

# 2025 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT



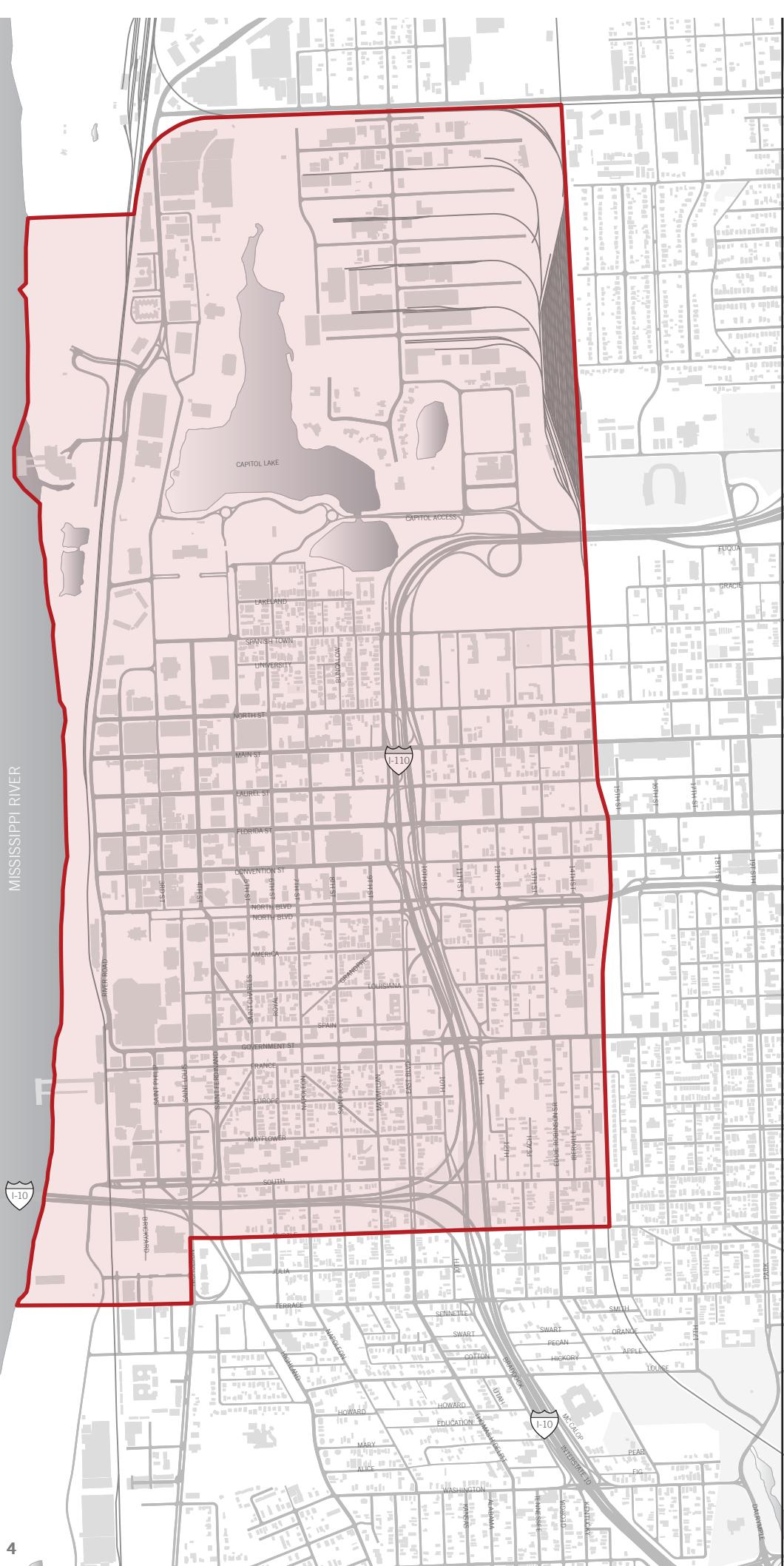


DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
DEVELOPMENT YEARBOOK  
2025

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## DDD BOUNDARY

West boundary at the Mississippi River immediately south of the Old Municipal Dock site, east to River Road, east to Terrace Avenue, east to Nicholson Drive, north to Myrtle Avenue, east to Kansas City Line Railroad (eastern boundary), north along railroad to Choctaw Drive, west along railroad, following southern curve of railroad near River Road, south on railroad, west to river at Eiland Street (north boundary of River Park development site), south along Mississippi River back to southern edge of Old Municipal Dock site.



## INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Development District's mission is to create a comprehensive policy for the promotion and enhancement of the District to benefit the entire community. In 2025, we advanced this mission by completing major goals outlined in our 5-Year Strategic Plan, announcing the development of Plan Baton Rouge III, enhancing public spaces, addressing safety and misconceptions, and promoting the progress and assets within the district that drive continued growth. We also released our most comprehensive Downtown Development Toolkit to date, showcasing strong market indicators—including increased residential activity and high occupancy across office and hotel sectors—along with new Placer.ai insights that provide a clearer understanding of how people move, gather, and engage downtown.

This 2025 Yearbook reflects a year of meaningful downtown progress stewarded by the DDD, while also recognizing the partners, organizations, and contributors who play a role in downtown's continued success. Inside, you'll find highlights of developments completed over the past year, key data and trends, projects now in the pipeline, and acknowledgements/recognition of the DDD and Downtown Baton Rouge. In addition, this document showcases the DDD's projects, events, and initiatives driving the next phase of development. Together, these collective efforts prove downtown is evolving, attracting new energy, and moving confidently into its next chapter.



MAP NTS

# 2025 STATS SUMMARY

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



**94%**  
CBD RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY  
**83.48%**  
CBD OFFICE OCCUPANCY

## CASINO



OVER  
**\$200 MILLION**  
CASINO INVESTMENT

## BUSINESSES



**10+**  
NEW RESTAURANTS

## PLAN BATON ROUGE III



**LAUNCHED PLAN BATON ROUGE III**  
HELD THREE COMMUNITY MEETINGS

## LIGHTING AND SECURITY



**LESS THAN 2%** POLICE CALLS COME FROM DOWNTOWN  
**INCREASED** SECURITY PATROLS IN DOWNTOWN EAST



**LIGHTING UPGRADE TO LED**  
- PHASE 1 & 2  
- 1,250 STREET LIGHTS

## SOCIAL MEDIA



**8.3k Followers**  
93,620 Views



**6.2k Followers**  
244,560 views

## THE DRIFT NEWSLETTER



**LAUNCHED JANUARY 2025**  
**42 %** OPEN RATE  
**3,410** SUBSCRIBERS  
**12%** SUBSCRIBER INCREASE SINCE 2024

## PROJECTS



**20 COMPLETED**  
DOWNTOWN PROJECTS  
**19 IN-PLANNING**  
DOWNTOWN PROJECTS

## VISITS & EVENTS



## **VISITS IN 2025: 12 MILLION**

MOST VISITED DAY: SATURDAY, MARCH 1ST - **132.5K**  
MOST VISITED DAY OF THE WEEK: **FRIDAY**

### HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS:

**2025 LIVE AFTER FIVE CONCERT SERIES:**  
50K ATTENDEES APPROXIMATELY

