercial

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	33,000 sf
Lot Area (acres)	.75 acre
Height	1 stories
Usable FAR	.23
Residential unites/acre	NA
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	7,400

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	\$ 198,000
Total Project Costs	\$ 1,200,000

Parking and Open Space Summary

Residential parking/unit	NA
Retail parking/ksf	9
Office Parking/ksf	NA
Total Parking Spaces	64
Open Space (%)	9

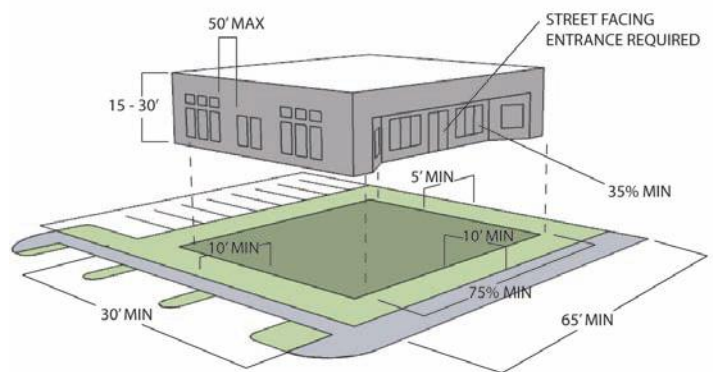
Construction Costs

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

Single-Family

Building Summary

Lot Area (sf)	1550 sf
Lot Area (acres)	.04 acre
Height	1 stories
Usable FAR	.48
Residential unites/acre	25
Avg. Unit Size (sf)	1245

Financial Summary

Average unit sale price	\$149,000
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	\$ 9300
Total Project Costs	\$ 159,000



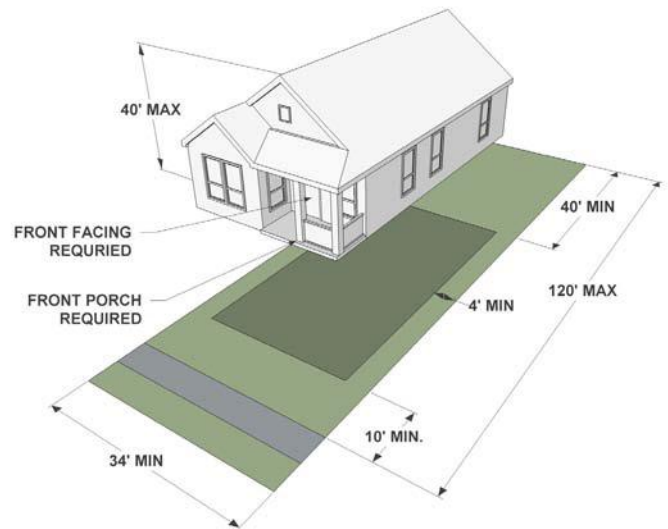
Example of Single-Family Residence

Parking and Open Space Summary

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

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



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 land uses, revisions to the zoning are required to make development of both commercial and residential parcels in Melrose East feasible. The FuturEBR comprehensive planning effort currently underway is addressing UDC modifications. In the meantime, based on the Melrose East Community Improvement Plan, a blanket change of land use and zoning for the entire community to Planned Unit Development (PUD) is recommended.

This Community Improvement 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, allowing redevelopment to more readily occur. It 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 Melrose East 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 that the urban design intent of the Melrose East 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

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.

Commercial parcels would also benefit from PUD rezoning of the entire target area, providing flexibility for future 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 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 Melrose East CIP and should be considered at that time.

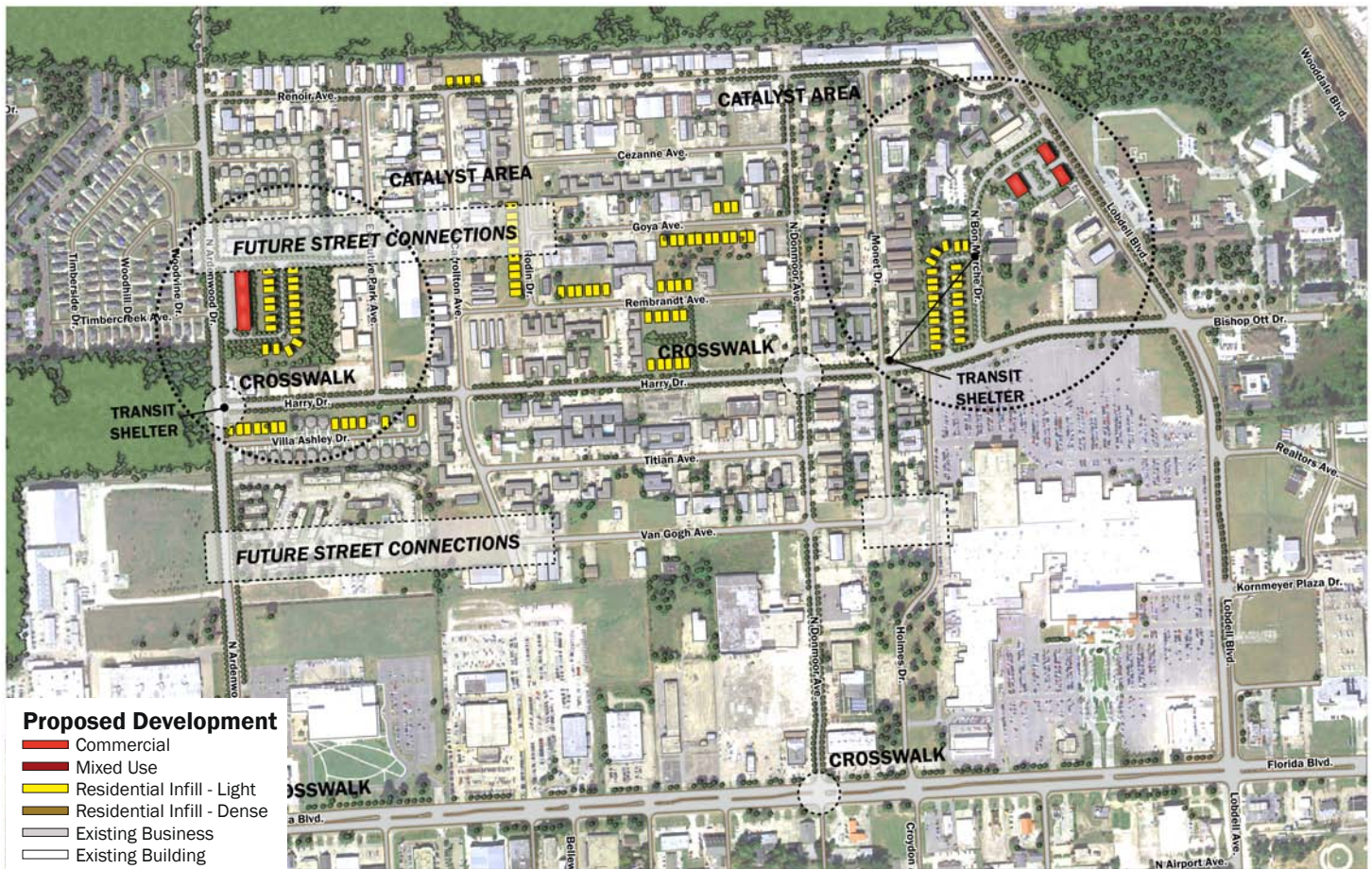


Figure 17: Catalyst Area Context Map

Catalyst Projects

Site

Input received at the Visioning Workshop and analysis by the Team helped identify two areas to house catalyst development within the Melrose East community. The first area is located north of Harry Drive along North Ardenwood Drive, bounded by Executive Park Avenue to the east and a proposed new neighborhood street to the north.

The second Catalyst Project area within the Melrose East neighborhood is located along North Bon Marche Drive with commercial development along Llobdell Boulevard and housing along Harry Drive. This plan also proposes a new neighborhood street as a connector from North Bon Marche Drive to Harry Drive. Both Catalyst Projects utilize vacant tracts. *See figure 17.*

Program

Community input received at the Melrose East Visioning Workshop indicated a desire for commercial and single-family housing opportunities in the western portion of the community along North Ardenwood Drive, as well as commercial and single-family housing opportunities in the eastern portion of the community and a childcare center located within the neighborhood. Both the Comprehensive Plan for East Baton Rouge Parish and the Melrose East CIP include a focus on Mid City and the Melrose East area, indicating that the population in and around the neighborhood may continue to grow in future years. The market assessment shows that this potential growth contributes to additional demand for commercial services in the area. With increased density, comes increased demand.

A primary opportunity for bringing commercial development to Melrose East is in the vacant tracts of land along North Ardenwood Drive north of Harry Drive, east of North Bon Marche Drive at Harry Drive, and at the corner of North Bon Marche Drive and Llobdell Boulevard. Given the community needs and market demand for a small grocery store, family clothing, shoes, and sporting goods, the two Catalyst Project sites present appropriate locations for commercial and residential development, one being on the west side of the neighborhood

