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INTRODUCTION

South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) is the District 3 State-designated Louisiana Planning and Development Commission. It was created in 1973 by Executive Order No. 27 of Governor E. Edwards and established in 1978 by State Act 472. SCPDC facilitates intergovernmental cooperation and harmonious coordination of the state, federal and local planning and development programs for the solutions and resolutions of economic, social, physical, and governmental problems of the state and its citizens by providing for the creation and recognition of regional planning and development commissions. By the virtue of the regional stakeholders that make up its membership and the organization’s regional focus, SCPDC has a unique perspective on the dynamics shaping the Bayou-River Region’s economy. It is recognized as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U. S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA).
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) COMPOSITION

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) requirements were updated in 2016 to help keep paper waste to a minimum and to help target the document toward a wider audience. To that end, this document is in two parts: A Technical Document and an Executive Summary. This is the Technical Document.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) states all CEDS documents must address the following topics:

1. A summary background of the economic development conditions of the region:
   - Demographic and socioeconomic data;
   - Environmental, geographic, climatic and cultural conditions;
   - Infrastructure assets;
   - Emerging and declining economic clusters;
   - Relationship of the region to the larger area;
   - Factors that directly affect economic performance in the area;
   - Housing, health services, educational, cultural, and recreational resources, and public safety (other factors)
2. SWOT Analysis
3. Strategic Direction/Action Plan
4. Evaluation Framework
5. Economic Resilience

Economic Resilience is a new required section starting in 2020. EDA requires all CEDS to provide analysis on how to deal with economic shocks (major disruptions). In other words, how the CEDS plan links to our region’s ability to “prevent, withstand and quickly recover” from “major disruptions”. The South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) will examine in this new section its role in pre- and post-shock situations.

LEGAL STRUCTURE

SCPDC is one of eight State-designated “Louisiana Planning and Development Districts” (District 3). SCPDC is recognized as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). As such, SCPDC serves as a strategic partner to both organizations. By virtue of the regional stakeholders that make up its membership and the organization’s regional focus, SCPDC has a unique perspective on the economy and dynamics in our seven Parish region.

The EDA requires all EDDs produce a new CEDS document every five years. The CEDS strategy must meet the legal requirements under 13 CFR § 303.7. Annually, the CEDS must be reviewed and evaluated against the framework developed in the plan. This document should be used to drive the direction of public and private economic development in the region from 2021-2025. The CEDS document is more than just a document, but a locally-based and regionally-driven strategy. The process in which the CEDS is created makes it a critical plan, designed by local stakeholders, reflecting the diverse needs of our region.
PURPOSE OF THE CEDS

The CEDS provides useful regional information, guidance, and perspective to local economic development stakeholders, whether they are at the municipal, parish, or regional level. The CEDS is a product of an inclusive planning process that is reflective of the diversity in the region it represents. This strategy is not intended to generate mandates for local governments, but to provide a conceptual framework to be used by stakeholders to strengthen competitiveness, economic resilience, and quality of life in the region.

THE CEDS PROCESS

SCPDC began the process by looking at the legacy and current conditions of the region using highly qualified data sources (such as data from the U.S. Census Bureau), examining other local and regional plans, and other factors affecting regional economic performance.

This data was then provided to an academic facilitator to develop a questionnaire that was sent to our stakeholders. The results of that questionnaire were used to develop the SWOT analysis. The results of the SWOT analysis were the driving force behind the strategic direction and action plan. The SWOT analysis was also used to help develop the evaluation framework of the CEDS.

Lastly, SCPDC took special notice of the new economic resiliency requirements for the CEDS plan. We recently completed a Regional Economic Development Resiliency Management (REDRM) plan that addresses resiliency issues and needs for businesses. The REDRM Plan will be incorporated into this strategy by matching the mutual areas and addressing any gaps between the two documents. Finally, the CEDS will provide an integration and action plan to help assure the region is prepared to avoid, absorb, and bounce back from economic shocks.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

The CEDS should be a “living document” meaning that it needs to be flexible. During the five-year range of this plan, new initiatives and funding sources will be introduced to benefit local governments in the SCPDC region. The CEDS needs to recognize those new programs and integrate the new initiatives into its action plan. This can be done immediately upon the introduction of new programs, but should be recognized and integrated during the annual CEDS evaluation and assessment.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A vital part of the CEDS development is stakeholder engagement. SCPDC created a core group of elected officials, economic development officials, and business owners throughout our seven-parish region. These core members were provided versions of the draft plan throughout the process and given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy and content of the plan.

SCPDC created a larger group of stakeholders to be part of the SWOT analysis. For the SWOT analysis, we reached out to the University of Louisiana-Lafayette’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Center (ULL) for assistance in creating a more robust engagement experience. ULL created a questionnaire that was sent to our stakeholders to gauge their opinion of the quality of assets in our region. All of this information and more can be found later in the SWOT chapter of this document.
From there, ULL analyzed the survey results and fleshed out those answers through the SWOT analysis. The results of that analysis are provided with details herein. This engagement and analysis were the main driver for the economic focus of this plan.

SCPDC wanted to also make sure that data, information, and draft versions of the plan available not just for stakeholders, but for the public in general. Using SCPDC’s website, a clearinghouse for information and also a webpage was created for taking comments about the SWOT analysis. Due to limitations because of COVID-19 and the need for virtual participation workshops, the process was only open to our stakeholders. However, live video streams of the process were provided for people to observe with several opportunities to provide comments.

Lastly, the final plan was shared to stakeholders and the general public to provide comments and suggested revisions. Draft versions of this plan were initially sent for review in-house to the SCPDC economic development staff, then to stakeholders, placed on the CEDS portal for wider public review and comment, and ultimately reviewed and approved by the SCPDC Executive Board and General Membership.

SCPDC’s engagement went above and beyond the minimum standards, so that the CEDS is a useful guide for the future of the region rather than just a required document for EDA programs.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

"Opportunity Zones" were created as part of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in order to recognize areas of disinvestment at the Census tract-level. The idea is to entice private investment in these areas by deferring or cancelling investors’ Capital Gains taxes for an investment of at least a five- to ten-year period.

A specific strategy for Opportunity Zones will not be developed in this document. However, the CEDS addresses many of the mutual goals of the regional stakeholders, the EDA and Opportunity Zones legislation in its plan.

The EDA states the purpose of Opportunities Zones are:

- to effectively position themselves for investment through Opportunity Zones, communities need to have a strong economic development plan in place that can send a signal to the private sector that the area has established a clear vision for the future, identified its important assets and challenges, and engaged key stakeholders. EDA believes that encouraging the desired private sector investment requires an understanding of the Opportunity Zones and the communities in which they reside from a regional perspective. Many of the assets touted within an individual community as reasons to invest in a particular Opportunity Zone are, in fact, regional assets. By placing a community’s assets and strengths in a regional context, the advantages of the entire region can further incentivize investment. The inherently regional focus of the CEDS therefore provides a unique platform to capture and promote the advantages of Opportunity Zone communities within a distinct economic region by highlighting and emphasizing the linkages among the key regional assets.
This CEDS plan inherently will focus on improving distressed communities in the region and the assets available for attracting new investments and economic development. Additional information for Opportunity Zones can be found on the EDA website.

**Locations of Opportunity Zones in the Bayou-River Region**

Currently, the only project utilizing the Opportunity Zone program in the region is the Sustainable Renewable Energy (Louisiana-Bagasse) development.

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**DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY**

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is an important program for the SCPDC region. The three major goals of the DRA program are:

1. Improved Workforce Competitiveness
2. Strengthened Infrastructure
3. Increased Community Capacity

These are also goals of the Economic Development Administration, SCPDC, and of this CEDS plan. In fact, SCPDC assisted communities with 41 grants from DRA, several of which dove tail with EDA, CDBG and other programs. SCPDC will work hard to implement DRA’s Regional Development Plan into its regular economic development activities.

Information about DRA’s investments into the SCPDC region can be seen [here](#).

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**BAYOU-RIVER REGION**

The Bayou-River Region consists of seven parishes: Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary, and Terrebonne. All seven parishes are in the State’s coastal zone (La. R.S.49:214.24 (C) and (D); Act 588). The region is maritime-focused geographically, economically, and culturally.

The Bayou-River Region encompasses two distinct types of waterways - bayous and rivers. The Bayou area of the region are those parishes located along the bayous - Assumption, Lafourche, St. Mary and Terrebonne; while the River area of the region includes those parishes located along the Mississippi River--St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist. Assumption, Lafourche, St. Mary, and Terrebonne parishes (the bayou
area) are leaders in the energy and shipbuilding sectors. The River area of the region—St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. James Parishes, has one of North America’s largest concentrations of heavy manufacturers (petroleum, refineries, chemicals, mining, and machinery). In addition to these major industry clusters, the region’s economy is heavily influenced by water transportation and warehousing clusters. The seafood and agricultural industry clusters are also regionally significant.

The economic strength of the Bayou-River Region is a reflection of its location (navigable waterways), competitive market access, (stateside and international) and specialized labor force (energy and marine). The growth of the region will rely on sound strategic planning from a diversified cross section of public and private stakeholders. The region’s overall strategy is to focus on maintaining its participation in the region’s strong economic sectors, diversifying its economic base by targeting industries conducive to growth and compatible with the skills of the regional workforce, train employees and attract skilled people to support our economic future, and to become economically resilient not only for monetary purposes, but to also maintain the rich culture of the region.
SUMMARY BACKGROUND
The EDA states that relevant information should be gathered in the following areas that affect the regional economy, as appropriate. Identify key trends, make the points briefly and clearly for a summary section, and move other supporting data to an appendix. Relevant information in these areas discussed below are detailed throughout this chapter:

- Demographic and socioeconomic data, including the human capital assets of the area and labor force characteristics such as the educational attainment of the working age population;
- Environmental, geographic, climatic, and cultural (including historic preservation) and natural resource profiles (e.g., mining resources, timber, fisheries, aquaculture, eco-tourism, etc.). Ideally, an environmental baseline for the area should be developed that identifies any environmental elements that may affect and/or constrain the regional economy. Relevant published literature for the region should be researched and dialogues established with the environmental regulators at the local, state and federal levels (for example: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (UFWS), Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), etc.), as well as the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. Please contact the appropriate EDA regional office for more information and guidance.
- Infrastructure assets of the area that relate to economic development including water, sewer, telecommunications/broadband, energy distribution systems, transportation modes, etc.;
- Emerging or declining clusters or industry sectors – and their past, present, and projected impacts on the region's competitive advantages and ability to build capacity for economic development;
- Relationship of an area's economy to that of a larger region or state (including global perspective), with particular regard to local advantages or disadvantages;
- Factors that directly affect economic performance in the area such as workforce issues; innovation assets; industry supply chains; state and local laws; financial resources; transportation systems; energy costs; business, personal, and property taxes; bonding capacity; land use patterns; and
- Other factors that relate to economic performance in an area such as housing; health services; educational, cultural and recreational resources; and public safety.
### DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC DATA

#### POPULATION

Source: 2019 American Community Survey

#### 2019 Population by Parish

- **Terrebonne**
  - Population: 110,461
  - Percentage: 28%

- **Lafourche**
  - Population: 97,614
  - Percentage: 25%

- **St. Mary**
  - Population: 49,348
  - Percentage: 12%

- **St. John the Baptist**
  - Population: 42,837
  - Percentage: 11%

- **St. James**
  - Population: 21,096
  - Percentage: 5%

- **St. Charles**
  - Population: 53,100
  - Percentage: 13%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Historical Population</th>
<th>Predicted Population</th>
<th>Predicted Growth/Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>19,654</td>
<td>22,084</td>
<td>22,753</td>
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<tr>
<td>Napoleonville</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafourche</td>
<td>68,941</td>
<td>82,482</td>
<td>85,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thibodaux</td>
<td>15,028</td>
<td>15,810</td>
<td>14,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Meadow</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>2,282</td>
<td>2,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockport</td>
<td>2,358</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>2,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>29,550</td>
<td>37,529</td>
<td>42,437</td>
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<td>St. James</td>
<td>19,733</td>
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<td>20,879</td>
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<td>Gramercy</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>3,211</td>
<td>2,412</td>
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<td>Lutcher</td>
<td>3,911</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>3,907</td>
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<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>23,813</td>
<td>31,924</td>
<td>39,996</td>
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<td>St Mary</td>
<td>60,752</td>
<td>64,253</td>
<td>58,086</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>9,325</td>
<td>9,584</td>
<td>9,004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morgan City</td>
<td>16,586</td>
<td>16,114</td>
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<td>Patterson</td>
<td>4,409</td>
<td>4,693</td>
<td>4,736</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>2,117</td>
<td>2,644</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berwick</td>
<td>4,168</td>
<td>4,466</td>
<td>4,375</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
<td>76,049</td>
<td>94,393</td>
<td>96,982</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houma</td>
<td>30,922</td>
<td>32,602</td>
<td>30,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Population</td>
<td>298,492</td>
<td>354,160</td>
<td>366,993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historical Population

- **Predicted Population**
- **Predicted Growth/Loss**
Since 1970, most parishes in the region have seen population growth, with some recently declining between 2010 and 2019. This is likely due to a continued decrease in oil and gas sector employment throughout the region.

There also is a trend where people are moving out of incorporated areas and into the greater parish. The lack of comprehensive plans and “smart growth” principals are allowing for sprawl. The State should consider strengthening planning laws to help prevent sprawl and to strengthen its villages, towns, and cities.

Predicted growth over the next 20 years continues the trend of growth in the region—mostly in its unincorporated parish area. However, the 95% confidence interval shows that population stagnation and loss is possible. With an aging population and a decrease in birth rates, a declining population is more likely. Growth in the region will require strengthening the jobs market and quality of life issues.

AGE AND SEX

Although there are some slight differences across parishes, the proportion of women to men is slightly higher compared to the national mix and reflective to the state.