**UNITED STATES BOWLING CONGRESS:**  
146K VISITORS

**MARDI GRAS:**  
125K ATTENDEES : SPANISH TOWN PARADE  
600K ATTENDEES: MARDI GRAS SEASON TOTAL

**NIGHT MARKET BTR:**  
12K ATTENDEES

**LOUISIANA MARATHON:**  
7K RUNNERS  
155K ATTENDEES + SPECTATORS

**BLUES FESTIVAL WEEKEND:**  
42K ATTENDEES



2025 PROJECTS



# STREET LIGHT UPGRADES

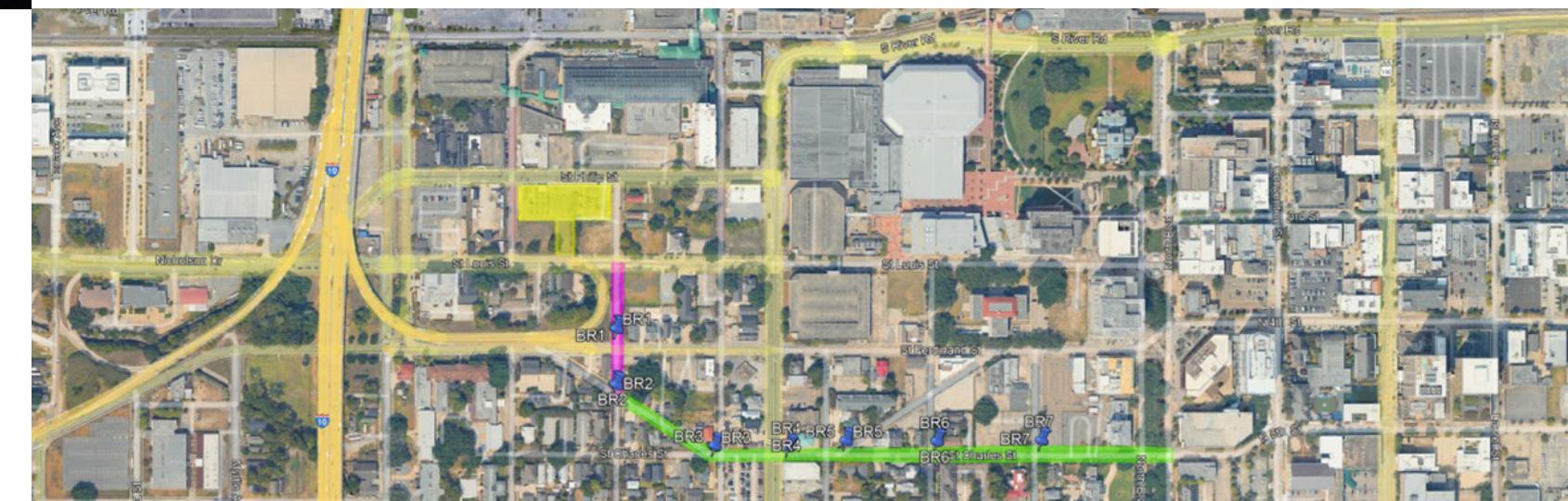
DDD's Strategic Plan identified lighting upgrades as a priority for downtown. The Downtown Development District, in partnership with Entergy and the City-Parish, upgraded more than 1,250 Central Business District street light fixtures to LED as part of a two-phase safety improvement effort. This effort responds directly to a survey finding on safety, which showed that downtown stakeholders reported a significant decline in their sense of safety from daytime to nighttime hours. The total cost was \$67,964, with DDD contributing \$33,920.

The upgrades covered areas from Government Street to North Street and I-110 to Choctaw. This follows lighting improvements along the Mississippi River Levee, Third Street, and Spanish Town Road. The upgrades replaced yellow bulbs with bright white LEDs to improve nighttime visibility, walkability, and enhance the sense of safety for residents and visitors. This initiative supports the DDD's five-year strategic plan and additional lighting projects outside the downtown area are also underway, with improvements planned to strengthen connections along Plan Road into downtown.



# SPANISH TOWN SECURITY CAMERAS

Downtown Development District purchased security cameras that will be placed in Spanish Town and will be installed as part of the Page/Rice Camera Initiative. This initiative is supported in part by the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice Foundation. The locations of the cameras in Spanish Town have been coordinated and collaborated with the Historic Spanish Town Civic Association, LECJF, and BRPD. The cameras installed will be monitored by law enforcement and benefit the neighborhood's safety by preventing and solving future crimes. Cameras are being installed at the end of 2025 and early 2026.



# ENTERGY DOWNTOWN UPDATES

DDD is coordinating multiple downtown capital projects with Entergy as part of its systemwide resiliency program. Entergy's five-year, \$2 billion initiative includes 2,100 projects statewide, with more than 250 downtown projects, valued at \$8 million, focused on pole replacements and underground infrastructure. A key effort, the Beauregard New Duct Build from St. Charles Street to North Boulevard, replaces aging systems and supports future downtown expansion through new circuits. Phase one was completed in 2025 and phase two is underway.