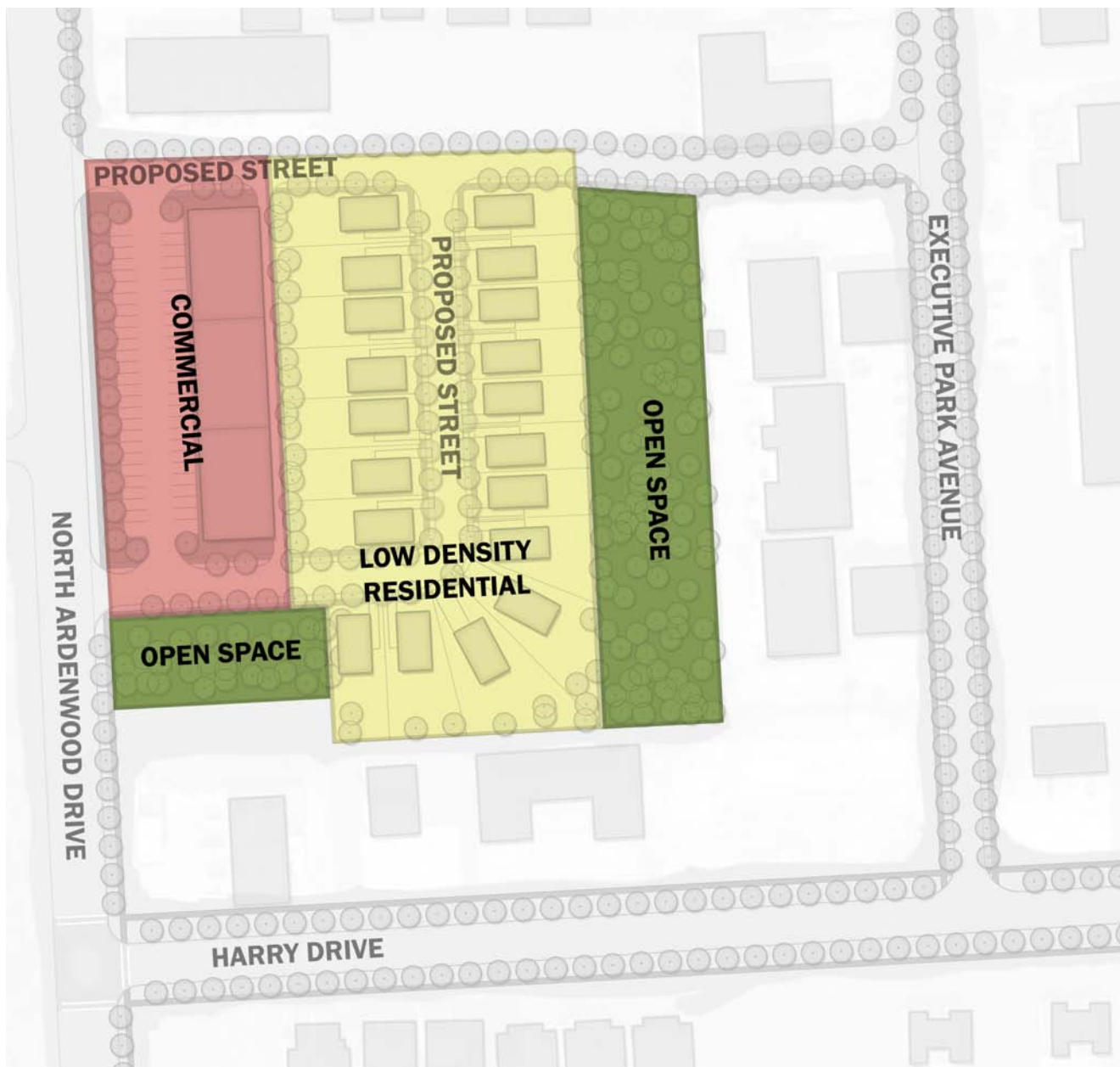


Figure 18: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Program Diagram

and the other on the east. Bookend developments will generate jobs, activity, and revenue in the area, having a considerable beneficial impact on the Melrose East community. Initially, intense efforts are recommended to embark on an effort to enforce stronger building codes that will require existing property owners to maintain their properties in the hopes of upgrading the living conditions in the area. Rehabilitation of many of the apartment buildings in the area needs to occur in order to market to homebuyers. Secondly, it is recommended that the RDA reach out to existing businesses to improve their facilities using their Small Business Faade Improvement Grant Program.

Both Melrose East Catalyst Projects recommend introducing single-family residential uses into the neighborhood. A reduction

in density from multi-family to single-family is preferred in an effort to strengthen the economic status of the area. The goal is to shift the balance from rentership to ownership to improve physical assets and attract more people with disposable incomes. Once the commercial development occurs and there are services provided, the market for homebuyers in the area should increase. *See figure 18 and 19.*

Most homes in Melrose East are inhabited by single parent families, thus creating a substantial demand for childcare services. Though some childcare facilities exist in the community, they do not provide services to meet all the residents' needs. In addition, the quality of childcare in Melrose East must be improved if the overall stability and viability of the community is to be improved.

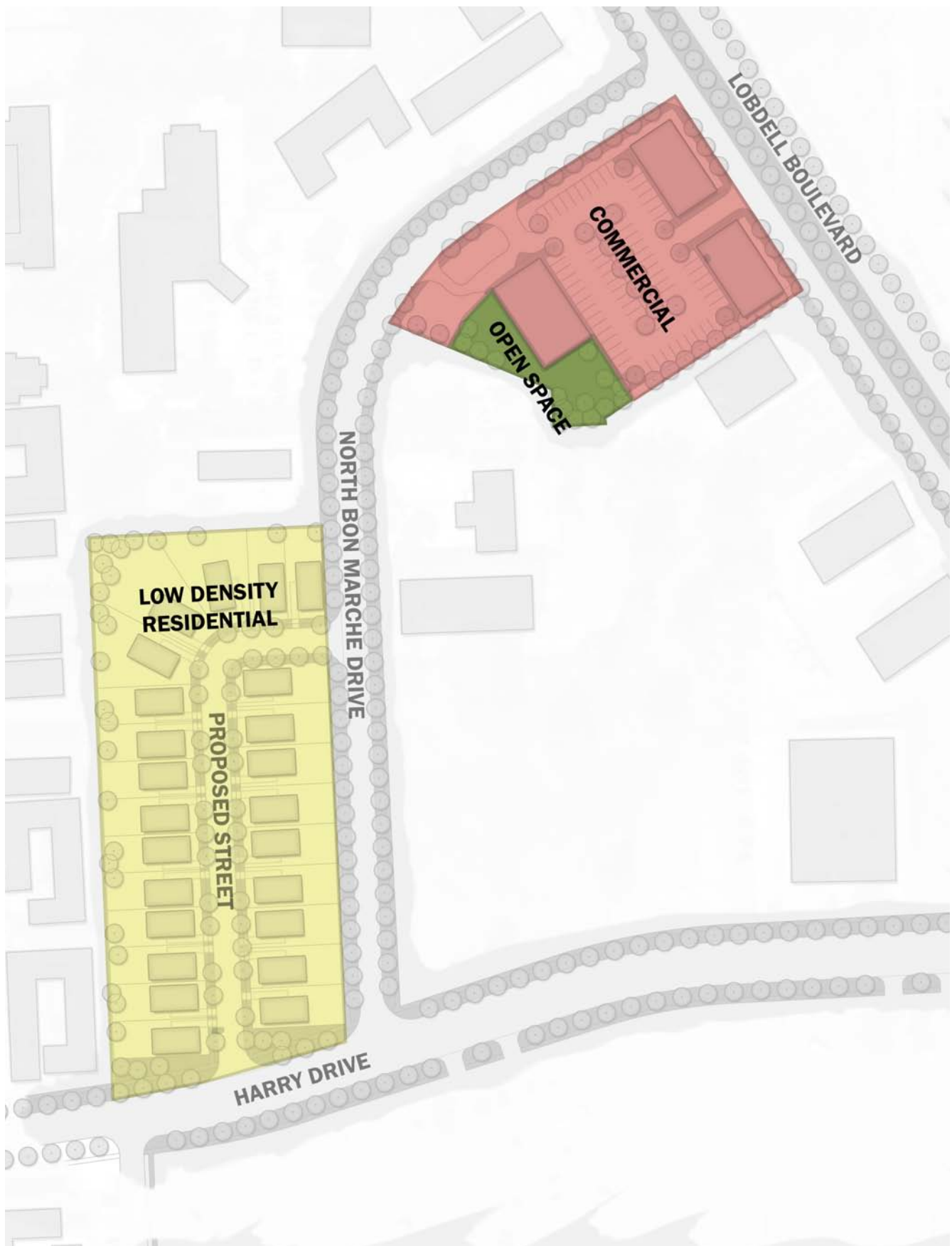


Figure 19: North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Program Diagram

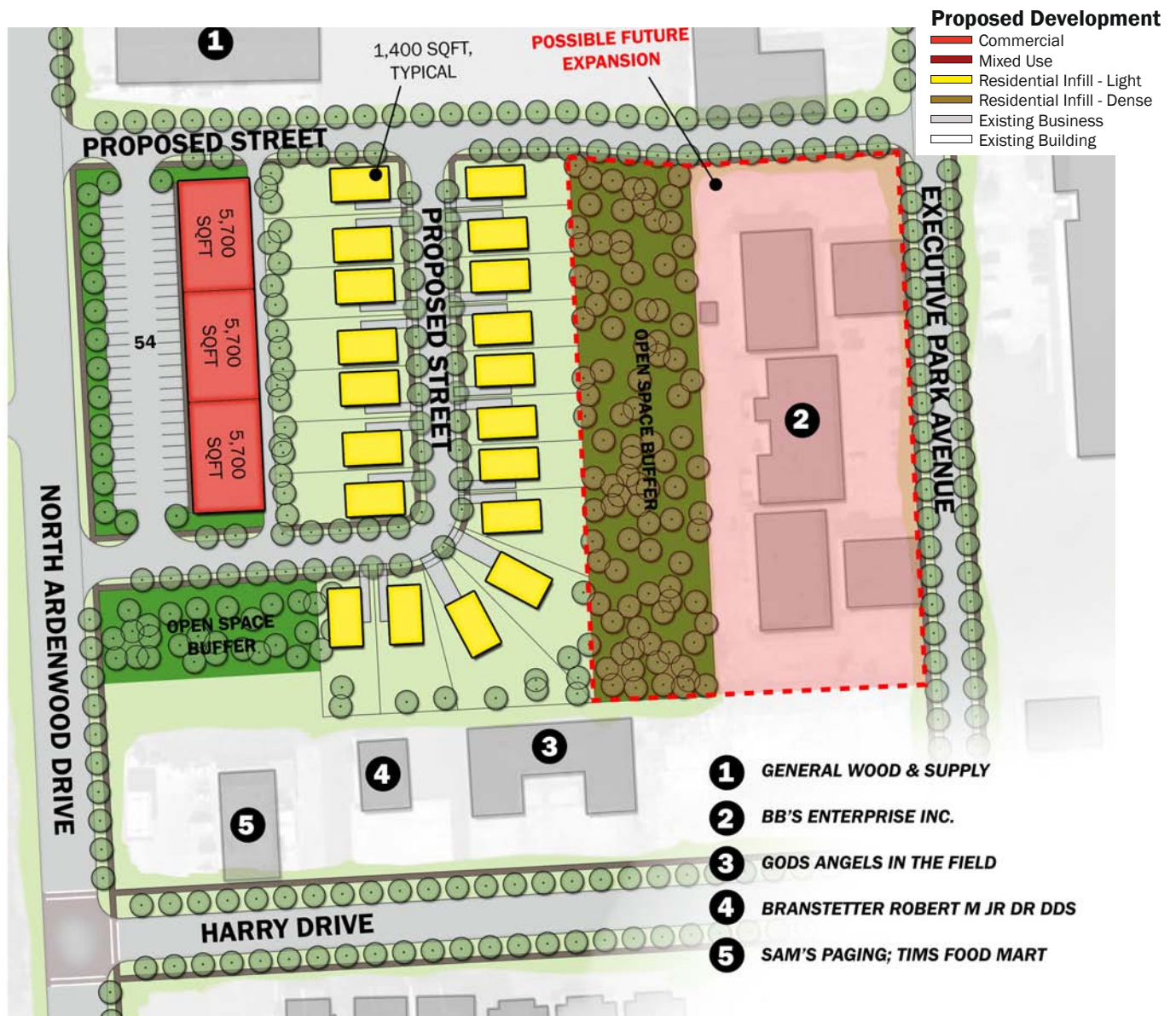


Figure 20: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Plan

To meet this need, a new community childcare facility is proposed in the second Catalyst Project site on North Bon Marche Drive. This facility is envisioned to provide daycare, after school care, and tutoring for children living in and nearby Melrose East. It is recommended that the RDA and the Office of Community Development work together to make this facility a reality.