Source: American Community Survey 2019
The chart below shows that the greater number of women in the region is in decline. There are higher numbers of women in older age brackets. While some of this may be due to longer life expectancies for women, more males are being born or families with more boys are moving to the region. This trend goes on from age 0 to 24 before it evens out around age 25.
Most parishes have similar median ages in comparison to the U.S. and Louisiana. However, there are some noticeable differences in Assumption, St. James, and St. Mary Parishes where the population is 1.5 to 2.5 years older than the median age in the comparison areas.

Source: American Community Survey 2019
The SCPDC region has a much larger proportion of African-American population than the nation, though slightly lower than that of the state as a whole. By parish, the African-American population fluctuates from a high of 58.4% to 13.5%.

Minority engagement for the CEDS development process is important for the success of the project. Also, emphasizing minority-based programs for workforce development to infrastructure projects are vital to the economic development efforts of the community.

Source: American Community Survey 2019
Although the Hispanic population is relatively low, it is still a significant proportion of the population in the SCPDC region. Language barriers could be an issue and basic cultural and language development should be considered to help with communication and workforce development. According to the American Community Survey, between 2009-2013 approximately 8.7% of the population in Louisiana spoke a language other than English at home.

Source: American Community Survey 2019
INCOME, POVERTY AND THE COST OF LIVING

St. Charles Parish outperforms other parishes in the SCPDC region and keeps pace with the national average for income and poverty levels. The cost of living in the parish is 5%-7% less than the nation, meaning incomes in St. Charles Parish go much further.

The story is very different in the rest of the region. Incomes are at the state level or lower, with Assumption and St. Mary Parishes having $2,000 to $4,000 less per person annually, respectively. Outside of St. Charles Parish, incomes are lower from $5,000 to $10,000 on the average or 60% to 80% of the national per capita income annually. The cost of living in the area is lower than in the U.S. on average, but higher in comparison to the low per capita incomes. This simply means wages do not go as far in the region to make ends meet at home. This can be seen in the “children under 18 below the poverty line” graph where 5%-13% more children are living in poverty compared to children in the rest of the U.S.

Source: American Community Survey 2019
### Income Per Capita

![Income Per Capita Chart]

Source: American Community Survey 2019

### Children Under 18 Below the Poverty Line

![Children Below Poverty Line Chart]

Source: American Community Survey 2019
The State index for cost of living is 86.9 (U.S. average is 100), but this is driven down by low housing costs. With the exception of St. Mary Parish, the cost of living is at or greater than the State level in the other six parishes. Other indicators are below the U.S. level, but not by much, with transportation costs exceeding the U.S. average. With wages at 66% to 89% of the U.S. median household income (with the exception of St. Charles Parish, which is equal to the U.S. median income), it is expensive for people to live in Louisiana under these wages. Improving transportation systems should be a priority to help lower costs, as well as attracting jobs with better wages.
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND TRADE

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) throughout the region has steadily risen between 2016 and 2019. 2017 saw some large increases for St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes. Compared to other parishes, the SCPDC region has three parishes with GDP ranked in the first quartile and three ranked in the second quartile. While Assumption parish has seen good growth over the four-year analysis period, it is still ranked in the bottom quartile in the state for GDP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GDP (in 2012 dollars)</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
<th>GDP Rank in State (out of 64)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>$387,917</td>
<td>$424,628</td>
<td>$433,320</td>
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<td>Lafourche</td>
<td>$3,730,400</td>
<td>$3,732,677</td>
<td>$3,811,941</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>$7,376,661</td>
<td>$8,232,852</td>
<td>$7,969,575</td>
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<td>St. James</td>
<td>$2,224,237</td>
<td>$306,740</td>
<td>$3,217,306</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>$2,976,594</td>
<td>$3,782,251</td>
<td>$3,959,487</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Mary</td>
<td>$2,299,656</td>
<td>$2,209,257</td>
<td>$2,822,527</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
<td>$5,230,091</td>
<td>$4,981,246</td>
<td>$5,152,689</td>
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</table>

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (https://www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/lagdp101220_2.pdf)

Exports and imports are down sharply across the globe due to restrictions from COVID-19. Recent Census.gov statistics show increases in exports from quarter two, when COVID-19 restriction locked down global transportation, and quarter three.
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Assumption Parish underperforms in educational attainment compared to elsewhere in the region, with St. Charles Parish over performing. Diploma and degree attainment is mixed for the other parishes. Residents of Lafourche and Terrebonne Parish over 25 years of age have a high school diploma attainment level less than 80%. The River Parishes have better results with diploma attainment at or near the state and national levels.

While Associates Degree attainment is less than the national level, it is much higher in the region than at the state level. The only exceptions are in Assumption Parish, which underperforms the region, and St. Mary Parish which is at the level for the rest of Louisiana. The higher attainment of Associates Degrees can likely be attributed to the trade school and workforce development programs SCPDC and EDA have collaborated on over the years.

Bachelor Degree attainment is much lower than the national and state levels. This likely is an indication of “brain drain”—students seeking degrees at institutions outside of the region and later finding better paying jobs elsewhere. This is important to address when looking to attract new businesses to the region.
EMPLOYMENT

The figure below shows employment gains and losses from 1997 – 2018. Except for St. Mary Parish, there have been net job gains over the 20-year period. However, there have been net job losses across the board in the clustered economy over the same period.

The U.S. Cluster Mapping project defines clusters as “a regional concentration of related industries”. “Traded” clusters are economic clusters that serve other regions or areas outside of the study region. “Local” clusters primarily serve the local market. Emerging and declining sectors are discussed in more detail later in this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>Net Job Creation</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Traded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafourche</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>1,647</td>
<td>2,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>1,374</td>
<td>7,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>3,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>6,478</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>2,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary</td>
<td>7,080</td>
<td>4,269</td>
<td>10,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>6,690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net job gains with net job cluster losses suggest the regional economy is growing, but independently. In the past, a refinery may require water transportation to move product, local factories making pipelines and other support from business located in the same vicinity. However, as traded clusters have left the region and the economy has become more global, new and expanded businesses have grown that are independent and serve needs more sporadically.
The regional unemployment rate was very low in the middle of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the State shutting down parts of the economy in order to help the spread of the virus. Unemployment rates peaked in April and May of 2020 and started to return to pre-COVID-19 level. Unemployment is still higher than pre-COVID levels at the time of this report. However, infection rates around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday led to more stringent restrictions and the extension of current restriction limiting parts of the economy. The unemployment rate has not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels and there is no indication that jobs lost during the pandemic will return. In the Emerging and Declining Clusters section below, local clusters in industries most affected by COVID-19 restrictions are expected to rebound and grow.

In December 2020, the unemployment rate in the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Statistical Area was 6.9%. However, many people in Louisiana are working part-time and need full-time employment or have stopped looking for work during the pandemic. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that unemployed and underemployed persons were about 14% of the labor force at the end of 2020.
HUMAN CAPITAL ASSETS

The World Bank defines “human capital” as the cumulative “knowledge, skills, and health that people invest in and accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society”. The Milken Institute develops a Human Capital Investment index for all 50 states on a biannual basis. In 2020, Louisiana ranked number 47 out of 50 states.

Since 2010, Louisiana has ranked between 44th and 48th for Capital Investment by state. While the state’s ranking has stayed consistently low, Louisiana’s overall index score has decreased over the past decade. This suggests that Louisiana’s human capital is decreasing, which is a problem for investment into the state and the SCPDC region.
ENVIRONMENTAL, GEOGRAPHICAL, CLIMATIC, AND CULTURAL INFORMATION

The following section develops an environmental baseline for the region and discusses how those features benefit or detract for the regional economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental laws that look to keep land, air and water clean in the region come from the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). Enforcement of environmental laws is mostly carried out by LDEQ.

EPA is mostly involved in permitting projects that will affect environmental cleanliness and approving of the State's environmental implementation plans. Other major EPA programs include coastal restoration projects through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), EPA Brownfield's programs, and the Region 6 Tribal Program. Most of the SCPDC region lies within the Barataria and Terrebonne Watershed Basins. St. Mary Parish lies within both the Atchafalaya and Teche/Vermillion Watershed Basins.

Regional Wetland Restoration Projects (Louisiana CWPPRA)

The U.S. EPA also provides guidance for preparing and recovering from hurricanes and flooding. Since infrastructure projects are a major part of the SCPDC strategy, this CEDS will implement the EPA resiliency plans into the Economic Resiliency section.

LOUISIANA WATERSHED INITIATIVE

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative (LWI) is a new program developed as a response to severe flooding in the state during 2016. The state has spent $16 billion for flooding and hurricane-mitigation programs over the past 20 years. LWI was launched to help rethink flood prevention strategies.

SCPDC is leading the effort in LWI’s Region 6 for capacity building to launch a more comprehensive flood strategy. SCPDC and its stakeholders have provided a preliminary plan to LWI on how to move forward with a new flood prevention program and legislation. Currently, limitations of being in a rural
area with limited technical resources is recognized and the need to develop a stronger technical baseline if a flood management program is to be implemented.

SCPDC has made some provisional recommendations to the state on how to handle watershed issues from a regional perspective. SCPDC has also begun reaching out to its watershed partners to discuss upcoming state-level legislation. After SCPDC receives feedback from its partners, it will work with LWI to develop a program to develop future infrastructure and policies for regional flood management.

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM (BTNEP)

National estuary programs were developed as part of the U.S. Clean Water Act to help “protect and preserve the culture and land” in the region indicated on the map below.

The goals of BTNEP include:

- Preserve and restore wetlands and barrier island
- Realistically support diverse, natural biological communities
- Develop and meet water quality standards that adequately protect estuarine resources and human health
- Promote environmentally responsible economic activities that sustain estuarine resources
- Generate national recognition and support
- Implement comprehensive education and awareness programs that enhance public involvement and maintain cultural heritage
- Support and create clear, fair, practical, and enforceable regulations
- Develop and maintain multi-level, long-term, comprehensive watershed planning
- Be compatible with natural processes
- Forge common-ground solutions to estuarine problems
- Formulate indicators of estuarine ecosystem health and balance estuary use

SCPDC is an active partner with BTNEP and the two organizations are planning future infrastructure projects that meet the organizations’ mutual goals.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERISTY – AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

The Louisiana State University – Agricultural Extension (LSU AgCenter) provides “research-based educational information that will improve (our) lives and well-being”. This is administered through each parish by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. Agricultural information for each parish can be found at the LSU AgCenter website.
Agriculture from both farms and livestock are a major source of rural economy in Louisiana and the SCPDC region. Soybeans, broilers (chickens), and sugarcane are the major contributors to the regional agriculture economy.

**FARMERS’ MARKETS**

The LSU AgCenter favorably promotes the development of local and regional farmers’ markets to help sell locally grown and developed products, create jobs and enhance local economies. While local farmers’ markets serve each parish during the non-winter months, there are no regional market efforts. The uniqueness of food, seafood, and locally-made products in the region suggest a regional farmers’ market could maintain and create jobs, while maintaining the culture of the region. The Farmers’ Market Coalition states shopping locally can triple jobs and generate revenue for an entire community. SCPDC should work to develop a regional farmers’ market that will boost the greater community where it is located and takes advantage of expected growth in the distribution and e-commerce center (see the emerging clusters section below).

**LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES**

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LWF) is in charge of licensing and permits for hunting, fishing, and harvesting aquaculture. LWF also maintains wildlife management areas and refuges. The following wildlife management areas and refuges are in the SCPDC region.

- Attakapas Island (St. Mary)
- Atchafalaya Delta (St. Mary)
- Elm Hall (Assumption)
- Lake Bouef (Lafourche)
- Manchac (St. John the Baptist)
- Maurepas Swamp (St. James and St John the Baptist)
- Pointes-aux-Chenes (Lafourche and Terrebonne)
- Salvador/Timken (St. Charles)
- Isle Dernieres Barrier Islands (Terrebonne)

When considering infrastructure or other projects in these areas, SCPDC should work with Wildlife and Fisheries to coordinate their efforts and to protect species in these areas.
AQUACULTURE

Aquaculture is a very important cultural and economic sector in the SCPDC region. According to Louisiana Seafood, one out of every 70 jobs in Louisiana is related to the seafood industry—the second largest seafood exporting state in the country. This has an economic impact of $2.4 billion annually for Louisiana. In some estimates, more than 20% of Louisiana seafood is harvested in Terrebonne Parish alone. The main species being harvested include shrimp, oysters, crabs, crawfish, and alligators.

Aquacultural work in the region is generational and tends to be small business and family-owned business oriented.

More than ever, fishing and aquaculture harvesting are being subjected to negative environmental impacts. Increased tropical storm frequency and intensity is affecting infrastructure and wildlife habitat. Upstream flood prevention projects are also sending silt down waterways, making fishing more difficult. The LSU AgCenter does extensive work in local seafood habitat and species research, including seafood farming as a way of keeping the industry intact with problematic environmental issues. Working with local and commercial fishing companies, and educational institutions, fishermen can be retrained to farm and still continue in their trade.

The University of Louisiana-Lafayette and the Meridian Group developed the 2020 study, An Economic Development Strategy for Louisiana’s Coastal Seafood Industry. The study looks to protect and enhance the seafood industry through creating a future economic development vision based on interviewing supply chain actors, identifying industry-wide themes, and generating an economic development strategy and solutions. The report developed three major areas where SCPDC can help assist in strengthening the industry:

1. Engagement, Planning and Resources;
   a. SCPDC should proactively engage the seafood industry to ensure equitable access to capital needed to prosper;
b. SCPDC will submit this CEDS report to industry stakeholder to make sure we are addressing issues critical to the industry’s survival;  
c. Provide outreach to the industry when we become aware of programs help it thrive and adapt to future changes and disruptions;

2. Workforce and Infrastructure;  
a. Use the CEDS to help leverage the sustainability of Louisiana’s fisheries through our on-going environmental work in the watershed and beyond;  
b. Provide technical assistance for seeking resources that assist in industry innovations;

3. Marketing, Branding and Innovation  
a. Adapt the CEDS resiliency section to help the seafood industry “bounce forward” after natural disaster or other economic shocks;  
b. Provide resources that assist in improving the industries transportation and distribution networks;  
c. Liaison with workforce development partners and entrepreneurship agencies to help train a new generation of workers and business owners.