## BALLY'S BATON ROUGE

The Bally's of Baton Rouge redevelopment is a \$140 million investment that features 25,000 square feet of gaming, a sports lounge, a speak-easy, and new dining options while still preserving pieces of the old Catfish Town building. The casino opened two years after Bally's Corporation purchased The Queen and Belle of Baton Rouge properties. The food hall, which is designed to pay homage to the Illinois Central Freight Station, will include Hearth Pizzeria, Shuck's Oyster Bar, a wine and small plates restaurant Vintage 1806, and Maritime Coffee.

The new development strengthens downtown's entertainment offerings and attracts additional tourism and business activity. Bally's has brought a total of 500 new jobs to the area, and additional tax revenue for the city. The recently completed hotel, adjacent to the casino, is also open and accepting reservations.



## CBD HISTORIC SURVEY

The DDD and the Planning Commission received a grant from the Louisiana Office of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism to update the Central Business District (CBD) Historic Building Survey. Led by consultant James Rolf, with Southkick Historic Preservation + Rolf Preservation Works, the effort documents 240 structures with updated descriptions, photos, and GPS data. The original survey was completed in 1984 and last revised in 2004. The 2025 update will support planning, preservation efforts, and eligibility for tax credits and funding.



## EBR BIKE-PED MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The East Baton Rouge Parish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update was completed in August 2024 and adopted by the East Baton Rouge Metropolitan Council in 2025. The update builds on the 2020 plan, reevaluating priorities, phasing projects, and refining the network. It includes facility definitions, existing conditions, maps, and policy recommendations. The effort was led by BREC and City-Parish with assistance from HNTB. The DDD also assisted in updates to the bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the downtown area to ensure compatibility with the transportation projects completed or underway.



## HOTEL UPDATES

The 93 room Hotel Indigo completed a major \$8 million renovation in 2024. The renovation modernized the downtown hotel while reinforcing its local identity. In 2025, Hotel Indigo ownership changed from Project King LLC to A&R Group. "This acquisition aligns perfectly with our strategy of targeting well-positioned assets in dynamic and growing markets," said Ken Patel, CEO of A&R Group. "Baton Rouge has a vibrant economy and a rich cultural scene, making it an ideal location for our portfolio. Hotel Indigo's unique brand identity and exceptional location present a strong opportunity for long-term value and growth." A&R's investment in Downtown Baton Rouge underscores confidence in the market and expands their growing hotel portfolio.

Hampton Inn & Suites also underwent a renovation in 2025 that included all new guestrooms, revitalized public spaces, and expanded food and beverage offerings. A standout feature of the renovation is the introduction of self-serve beer and wine taps, providing an innovative amenity for both business and leisure travelers. The total estimated costs of the renovations was \$1.5 million. Originally opened in 2013 Hampton Inn & Suites offers 137 modern guest rooms—many with Mississippi River views.



## MOVEBR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

MOVEBR continues work on six downtown ADA transition projects addressing accessibility deficiencies. Construction is complete on Laurel and Lafayette Streets, including push-button crossings, audible signals, and new striping. Along North Boulevard from the interstate to River Road, work included the installation of detectable warnings, curb cuts, and additional ADA-compliant improvements to improve accessibility and pedestrian safety. These projects enhance connectivity between downtown destinations and the riverfront. Some of the upcoming projects include, redesigning the ped-bike area at North Boulevard and TJ Jemison to improve safety and efficiency, design completion of the South Blvd plans, and next steps for the Bus Rapid Transit network to and through downtown.



## TREE SURVEY

Baton Rouge Green has completed a digital inventory of approximately 5,000 trees in Downtown Baton Rouge. The survey quantifies environmental benefits and provides information useful when seeking funding opportunities while informing maintenance strategies. The DDD is working with BRG and the Department of Maintenance, in an effort to address termite and ball moss damage and guide replanting.