The proposed childcare facility could work in partnership with the recently proposed K-8 school planned for the site at the western end of Harry Drive just south of the newer single-family residential development. The school will be a charter school developed and managed by National Heritage Academies, which already operates another school they developed on North Foster Drive at Hollywood Street.

Catalyst Project

The North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project, *see figure 20 and 21*, calls for a strip of attached commercial with parking fronting North Ardenwood Drive and a 12' commercial service alley. Providing a progression from commercial to residential uses, it also calls for 19 new single-family lots at 45'x120' that front a new neighborhood street that connects North Ardenwood Drive to a second proposed new neighborhood street. The neighborhood streets are designed as tree lined streets with sidewalks on both sides and crosswalks, making the development shady, safe, and walkable for the new residents and patrons. An open space buffer



Figure 21: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Plan Tilt Up Before and After



Figure 22: North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Plan



Figure 23: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Plan Tilt Up Before and After

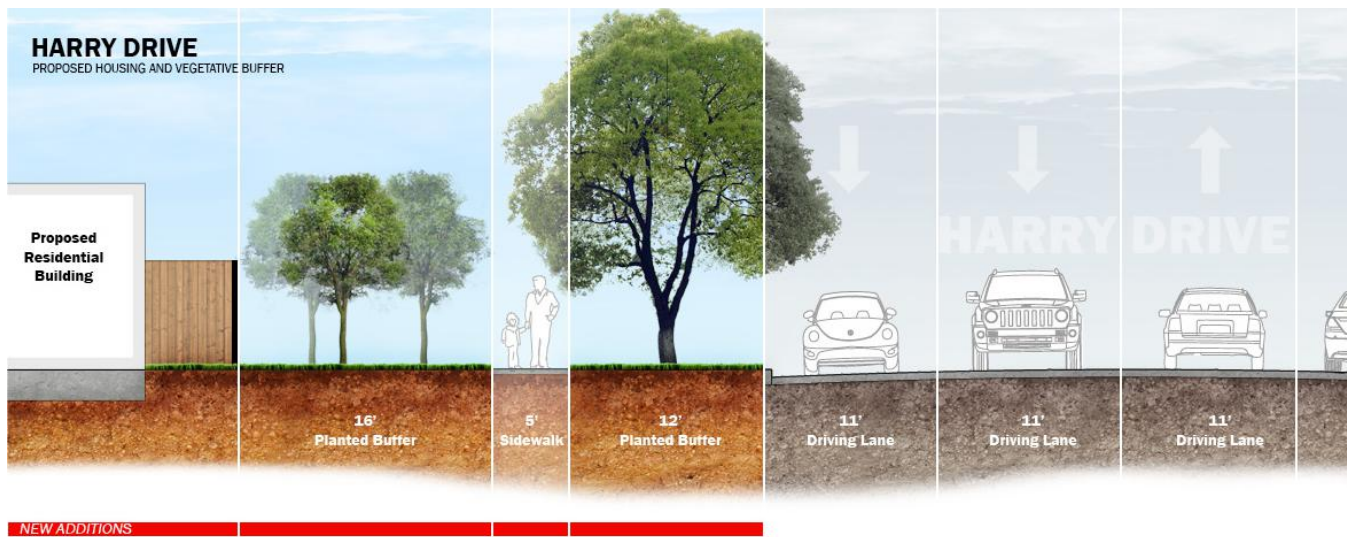


Figure 24

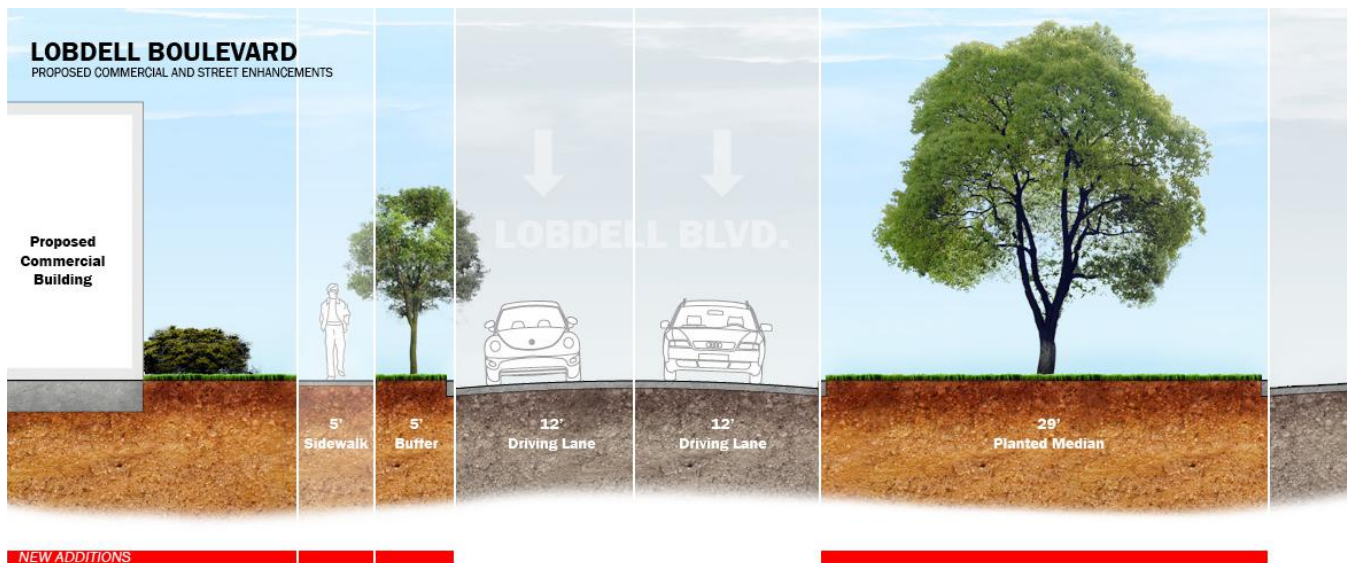


Figure 25

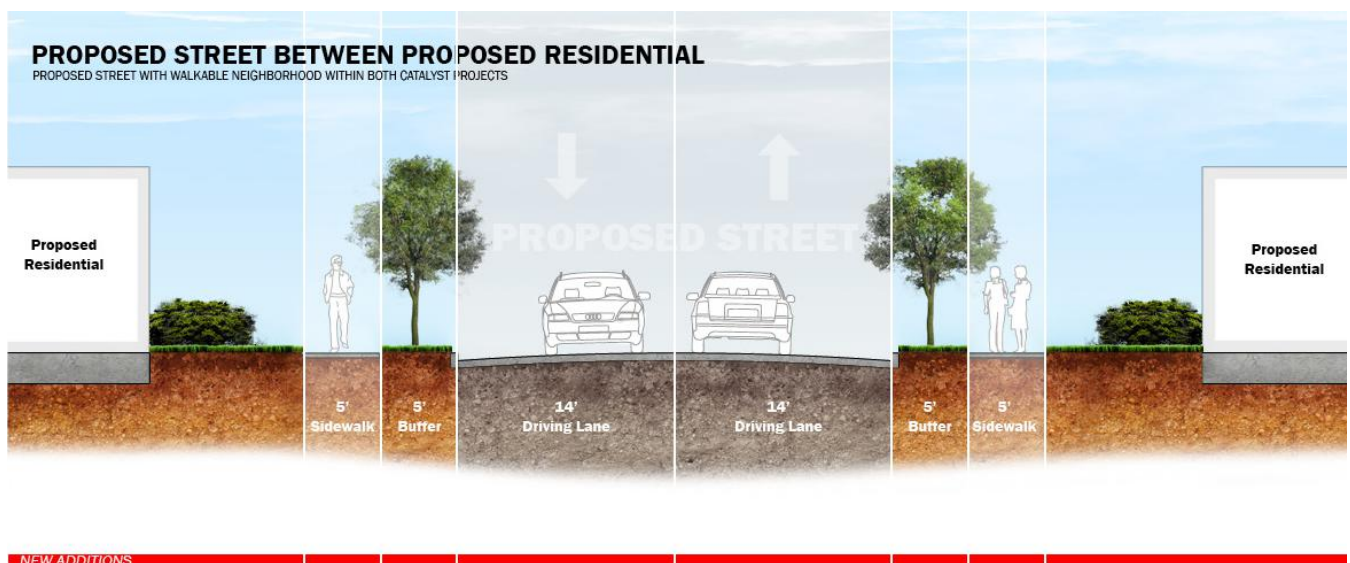
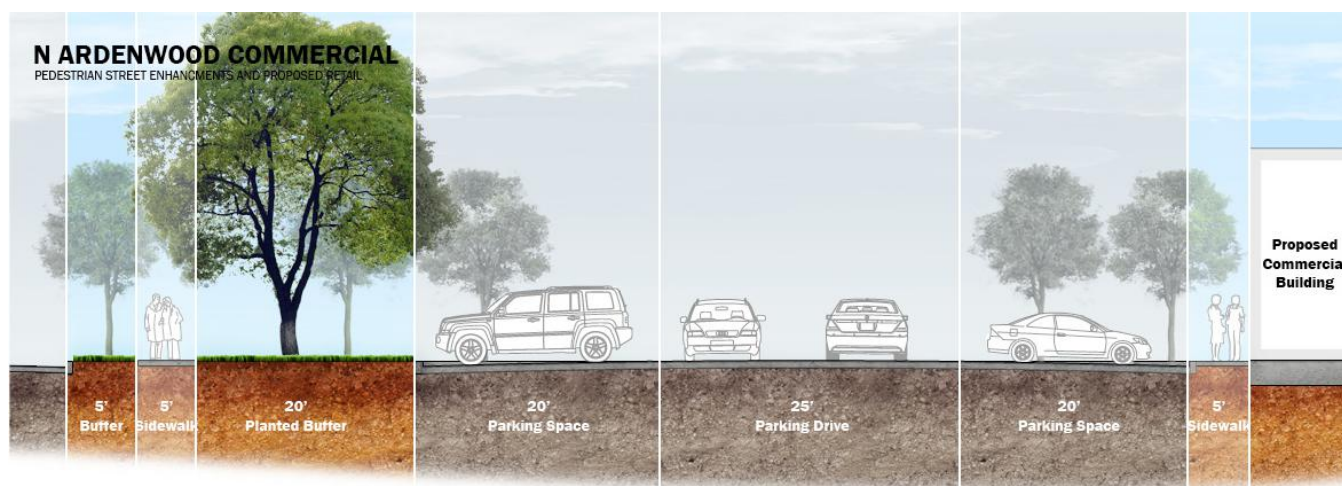