Aquaculture is more than just fishing and seafood. The region’s waterways are also important for tourism and recreation. The SCPDC region is famous for swamp tours and kayaking in the bayous and rivers. Longevity of the systems of rivers, ports, and intercostal waterways is most important to the economic health of the region.

SCPDC and its partners are part of several groups looking for a larger solution to addressing environmental issues over a longer horizon. It is imperative that SCPDC seek out funds for projects to protect the local way of life and strengthen an underrated sector of the economy.

Lastly, when the aquaculture industry is hit by an economic shock, not enough is being done to reach out to businesses and employees in the aquaculture industry to let them know what help is available. Many in this industry are of different ethnicities, including local Cajun-French speakers, Latinos and Vietnamese, to name a few. SCPDC should look to create a multi-language outreach program to engage those in deep rural areas that may have difficulty seeking programs to help them in their time of need.

BROWNFIELDS

The SCPDC devotes an entire section of its Planning Department to the U.S. EPA Brownfields program. It offers assessment grants and revolving loans for identification and cleanup of potential Brownfields sites. More information on how SCPDC is involved in these efforts can be found on the South Central Planning & Development Commission’s (SCPDC) Regional Brownfields Program began with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) award of a pilot grant in 2002 and was the foundation of a dynamic revitalization program. Since then, SCPDC’s Regional Brownfields Program has managed several programs and initiatives aimed at identifying, assessing and remediating brownfield sites throughout its regional planning district. As a regional commission whose mission is “to perform a variety of services to meet the ever-changing needs and challenges of its member governments and serve many different constituencies,” the Regional Brownfields Program was expanded in 2009 to include the South Louisiana Brownfields Coalition Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF). The Coalition includes four partners with South Central Planning and Development Commission as the grant recipient with over 20 years of lending experience in other federally-funded programs. The Coalition’s other partners include:
the Acadiana Planning Commission; the City of Lake Charles; and the City of Baton Rouge / Parish of East Baton Rouge. The program serves the City of Lake Charles and 15 parishes (including municipalities within these 15 parishes).

“Brownfields” are sites that are, or may be perceived to be, contaminated and are vacant and underutilized properties previously used for industrial or commercial activities that may have resulted in contamination from petroleum or hazardous substances. Often seen as eyesores, these sites may consequently stall an area’s progress and development. Brownfields can also be seen as redevelopment opportunities with the potential to transform community liabilities into assets through revitalization that brings new life to an area. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties protects the environment, reduces blight, & takes development pressures off greenspaces and working lands. Under the Brownfields Program, the US EPA provides funding and technical assistance to empower states, communities, tribes, and nonprofit organizations to prevent, inventory, assess, clean up, and reuse brownfield sites.

SCPDC’s Brownfields Program provides the following services:

- **Assessment Grants** – Assessment grants provides funding for brownfield inventories, planning, environmental assessments, and community outreach related to brownfields sites. Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments are provided for eligible entities at no cost, assisting with dormant or underutilized properties due to liability associated with possible contamination.

- **Cleanup Grants** – Cleanup grants provide funding to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites with planned greenspace, recreational, or other non-profit uses.

- **Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants** – Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grants provide funding to capitalize a revolving loan fund and provide sub-awards to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. The fund “revolves” by lending to public and private borrowers in order to finance environmental cleanup activities at brownfields sites, and then using loan repayments to provide new loans.

- **Technical Assistance** – SCPDC offers technical advice and education, through its partnership with EPA, for some brownfields redevelopment projects where local government is supporting or playing a key role. This includes partnering with stakeholders and other agencies for additional funding or assistance on their projects.

For more information on SCPDC’s Brownfield Program, please visit our [website](#).

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**TRIBAL PROGRAMS**

U.S. EPA administers environmental assistance to U.S. recognized tribes. In Charenton, Louisiana, in St. Mary Parish, the Chitimacha Tribe has its reservation. The Chitimacha reservation lies within the Atchafalaya Basin. Information on tribal programs and assistance can be found on the EPA [website](#).

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**RECYCLING**

Recycling is available in some form in all parishes throughout the SCPDC region. However, 53% of the state’s population has no available recycling services and only 12.87% of the state’s population utilize
available recycling services. The SCPDC should consider developing a rural recycling program for the region to help increase jobs and improve the environmental outlook.

GEOGRAPHICAL

Louisiana has 30% of the nation’s coastal marshes and 45% of all intertidal coastal marshes in the continental U.S., but 80% of the nation’s annual coastal wetlands loss. According to Sea Level Rise.org, the sea level around Louisiana has risen two feet since 1950 and the state is losing a football size field of land every hour. This has led to over $25 billion in spending to help cut down land losses, and restore wetlands and salt marshes.

Storm surge, saltwater intrusion through manmade canals and dams that prevent the natural restoration of silt are the main factors of land loss due to erosion. Since 2000, 28 named storms affected the Louisiana region. SCPDC is helping administer grants throughout the region to build infrastructure that helps blunt the effect of storms. More on our current projects will be discussed later in the Economic Resiliency section of this report.

The topography of the area consists of low-lying flatlands along the Mississippi River’s alluvial plane. The fertile soils and waterways are important to the region’s economic agriculture and aquaculture.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

The economy of Louisiana and the SCPDC region is powered by the resources of the Mississippi River. The Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC) states that 10 river-related economic sectors generate $151 billion in annual revenue and employ over 580,000 people. With the SCPDC region being known as a “Sportsman’s Paradise”, it is important to note that $17 billion and 245,000 jobs were generate through tourism and outdoor recreation. A full report on how the Mississippi River acts as the heartbeat of the region’s economy, view the full report here.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Oil and gas is still an important industry to the region, but the due to the economics of the industry and demand for oil and gas, its economic impact on the region is in decline. A Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta report from 2020 states the region is still very tied to the energy sector, but less with extraction and more on refining. This is due to most of the state’s affordable oil and gas sources being already
extracted. However, the oil and gas industry still employs nearly 80,000 people in the state. The future in the energy industry for Louisiana is in downstream activities, renewable energy and exploring future technologies.
The Bayou-River region is declared a “humid subtropical” climate under the Koppen standards—meaning the mean temperature in the coldest month is between 27° F and 64° F and the warmest month is 72° F and higher. The climate is imperative to the economy and culture of the Bayou-River region. Recreational sporting, aquaculture and agriculture are all products of the regional climate and geography.

Climate change is having a real effect on the region and could potentially lead to a loss of economic and cultural aspects of the region. Rising sea levels and coastal erosion have led to a loss of 25 square miles per year along the Louisiana coast. Sediments washed down into the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River are deeply impacting crawfish farming and other fishing activities important to the regional economy. Increasing temperatures are leading to stronger tropical storms and hurricanes, which further speed up land losses along the coast.

Increasing temperatures are also slated to negatively affect regional soybean stocks, cotton farms, and livestock in two ways: by drought due to a lack of water and by heat affecting the metabolism of plants/animals. Oysters and mussels are also deeply affected by warmer temperatures.

Innovation for regional solutions to prevent the negative affect of climate change will be important to maintaining the region’s economy and culture.
INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

The overall infrastructure in the region is in fair condition. However, roads, water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure is aging and needed repairs are quite common. Recent freezing temperatures exposed the problems with underground pipes, causing many to burst and require emergency repair. “Boil water” notices are all too common during floods and other inclement weather. Many local roads are full of potholes and are in need of repair. SCPDC finds funds and its partners perform a lot of infrastructure work annually. A comprehensive infrastructure study to see find which areas are most in need and to seek funding for upgrades and repairs should be considered.

POTABLE WATER

The region’s potable water sources are of a high quality and drinkable. Public water as a utility is maintained by each parish’s waterworks districts. The region’s waterworks departments use surface water sources that are then treated and stored for distribution to its customers. Customers not connected to the public utilities are responsible for their own water source as approved by the Department of Environmental Quality.

Local waterworks programs, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Louisiana Department of Health work together to provide education for maintaining clean water, monitoring water safety, inspecting water projects, and reviewing engineering plans concerning water systems. In situations where water becomes undrinkable, systems become affected by storms or boiling is recommended, these three entities work to get the necessary information to the public via media and social media. Technical advice and training is also available through the Louisiana Rural Water Association.

SCPDC is actively working with localities to help ensure water is drinkable through administering grants for infrastructure projects. Work with stakeholders on clean water infrastructure will be continued.

SEWER

Public sewer systems are also governed by local authorities, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and the Louisiana Health Department. Sewer projects are also permitted and closely watched by the U.S. EPA. Technical assistance is also provided by the Louisiana Rural Water Association. Private septic systems are one of the most worrisome issues in the region where seepage pollutes water and soils.

An important piece of SCPDC’s work is helping administer funding for the maintenance and expansion of public wastewater treatment systems. SCPDC administer several projects annually throughout the region that look to disconnect households from private septic systems and increase central wastewater treatment customers and capabilities. SCPDC will continue to work with stakeholders in increasing these efforts.
STORMWATER

Stormwater issues continue to be a problem in the region due to local and downstream flooding, as well as connected sewer and stormwater systems. Many of the existing pipes in the region are in extremely corrosive areas according to LADOTD. Pipe replacements will be necessary during road repairs and may need to be replaced regardless of planned road repairs based on the level of corrosion.

The Louisiana Watershed Initiative (LWI) and local stakeholders are developing larger plans to prevent flooding in the state through better hydrological engineering and project design. Many communities are beginning to require that all new developments maintain a one-day, 25-year storm within their property. This is a good start, but a broader LWI plan will be required to prevent flooding events similar to the 2016 downstream flooding.

SCPDC is very active with LWI and plan to be a strong partner for regional watershed efforts.

BROADBAND

According to BroadbandNow, more than 98.5% of the SCPDC region has access to broadband. Most of the region has access to 100 megabits per second service. However, the region lacks 1 gigabit per second access and fiber-optic service. The state also lacks low-price service: only 56.4% of Louisiana residents are offered low-price access plans.

Louisiana established the Broadband for Everyone in Louisiana initiative to help track where broadband service is needed and to have 100 megabytes per second service available throughout the state by 2029. Funds for subsidies should be sought to help make broadband more accessible for low- to moderate-income residents and new businesses. Lastly, a broadband redundancy plan needs to be put together to allow for quicker recovery and resiliency during events that affect broadband coverage.
ENERGY

For electrical and natural gas services, the entire region is served by Entergy Louisiana and the South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association (SLECA). Due to the location of Louisiana near the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River, extensive pipelines are located throughout the Bayou region that serve the entire U.S.

Renewable energy is a growing industry in the SCPDC region, with new companies beginning to produce solar panels and other traditional oil and gas companies beginning to invest more in this area. Solar, biomass, and offshore wind currently produce energy for Louisiana. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources has developed several maps indicating the locations of renewable resources throughout the region.

REFINERIES

Below is a map from the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources indicating the location of refineries and other oil and gas infrastructure in the region.
TRANSPORTATION

The SCPDC region is well-served by a combination of sea ports, airports, interstates and railroads. The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is staffed by the planning department of SCPDC, and is the major transportation policy planning body in the area. The areas outside of the region are served and maintained by state and local authorities, except for the urbanized area of St. Charles and St. John the Baptist Parishes; those are controlled by the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission/New Orleans MPO. The sections below provide more detail on all of the transportation modes and recommendations are provided where action is needed.

HOUMA-THIBODAUX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The Houma-Thibodaux MPO develops transportation policy, develops funding for transportation projects and provides technical support for the region shown in the map herein.

The MPO is guided by its 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The plan is reviewed and updated every five years. The vision and goals of the MPO are to:

- Provide reliable transportation options
- Improve safety and security
- Maximize and maintain the transportation system
- Support prosperity
- Protect the environment and communities within the region

All information, including maps and other exhibits about the plan, can be found here.

NEW ORLEANS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
The region is served by two major transit authorities: Good Earth Public Transit and the River Parishes Transit Authority. Information on all transit systems are handled through SCPDC, the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization and the New Orleans MPO. More details can be found on the South Louisiana Transit website.

Good Earth Public Transit operates fixed routes throughout Terrebonne Parish and into the City of Thibodaux. Paratransit service is also available for people with disabilities. The Terrebonne Council on Aging offers demand-response service to individuals in the rural areas of the parish and paratransit services to the elderly and disabled population of the parish.

Lafourche Parish Council on Aging offers rides to elderly and disabled throughout the parish.

River Parishes Transit Authority offers shared-ride, demand-response services for citizens of St. Charles, and St. John the Baptist. Rides are offered into Jefferson Parish for riders to transfer onto the City of Kenner transit system.

Assumption Parish is served by the Parish’s Council on Aging demand-response service. People of all ages and incomes within the service area are able to use the Council on Aging transportation service.

St. James Parish Government offers demand-response and paratransit service to citizens. People of all ages and incomes within the service area are able to use the transportation service.

St. Mary Parish Community Action Agency provides limited demand-response service. It however does not connect the parish to other parishes within the SCPDC region.

For people with disabilities, parish ARC organizations provide transit service in Assumption, Lafourche (throughout the parish and specifically in Special Education District #1), Terrebonne, and St. Mary Parishes.

The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) provided transit analysis in its 2045 Transportation Plan. It indicates that most places within the metropolitan planning region are well served, but parts of Assumption and Lafourche parish are currently underserved. Moreover, the SCPDC region outside of the MPO region is underserved and disconnected from other parishes within the region. Transit projects that connect the outer region to the MPO region should be sought out.