## THIRD STREET MASTER PLAN

The DDD hired McKnight Landscape Architects to lead the Third Street Master Plan, with the goal of identifying amenities that would enhance historic Third Street and also utilizing the existing pedestrian traffic and enhancing its attractability to businesses and tourists. Building on Plan Baton Rouge II, the plan focuses on streetscape improvements spanning five blocks and six intersections from North Boulevard to North Street. It incorporates the concept of "braided" green spaces that connect the Central Green with Third Street, featuring shaded parklets, gathering areas, and improved gateways designed to enhance walkability, orientation, and street life.

The now complete plan envisions a greener, more walkable corridor with art, a robust urban canopy, and parklets (sidewalk extension that converts one or more on-street parking spaces into a public cafe seating area). Phase one of the plan is to install a parklet that showcases recommended enhancements and is planned for 2026.



## RETAIL STUDY

DDD worked with Through-Line Consultants on a retail study aimed at assessing vacant storefronts and identifying opportunities to strengthen the downtown retail environment. As part of the research for the study, interviews and surveys were conducted with real estate professionals, potential vendors, downtown property owners, and property managers to gather their input, identify challenges, and better understand barriers to attracting new retailers. The study was completed in winter of 2025 with helpful data and recommendations to complete the short-term and long-term goals of increasing retail in Downtown Baton Rouge.



## ENTERTAINMENT STUDY

In partnership with DDD, BRAF, BRAC (The Partnership), Arts Council, and Visit Baton Rouge, a recently completed entertainment study by Hunden Partners outlined a bold vision for the future of the Raising Cane's River Center and its role in strengthening downtown Baton Rouge. The study identifies key challenges, including the facility's age, facilities, and the lack of a connected headquarters hotel. Recommended improvements include a new 29,200-square-foot ballroom and meeting rooms, renovations to existing interior spaces, and a reimagined outdoor public plaza that better engages the riverfront. The study was completed in 2025. The City of Baton Rouge, Metropolitan Council, and River Center Project Oversight Committee are stewarding the progress of the River Center.



## RIVERFRONT SIGNAGE

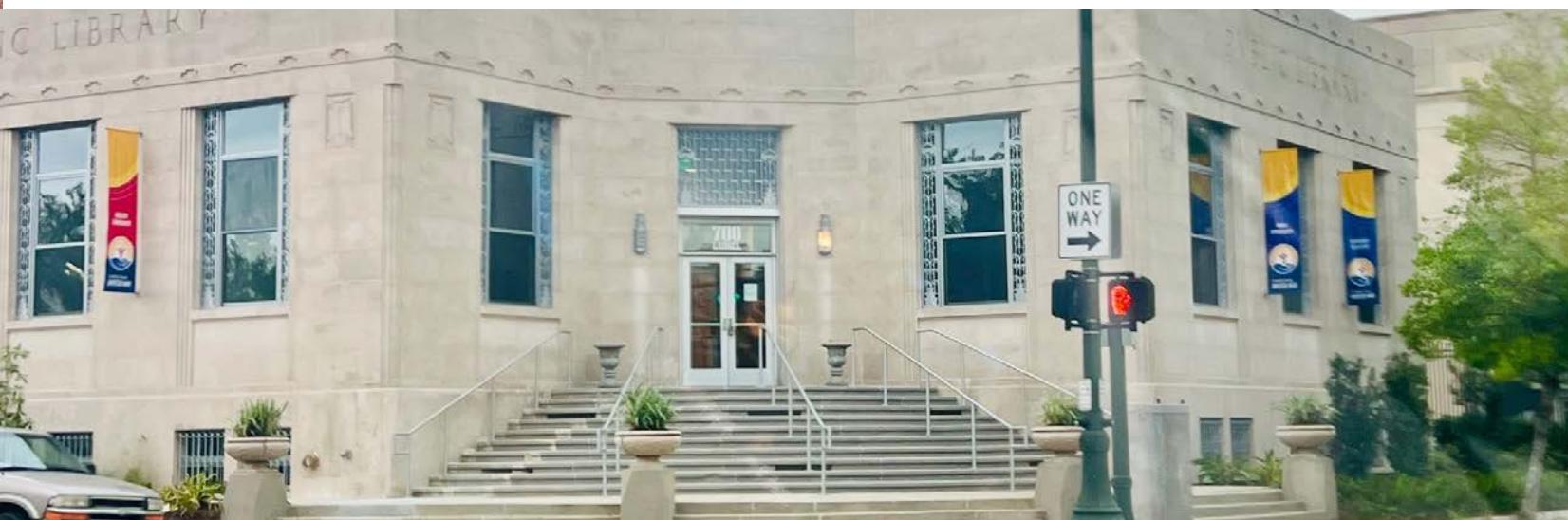
DDD secured a grant from the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, under the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, to install educational riverfront signage along the top of the Mississippi Levee Trail. The signage highlights regional water systems and history of the significance of Baton Rouge's position along the Mississippi River, ranging from Indigenous settlement to the modern Water Campus. The signs are designed to engage with the thousands of visitors. DDD has previously looked at the Levee Trail visits showing the actual foot traffic and walkability. Within the past year, there were approximately 114,800 people using the levee.