Figure 26



NEW ADDITIONS

Figure 27



NEW ADDITIONS

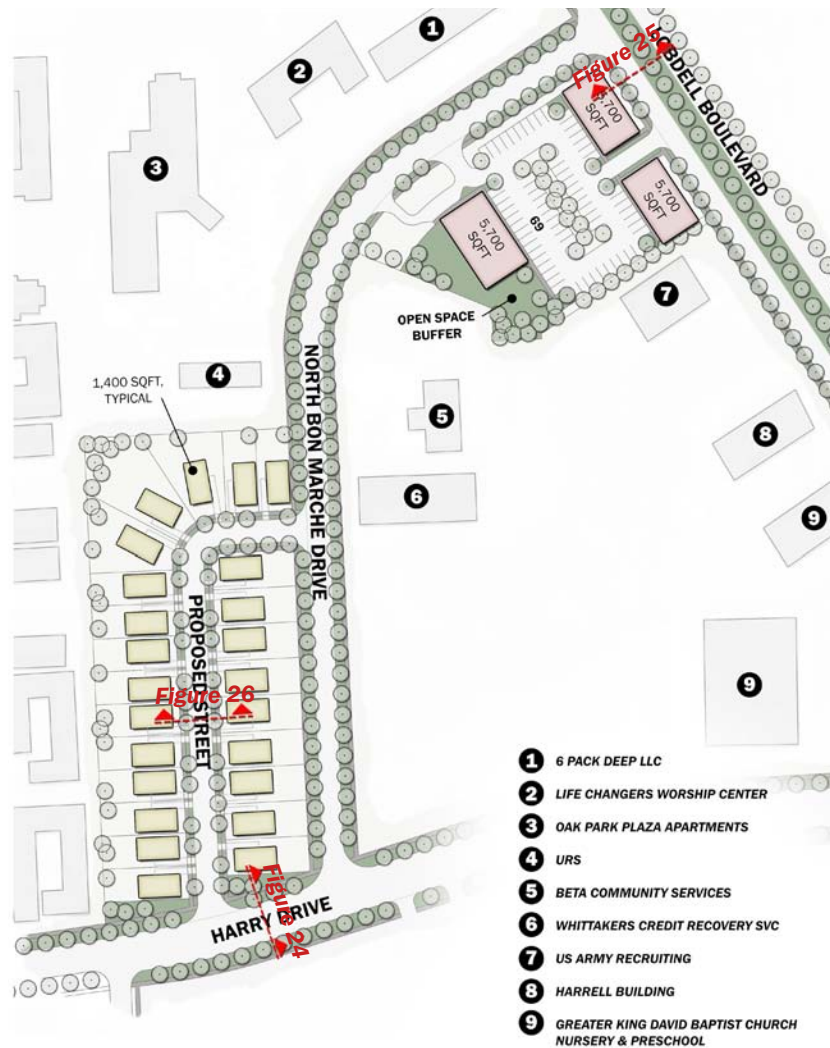
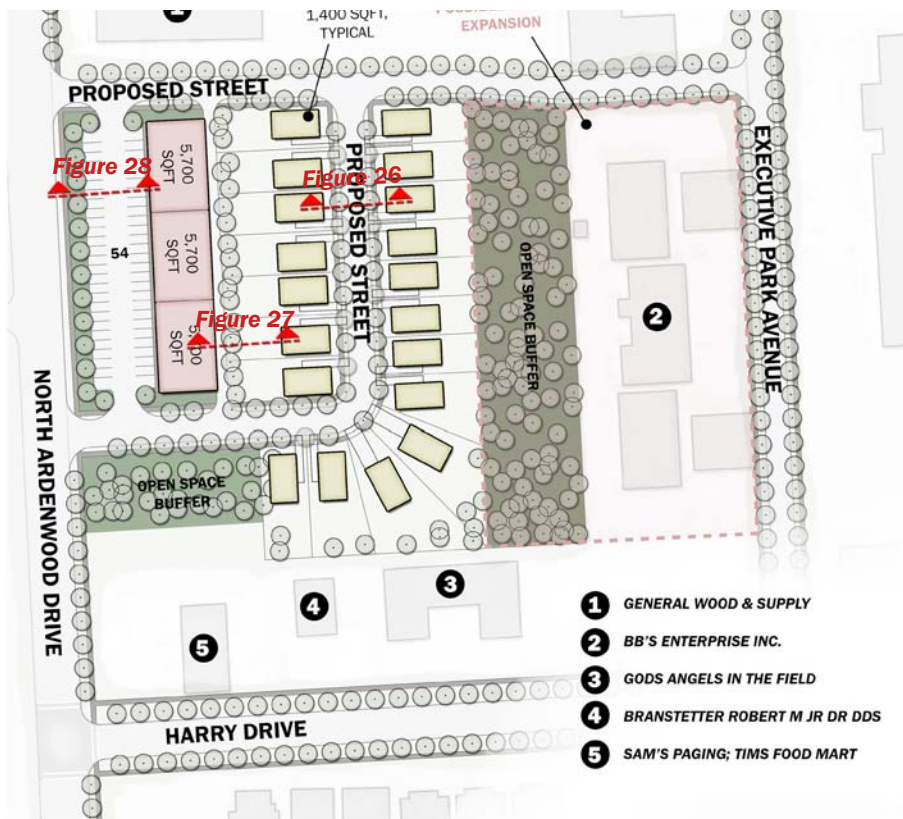
Figure 28

is proposed south of the commercial development separating the residential lots from North Ardenwood Drive. A second open space buffer is proposed east of the residential lots towards Executive Park Avenue. Both open space buffers could potentially serve as passive park space with picnic tables and trails for the residents and the employees of the retail spaces.

The North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Project, *see figures 22 and 23*, mirrors the North Ardenwood Drive one with commercial and residential uses. Three parcels of detached commercial are proposed along Lobdell Boulevard south of North Bon Marche Drive. Two commercial buildings front Lobdell Boulevard with parking in the back leading to a proposed childcare center equipped with an off street drive through for drop off/pick up. The retail development and childcare center will not only serve the residents of the neighborhood, but will cater to the numerous

businesses and daytime employees of the Bon Carre Business Center, located in the southeast corner of the community. A generously planted buffer is proposed between the childcare development and the existing businesses south of it. Further south down North Bon Marche Drive at the intersection of Harry Drive is the proposed site for 24 single-family residential home sites at 45'x120'. These lots front a new neighborhood street designed as a tree lined street with sidewalks on both sides and crosswalks, giving the development an inviting, walkable, residential feel. A 16' vegetative buffer is planned along Harry Drive to separate the residential lots from the street and to provide privacy and safety.

Graphic representations are included showing urban design elements proposed for the catalyst projects. *See figures 24-28.*



Key Maps for Figures 24 - 28

Transportation: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst

Roadways

This Catalyst Project is located in the southwest quadrant of the block bounded by North Ardenwood Drive, Renoir Avenue, Executive Park Avenue, and Harry Drive. Currently, this area is largely vacant, undeveloped land, except along the Harry Drive frontage. The project calls for the provision of three commercial parcels with parking along North Ardenwood Drive and nineteen (19) single-family lots. These lots will front a new neighborhood street which curves into the Catalyst Project from North Ardenwood Drive, turning north and continuing until it intersects another proposed street which runs east-west between North Ardenwood Drive and Executive Park Avenue. With the addition of these neighborhood streets, traffic generated by the residential development will be able to access North Ardenwood Drive from two new intersections and Executive Park Avenue from one. Traffic should be evenly distributed without undue peak hour delays at either intersection. Peak hour traffic generated by 20 single-family lots can be expected to be approximately 200 trips with roughly sixty percent (60%) of these trips in the peak direction, i.e., outbound during the AM peak and inbound during the PM peak. These additional trips, given the proposed creation of three additional intersections, are not expected to create undue traffic delays or adversely impact levels of service (LOS) at the affected intersections.

Peak commercial trip generation is not anticipated to occur at the same time as the residential peak trip generation. In any case, access to the proposed commercial parcels will be provided via two means of ingress/egress to the proposed new neighborhood streets. Commercial traffic at this location will not be able to directly access North Ardenwood Drive, further reducing adverse impacts on this thoroughfare.

The principal streets impacted by this Catalyst Project will be North Ardenwood Drive, Executive Park Avenue, and Harry Drive. While a few of the intersections on these streets may experience very short periods of traffic congestion during the peak hour, the traffic expected to be generated by this Catalyst Project will have a negligible effect. The proposed connector street between North Ardenwood Drive and Executive Park Avenue will also help to break up the relatively long distance between Renoir Avenue and Harry Drive, affording motorists another option to access either North Ardenwood Drive or Executive Park Avenue, depending on the direction of travel.

In this area of the neighborhood, North Ardenwood Drive and Renoir Avenue appear to function as collectors, bring traffic to Lobdell Boulevard (via Renoir Avenue) or to Harry Drive and Florida Boulevard (via North Ardenwood Drive).

Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access and connectivity throughout the study neighborhood, including the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project, is very good in that all of its streets have sidewalks on both sides. Only one boundary street, Florida Boulevard, has no sidewalks, but right-of-way that may have been available for this pedestrian amenity was consumed when the roadway was widened to six lanes. Within the larger CIP neighborhood itself, only Holmes Drive lacks sidewalks on both sides of the street, but this does not have a bearing on the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project. On Holmes Drive, sidewalks are present only along its east side.