Ports and railroads in transportation terms are considered modes for moving goods, or freight. The HTMPO has several technical reports examining the existing conditions and assessing the needs for railroads, seaport and airports. The 2045 Transportation Plan for the SCPDC region provides much more information about how economic development is affected by existing transportation infrastructure and how future initiatives should be focused to improve those modes of transportation. With the HTMPO being housed at SCPDC, we will work closely together to make sure funds are focused toward areas most in need.
Sea ports are very important as they connect maritime shipping with truck and airport transport. Moreover, ports connect and enhance major industry sectors—from manufacturing to warehousing. Five ports in the Mississippi River compose the largest port complex in the world. One in five jobs in Louisiana come from port activity and $181 billion of economic impact internationally.

The two major ports in the region are the Port of South Louisiana (St. Charles Parish) and Port Fourchon (Lafourche Parish). SCPDC has worked with the Port of South Louisiana and the Port of West St. Mary recently to enhance services through EDA grants.

The ports of West St. Mary, Morgan City and the Port of Terrebonne are essential to the oil and gas industry. As of 2016, 92 capital improvement projects are planned in 21 ports, with $7.6 billion in improvements are recommended by 2040. SCPDC will continue to work with ports in our region to assist with planned improvements.

**AIRPORTS**

Two regional airports serve the region and the Thibodaux Municipal Airport for non-commercial flights. There is also a small executive airport at the Port of South Louisiana to allow easy connection to businesses utilizing the port. The Houma-Terrebonne airport and the Harry P. Williams Airport in Patterson (St. Mary Parish) provide daily connections to Lafayette and Houston. The New Orleans International Airport is outside of the region, but only a short driving distance away.
RAILROADS

Louisiana and Delta Railroad serve the area for cargo transportation on a track that runs from New Iberia into the SCPDC region, terminating at Raceland. The MPO does not address railroad issues and not much is known about whether the area has adequate railroad cargo service. SCPDC should work with area ports to see if additional cargo train service is necessary and if LDD involvement is necessary.

Amtrak has a passenger platform in Schriever with no amenities. Service at this station goes east to New Orleans and then points north, or west through Lafayette and into Texas paralleling U.S. 90 and then Interstate 10. Enhancing service on this line for express service to New Orleans or Lafayette could help commuters cheaply and effectively move throughout the region.

COMMUTING FOR WORK

According to analysts, for each mile someone lives away from their job it can cost up to $795 a year in time and commuting costs. According to the most recent statistics available by the American Community Survey (2010-2014), workers in the SCPDC region travel an average of 24 to 31 minutes to work every day—this is about average for workers in parishes throughout the state. Visualizations of worker commutes by parish can be found here.

The American Community Survey also looks at “working from home”. This trend was increasing before COVID-19 restrictions, but as many as 80% of companies are expected to allow at least part-time remote collaboration after the pandemic.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY

The Houma-Thibodaux MPO in collaboration with the South Central Regional Safety Coalition is currently in the process of developing a Bicycle-Pedestrian Safety Plan. This involves a full survey of existing bicycle paths and sidewalks within the entire seven-parish SCPDC region. Many of the State highways in the area are considered to have high demand for bicycle services, but low-level infrastructure. Many of the pedestrian path are also disconnected and non-compliant under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Upon completion of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan, the MPO should look to see if SCPDC can help in finding funding for infrastructure projects that implement the plan.

ALTERNATIVE FUEL VEHICLES

Developing electrical vehicle charging stations throughout the region can help encourage alternative fuel vehicles to travel through the region. If charging stations are strategically placed in downtown areas, or where shopping and recreation is available, this could help the economy as drivers spend money while waiting for their vehicles to charge. SCPDC should consider a regional plan for alternative vehicles and working with energy companies to develop these ideas together.
EMERGING AND DECLINING ECONOMIC CLUSTERS

The economy of the Bayou-River region is a product of its environment and surroundings. The area is rich in natural resources, from oil and gas to shrimp and oysters. Clusters were formed naturally in order to help get the local products to market. However, due to automation, globalization, changes in the environment and other factors, clustered employment has declined in the region since 1998. Overall, there have been net job gains in the region, indicating that job creation is becoming more independent. The goal of this section is to recognize where those independent job gains were and if those jobs are in emerging economic sectors. This section will also examine declining sectors so stakeholders can decide how best to direct investments and workforce training.

Information in this section uses data and analysis from the U.S. Cluster Mapping project—a joint project between the Economic Development Administration and Harvard Business School. The data looks at “local” and “traded” clusters. Local clusters are economic clusters that serve the region versus traded clusters that serve beyond the region in which they are located. The data also indicated whether a sector is set for future growth, stagnation or decline. Lastly, this section will use data from the cluster mapping project to indicate the relationships between clusters so stakeholders can develop a strategy for pursuing job growth diversification in related job areas.

HISTORICAL ECONOMIC CLUSTER REVIEW (1997-2018)
U.S. Cluster Mapping has provided analysis by parish for clusters between 1997-2018. The project indicates where relationships exist between sectors at the three- to four-digit NAICS code level. Analysts can also dive deeper and look at emerging industries at the NAICS six-digit level.

Finding linkages between clusters where there is a specialization in the region and emerging clusters in a related sector can help focus where the workforce has compatible skills, and thus create more efficient job growth.

Clusters are broken up into two main categories: local and traded clusters. Local clusters are industry sectors that serve the regional economy, where traded sectors serve areas outside of the region.

The regional clustered economy is mostly locally-focused (62% to 38%). In St. Mary and St. James Parish, clusters are almost evenly proportionate between local and traded clusters, while in other parishes less than 25% of clustered employment are in traded sectors.

Below is a regional and a parish-by-parish analysis looking at the 20-year history of clustered employment in the region, and which clusters are emerging or declining. This information is useful in helping to determine which sectors are best for focusing the region’s economic development efforts.

**REGIONAL CLUSTERED ECONOMY**

SCPDC has developed a snapshot of economic clusters in our region that can be seen here. Local clusters dominate traded clusters as 62% versus 38% of the economy, respectively. Although economic development efforts should take place regionally, it is best to examine emerging and declining clusters on a parish-by-parish basis. Those details are discussed below.
The three clusters most in decline over the 20-year period are also the sectors predicted to have the most growth:

- Food processing and manufacturing
  - Specialty foods and ingredients
- Distribution and e-commerce
  - Wholesale food products;
  - Wholesale farm products and supplies
- Oil and gas production and transportation
  - Support activities for oil and gas operations

Construction products and services are the highest growth cluster over the period, but jobs are expected to stagnate.

The project further expects the automotive cluster in Assumption Parish to disappear. This is due to closure of “metal mills and foundries” in the parish.
LOCAL SECTORS

Assumption Parish also has predicted growth in local sectors where historically there were job losses:

- Local food and beverage processing and distribution
  - Retail food stores
  - Beer, wine and liquor retailing and wholesaling
- Local motor vehicle products and services
  - Automobile dealers
  - Automotive parts retailing
  - Automotive repair shops
  - Other automotive services
  - Other motor vehicle distribution
- Local real estate, construction and development
  - Construction materials retailing
  - Specialty contractors
  - Real estate services
- Local civic organization (religious organizations)
- Recreational facilities and instruction

Continued growth is expected in the parish’s historical local clusters:

- Local retailing of clothing and general merchandise
- Local transportation services (freight)

RELATED SECTORS

In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters:

Specialized Clusters

- Construction
- Transportation
- Oil & Gas

Related Clusters

- Electric power
- Water transportation
- Distribution and e-commerce
- Lighting
- Non-metal mining
- Vulcanized materials
The top traded economic clusters where job losses occurred over the past 20-years are mixed on their future growth or decline:

**Declining Sectors**
- Production Technology and Heavy Machinery
  - Agricultural and construction machinery and components
- Automotive
- Paper and Packaging

**Emerging Sectors**
- Business services
  - Corporate headquarters
  - Engineering services
  - Computer services
  - Consulting services
- Distribution and electronic commerce
- Hospitality and Tourism
The two sectors that saw job creation since 1997 are also expected to see growth in the parish.

- Oil and gas production and transportation
  - support activities and well drilling
- Transportation and logistics
  - Ground transportation support activities
  - Trucking
  - Specialty air transportation

**LOCAL SECTORS**

In local clusters, job losses are not expected. Most clusters, both emerging and declining are expected to grow.

- Local hospitality establishments
  - Hospitality establishment
  - Recreational facilities and instruction
- Local health services
  - Hospitals
  - Healthcare provider offices
- Local logistical services
  - Local transportation services
  - Local passenger transportation
- Local real estate, construction and development
  - Specialty contractors
  - Concrete products
  - Construction materials retailing
  - Construction materials wholesaling
  - Real estate services
  - General contractors
  - Highway and street construction
- Local personal services (non-medical)
  - Child care services
  - Hair care services
  - Personal products retailing
- Local retailing of clothing and general merchandise
  - General merchandise retailing
  - Apparel retailing
- Local motor vehicle products and services
  - Automobile dealers
  - Automotive repair shops
  - Parking services
  - Automobile parts wholesaling
• Local financial services
  o Deposit-taking institutions
  o Insurance agents or brokers
  o Pension, health and welfare funds
  o Collection agencies
  o Tax return preparation services
• Local education and training
  o Elementary and secondary schools
  o Recreational and other services
• Local household goods and services
  o Landscape and horticultural services
  o Hardware retailing
• Local community and civic organizations
  o Social service organization
  o Religious organizations
  o Trusts
• Local food and beverage processing and distribution
  o Retail food stores
  o Beer, wine and liquor retailing and wholesaling

RELATED SECTORS
In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters:

Specialized Clusters

• Water transport
• Oil and Gas

Related Clusters

• Transportation
• Distribution and e-commerce
• Construction
• Electric power
TRADED SECTORS

Traded clusters in St. Charles Parish show mostly stagnation in the future. Upstream chemical jobs are expected to decline. However, Royal Shell Refinery is in the process of modifying the Norco Refinery to refine chemicals. With these modifications, upstream chemical jobs for the parish may increase.

Declining Clusters

- Upstream chemicals
  - Organic chemicals
  - Agricultural chemicals
  - Inorganic chemicals

Emerging Clusters

- Business Services
  - Computer Services
  - Business support services
  - Consulting services
  - Engineering services
  - Corporate headquarters
  - Ground passenger transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. Charles</th>
<th>Trade Cluster Gains</th>
<th>Trade Cluster Losses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>Oil and Gas Production and Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Transportation</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>Upstream Chemical Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food Processing and Manufacturing</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. Charles</th>
<th>Local Cluster Gains</th>
<th>Local Cluster Losses</th>
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<td>Local Food and Beverage Processing and Distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Hospitality Establishments</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>Local Real Estate, Construction and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Personal Services (Non-Medical)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Local Health Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOCAL SECTORS

Locally, growth is expected across all clusters—both in clusters that are historically emerging and declining.

- Local logistical services
  - Local transportation services
  - Warehousing services
- Local hospitality establishments
  - Hospitality establishments
  - Recreational facilities and instruction
- Local personal services
  - Child care services
  - Personal products retailing
  - Hair care services
  - Other personal services
- Local financial services
  - Insurance agents and brokers
  - Tax preparation services
  - Pension, health and welfare funds
  - Deposit-taking institutions
- Local education and training
  - Recreational and other services
- Local community and civic organizations
  - Religious organizations
  - Social service organizations
- Local retailing of clothing and general merchandise
  - Apparel retailing
  - General merchandise retailing
- Local food and beverage processing and distributions
  - Tobacco retailers
  - Retail food stores
- Local motor vehicle products and services
  - Automotive parts retailing
  - Parking services
  - Automotive repair shops
  - Automotive dealers
  - Other motor vehicles distribution
  - Other automotive services
- Local household goods and services
  - Landscape and horticultural services
  - Hardware retailing
• Local commercial services
  o Testing laboratories
  o Local professional services
  o Security services
  o Building support services
• Local health services
  o Healthcare provider offices
  o Medical equipment distribution and rental
  o Home and residential care
  o Hospitals

RELATED SECTORS

In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters. The U.S. Cluster Mapping project finds that St. Charles Parish has a slight specialization in “distribution and e-commerce”. This specialization is strongly related to many other clusters where job growth is expected. This provides the parish with many opportunities for cluster diversification. Parish specialization and related clusters are listed below:

Specialized Clusters

• Water transport
• Upstream chemicals
• Electric power
• Distribution and e-commerce
• Construction
• Transportation

Related Clusters

• Oil and gas
• Biopharma
• Business services
• Education
• Financial services
• Insurance
• Marketing
• Communications
• Fishing
• Agriculture
• Livestock
• Information technology
• Medical devices
• Lighting

• Recreational goods
• Nonmetal mining

Related Clusters

• Upstream metals
• Food processing
• Downstream chemicals
• Vulcanized materials
An unexpected closure of the Royal Dutch Shell Covenant refinery has led to the loss of 700 regular jobs and 400 contract jobs that will have a severe effect on the St. James economy. The data used below is from 2018 and did not anticipate closure of this facility. Some of these jobs will be relocated to the company’s Norco refinery in St. Charles Parish and thus stay in the region. The exact number of jobs that will be relocated has not yet been announced.

### Traded Sectors

In sectors with historical growth between 1997-2018, no additional job growth is expected. There is some growth expected in declining clusters. This should be reexamined later when the loss of jobs from the Covenant refinery closing is truly realized.

- Oil and gas production and transportation
- Food processing and manufacturing
  - Baked goods
- Distribution and e-commerce
  - Warehousing and storage
  - Wholesale of food products
  - Wholesale of furniture and home furnishings
  - Wholesale of farm products and supplies
- Business services
  - Engineering services
  - Ground passenger transportation
Business support services
Corporate headquarters
Consulting services

Hospitality and tourism
Accommodation and related services
Cultural and educational entertainment

LOCAL SECTORS
Locally, most cluster, both with historic growth and decline, are expected to add jobs.