CARBO Landscape Architecture developed the graphic layouts and construction details. The metal bases supporting the signs were intentionally designed to weather naturally over time, creating a unique patina that complements the riverfront environment. The cutout design on each base varies by location across the state. While some communities use a pelican motif, the DDD selected a Mississippi River-shaped cutout to reflect Baton Rouge's geography and relationship with the river, with a small star indicating the city's location. Phase one was completed in October 2025 by Groundworks, LLC and included three signs installed near the Rotary Eye of the River Sculpture, Baton Rouge City Dock, and the Skip Bertman Drive Levee Trailhead. Phase two is on track to be installed in early 2026.



## COMMERCE BUILDING PENTHOUSE

The top floor of the Commerce Building on Laurel Street was converted into two residential penthouse units. Originally intended for a restaurant, the space remained vacant due to logistical challenges. Bearing Point Properties repurposed the area into two-bedroom units with added amenities. Approximately \$1 million was invested in the project. The two units were immediately occupied, underscoring the demand to live downtown.



## UNITED WAY BUILDING RESTORATION

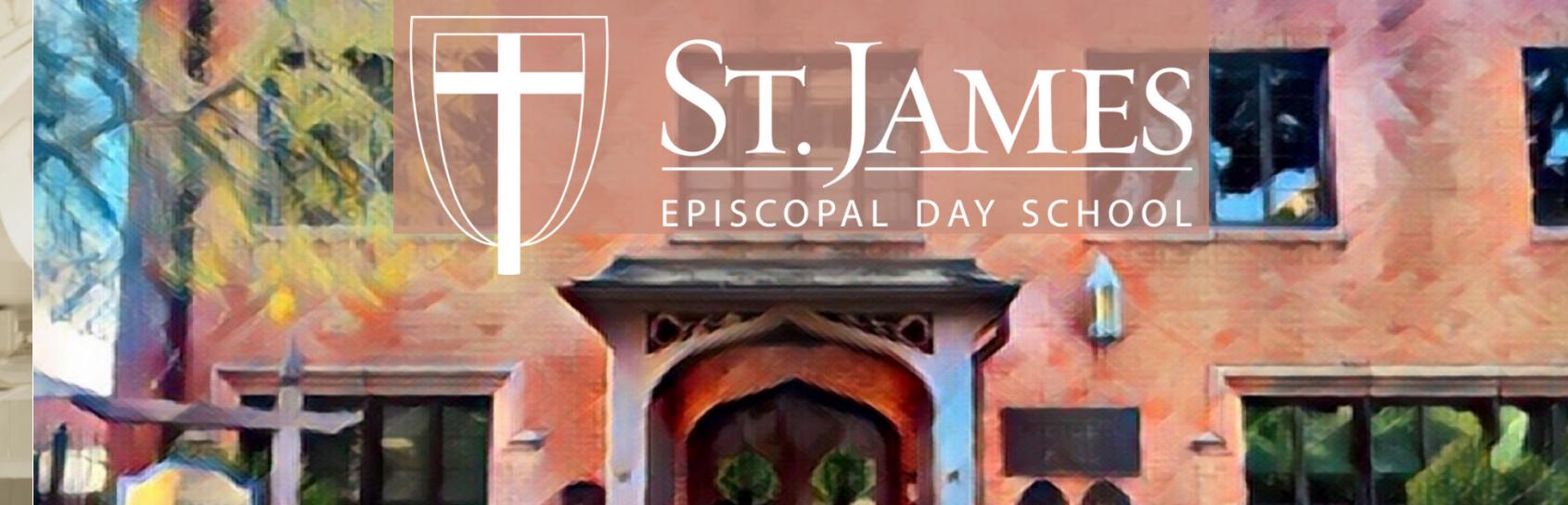
The Capitol Area United Way has completed renovations at 700 Laurel Street, the former Old Public Library built in 1939. The \$1.5 million office renovation addressed long-standing water damage through major interior and exterior improvements. Funding was provided through the American Rescue Plan Act.