Transit Service

Transit service is offered in the vicinity of the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project by two of the CATS transit lines: the Florida Route and the Cortana Express Route. Service levels (days/hours of operation and headways) were discussed in the neighborhood overview.

On the basis of existing transit service, it would appear that the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project is relatively well served, although not directly served by two CATS lines. Service during the week, however, is much better than on weekends when the Cortana Express route is not in operation. Transit service, especially on weekdays, could be enhanced by closing headways to 15 or 20 minutes, particularly for the Cortana Express route.

Recommendations include:

- » Close transit headways to 15 or 20 minutes on the Cortana Express route.
- » Construct transit shelters near the northeast and southeast corners of the North Ardenwood/Harry Drive intersection to better serve the Catalyst Project neighborhood. These improvements will help to attract transit riders from the Catalyst Project area.
- » Build Catalyst Project area streets with sidewalks and underground drainage, properly sized to meet drainage requirements.

Transportation: North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst

Roadways

The North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Project is located on two sites bounded by Lobdell Boulevard, Harry Drive, and Bon Marche Drive. The first of the two sites that comprise this Catalyst Project is a small commercial development with three parcels located along the south side of North Bon Marche Drive at its intersection with Lobdell Boulevard. This site includes a proposed 5,700 square foot childcare center and 11,400 square feet of commercial space in two parcels. Access to the childcare center is provided from North Bon Marche Drive. Ingress/egress for the rest of the Catalyst Project site is provided from North Bon Marche Drive and Lobdell Boulevard.

The second site within this proposed Catalyst Project contains 24 single-family residential home sites fronting a proposed new street which connects North Bon Marche Drive and Harry Drive. Currently, both sites that comprise this Catalyst Project are vacant, undeveloped land.

With the addition of this proposed new neighborhood street within the North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Project, traffic generated by the residential development will be afforded ingress/egress by an intersection with North Bon Marche Drive and one with Harry Drive. The latter intersection is 160 feet from the North Bon Marche Drive/Harry Drive intersection. This proximity may present problems for southbound traffic on both Bon Marche and the proposed Catalyst Project street, particularly if the right turning movements from southbound Bon Marche Drive to Harry Drive conflicts with simultaneous southbound left turns from the Catalyst Project street to Harry Drive, although the peak hour volume on the new street will be very small. Southbound traffic on the new street may need to be restricted to right turns only. It should be noted that peak hour traffic generated by 25 single-family lots can be expected to be approximately 250 trips with roughly sixty percent (60%) of these trips in the peak direction, i.e., outbound during the AM peak and inbound during the PM peak. These additional trips, given the proposed creation of two additional intersections, are not expected to create undue traffic delays or adversely impact levels of service (LOS) at the affected intersections, with the possible exception noted above.

Peak commercial trip generation is not anticipated to occur at the same time as the residential peak trip generation. In any case, access to the proposed commercial parcels will be provided via two means of ingress/egress, one from North Bon Marche Drive, and the other one from Lobdell Boulevard. In the interest of

traffic safety, traffic exiting the site to Lobdell Boulevard should be restricted to right turns only, unless the North Bon Marche Drive/Lobdell Boulevard intersection is used. Additionally, left turns from the Catalyst Project site would be difficult given Lobdell Boulevard's size at this location and the site's relative close proximity to the Lobdell Boulevard/Harry Drive intersection.

The principal streets impacted by this Catalyst Project will be North Bon Marche Drive, Harry Drive, and Lobdell Boulevard. While a few of the intersections on these streets may experience very short periods of traffic congestion during the peak hour, the traffic expected to be generated by this Catalyst Project will have a negligible effect.

In this area of the neighborhood, Bon Marche appears to function as a collector, providing a "short cut" into the neighborhood and to Harry Drive. This allows access to the Bon Carre Business Center from the north.

Infrastructure

Water

Water service available in the Melrose East community is adequate and of a high quality, as it is throughout the rest of the City. The development of the proposed Catalyst Projects will in no way adversely impact the water utility by placing undue burdens on system capacity. A great deal of excess capacity exists within the water system.

Storm Water Drainage

It is expected that the proposed streets in both Catalyst Projects will be constructed with curbs and gutters with storm drains. Within Melrose East, roadside drainage ditches are found only along Florida Boulevard. The Catalyst Project areas should be able to adequately handle storm water runoff if its streets include curbs and gutters with storm drains. In that case, drainage maintenance issues will be minimal and the 10-year storm event should be handled with ease.

Sanitary Sewer

Melrose East is served by a community sanitary sewer system and the South Waste Water Treatment Plant (SWTP) located near the Mississippi River a few miles south of downtown Baton Rouge, on Gardere Lane near its intersection with Nicholson Drive (LA 30). This plant also serves all of Baton Rouge south of I-12, and a portion of the city north of I-12 and east of the downtown area. Problems have been identified at this WWTP and projects are underway to resolve these issues. For example, the South WWTP continues to operate in violation of its discharge permit limitations. Following the completion of improvements developed for the Revised Remedial Action Plan, flows predicted for the South WWTP will be much above the capacity of the plant. This deficiency will not be able to be overcome or managed through pump station and flow control improvements alone. According to results of the hydraulic modeling done for this plant, the expected peak hour flow is more than twice the plant's current peak hour design capacity. With specific projects underway, the City-Parish is addressing this deficiency.

Current sewer system improvement plans call for flows to the South WWTP to be increased. These improvements are designed to alleviate the modeled system deficiencies that could produce Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) in many areas served by the South WWTP. But without capacity improvements to the

plant itself, problems with the plant's ability to handle peak flow conditions and to meet its discharge permit requirements will only get worse. Without these improvements, the Melrose East Catalyst Projects could contribute to these problems.

For these reasons, the City-Parish has undertaken a series of projects designed to considerably upgrade the capabilities of the South WWTP. These include a number of Immediate Action Projects (IAP) at this plant designed to significantly increase its capacity, and bring it into compliance with current discharge limits. These projects are slated for completion in early 2011, and carry a cost of approximately \$25.6M. Upon completion of all the programmed sewer system improvements, previously identified SSO problems in the neighborhood will be eliminated and the overall sewer system capacity will be improved.

Financial Analysis

In an effort to determine the feasibility of the Catalyst Projects, financial pro formas were performed, investigating several different financing options for each development type, and are included in the Appendix of this document. The following is an example financial analysis based on the commercial development types included in the North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project.

In this Catalyst Project, there are three attached commercial opportunities that will serve to anchor the development project. *See figure 29.* This commercial development of the Catalyst Project provides for 17,100 square feet of leasable space. Assuming an average size of 5,700 square feet per building and a construction cost of \$80 per square foot, the construction costs of the buildings would total approximately \$2.5 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.



Figure 29: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Phase Commercial Implementation

Community-Wide Recommendations

The Melrose East Catalyst Projects establish the spark needed to begin the revitalization effort in the area and provide the framework for a prosperous, sustainable, and smart future. They 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. They will help expand the Melrose East community's economic role while also protecting and enhancing its rich cultural and ecological resources. However, to achieve true revitalization of Melrose East, we must look beyond the Catalyst Projects boundaries to the community as a whole. The following recommendations set forth the steps required to most effectively revitalize and rebuild the 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 30.*

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

There are a number of adjudicated, abandoned, unmaintained, and otherwise vacant properties in Melrose East 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.

Implement a robust and consistent code enforcement program.

Preliminary analysis, interviews, and workshop feedback suggest that Melrose East 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 both existing residents and 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.

Improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation through streetscape improvements.

Harry Drive travels through the length of Melrose East and does have sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian travel, but bicycle paths are lacking. The existing sidewalks are narrow and provide very few trees for shade. Enhancements should be made in the form of bike paths, sidewalk widening, tree plantings, and lighting. The existing right-of-way (80 feet) and setbacks are more than sufficient to handle these amenities without the need for property acquisition or heavy infrastructure modifications. Similar streetscape improvements, including bike paths, are recommended on North Donmoor Avenue and North Ardenwood Drive, the major north-south arterials of the neighborhood. Furthermore, stormwater management elements along the streets should be designed to mitigate localized flooding throughout the community.

Additionally, community inspired crosswalks are recommended on North Donmoor Avenue at its intersections with Harry Drive and Florida Boulevard as well as North Ardenwood Drive at its intersections with Harry Drive and Florida Boulevard.