- Local hospitality establishments
  - Hospitality establishments
  - Recreational facilities and instruction
- Local motor vehicle products and services
  - Automotive repair shops
  - Automotive parts retailing
  - Automotive dealers
  - Other automotive services
- Local financial services
  - Deposit-taking institutions
  - Pension, health and welfare funds
  - Tax-return preparation services
- Local community and civic organizations
  - Religious organizations
  - Business associations
- Local education and training
  - Elementary and secondary schools
  - Job training services
  - Recreational and other services
- Local logistical services
  - Local passenger transport
  - Local transportation services
- Local household goods and services
  - Landscape and horticultural services
- Local commercial services
  - Building support services
  - Security services

Local professional services

Local real estate, construction and development
  - Construction materials wholesaling
  - Specialty contractors
  - Real estate services
  - General contractors
  - Commercial materials retailing

Local food and beverage processing and distribution
  - Tobacco retailing
  - Retail food stores

Local health services
  - Healthcare provider offices
  - Hospitals
  - Home and Residential Care

RELATED SECTORS
In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters:
Specialized Clusters

- Water transport
- Oil and Gas
- Transportation

Related Clusters

- Distribution and e-commerce
- Construction
- Electric power
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. John the Baptist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traded Cluster Gains</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Downstream Chemical Products</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitality and Tourism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. John the Baptist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Cluster Gains</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Real Estate, Construction and Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Hospitality Establishments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Community and Civic Organizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRADED SECTORS**

Light growth is predicted in five economic clusters: two historic growth clusters and three declining clusters.

- **Hospitality and tourism**
  - Accommodations and related services
  - Cultural and educational entertainment
  - Other tourism attractions
- **Distribution and e-commerce**
  - Rental and leasing
  - Warehousing and storage
  - Wholesale of drugs and druggists’ sundries
  - Wholesale farm products and supplies
  - Wholesale of furniture and home furnishings
  - Wholesale of construction and mining machinery and equipment
- **Business services**
  - Corporate headquarters
  - Engineering services
  - Computer services
  - Business support services
  - Employment placement services
- **Oil and gas production and transportation (support activities)**
- **Food processing and manufacturing**
LOCAL SECTORS

- Local real estate, construction and development
  - Specialty contractors
  - Real estate services
- Local hospitality establishments
  - Recreational facilities and instruction
- Local community and civic organizations
  - Social services organizations
  - Religious organizations
- Local education and training
  - Elementary and secondary schools
  - Job training services
- Local commercial services
  - Security services
  - Testing laboratories
  - Building supports services
  - Local professional services
- Local retailing of clothing and merchandise
  - Apparel retailing
  - General merchandise retailing
- Local health services
  - Healthcare provider offices
  - Medical laboratories
  - Home and residential care
  - Hospitals

RELATED SECTORS

In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters:

Specialized Clusters
- Water transport
- Upstream chemicals
- Distribution and e-commerce
- Transportation
- Hospitality
- Downstream chemicals
- Oil and gas

Related Clusters
- Insurance
- Plastics
- Biopharma
- Business services

Related Clusters
- Education
- Financial services
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Communications
- Fishing
- Agriculture
- Livestock
- Information technology
- Medical devices
- Construction
- Lighting
- Recreational goods
- Nonmetal mining
- Upstream chemicals
- Food processing
- Vulcanized materials
ST. MARY PARISH

St. Mary’s Parish has been hit hard by significant job losses and is the only parish in the region with net job losses between 1997 and 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traded Cluster Gains</th>
<th>Traded Cluster Losses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction Products and Services</td>
<td>Water Transportation</td>
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<td>4,454</td>
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<td>Oil and Gas Production and Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downstream Metal Products</td>
<td>1,633</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>1,125</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Cluster Gains</th>
<th>Local Cluster Losses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Community and Civic Organizations</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Real Estate, Construction and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Logistical Services</td>
<td>Local Food and Beverage Processing and Distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Financial Services</td>
<td>Local Retailing of Clothing and General Merchandising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRADED SECTORS**

Very little job creation is expected in traded clusters in the near future. Those expecting some growth are listed below.

- Oil and gas production and transportation
  - Oil and gas extraction
  - Support activities for oil and gas operations
- Business services
  - Consulting services
  - Corporate headquarters
  - Business support services
  - Engineering services
  - Computer services

**LOCAL SECTORS**
Stronger job increases are expected within locally-traded clusters, with more than 700 jobs expected in the “local hospitality establishments” cluster.

- Local community and civic organization
  - Social services organization
  - Trusts
  - Religious organizations
- Local logistical services
  - Local transportation services
  - Local passenger transportation
- Local financial services
  - Deposit-taking institutions
  - Insurance agents and brokers
  - Collection agencies
  - Tax preparation services
- Local household goods and services
  - Landscape and horticultural services
  - Hardware retailing
- Local education and training
  - Elementary and secondary schools
- Local hospitality establishments
  - Hospitality establishments
  - Recreational facilities and instruction
- Local motor vehicles product and services
  - Automotive parts retailing
  - Automotive wholesaling
  - Automotive dealers
  - Automotive repair shops
  - Automotive parts wholesaling
  - Other automotive services
- Local commercial services
  - Testing laboratories
  - Security services
  - Building support services
- Local personal services (non-medical)
  - Child care services
  - Hair care services
  - Personal products retailing
  - Other personal services
- Local health services
  - Healthcare provider offices
  - Home and residential care
  - Medical laboratories
  - Hospitals
- Local retailing of clothing and general merchandise
o Apparel retailing
o General merchandise retailing
• Local food and beverage processing and distribution
  o Tobacco retailing
  o Beer, wine and liquor retailing
  o Beer and liquor wholesaling
  o Retail food stores
• Local real estate, construction and development
  o Building equipment distribution
  o Water and sewer line construction
  o Highway and street construction
  o Construction materials retailing
  o General contractors
  o Specialty contractors

RELATED SECTORS

In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters:

Specialized Clusters

• Water transportation
• Construction
• Downstream metals
• Upstream chemicals
• Oil and gas
• Electric power

Related Clusters

• Transportation
• Distribution and e-commerce
• Vulcanized materials
• Non-metal mining
• Jewelry
• Lighting
• Medical devices
• Recreational goods
• Plastics
• Production technology
• Metalworking
• Downstream chemicals
• Biopharma

TERREBONNE
TRADED SECTORS

Declining clusters in “oil and gas” and in “business services” are expected to rebound in the near future.

- **Oil and gas production and transportation**
  - Drilling wells
  - Oil and gas extraction
  - Support activities for oil and gas operations
- **Business services**
  - Consulting services
  - Computer services
  - Engineering services
  - Ground passenger transportation
  - Employment placement services
  - Corporate headquarters
  - Business support services
- **Transportation and logistics**
  - Specialty air transportation
  - Ground transportation support activities
  - Trucking
- **Education and Knowledge Creation**
  - Training programs
- Professional organizations
- Research organizations
- Educational support services

- Hospitality and tourism
  - Rental and leasing
  - Electronic and catalog shopping
  - Warehousing and storage
  - Wholesale of drugs and druggists' sundries
  - Wholesale of electrical and electronic goods
  - Wholesale of industrial machinery, equipment and supplies
  - Wholesale of food products

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**LOCAL SECTORS**

Growth is expected across the board in both emerging and declining local clusters.

- Local community and civic organizations
  - Religious organizations
  - Social service organizations
  - Trusts

- Local hospitality establishments
  - Hospitality establishments
  - Recreational facilities and instruction

- Local commercial services
  - Local professional services
  - Testing laboratories
  - Security services
  - Building support services

- Local logistical services
  - Local transportation services
  - Warehousing services
  - Truck leasing
  - Local passenger transportation

- Local financial services
  - Insurance agents and brokers
  - Deposit-taking institutions
  - Tax-Return preparation services
  - Collection agencies
  - Pension, health and welfare funds

- Local retailing of clothing and general merchandise
  - Apparel retailing
  - General merchandise retailing

- Local personal services (non-medical)
  - Personal products retailing
• Child care services
• Hair care services
• Other personal services (especially in veterinary services)

• Local education and training
  • Job training services
  • Recreational and other services

• Local health services
  • Healthcare provider
  • Home and residential care
  • Medical laboratories
  • Hospitals

• Local real estate, construction and development
  • Real estate services
  • Building equipment distribution
  • Construction materials wholesaling
  • Highway and street construction
  • Specialty contractors
  • Construction materials retailing

• Local food and beverage processing and distribution
  • Tobacco retailing
  • Beer, wine and liquor retailing and wholesaling
  • Retail food services

RELATED SECTORS

In order to diversify the parish’s workforce, local officials and business owners should consider research and investment into these clusters that are related to the parish’s “specialized” clusters. For Terrebonne Parish, many of the related clusters are in industrial sectors once prominent in the area and where the workforce for “oil and gas” and “business services” might still be in place:

Specialized Clusters

• Water transportation
• Construction
• Downstream metals
• Fishing
• Distribution and e-commerce
• Metalworking
• Oil and gas

Related Clusters

• Insurance
• Financial services
• Business services
• Information technology
• Lighting
• Medical devices
• Recreational goods
• Nonmetal mining
• Upstream metals
• Food processing
• Electric power
• Vulcanized materials
• Plastics
• Jewelry
• Production technology
• Automotive
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging Traded Clusters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster</td>
<td>Assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and Gas Production</td>
<td>Lafourche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Transportation</td>
<td>St. Charles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St. James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing and</td>
<td>St. John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>St. Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution and E-commerce</td>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
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<td>Hospitality and Tourism</td>
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<td>Education and Knowledge</td>
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<td>Creation</td>
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<td>Transportation and</td>
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<td>Logistics</td>
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## Emerging Local Clusters

<table>
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<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Lafourche</th>
<th>St. Charles</th>
<th>St. James</th>
<th>St. John</th>
<th>St. Mary</th>
<th>Terrebonne</th>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Beverage Processing and Distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle Products and Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real Estate, Construction and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and Civic Organizations</td>
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<td>Retailing of Clothing and General Merchandise</td>
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<td>Transportation Services (freight)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality Establishments</td>
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ECONOMIC CLUSTER TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on trade training for emerging clusters (sales, welding, auto mechanics, computer services);
- Examining job growth in clusters related to parishes’ specialized clusters;
- Develop program to assist local businesses with e-commerce and distribution;
- Jobs are growing in local transportation, likely due to the emergence of Uber and other similar related services. Develop programs to help people interested in the growing “gig economy”;
- Recreational facility and instructional jobs are on the rise. Parishes should develop comprehensive parks and recreational plans. These plans should identify passive and active spaces and compare those to the recommended amount required for their population, according to industry standards (e.g. Urban Land Institute)
- The regional economy is still transitioning toward a service economy. Child care, hair care and other personal service jobs are expected to be on the rise. This is an opportunity for small business development. Parishes and regional workforce development agencies should focus on related-trade education and entrepreneurial training.
- Financial services and “deposit-taking institutions” jobs are expected to rise. Working with banks on the skills needed for their future workforce is advised.
- Insurance, real estate jobs and other similar occupations will require people to obtain licenses. Parishes and workforce development agencies should recognize growth clusters where licenses are required and focus on making required classes available, and potentially subsidized.
- Jobs in the automotive, motorcycle and boat sales industry is expected to rise. Training salespersons could be vital to improve growth in this emerging markets.
- Across the board, from food stores to hardware stores, retail service clusters are expected to rise. This may not be in traditional brick-and-mortar fashion;
- Seafood and food culture has made the Bayou-River region a place with unique food and food products. E-commerce has made the opportunity to get those unique products available to a much larger market. Farms, food manufacturers and retail establishments have an opportunity to take advantage of new technologies and shipping from the region.
- Many emerging clusters were deeply affected by COVID-19. Stakeholders should begin rethinking how to get those industries on track as we begin to emerge from legal restrictions and closures.
- Parishes should consider partnering more with local civic, business and religious organizations, as this sector shows growth across all parishes.
- Growth in some emerging clusters is incremental. It may be important to find existing businesses within the parish already offering these services and see what could be needed to encourage existing business growth and hiring.
- Parishes should locate warehousing areas for storage and for leasing equipment to help promote predicted growth in these sectors.
- With an aging population in the region, there is an expected need for workers in hospitals and home healthcare facilities.
- Focus on minority-based community engagement and the development of minority-based programs.
- Work with workforce development professionals for developing Spanish-language programs for employees and employers.
Economic clusters in the region are disproportionately local-based, meaning the economy in the region has a weak relationship with the larger economy. That relationship is also mostly oil and gas based, which has been a declining sector both regionally and globally. This trend suggests that the region’s economic relationship with the larger economy is weakening over time.

However, this trend does not have to continue. Louisiana is the economic gateway to the rest of the United States and the last trade point from the U.S. to the global economy. The region has an opportunity to be more than just a storage area for goods coming and going. The CEDS plan will need to partially focus on how to use the location of the region and its ports of entry to increase traded economic sectors.

FACTORS DIRECTLY AFFECTING ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

WORKFORCE ISSUES

Based on the statistics from the American Community Survey, the region’s workforce lags behind in education at nearly all levels. Though, it shows people with education in trades and in Associate Degree level programs are strong. There are several community colleges and trade programs in the regions, as well as Nicholls State University providing many four-year programs.

Unemployment is also high, coming off of record low unemployment numbers before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment rates have decreased as the State has reopened and are expected to continue to decline. However, the prolonged pandemic restrictions for more than a year have led some long-term unemployed to fall off of the employment rolls. Long-term unemployed people create a major problem because it appears employment is improving, when this group of unemployed people are in major need of income or (re)training.

Moreover, the regional economy is not very well diversified. Most of the jobs in the region were based in the oil and gas industry or in support of that industry. Diversifying the regional economy is one of the most recognized needs by our stakeholders. Workforce development and economic development professionals need to work together to provide programs focused on emerging and related clusters.

INNOVATION ASSETS

Louisiana Economic Development (LED) is the driving force in the state for workforce training, business attraction and retention, and marketing new innovations. LED in their EQ newsletter from 2018 discusses how private firms created new methods for pasteurizing oysters and developing remotely-operated vehicles for underwater oil and gas exploration. LED will continue to try to help new private industries come to Louisiana and keep existing industries that will continue to adapt and innovate to stay relevant in a global business climate.
Educational research is occurring at the Louisiana University’s Marine Consortium (LUMCON) on a variety of matters with the goal of “delivering tangible outcomes and products”. The Marine Synthesis Center is taking the lead in identifying scientific questions and solving problems under practical means. Other research is occurring throughout the Louisiana University System, but mostly outside of the SCPDC region. However, innovations are being made to help the economic vitality and resiliency of the region.