## MAIN STREET MARKET RENOVATIONS

First opened in 2002, Main Street Market is a group of shops, vendors, stalls, and meeting spaces on the ground floor of the Galvez parking garage at 501 Main Street. The State of Louisiana and the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA) embarked on multiple years-long renovation of the garage and shops to better align with BREADA's mission of — farmers, food, access and community. The project was supported by a \$1 million State allocation. Improvements include expanded restrooms, updated fixtures, and a new programming space. Renovations were completed in late 2025.

This fall BREADA announced five new food vendors to activate the market. These include BREADA's weekday coffee shop, River & Roots, along with Creole Creations, Vivian's Rotisserie and Grill, The Cozy Griddle, and Sapor Indian Fusion, all serving both weekday patrons and the Saturday Red Stick Farmers Market.



## ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

A \$3.1 million capital campaign funded major campus improvements at St. James Episcopal Day School. Enhancements include a new playground, reimagined library, enrichment center, and Spark Studio. The upgrades support creativity, STEM learning, and student engagement. Additional improvements including a new playground for older students and unique outdoor learning spaces are planned as the school continues to grow downtown.



## LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Louisiana Economic Development (LED) has relocated operations to the renovated Capitol Park Welcome Center at 702 River Road. The \$5.5 million renovation modernizes the facility while preserving its architectural character. The building houses multiple LED departments and showcase Louisiana's economic strengths.



## USS KIDD RENOVATION

The USS Kidd, a World War II battleship and award winning National Historic Landmark, has undergone major repairs in 2025, for the first time since the early 1980s. The repairs are made possible thanks to the appropriation of funds by Louisiana lawmakers. Government officials in East Baton Rouge Parish and the Louisiana Veterans Museum Foundation have also provided project-related funds. Repairs included hull restoration, a newly painted exterior design, rebuilding the sewage system, and repairs to the steward's quarters - the living space for the Black members of the segregated crew.

Removed from its river cradle in spring 2024, the USS Kidd was transported to dry dock in Houma, Louisiana, for an extensive preservation project. During the past year, the Kidd's social media team has documented this work through a dedicated YouTube series, significantly increasing public awareness and engagement while building anticipation for her return home. The USS Kidd is expected to return to Baton Rouge during the next high-water cycle in spring 2026.

## HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNAGE

The Downtown Development District (DDD) received \$50,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to update and restore downtown's vehicular and historic wayfinding signage. The project applies new finishes and updates content from the award winning 2008 Sasaki design and is part of a broader signage restoration effort.

Downtown's historic neighborhoods, Spanish Town and Beauregard Town have specific historic neighborhood signs highlighting their history and significance to the City of Baton Rouge. The four historic neighborhood signs are located along major neighborhood corridors. Restoration of signs were completed in late 2025. The restoration and improvements include structural repairs to cabinets, posts, and side scrolls, reprinted high-quality panel graphics, and cleaning and repainting to match the original colors. Additional signage restoration to the downtown vehicular wayfinding signage is scheduled for completion in 2026 and the subsequent phase II project will focus on pedestrian wayfinding.



BUSINESSES



## BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

**ALL TECH SERVICES** - 327 NORTH BOULEVARD. Sells, installs, and services automatic gates, turnstiles, and all related accessories and access control. Also offering fence services across all industries and wholesale pricing to qualified dealers.