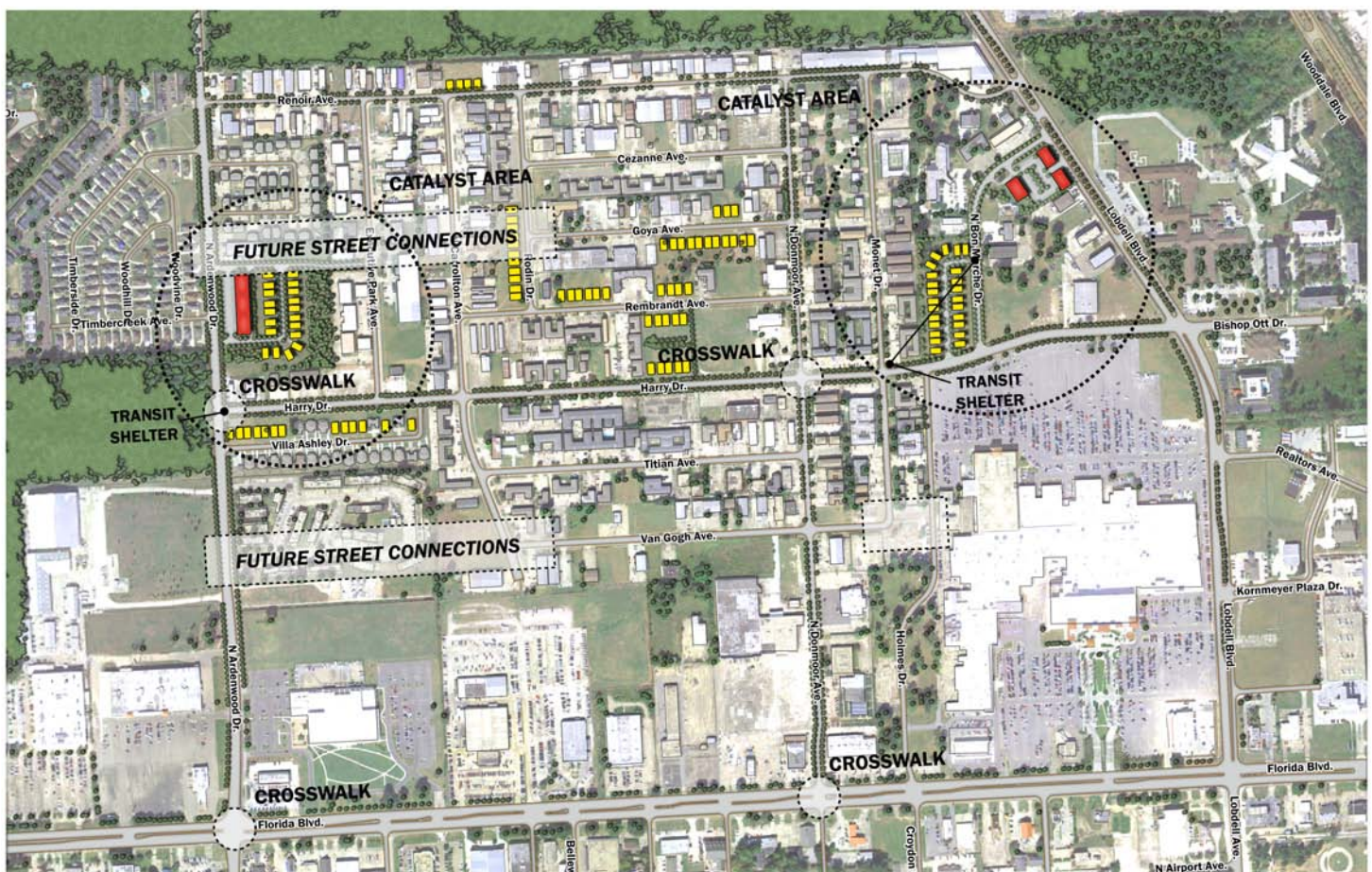
Connect streets within the neighborhood

There are only three east-west streets that traverse the length of Melrose East: Renoir Avenue, at the neighborhood's northernmost boundary; Harry Drive, at the center of the neighborhood; and Florida Boulevard, at the neighborhood's southernmost boundary. To provide better accessibility to neighborhood residents and better align with Complete Streets policies, facilitating these street connections is necessary. Complete Streets policies encourage street connectivity and aim to create a comprehensive, integrated network for all modes including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses, and automobiles.

Recommended connections include Goya Avenue west to North Ardenwood Drive and east to Bon Marche Drive as well as Van Gogh Avenue west to North Ardenwood Drive and east to Holmes Drive. Properties that could facilitate this connection should be acquired as they become available.

Increase diversity of housing options

With the exception of the townhomes located on Villa Ashley Drive, the only housing option within Melrose East is apartment living. This type of arrangement makes for an unsustainable community with few residents feeling they have a stake in the neighborhood. Where appropriate, additional housing types that provide for home ownership should be constructed, including single-family residences.



Proposed Development

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

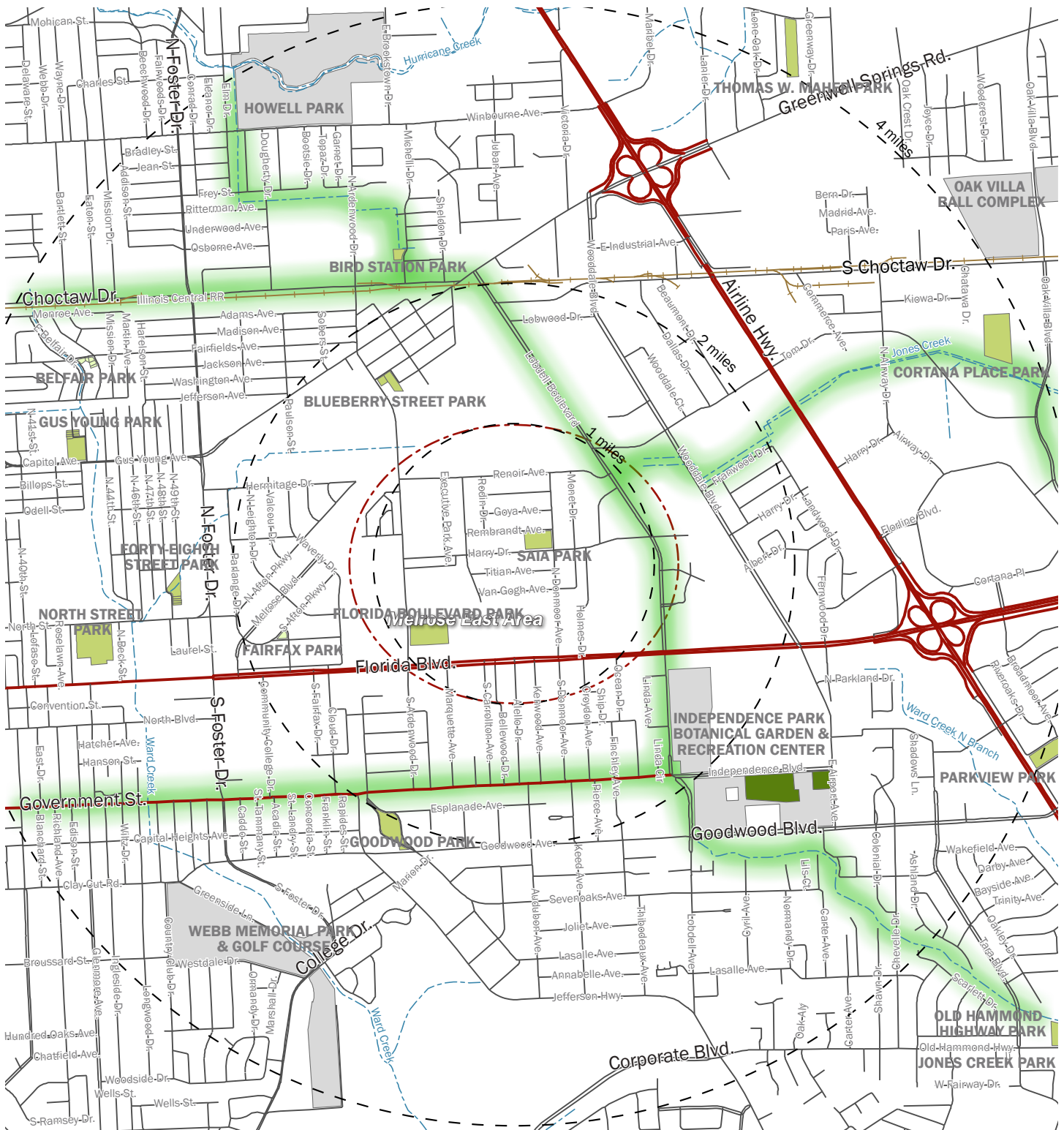
Figure 30: Community-Wide Recommendations

Regional Connections

Blight is the manifestation of economic distress in a community that is not essentially connected to other parts of the City nor adequately linked to the mainstream economy. To address conditions in Melrose East, this plan seeks to connect the target area to environmental, economic, and societal systems beyond the community.

Melrose East residents have access to several major roadways, connecting them by vehicles both in east-west and north-south directions to the remainder of the Parish. However, for pedestrians, these connections are limited or non-existent, but can be provided. Building upon the recent improvements of Lobdell Boulevard through the Mayor-President's Green Light Program, the pedestrian amenities can be extended to connect residents of Melrose East to Independence Park. At the Park, the Normandy Lateral drainageway connects to Ward Creek and could be developed as a greenway, which would provide residents with a safe and enjoyable link to Old Hammond Highway Park and beyond. Additionally, providing enhanced pedestrian amenities along Lobdell Boulevard would link pedestrians in two ways to the Downtown Development District's proposed Downtown Greenway. North of Melrose East, Lobdell Boulevard would lead pedestrians to Choctaw Drive where improvements are proposed as part of the RDA's Choctaw Corridor CIP that will connect to the Downtown Greenway via North 17th Street. South of Melrose East, Lobdell Boulevard intersects Government Street. Streetscape improvements similar to those on Lobdell Boulevard should also be implemented on this street, providing not only a link to the Downtown Greenway, but also to shopping, dining, and employment opportunities in the revitalized Mid City area.

The proposed Downtown Greenway is a greenway that would link seven BREC parks: Memorial Stadium, Goldsby Field, Spanish Town Park, 7th Street Park, Expressway Park, Brooks Park, and City Community Park. It will form the backbone of an urban trail system, reconnecting disjointed communities and creating a more livable environment. The Downtown Greenway hopes to spark a new surge in private investment and have a significant impact on the redevelopment of the area, including the Melrose East community. *See figure 31.*



Legend

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

Figure 31: Regional Connections

Implementation Priorities & Responsibilities

The Melrose East community has many unique qualities that distinguish it from the other CIP target areas as well as the rest of the Parish. Overall, Melrose East is an invisible neighborhood because it originated with the creation of Bon Marche, a suburban style mall that opened in 1960. The demise of the mall during the mid-1970s led to the blight currently seen in the area, and in recent times the neighborhood has been known as “Mall City,” which has a negative connotation. Its residential areas primarily consist of multi-family rental housing, and data indicates that the incomes and educational levels achieved in this area are low. Additionally, the density of Melrose East without open space and transit results in more negative conditions than in other areas of Baton Rouge.

Implementation of improvements to the Melrose East Community is centered around two Catalyst Projects as well as community-wide infrastructure improvements, building rehab, and infill residential development.

Implementation Phase One

The first Catalyst Project is located off of North Ardenwood Drive, the western boundary of the target area, and complements a relatively new housing development across the street to the west. Also proposed for this area of Melrose East is a new charter school to be developed and operated by the National Heritage Academies organization. The school is planned to accommodate Melrose East school-aged children as a substantial percentage of their student population, which will greatly improve the quality of life in Melrose East and, therefore, the attraction of new residents. The Team proposes single-family homes with commercial space along North Ardenwood Drive because of its connection to Florida Boulevard. This will provide neighborhood retail services for new and existing residents.

The North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project provides open space as an eastern buffer from commercial office properties along Executive Park Avenue. Many of these spaces are currently vacant or underutilized and under single ownership. Since this commercial strip is surrounded by residential uses, improvements to the neighborhood should lead to a transformation of this area along Executive Park Avenue, possibly including additional homes in the future due to the increased open space. As part of this Catalyst Project, two new public streets are proposed to connect Goya Avenue, Executive Park Avenue, North Ardenwood Drive, and Harry Drive.