SCPDC is currently working on projects with LUMCON and other universities to help fund projects that encourage the development of additional innovative assets.

**INDUSTRY SUPPLY CHAINS**

As mentioned in the transportation section above, the SCPDC region is the entry and exit way for the largest economic supply chain in the world. Inclement weather and other economic shocks in our region disproportionately disrupts the global supply chain. Traded economic clusters makeup up about 1/3 of the region’s economy, but houses a much larger state, national and international share. A real opportunity exists to harness the region’s strategic strength in the global supply chain and increase its traded economic share.

**STATE AND LOCAL LAWS**

LED stated that Louisiana is a top ten state for “business environment”. This is due to the state having less regulations on businesses. More so in the SCPDC region, many communities do not have zoning codes and allow for unfettered development, in theory. Most issues hampering the region’s economic growth do not come from unnecessary laws and red tape, but from “quality of life” issues and high business taxes.

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

An analysis by WalletHub finds that Louisiana is a state with low GDP and real estate property taxes, but is the 12th most dependent on federal assistance. SCPDC and its stakeholders are dependent on outside financial resources. This CEDS plans will attempt to review how efficient those resources are expended in the region and the success of programs utilizing those funds.
**ENERGY COSTS**

Per the graph below, energy costs are below average in Louisiana in comparison to the rest of the nation.

**Louisiana Price Differences from U.S. Average, Most Recent Monthly**

![Graph showing energy cost differences](source)

Source: Energy Information Administration, Petroleum Marketing Monthly; Natural Gas Monthly; Electric Power Monthly

**BUSINESS, PERSONAL, AND PROPERTY TAXES**

Louisiana is a high business tax state and is known for having a difficult-to-navigate business tax system. Without reform at the state-level, the SCPDC region is held hostage by a tax system that is not favorable to business attraction and retention. Currently, Louisiana is ranked 44th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia for business tax climate.

Income tax on the other hand is a simple, flat rate, three-tiered system. Those taxes, however, are high compared to the rest of the nation. Louisiana is ranked number 32 in the nation for high personal income tax rates. The states near its ranking however have much higher quality of life rankings, indicating residents can see where their money is being spent.

Base sales tax for the state is low at 4.45%, with an additional 7% allowable for local consumption tax. This makes Louisiana the second highest sales tax state in the U.S. Consumption tax could be a problem at this high rate if the state makes a turn toward e-commerce. The local average is an additional 5.07% in the state, which is reflective of the regional local tax range between 8.75% (St. Mary) and 9.95% (Terrebonne).
Property taxes are some of the lowest in the U.S., with Louisiana ranking third at 0.53% effective property tax rate. Combined with the 15th lowest median property value in the U.S., the average homeowner can expect to pay $840 a year in property tax. Affordable housing and low real estate are a positive point for growth in the region.

**BONDING CAPACITY**

Small businesses notoriously lack bonding capacity and find it difficult to be prime contractors on jobs requiring high insurance coverage. LED realized this barrier and created the Bonding Assistance Program for Small Contractors. The goal of the program was to provide some assistance to small businesses with low bonding capacity so they can participate in state construction projects. There is no information available on the usefulness or success of the program at this time.

Bonding in Louisiana is regulated by the Louisiana Department of Insurance (LDI).

**LAND USE PATTERNS**

Most of the region is rural and undeveloped. A good portion of the undeveloped area is made up of wetlands and other natural resources making it undevelopable. Throughout the region, there are small urbanized areas with small populations. Industrial sites, especially maritime industrial, are land uses across the region in a highly disproportionate amount due to its location near seaports.

Since comprehensive plans are not mandated by the state, many parishes and localities do not have them and the land-use maps are outdated. St. Charles Parish is in the process of updating its land-use map. For economic development purposes, SCPDC should work with the rest of the parishes in the region to update its land-use maps, including marking the location of vacant and underutilized parcels.

**ADDITIONAL FACTORS RELATING TO ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**

**HOUSING**

As stated earlier, housing in the SCPDC region is very affordable and is not generally an obstacle for economic development. Assumption Parish and St. Charles Parish are ranked number one and number six, respectively, for “best parishes to buy a home in Louisiana). St. James and Lafourche Parishes put four of the seven counties in the SCPDC region in the top 20 places to buy a home ranking.

The Louisiana Housing Corporation’s (LHC) 2019 Region 3 Housing Needs Assessment shows that the regional economy and housing market are disproportionately affected by national economic trends. This will need to be addressed in the CEDS Resiliency section to create a better steady-state response to external shocks.

The LHC shows that while housing is affordable, incomes are dropping. Moreover, in many places throughout the region, kitchen and plumbing facilities are inadequate. SCPDC provides code enforcement services for these matters and also assists communities with financing for sewer projects. SCPDC plans to continue to make this work a top priority throughout the region.
The following housing authorities in the region assist low-income families and the homeless with affordable rent and home buying opportunities, primarily through the HUD Section 8 program:

- Assumption Parish Housing and Community Development
- Lafourche Parish Housing Authority
- St. Charles Parish Housing Authority
- St. James Parish Housing Authority
- St. John the Baptist Parish Housing Authority
- Houma-Terrebonne Housing Authority
- Morgan City Housing Authority
- Berwick Housing Authority
- Patterson Housing Authority
- Thibodaux Housing and Community Development

In cases where partnership through the LCDBG program, or other programs is sensible, SCPDC should work together with housing authorities to maintain house affordability and quantity.

HEALTH SERVICES

Health services and education in health-related jobs are plentiful throughout the region. Community and preventative health units in the region can be found here. Several hospitals are scattered throughout the region and larger hospitals with more resources and capacity are within an hour drive to New Orleans, Baton Rouge or Lafayette.

However, COVID-19 has shined a light on some of the health system’s shortcomings. Distribution and inoculation of the vaccine continues to be slow in the region as of the writing of this document.

Several members of the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) took part in the stakeholder participation process and SWOT analyses. This plan also took into consideration LDH’s Rural Health Plan and SCPDC will assist with regional projects to strengthen the rural health system.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Primary and secondary education curriculum and standards are governed by the Louisiana Department of Education. Individual school districts are operated by each parish. Overall, Louisiana has the second to last ranking for schools in the U.S. Pupils in Louisiana rank amongst the lowest in math and reading scores in the nation. Schools are also plagued with violence, threats, and bullying, where Louisiana ranks in the bottom five in all categories. School spending is in the middle of the pack (ranked 28th nationally), but the level of spending compared to the outcomes has mixed results.

While Louisiana’s primary and secondary educational systems are ailing, parish school districts in the SCPDC region are all ranked in the top half of the state. The exception is in Assumption Parish which is currently ranked number 36 out of 64 total parishes. These educational issues are a problem for the workforce being able to attain post-secondary education and it needs to be addressed holistically.
COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Fletcher Technical Community College and River Parishes Community College are the two community and technical colleges serving the SCPDC region. Those are both run by Louisiana’s Community and Technical Colleges (LCTCS). The number of people with post-secondary education in a two-year program or trade is above average in the seven parishes. This is likely due to the number of programs in skilled trades serving the oil and gas industry, and also those in medical and nursing fields.

Per our stakeholders, there is some criticism that community and technical colleges are slow to adopt program to meet the economic needs of the region. This is likely due to a lack of a comprehensive group evaluating these issues. The following are recommended to mend this issue:

- Create a private-public partnership to identify new economic clusters to diversify the economy. The partnerships should consist of local economic development agencies, workforce specialists and educators;
- Reach out to potential job makers to identify their workforce needs;
- Develop academic programs to meet future needs of potential investors;

LCTCS does reach out to both employers and students through their Workforce Solutions program and the Workready U adult education program. The Workforce Solutions program should be strengthened to be more proactive and local employers should be encouraged to reach out to be an LCTCS strategic partner.

FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Nicholls State University, located in the City of Thibodaux, is the only four-year university in the region. The university offers 25 undergraduate programs, five Master degree programs and two graduate certificate programs. Nicholls is very engaged with workforce community needs and is adding programs and curriculum to meet the region’s needs.

Also housed at Nicholls State is a division of the Louisiana Small Business Development Center. The LSBDC helps entrepreneurs and businesses with technical needs and strategies for starting and growing businesses.

The Bayou Region Incubator (BRI) is a new project that will be housed at the university. BRI’s mission is to grow and support a diverse, sustainable, and inclusive economy in the Bayou Region through entrepreneurship and small business development of industries addressing Louisiana’s coastal crisis. BRI will provide technical assistance, financial advisory services, and material support to existing and aspiring entrepreneurs and small businesses, focusing on those operating within the Bayou Region of Lafourche, St. Mary, and Terrebonne Parish. As an additional area of emphasis, BRI will focus on developing businesses, techniques, and new technologies to assist the Bayou Region -- and coastal environments everywhere -- adapt to existing and future disaster and climate change-induced risks. SCPDC has started a partnership with BRI and EDA in the hopes of fostering success with the fledgling project.
RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Each of the SCPDC’s parishes and municipalities control parks and recreational facilities within their jurisdiction. Information about parks, recreation centers, and other facilities, can usually be found on the appropriate government’s website. Below is a map indicating all of the parks and recreational facilities in the region.

Outside of distinct parks sites and other recreational facilities, the area is abundant with waterways and open lands used for kayaking, fishing and hunting. During the SWOT analysis, stakeholders stated that much of the recreational sites and facilities are unknown to both residents and non-locals. Signage and accessibility to recreation sites, parks and facilities is important to improve quality of life in the region.

In the past, SCPDC has provided support in trailhead projects and in the development of a Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Plan. SCPDC is also working on environmental matters that ultimately will preserve and enhance existing recreational areas. The goal is to continue to provide access and support our communities in these matters.

TOURISM AND CULTURE

Tourism and culture are principally connected in that tourists are being actively marketed the unique culture of the region. The River Parishes Tourist Commission (RPTC) focuses on promoting tourism in St. John the Baptist, St. James, and St. Charles Parishes. In its 2030 Strategic Plan, RPTC is branding tourism...
into three broad categories: food-related tourism, plantation/history of slavery tourism, and outdoors/water-related tourism. These activities are strong tourism marketing brands, because the uniqueness to the region.

COVID-19 halted travel and restrictions have hurt the tourist industry. As 2021 reopens to tourists and travel, it will be important to be ready for tourists. This includes strengthening Main Street communities that have been hurt during the economic downturn and focus on developing locally-traded clusters. SCPDC will continue to assist its regional partners in tourism affairs and in providing loans to small businesses to help entrepreneurs grow.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Each jurisdiction has its own police force, and in situations where a municipality does not have its own force, the parish sheriffs assist in public safety matters. Louisiana was considered the most dangerous U.S. state in 2020 for both violent crimes and property crimes. However, the crimes Louisiana residents are most fearful of happening to them are not realistically the crimes that are actually happening.

Within the region, only Thibodaux has a positive crime index, suggesting other localities in the SCPDC region have higher crime rates than the state average. However, for most jurisdictions, those crime rates are low and communities are mostly safe.

SCPDC has a strong traffic safety, education and outreach program in its South Central Regional Safety Coalition (SCRSC). SCPDC works with local law enforcement offices throughout the region to develop safety education programs “geared toward saving lives and reducing serious injury”. The SCRSC 2020 Education and Outreach plan details its traffic safety initiatives and successes.

It is well understood that improving the economic conditions of the community will help decrease crime rates. SCPDC will continue to help workforce development, entrepreneurship and job creation in our region. SCRSC will also continue to work with its local, regional and state partners to increase traffic safety.
INTEGRATION WITH OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANS

Most of the statistics and analysis performed in this plan are directly linked to the source. Ample plans and information were reviewed in making this plan. The list below is not all-inclusive, but represents many of the documents reviewed in making this plan. The goals, objectives, data and other information from the plans listed below have been incorporated in the SCPDC 2022-2027 CEDS.

- Delta Regional Authority Regional Development Plans III and IV
- Louisiana Economic Development Performance Reports
- River Parishes Tourist Commission 2030 Strategic Plan
- Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization Plans and Studies
- Terrebonne Economic Development Authority 2017 Strategic Plan
- South Louisiana Economic Council 2017-2019 Strategic Plan
- Lafourche Parish 2014 Comprehensive Resiliency Plan
- Assumption Parish 2008 Comprehensive Plan
- St. James Parish 2014 Comprehensive Plan
- St. John the Baptist Parish 2014 Comprehensive Resiliency Plan
- Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program 2019 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan
- Louisiana Watershed Initiative Resources Library
- SCPDC Regional Economic Development Resiliency Management Plan
- Louisiana Housing Corporation State Plans
- Louisiana Housing Corporation 2019 Housing Needs Assessment – Region 3
- Louisiana Department of Health Rural Health Plan 2011-2015
- An Economic Development Strategy for Louisiana’s Coastal Seafood Industry
SWOT ANALYSIS
MAKING REGIONAL PARTICIPATION LOCAL INCLUSION

Though our region has a lot of similarities, there are also a lot of differences between localities. The makeup of our communities, the mix of industries, educational facilities, and other issues that affect our daily lives have specific local traits that need to be addressed. For this SWOT exercise, SCPDC brought together a group of stakeholders in government, healthcare, education, workforce development and industry to discuss the question: where are we now?

While this is important in creating our strategic direction, ultimately an implementation plan is needed. The ideas in the SWOT analysis need a local strategy developed by the people in the place where they reside. SCPDC and local communities must make a strong effort to reach out to underrepresented populations. Involving as many people as possible in the implementation process is important for the CEDS to be successful and equitable in its economic development strategy.

SCPDC will engage Southern University and A&M College as a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), which is a partner with EDA. Though the university is outside of our region and not engaged in the SWOT analysis, we believe the university may have insights into how to improve workforce training and economic diversity.