Changes in the character of this area will lead to an improved residential neighborhood. However, the commercial and industrial portions of Melrose East will need additional attention and investment from the RDA. First, strategic upgrades in commercial retail properties that serve the residents are critical. The strip of businesses on North Donmoor Avenue between Harry Drive and Van Gogh Avenue is in need of major improvements, especially because of the proximal criminal activity. Since it is in the middle of the neighborhood, these businesses should immediately focus on utilizing the RDA's Small Business Façade Improvement Grant Program. This investment could be coupled with technical assistance from the Baton Rouge Community College Small Business Center (BRCC-SBC) to provide financial systems upgrades and marketing improvements. The RDA should continue to market the Small Business Façade Improvement Grant Program throughout the neighborhood as a first step in improving the businesses, while also encouraging them to participate in BRCC-SBC.

Florida Boulevard properties adjacent to Melrose East such as the Sav-a-lot shopping center could also benefit from the Small Business Façade Improvement Grant Program. This investment would not only complement streetscape improvements, but also increase use of commercial businesses through identity branding, which would in turn help change the image of Melrose East as a whole. The RDA should continue to target areas near the Catalyst Projects for façade upgrades while also assisting property owners in attracting the appropriate tenants to serve the community. *See figures 32, 33, and 35.*

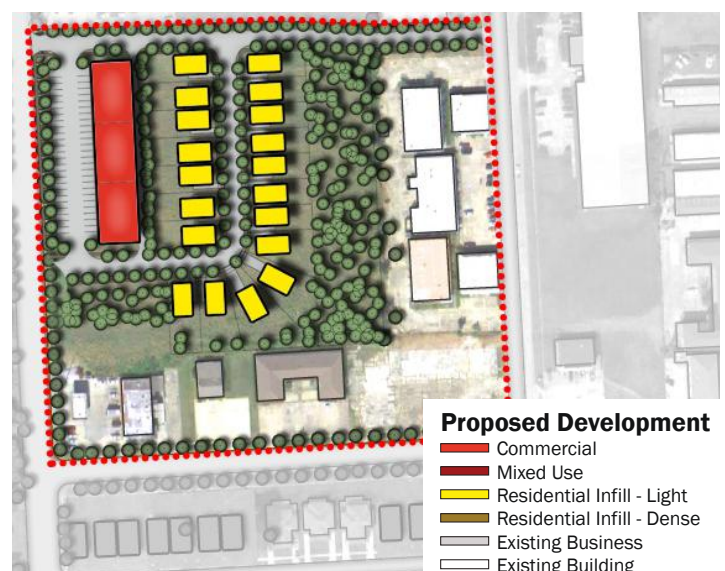


Figure 32: North Ardenwood Drive Catalyst Project Implementation



Figure 33: Before and After Implementation of Phase One

Implementation Phase Two

Along Lobdell Boulevard, the commercial businesses primarily house office space, many of which are health and supportive housing facilities. Since the area off Lobdell Boulevard between Renoir Avenue and Harry Drive is slated for the second Catalyst Project, façade improvements are needed across the street at the Imperial Plaza shopping strip, as only two storefronts there are occupied. The first part of this Catalyst Project is commercial development of two 5,700 square foot buildings and a new childcare facility in the rear. Additional childcare centers will be needed for the increased population due to the rehabilitation of vacant multi-family residences, and the construction of new infill housing and single-family homes. Service providers and training programs should also result in a greater need for childcare by increasing employment levels. Since education levels in this neighborhood are low, intervention is necessary to break the cycle of poverty. A large percentage of the Melrose East population is children under ten years old. Early intervention with effective childcare is an important tool in improving education levels of disadvantaged children. While implementing the CIP plan, the RDA should encourage City and State agencies to work with the existing daycare facilities to ensure that they are providing adequate care and student tutoring.

The second part of this Catalyst Project is the development of a single-family housing complex on North Bon Marche Drive and Harry Drive. This home ownership opportunity should be marketed to workers in the Bon Carre Incubator, Greater King David Church parishioners, staff of supportive housing facilities in the area, and rental residents of Melrose East. Development of this Catalyst Project includes construction of a new public street connecting North Bon Marche Drive to Harry Drive.

It is important that this investment be preceded by meetings with businesses that are located in the immediate neighborhoods. Special effort should be made to continue to work with Greater King David as they move forward with expansion plans for their existing campus at the corner of Lobdell Boulevard and Harry Drive. Additionally, the other faith organizations located throughout the target area should be encouraged to become more active in the rebuilding of Melrose East. Although many of the parishioners of these churches live outside the Melrose East community, the church is a strong presence within the community and should continue to look for ways to support and enhance the neighborhood. They could serve in ways as small as opening up their space for tenant and block club meetings, getting members to participate in cleanup events, sponsoring after school activities and tutoring, or hosting support groups and counseling for individuals or families.

Similar outreach needs to occur with the numerous special needs and supportive housing facilities that are located in Melrose East. Drug and mental treatment centers, halfway houses for former prisoners, homeless shelters, housing facilities for the disabled, and nursing homes are concentrated in this blighted area. Generally, they are well maintained and adequately managed from the observation of Team members, but rarely do they contribute to improving the character of the neighborhood around them. The owners and managers of these facilities should be encouraged to participate in block clubs and neighborhood activities, circulate information about potential employment, and become a more active part of this community. By increasing communication with these types of facilities, the RDA could identify sources for joint purchasing or combining contracts so that the suppliers or contractors they use would consider hiring Melrose East residents.

One of the assets of Melrose East that has gone unrecognized is the industrial business sector. Along Renoir Drive and adjoining areas in the northern part of the neighborhood there are numerous successful businesses. Some are small service entities such as automotive shops or carpet cleaning businesses that have long operationed in the area. Additionally, there are several specialty manufacturing and distribution companies within and adjacent to Melrose East that have been successful and have experienced growth in the area. Some business and neighborhood apartment building owners who attended the workshops expressed interest in ensuring that appropriate improvements are made with the CIP. In addition to existing programs for residential apartment rehab loans, the RDA has the ability to assist industrial and commercial entities in expanding their business operations or improving their facilities in an effort to increase the potential employment of neighborhood residents. *See figures 34 and 36.*



Figure 34: North Bon Marche Drive Catalyst Project Implementation



Figure 35: Before and After Implementation of Phase One



Figure 36: Before and After Implementation of Phase Two

Additional graphic representations of recommended urban design elements are found below in addition to the Implementation Strategies Matrix, which discusses responsible parties and time frames for implementation. *See figures 37 and 38.*

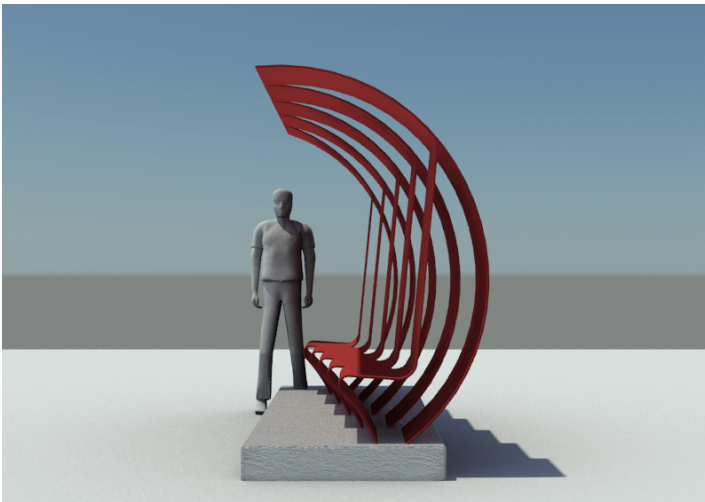


Figure 37: Transit Shelter Concept

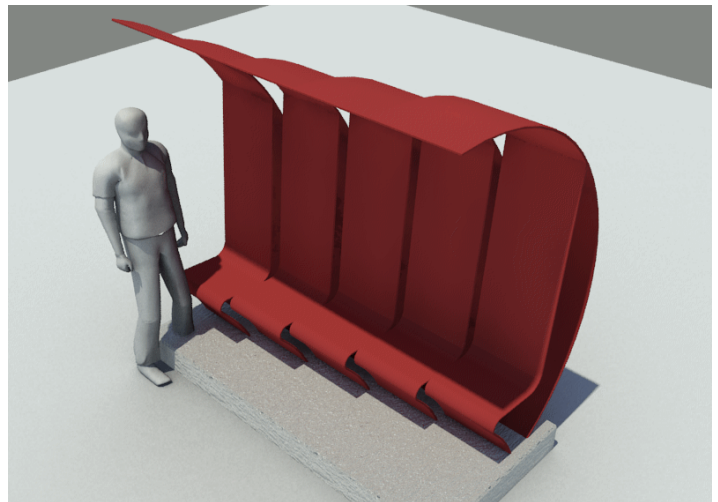
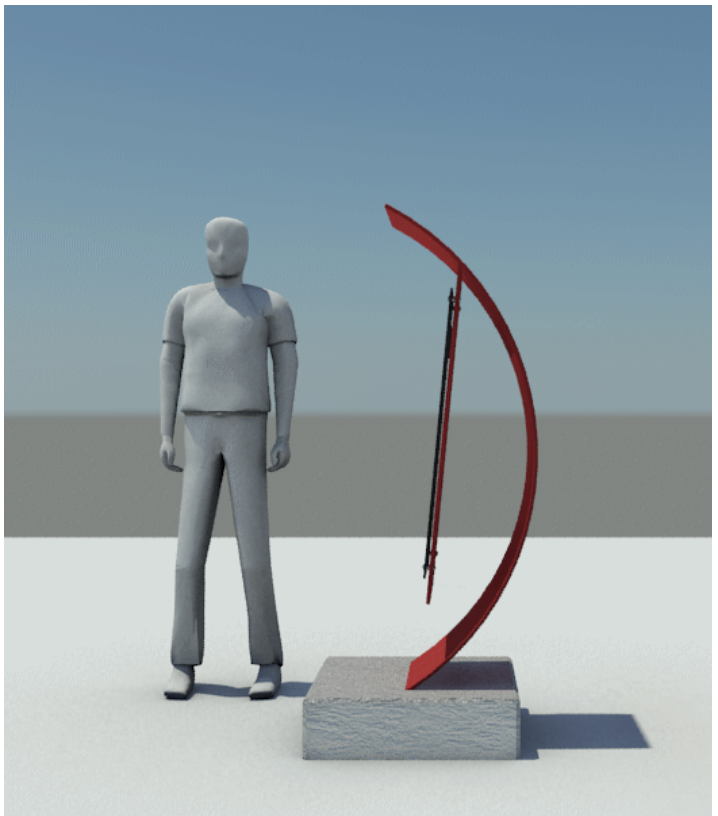


Figure 38: Neighborhood Signage Concept



CIP | IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES MATRIX KEY CODE

Color

	Burgundy	Catalyst
	Grey	Transportation & Infrastructure
	Blue	Outreach/Community Involvement
	Tan	Code of Ordinances
	Green	Recreation
	Orange	Rehabilitation
	Pink	Rebranding

Description

Abbreviation

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
MECA	Melrose East Civic Association
METRO	Metro Council Representative

Organization Name

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Financing Matrix & Funding Strategies

To ensure successful implementation of the Melrose East 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 with a target 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 target 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

The high rate of poverty and negative social conditions have riddled Melrose East with criminal activity. All groups in the Visioning Workshop listed lack of security as one of the major liabilities in the community. Addressing this issue with law enforcement agencies, therefore, is the first important step in implementing the Melrose East CIP. The RDA should explore innovative approaches to dealing with crime, such as suggesting the deployment of mobile police stations to crime-ridden areas as Catalyst Projects are being constructed.

To eradicate blight that is at the core of Melrose East, the RDA needs to address the effects of concentrated poverty in the area, as it will hinder the neighborhood's economic revitalization. This plan has identified critical sites of redevelopment that can serve as the catalyst for rebuilding the character and economy of the neighborhood. In many revitalization efforts, focus on commercial development in the planning process offers the benefit of retail and services for residents in the blighted area, providing employment opportunities. However, Melrose East is bordered by the commercial corridor of Florida Boulevard, which provides a majority of basic services for residents. Market assessments confirm that there is only modest demand for additional commercial development, primarily for local neighborhood commercial uses.

Therefore, the Catalyst Projects would not likely be an immediate source of employment and would not be large enough to create the significant change needed to stimulate this economically distressed area. Plans should also focus on strengthening the residential character of the area by addressing education, training, and family stability. This should be undertaken at the same time that blighted conditions begin to be addressed. The RDA's investment in the neighborhood will improve the quality of life in Melrose East for the existing residents. Their ability to take advantage of and benefit from this investment is predicated on their participation in the process of enhancing their lives.

The RDA's role in this community should be to facilitate and encourage efforts of service organizations in the rebuilding the human capital in Melrose East. From its position as an independent entity, the RDA can convene local organizations, public social service agencies, and non-profit providers to address the issues in the neighborhood that inhibit the effective implementation of the CIP. Working with partners that are intermediaries (such as the United Way) to facilitate discussions, RDA staff could evaluate the effectiveness of existing efforts to improve conditions and identify those that could best advance the goals of the CIP. The increased population density and concentration of problems in Melrose East require that an intermediary engage selected providers to increase and intensify their current programs to function in a more results-oriented method. These service providers should be focused on programs that engage residents and provide case management to address issues that can hinder family stability.

Resident engagement is designed to ensure that those living in a blighted area are involved in its redevelopment and benefit from its improvements. Programs that organize meetings, activities, and presentations should be established to inform residents of projected changes and engross them in the redevelopment

process. In multi-family buildings, tenant associations should be organized to build camaraderie and identify common concerns for property management. Information gathered can then be shared with property owners or appropriate public agencies. Having occupants take an active role in improving their living conditions builds a sense of connection and belonging and causes them to take more responsibility for their homes and neighborhood. These groups can establish a network of information sharing within a building or complex, while also forming "block clubs" to tackle larger issues in their immediate area such as garbage or crime. When residents become engaged in their immediate area needs, they are more inclined to attend larger neighborhood meetings. Residents of Melrose East who attended the CIP workshops could be valuable assets to these larger organizing efforts by helping engage residents.

These engagement activities can create relationships that build a sense of trust with residents and encourage them to address more personal or family needs. Service provider organizations that are experienced in case management can address issues that hinder residents' engagement in the mainstream economy. After assisting residents in identifying their goals, service provider organizations can help obtain resources for achieving these goals by making referrals to the appropriate agencies and programs. Making connections to literacy training, job readiness skills training, employment training, social services, and childcare programs can prepare residents to take advantage of opportunities that will arise with the implementation of the CIP.

In addition to facilitating improved service delivery in Melrose East, the RDA should spearhead a movement to re-brand Melrose East. Erasing the brand "Mall City" and creating a new identity for the community is important for future investment in the Catalyst Projects and is motivation for residents to participate in the revitalization. Changing the image of the area is also critical to maintaining improvements to the character of the area.

This re-branding could be addressed by joining local advertising and public relations experts with civic leaders for a brainstorming session to suggest words or phrases to boost the identity of Melrose East. Several workshop participants expressed interest in creating a new brand based on the Melrose East streets that are named after Impressionist painters. This brand could be used to bring art, art education, creativity, and lots of color to the community, in the form of classes, neighborhood activities, and the design of crosswalks, signage, and transit shelters. Once the new identity is created, it can be used in a public campaign that, for example, places banners on light poles on major thorough streets in Melrose East such as Florida Boulevard, Lobdell Boulevard, North Ardenwood Drive, Harry Drive, North

Donmoor Avenue, and Renoir Avenue. Announcements and articles should be placed in local newspapers highlighting the cleanup efforts currently underway by the RDA and private sector, as well as changes anticipated with the implementation of the CIP.

Ongoing activities for resident engagement should include block club meetings, children's activities, cleanup campaigns, and neighborhood festivals. These should be held on a regular basis and be widely publicized. Information on Melrose East activities should be distributed to area supportive housing facilities, surrounding neighborhoods, Baton Rouge Community College, Melrose Place subdivision, and businesses on Florida Boulevard and Tom Drive. Outlets identified as distributors for public relations can later be used to market new housing and business opportunities in Melrose East.

The negative conditions in this neighborhood are largely due to the multitude of vacant lots and buildings that are in disarray. The City-Parish should immediately embark on an effort to inspect and issue violations to property owners who do not maintain their properties. The RDA should facilitate demolition of vacant buildings that do not warrant renovation, especially in areas where Catalyst Projects will be located, and facilitate redevelopment of property to complement future plans. Many apartment buildings are partially occupied but living conditions are poor. Apartments that receive HUD Section 8 certificates for occupants should be inspected by the Baton Rouge Housing Authority, and if substandard conditions exist, payments should be suspended until owners comply with regulations.

Adjudicated properties can be developed once a process for selecting appropriate developers for infill housing is determined. The reduction in density from multi-family to single-family is preferred, though there is currently little market for homebuyers who are interested in Melrose East. Improvements to the area and efforts to strengthen the economy should improve the market for home sales in the area. Planned developments around the neighborhood, such as Smiley Heights, should also increase market potential for residential uses in Melrose East.

Redevelopment Partnerships

Major efforts are required to rebuild the Melrose East community and to improve the quality of life for its residents. With its density and concentration of poverty, partners with the RDA are needed to provide the intensive outreach and resident engagement, as well as resident and family services. Recommendations of potential partners to assist the CIP process are as follows:

Apartment Owners

Many of the multi-family properties have been upgraded or rehabilitated in the last few years and the owners are closely involved in the management. Several of these owners attended the Visioning Workshop and are interested in improvements to the neighborhood that could increase their investments. They could assist the RDA in communicating with residents to ensure their engagement in rebuilding activities. Additionally, these business owners could respond to RFPs for the rehab of vacant properties and could also utilize the RDA rehab loan program.

Melrose East Community Association (MECA)

This recently formed group consists of residents, property owners, and businesses interested in improving the neighborhood. They have been active in cleaning and maintaining vacant lots in the area and have expressed interest in getting more involved with the RDA in the redevelopment process.

Industrial Businesses

The northern portion of the neighborhood consists of many successful industries. Effort should be made to help them improve the conditions of their businesses and operations. The RDA could encourage expansion or assist in attracting other business to the area, such as their suppliers or customers. Primarily light manufacturing, warehouses, and service business, these industrial business are a potential source of jobs for residents.

Existing Retail Businesses

Though they are generally small stores, these businesses provide basic goods and services for residents. Numerous façade improvements are needed, as well as upgrades to operations and marketing. They should be encouraged to utilize the BRCC Small Business Center.

Capital Area United Way

CAUW has a network of service providers, many of which they help to fund, that can be tapped to assist in improving the lives of the residents and families. These include providers that address education, literacy, health care, and job training.

Baton Rouge Community College

Located across Florida Boulevard from Melrose East, this institution should be utilized to assist in training and educating residents. Additionally, it is possible to tailor their services to the needs of the students or targeted industries/businesses.

BRCC Small Business Center

The SBC provides counseling and training in business leadership, customer service, administration, and computer-based operations. The services of this center should be tapped to help improve all the businesses in Melrose East. In addition, programs should be established to encourage resident business ownership, particularly worker-owned cooperatives.

Mid City Redevelopment Alliance

Located in an adjacent neighborhood, this well established CDC has a strong track record in counseling and preparation of first time homebuyers, as well as in developing single-family residences in distressed neighborhoods. They would be a good partner with the RDA in providing these homebuyer preparation service and developing housing. They could also work with for-profit developers on creating new single-family homes.

Baton Rouge General Hospital

The proposed expansion of this facility will lead to a need for additional staff. The RDA should work with BRCC to prepare Melrose East residents for possible employment there in the future.

Churches

Contact should be made with leaders of faith organizations located in the target area. Meetings should be held to review CIP plans and encourage engagement in the redevelopment process, the neighborhood, and its residents.

Community Improvement Benchmarks

In an effort to track the success of the Melrose East 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 the social and economic improvements achieved by 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 structures, or detached accessory structures require a building permit. These permits are required for both residential and commercial construction. Tracking the number and type of permits issued in Melrose East 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 Melrose East 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 Melrose East area, indicating an increase in spending for the area.

These benchmarks, when monitored over the short- and long-term, will reveal changes in economic conditions and quality of life in the Melrose East 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.

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 4 is the precinct that oversees the Melrose East 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 and Code Enforcement

Blight was consistently identified as a major challenge within the Melrose East community through stakeholder interviews, workshops, and other meetings. The RDA is reaching out to business owners regarding façade improvement grants and tracking the number of applied for grants. An increase in the number of applied for and issued grants would indicate that business owners are becoming more invested in the neighborhood and its perception.

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 the Melrose East Community, 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-Parish 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 Melrose East is being eradicated.