WHAT IS IN A SWOT?

SWOT simply stands for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths”. While similarities due to geography make us a region, it will take joining the diverse strengths of the region that will make the SCPDC region economically successful. Stakeholders were engaged throughout the seven parish region about the SWOTs in common, but also about those unique issues that need to improve and how individual strengths can better the entire group.

EDA also asks local development districts to dig deeper into its SWOTs and examine issues that are important to everyone’s economic development. Here is a suggested list provided by EDA:

- State of the regional economy
- Regional clusters
- External trends and forces
- Workforce considerations
- Institutions of higher education
- Spatial efficiencies/sustainability
- Broadband needs
- Energy needs
- Natural hazards
- Equitable development
- Partners for economic development
- Resources for economic development

In order to best address all of these issues, SCPDC contacted University of Louisiana-Lafayette (ULL) Moody College of Business Administration to assist with developing the structure and ultimately facilitating the SWOT analysis. Below is further discussion of the SWOT structure and overall citizen participation process.
PRE-SWOT PARTICPATION PROCESS

Dr. Geoffrey Stewart with ULL had previously performed the SWOT analysis and other work with colleagues in the Acadiana LDD region. SCPDC modified a questionnaire ULL already developed for their previous project to better fit our region. This was sent to stakeholder group and other partners. The goal was to see what representatives of the region felt were strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

ULL and SCPDC reviewed the responses and pinpointed subjects that needed to better flesh out during the SWOT analysis. SCPDC also prepopulated our SWOT analysis with items identified to be regional SWOTs.

The results of the survey were shared in advance of the SWOT analysis and will remain available for review on the SCPDC’s CEDS webpage.

SWOT

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual SWOT analysis was held utilizing online, interactive SWOT software. The entire SWOT can be viewed on the CEDS webpage. A list of all of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are also on the webpage.

POST-SWOT PARTICIPATION PROCESS

After the virtual SWOT analysis was posted online, stakeholders who were unable to take part 30-days to provide additional comments, analysis or to ask questions. The SWOT stakeholder group was encouraged to engage the community and to provide comments for this process. All applicable comments are also available on the CEDS webpage.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The SWOT analysis was an impressive wide-ranging discussion about the areas major strengths and the room we have to make improvements. The stakeholders were very optimistic and believe the region has the opportunity to grow and become stronger. While there were many issues discussed, the four main areas of discussion were: culture; education, innovation, and entrepreneurship; infrastructure and workforce development. The full SWOT discussion can be found on the SCPDC webpage as well as the results.

Below we look at the main SWOT issues in the four target areas. These will be used to create and adapt SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound. These will be discussed later in the Strategic Direction/Action Plan and Evaluation Framework chapters.
CULTURE

STRENGTHS

- Friendly people
- Food and music
- Life is enjoyable

WEAKNESSES

- Lacking a cultural center showcasing the region
- Quality of Life issues
- Recreational opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Opportunities to create a regional brand
- Translate culture into Quality of Life improvements to attract employers and workers
- Develop a cultural center to help create jobs and advertise the uniqueness and qualities of the region

THREATS

- Young people leaving, threatening persistence of culture
- Not putting together a cohesive regional brand before missing out on potential opportunities
**STRENGTHS**

- LUMCON and the establishment of the LUMCON Maritime campus with Fletcher Community College
- RPCC and Fletcher adding programs like Cloud Computing to help meet regional needs
- Strength of Nicholls State as more than a university, but a jobs creator
- New incubator program opening at Nicholls State

**WEAKNESSES**

- Start-ups have difficulties accessing capital
- The K-12 education system does not prepare students well for workforce needs
- Although there is innovation in traditional economic clusters, this is not translating into entrepreneurship

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- Opportunity to partner with businesses to help with recruiting needs
- Investment in Coastal-related initiatives
- Seek out emerging economic clusters (e.g. unmanned vehicles, e-commerce)
- Seek new technologies to help agriculture and aquaculture needs (precision agriculture)

**THREATS**

- Lack of communication and collaboration between employers and educators
- Bringing innovators to the region when work is becoming more remote
- Inability to leverage tech and engineering capabilities of the region
INFRASTRUCTURE

STRENGTHS

- Broadband is widely available throughout the region
- One of the best port systems in the world
- Transportation network (I-90, I-10) nearby seaports and airports

WEAKNESSES

- Mostly dependent on outside funding for improvements
- Aging water and sewer infrastructure
- Poor road conditions
- Lack of bike and pedestrian infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES

- New programs from the government available to help infrastructure needs (CARES Act, American Rescue Plan)
- Strength of the H-TMPO for regional transportation issues
- Development of regional bike and pedestrian plan

THREATS

- Environmental issues making infrastructure issues difficult
- Lack of regional cooperation to build innovative infrastructure (seafood industry delivery, e-commerce needs)
- Natural disasters and other economic shocks bringing work to a halt
STRENGTHS

- Employment opportunities are available in the region
- Workforce has a strong work ethic
- Agencies and educators are ready and willing to make the necessary changes to develop the workforce for current and future needs

WEAKNESSES

- Workforce lacks a diversity of skills to promote emerging sector businesses to the region
- Well-paid jobs in construction and other fields are being filled by out-of-state workers and companies
- Need to train more than basic skills, but management and supervisory capabilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Hospitality programs are becoming more and more available
- Willingness of educators to create curriculum to help keep talent in the region
- Workforce is generally willing to be reskilled or upskilled

THREATS

- Prime contractors not looking for workers in the region
- Difficult to find out-of-state recruiting resources
- Workforce skills not seen as being compatible with other industries
COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

Across all topics discussed during the SWOT analysis, collaboration and outreach tended to be areas of weakness. The region has a lot of strengths in specific areas that other sectors are not aware about. Also, a lot of issues came up that SCPDC was unaware of, especially in the areas of healthcare and education. Outreach needs to be better to let stakeholders know of opportunities available and when there are opportunities for collaboration in the region. These issues will be discussed throughout the Strategic Direction/Action Plan section.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGY AREAS

The full SWOT analysis also contained themes in healthcare, regional branding, unique location of our region, public services, recreation, and resiliency capabilities. These were recognized in the four main SWOT themes discussed above and will further be discussed in the Strategic Direction, Action Plan section.

TRANSLATING STRONG CULTURE INTO QUALITY OF LIFE

In both the survey and the SWOT analysis, “culture” is considered to be the strongest attribute of the region. The people, food, music, atmosphere, and recreational opportunities make the region a great place to live for people who grew up here. However, the SWOT group noted a problem with branding the region better so those cultural items we see as being strengths are reasons for businesses to consider coming to this region. Branding and promotion will be a theme throughout the CEDS action plan section.

WHAT MAKES US RESILIENT?

Resiliency as defined by the SWOT group seems more to be about an individual being able to make ends meet when an economic shock occurs. In this sense, resiliency looks more like individual survival. Resiliency as defined by CEDS is the ability to “bounce forward”.

Moreover, shocks and resiliency were discussed mostly in terms of hurricanes. COVID-19, and the oil and gas industry shrinkage in the region, were not anticipated well. Many areas have depleted main streets and downtowns.

Now is the opportunity to build back stronger.
RESILIENCY AND SURVIVAL

As discussions with people in the region, they describe themselves as being “resilient”—and with justification and pride. Throughout history, many people were brought to the region against their wills and found a way to survive living off of the land. Without warning, tropical storms would devastate sugarcane fields, erode precious fishing areas, and ruin homes. The people of this region again and again picked themselves up by their bootstraps and found a way to carry on.

Until the 1920s, this region was mostly closed off to the world until its plentiful fossil fuel resources were discovered. What some sardonically consider “Cajun ingenuity” as a backwards way of rigging things to work are actually innovations that continue to be in place throughout the major industries here—constructive innovations, but not something that can be measured by the quality of regional research facilities or the number of patents awarded.

Fossil fuels were the way of life here until the 1980s when globalization drove down prices. Whenever world supplies are too high, consumers win with lower gas prices but workers in the industry are hurt. The oil reserves remaining in the area are no longer economically worth extracting for companies. Fossil fuel corporations adapted by utilizing the region’s refining capabilities, ports and storage infrastructure to keep things going. In some ways, it worked to keep people employed and to maintain the oil and gas industry as the economic mainstay for the region.

However, the problem now is more than just an issue of over supply—demand for fossil fuels is decreasing around the world. Renewable energy is becoming more affordable and in higher demand. Moreover, the shock of COVID-19 was both social and economic; planes stopped flying and people stopped driving as we all stayed home to stay safe. Refining companies are working to convert facilities to chemical processing and adding renewable energy to their production portfolios, but the pandemic unexpectedly hit too hard. In 2020, the Royal Shell refinery in Convent, St. James Parish, was shuttered causing the loss of 1,100 jobs. To put this into perspective, the loss in jobs at the refinery is equal to 9.2% of the Parish’s civilian labor force.

There is no doubt that the people of St. James will adapt. There is no doubt those who lost their jobs will survive. Many businesses supporting the refinery might be able to hang in there until better times swing back around—we always find a way to survive. Yet, its time to face the fact that the region is not very resilient. The region simply was not ready for this type of economic shock. Severance pay ran out for terminated workers at the Convent refinery in February 2021 and the region is still struggling to find funds to help re-train or place those workers in another industry.

It is important to make this distinction between survival and resiliency. Resiliency is the ability not to just bounce back, but to bounce forward to a better place after an economic shock. After every shock, the region should come back better. This begins with building a resiliency structure that addresses immediate, midterm, and long-term issues. SCPDC’s resiliency system should look at how it absorbs economic shocks before they happen, once shocks occur and how to be stronger once it’s through. SCPDC must help build the foundation for steady-state and responsive resiliency initiatives. Lastly, it is time to figure out how to diversify the economy. The region has to invest in keeping the long-time fossil fuel partners, but also must adapt to an ever-changing economic landscape by thinking ahead.
COMPREHENSIVE GAME PLAN FOR A MORE RESILIENT LOUISIANA

In November 2020, Louisiana released its Comprehensive Game Plan for a More Resilient Louisiana (appendix with detailed initiatives).

The plan states five foundational elements for making the State more resilient. These five items were also discussed deeply during the SWOT analysis:

- Building resiliency, not just recovery
- Economic diversification
- Public input
- Equity
- Leveraging our sources of strength

This section will review these themes and integrate them as regional goals for building resiliency.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Louisiana Economic Development put together the Rural Development Task Force (RDTF) to address a variety of issues affecting rural areas. Unfortunately, it appears no one from the SCPDC region was a representative of this group. However, many of the issues researched and discussed by the task force are affecting our rural region. White papers are available on the RDTF webpage discussing issues with broadband, economic development, K-12 education, post-secondary education, healthcare, and rural resiliency.

Capacity building, outreach, and funding to rural regions for projects are the major subjects discussed throughout these white papers. This CEDS will incorporate the white paper goals and themes, when applicable.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESILIENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2020, SCPDC worked with economic development professionals in the seven-parish region to develop the Regional Economic Development Resiliency Management plan (REDRM). The main goal of the plan is to develop economic initiatives that help businesses prepare and recover after economic shocks.

REDRM recognizes that the region is vulnerable to natural disasters, cyber security attacks, and health crises (similar to the existing COVID-19 pandemic). For natural disasters, the REDRM suggests business owners communicate with the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center (LABEOC). LABEOC helps businesses develop hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness plans, as well as provides resources for emergency-related events.

The REDRM Steering Committee also developed a SWOT analysis looking at communication issues, re-entry of businesses after an economic shock, and quality of life elements. While the region has experience and a lot of strengths in returning to work after natural disasters, there were several areas that were identified as areas that need improvements. These include:

- Poor connectivity of road ways
- Lack of outreach programs
• Lack of communication networks (broadband)
• Few businesses with hazard mitigation plans
• Regional geography makes the area to flooding, thus delaying reentry
• Poor public transportation services
• Lack of economic diversity
• Better employment opportunities driving people to move out of the region

These structural “weaknesses” will be addressed in this CEDS Strategic Action Plan section, as many of the issues discussed are universal and are affecting overall economic development efforts in the region.

Additional information on available resources for businesses to become resilient can be found on the SCPDC resiliency webpage and a sample “business resiliency plan” is available for businesses to consider. This information however has to get into the community through better local outreach.

**STeady-state Resilience Initiatives**

Steady-state initiatives are defined as, “long-term efforts” that seek to bolster the region’s ability to withstand or avoid a shock. These initiative should create capabilities for SCPDC and its partners to be responsive to the region’s recovery needs following an incident. No one is able to predict the type of shock or the impact. In this sense, steady-state initiatives should help in withstanding all types of economic shocks, regardless if those include job closures, industry decline, natural disasters or pandemics.

SCPDC should incorporate the following items into their action plan:

• Comprehensive planning efforts that implement a collective vision for resilience and integrate that vision with hazard mitigation plans, economic development initiatives and available funding sources;
• Targeting emerging clusters and diversifying the economy away from oil and gas, and hospitality;
• However, knowing the importance of oil and gas, and hospitality sectors, to the region, work closely with them to see where they have problems are and how we can work regionally to prevent future job losses;
• Building a resilient workforce that is able to switch between industries when an economic shock occurs;
• Develop a regional GIS system that identifies available development sites, prepared for easy post-disaster impact assessments;
• Integrate SCPDC GIS and SCPDC MyGovernmentOnline and MyPermitOnline systems to make public business licenses, tax information and other important business data;
• Expand networks and create redundancy in telecommunications and broadband capabilities;
• Outreach to the business community with the REDRM plan, especially concerning supply chains;
• Strengthen environmental issues by locating available buildings outside of floodplains, and preserving natural lands that help soften the blow of natural disasters.

All of these steady-state initiatives will be added into our Strategic Vision and SMART goals to help with mid- to long-term planning initiatives.
RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES

Response initiatives involve those items that help the region prepare for an economic shock and recover after the shock occurs. Recovery should involve a plan to get back to the steady-state, but also analyze how the region can recover at a stronger economic place – the definition of resiliency. These initiatives should include the following:

- Pre-disaster recovery planning, like the REDRM plan, to define key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and key actions;
- Establishing a process for communication and monitoring with business post-disaster;
- Create outreach and communication capabilities to contact key officials and communicate business need and impact assessment efforts;
- Establish a leadership succession plan for recovery needs.

RESILIENCY VULNERABILITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The most common themes with becoming more resilient are the following:

- The region lacks preparedness, and hence the ability to absorb economic shocks;
- The region does not have a diversified economy and does not have good plans for absorbing losses in major industries;
- Outreach and collaboration do not occur in a way to strengthen the region before shocks or to build back better after shocks occur;
- Systems are not adequate or not in place so information is available when the area suffers an outage (structure and redundancy of networks);
- Well-prepared for hurricanes, both pre- and post-disaster, but not for economic-related shocks;
- Resiliency is not part of educational curriculum.

These items will be addressed throughout the Strategic Direction/Action Plan section.

CONCLUSIONS ON RESILIENCY

The SCPDC region has suffered many setbacks through different storms over the years and the loss of jobs in the oil and gas industry. The workforce in the region is strong and capable of reinventing itself, time after time. However, continued oil and gas sector losses and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the region’s lack of preparedness to avoid shocks. Systems simply were not in place due to a lack of collaboration and outreach.

While the SWOT analysis brought together a solid representation of stakeholders in our region, doing this once every five years is not adequate. While the Strategic Direction/Action Plan will address resiliency issues throughout, a major focus will be on preparedness. This is important as we need to be able to absorb shocks in the near future in order to be able to build back stronger in the future. Any major shocks in the near future without more preparedness creates an opportunity to derail long-term strategies. The near-term goals of this CEDS concerning resiliency will be to put the systems in place to help absorb and prevent shocks.
SYNCHRONIZING WITH OTHER PLANS AND RESOURCES

The following webinars and materials were reviewed as part of drafting of this section:


**Restore Your Economy** – Economic Development Professional Role.

**Building Resilient Regions**. Equity Research Institute – University of Southern California Dornsife.


INTRODUCTION

This next section introduces SMART goals for accomplishing implementation of this plan. As this is a Strategic Direction and an Action Plan, there are broader themes and more specific goals for implementing those broad themes. The actions in the Action plan will be measurable and will be discussed in the Evaluation Framework chapter.

**Specific** – all goals and action items will be specific. They are categorized by subject and provide specific actions to accomplish the goals.

**Measurable** – the Evaluation Framework chapter will provide baseline data, data sources and specifics on how to measure whether a goal is being obtained.

**Achievable** – the goals are not too lofty, and while broad, they can be attained through efforts and leadership of SCPDC.

**Realistic** – the goals and actions will be initiatives that can be started upon adoption of the CEDS plan.

**Timely** – the goals are broken into three time ranges: 1-2 years (Recovery); 2 – 4 years (Resiliency); 3 – 5 years (Building Back Stronger). The objective is to create preparedness now, while working on the systems needed to prevent or absorb shocks and then use those systems to make improvements on the region.
VISION STATEMENT

SCPDC looks to assist the partners and stakeholders in our region over the five-year horizon of this plan through:

1. Assisting with RECOVERY efforts from degrading infrastructure, preparing for new economic initiatives, and coordinating outreach and collaboration (results beginning in YEAR 1);
2. Creating RESILIENCY through working together as a region to absorb economic shocks, quickly returning to normal, assessing shortcomings during the shock and implementing changes for the future (results beginning in YEARS 2-4);
3. BUILDING BACK STRONGER so we are in a better place each and every time an economic shock occurs (results beginning in YEARS 3-5).

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Improve Outreach and Collaboration Efforts
   1.1. Develop sector-based committees to discuss workplace needs and innovation
   1.2. Work with communities to make them more aware of grant and other funding opportunities
   1.3. Provide technical assistance to communities who are lacking capacity
   1.4. Develop web-based information outlets available to the public
   1.5. Create a system of local implementation of the CEDS into local communities
   1.6. Create working relationships with HBCUs, the Chitimaca Tribe and other minority groups to ensure proper representation of our region and use of SCPDC resources
   1.7. Develop a broader audience for SCPDC newsletter and other outreach materials
   1.8. Look to strengthen non-English language efforts through building foreign language coalitions

2. Infrastructure
   2.1. Use infrastructure grants in the short-term to help in local recovery efforts
   2.2. Develop and integrate studies to determine problem areas in the region and to plan for future support
   2.3. Plan projects to improve the infrastructure to help attract new businesses
   2.4. Completing the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan and helping to implement that plan’s strategies
   2.5. Develop private-public partnerships to understand the infrastructure needs for businesses
   2.6. Continue working on drainage and flood prevention efforts
   2.7. Create a committee and start working toward a big project (cultural center, seafood distribution center, farmer’s market, recycling center, etc.)
   2.8. Develop better transit options for the region
       2.8.1. Consider merging Good Earth and Regional Transit
       2.8.2. Work on developing an Electrical Vehicle network in the area
       2.8.3. Seek faster and reliable options out of the region to New Orleans and Baton Rouge
   2.9. Build infrastructure, and redundancy where possible, to help attract new business and promote existing business expansion
2.10. Utilize existing port infrastructure and adapt it where necessary to meet economic diversification needs

3. Regional Culture and Quality of Life
3.1. Develop private-partnerships to see why businesses are interested or disinterested in moving to the region
3.2. Work with local leaders in translating the regions strong cultural attributes to quality of life improvements
3.3. Make recreational facilities in the region more accessible
3.4. Rebrand and market the region’s strengths and future

4. Planning
4.1. Make an effort to review land-use maps for all jurisdictions
   4.1.1. Develop a regional land use map
      4.1.1.1. Create land use maps for jurisdictions that do not have an adopted map
      4.1.1.2. Update maps ten years or more older
   4.1.2. Create list of emerging local and traded clusters, and jobs in the “new economy”
   4.1.3. Review land-uses and zoning codes (where applicable) to see if uses are allowed and where they are compatible
4.2. Use local comprehensive or economic development plans to integrate the CEDS into local communities
   4.2.1. Offer assistance with local staff with this process
   4.2.2. Emphasize efforts to adapt the CEDS plan into the community through community outreach
   4.2.3. Work with local community leaders to target outreach efforts in underrepresented communities
4.3. Seek funds for renewing comprehensive plans, economic development plans, hazard mitigation plans and other planning efforts

5. Workforce Improvement and Economic Diversification
5.1. Provide the economic cluster analysis in this plan to partners so they see future trends for businesses in their jurisdiction
   5.1.1. Localities should also examine in what ways clusters are related and any gaps the workforce may have
   5.1.2. Examine what specialized clusters and how to improve local businesses in those clusters
5.2. Develop a private-public partnership to discuss business needs and workforce gaps
5.3. Develop plan to attract emerging sector businesses to the region
   5.3.1. Promote educational programs to train and re-skill workers for new jobs
   5.3.2. Market this information to attract new businesses and entrepreneurship
5.4. Establish stronger entrepreneurship programs

6. Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship
6.1. Create a committee of educators from the region
   6.1.1. Discuss workforce weaknesses and the potential for new programs
   6.1.2. Examine difficulties in the educational system and how to improve them
6.1.3. Meet periodically with other committees developed in this plan to help coordinate mutual goals

6.2. Push entrepreneurship programs
   6.2.1. Develop better marketing and outreach programs for SCPDC loan programs
   6.2.2. Create a loan orientation with local small business development centers and incubators that includes information on REDRM plan and CEDS goals

6.3. Create an innovations committee
   6.3.1. Determine what innovations are occurring in which sectors
   6.3.2. Develop a plan for promoting innovative thinking and innovative productions
   6.3.3. Determine where or develop a program to help with intellectual property issues (patents, copywriting, etc.)
ACTION PLAN AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Action

Be proactive in getting partners and stakeholders to seek out grant opportunities for failing infrastructure.

Evaluation

Amount of grant monies awarded for infrastructure in our region:

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<tr>
<th>Baseline 2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
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Number of partners contacted concerning grant opportunities annually (outreach):

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<th>Baseline 2020</th>
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Number of businesses contacted concerning loan opportunities annually (outreach):

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<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
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Number of partners who received technical assistance for grants:

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Action

Develop a system for better outreach and developing collaboration with partners. Work with SCPDC planning department to determine best ways to contact partners and stakeholders, who should be contacting which partners and stakeholders, when and how often outreach should occur, and who will maintain and update the contact list.

Evaluation

Develop formal procedures by the end of 2021.
**Action**

Develop a web-based map system that is available to the public that minimally provides the following:

- Real-time updates of building permits, licenses and other items showing business activity using GIS and MyGovernmentNow online software
- Location of sites where SCPDC has performed work with narrative explaining the project
- Available commercial sites for businesses, new development or redevelopment
- Other locational information as decided by committee

**Evaluation:**

Was a committee formed for this project? When? (January 2022 deadline)

Who will update and add information to the site? (March 2022 deadline)

Complete project and send to partners by June 2022.

**Action:**

Develop subject matter committees in the following areas to implement resiliency and building back stronger goals for future years (plan for each group to meet monthly, and then as one large group quarterly):

- Healthcare
- Workforce Development and Economic Diversification
- Education
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Infrastructure
- Culture and Quality of Life
- Seafood and Fishing Community

**Evaluation:**

Form all committees by end of year 2021.

Develop white papers on all subjects by end of year 2022.
Action

Increase the capacity of SCPDC to provide its services to its partners.

Evaluation

Resubmit an EDA grant for expansion of the SCPDC building. (Was it awarded? When will it be completed? How many new jobs did it create?)

Look to expand planning department staff to meet new outreach and technical needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Planning Department Employees</th>
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<th>Number of Information Technology Department Employees</th>
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<tr>
<th>Number of Places Utilizing SCPDC Software</th>
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<td>Baseline 2020</td>
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Action

Develop a local implementation plan for CEDS. Provide funding and technical assistance for local planning and economic development efforts.

Evaluation:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Communities who Updated Land Use Plans to Include CEDS Information</th>
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<td>Baseline 2020</td>
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<tr>
<th>Number of Communities who Updated Local Economic Development Plans to Include CEDS Information</th>
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<th>Funding Awarded to Provide Technical Assistance</th>
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<td>Baseline 2020</td>
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**Action**

Develop a program to make recreational sites noticeable and more accessible. Execute a survey locating all passive and active parks and recreational sites, and use widely-accepted standards to determine if parks serve the population.

Further look into how noticeable it is that a site exists.

**Evaluation**

Perform survey by July 2022.

Create map and perform analysis by end of year 2022.

Disseminate information to parishes and municipalities by March 2023.

Create promotional materials by the July 2023 and online recreational platform with pictures.

**Action**

Work with local partners to utilize incoming broadband funding. Funding should help expand broadband to rural areas and increase broadband speeds. Broadband networks also need a redundancy plan in case of outages. Funding or other methods should also be explored to decrease consumer costs for low-income consumers and new businesses.

Explore municipal-based WiFi networks to allow people and businesses to connect in Main Street areas.

**Evaluation**

Cost of broadband service/index to Median area income by Census-tract

Miles of new broadband service

Current speeds/change in speed from prior year

Amount of money spent annually on broadband programs

**Action**

Work with local transit authorities to increase efficiency of transit, in both cost (debt) and in routing. Consider express routes from stops at the end or routes directly to important places in the region (downtown Houma, Nicholls State/downtown Thibodaux and to transfer routes to New Orleans/Baton Rouge).

**Evaluation**

Plans to combine both authorities

Annual costs for each authority

Number of new routes

Development of transportation nodes for park and ride, transfers, EV vehicles, etc.
Action

Develop a foreign language outreach program. Determine which languages outreach information needs to be translated into. Also, determine the mode of communication (written, audio, visual).

Evaluation

Form committee by June 2022. Develop plan by end of 2022.

Action

Start a private-public partnership to develop a plan for a large regional project to create jobs (Cultural Center, Farmer's Market, Recycling Center, etc.)

Evaluation

Create committee to develop project idea by end of 2021.

Determine project by end of 2022.

Find funding to have A/E firm determine size and feasibility of project by June 2023.

Find potential site locations by end of 2023.

Determine best ways to purchase site/land, if necessary, by June 2024.

Begin seeking funding and fund project by June 2025.

Break ground in 2026.

Watershed

Action

Continue Louisiana Watershed Initiative efforts.

Evaluation

Continue monthly meetings and be involved with State legislation.

Work to increase annual award amounts coming to the region through LWI efforts.

Action

Develop a plan and install electrical vehicle charging networks.

Evaluation

Work with H-TMPO to create a subcommittee by June 2022.

Develop public-private partnership with automakers and local businesses by June 2022.

Determine locations and best practices by June 2023

Seek and secure funding by June 2024

Install infrastructure by end of 2025
# of new EV charging stations installed by year

**Action**

Push to expand innovation and take advantage of local emerging business clusters.

# of new Businesses/Entrepreneurs

Status of Nicholls incubator program

# and amount of loans for new businesses and business expansion

**Action**

Develop a committee to work on rebranding the region. Look to build on the region’s strengths to seek new businesses and residents to the region. Determine who will use this information (parishes, LED, SCPDC, etc.) Who is the audience and what are the goals?

**Evaluation**

Begin forming committee upon plan adoption.

**Action**

Create new programs in K-12, Community College, four-year and certificate level that adapt to workforce needs

**Evaluation**

# of new K-12 programs by parish

# of new community college programs

# of new Nicholls programs

### ADDITIONAL EVALUATION METRICS

Annual Median Household Income by Parish

Children in Poverty

Miles of Roads Repaired

Population Changes

Job Increases in Emerging Clusters (NAICS 3- and 4-Digit Data) by Parish, both local and traded clusters

ACS Adult Education Indicators?
CONCLUSION

TO BE ADDED IN FINAL DOCUMENT