**BALLY'S BATON ROUGE CASINO & HOTEL** - 103 FRANCE STREET. A full-service gaming and hospitality destination featuring slot machines, table games, dining options, and upscale accommodations. Recent renovations have modernized the property and expanded its entertainment offerings, making it a vibrant hub for gaming, events, and nightlife. New dining includes: Hearth Pizzeria, Oyster Bar, Vintage 1806, and Maritime Coffee.

**BATON ROUGE CRUISES** - 900 SOUTH RIVER ROAD. Offers a variety of sightseeing and themed excursions on the Mississippi River aboard its paddlewheeler, including narrated harbor tours, cocktail cruises, dinner cruises, and Sunday brunch. Experiences combine scenic views of downtown landmarks.

**BAYES OYSTER BAR** - 315 NORTH BOULEVARD. Specializes in oysters prepared in a variety of flavorful, expertly crafted styles that highlight both classic and creative preparations. The bar also offers boiled shrimp, po'boys, and drink specials.

**DANNY'S DIVE BAR** - 151 3RD STREET. An uncomplicated drink menu, live music on the patio and a rotating selection of lunch, dinner and late-night plates curated personally by the Owner/Chef.

**DEMINOLA BLENDS** - 307 3RD STREET. A vibrant café in Baton Rouge, offering smoothies, cold-pressed juices, coffee, and pastries.

**DESIDERATA KITCHEN** - 431 3RD STREET. Offers creative spins on catering with Louisiana classics. Emphasis on fresh, specialty cuisine that balances tradition with innovation. One standout is the award-winning Creole shrimp and smoked gouda grits.

**FRESH CRAVINGS** - 326 3RD STREET. Located inside of Squeaky Pete's Bar, their menu features a wide range of comfort food favorites including customizable tacos, wings, and hearty burgers. Open daily for lunch.

**MAIN STREET MARKET VENDORS** - 501 MAIN STREET. Recently renovated indoor food hall that features locally-owned restaurants and a specialty coffee shop housed in a public marketplace setting, including: River Roots Coffee, Creole Creations, Vivian's Rotisserie and Grill, The Cozy Griddle, and Sapor Indian Fusion.

**NEXUS LOUISIANA** - 440 3RD STREET. Accelerating the growth of high-potential technology-enabled companies by providing them with coaching, capital and connections. Programs leverage regional collaboration to foster mentorship, investment, and opportunity for local entrepreneurs to grow their ideas and transform the technology industry in Louisiana.

**OOH LAW-LA'S PIZZA** - 701 SPANISH TOWN ROAD. Offering fusion pizza with a Caribbean flair. Customers can also order custom pizzas with toppings of their choosing.

**PEDAGO BIKES** - 602 MAIN STREET. A locally-owned bike shop where customers can test ride, purchase, or rent high-quality e-bikes designed for comfort and exploration. The store emphasizes community engagement and outdoor adventure in and around Baton Rouge.

**PELICAN CREDIT UNION** - POSTAL BRANCH - 510 N. 6TH STREET. Pelican Credit Union takes an intentional and active approach to creating positive impact in the communities of Louisiana. The new Postal Branch also shares in the beloved Pelican tradition of having complimentary hot coffee available every day.

**REGUS** - 525 FLORIDA STREET. Supporting Baton Rouge by offering day offices, customizable offices, and private offices to rent for any team size.

**ROUGAROUX BAYOU BIRRIA, SPANISH TOWN MARKET** - 701 SPANISH TOWN ROAD. Providing bold Louisiana style birria with rich, slow-braised meats and zesty spices that bring the bayou flavor.

**SPANISH TOWN MARKET & COFE** - 701 SPANISH TOWN ROAD. Blending local history with a refreshed, modern feel. Offering quality coffee, approachable food, and a welcoming community gathering place.

**STUDIO COWORK** - 440 3RD STREET. A creative coworking community offering flexible workspaces, meeting rooms, podcasting, and full-service content studio for visual projects.

**TRAP HAUS** - 1300 GOVERNMENT STREET. A vibrant, plant-powered oasis, blending health and community in a trendy, welcoming space. Housed in a bright, green-accented setting, it features a Chipotle-style smoothie bar with customizable blends, acai bowls, cold-pressed juices, and vegan twists on Southern soul comfort food.

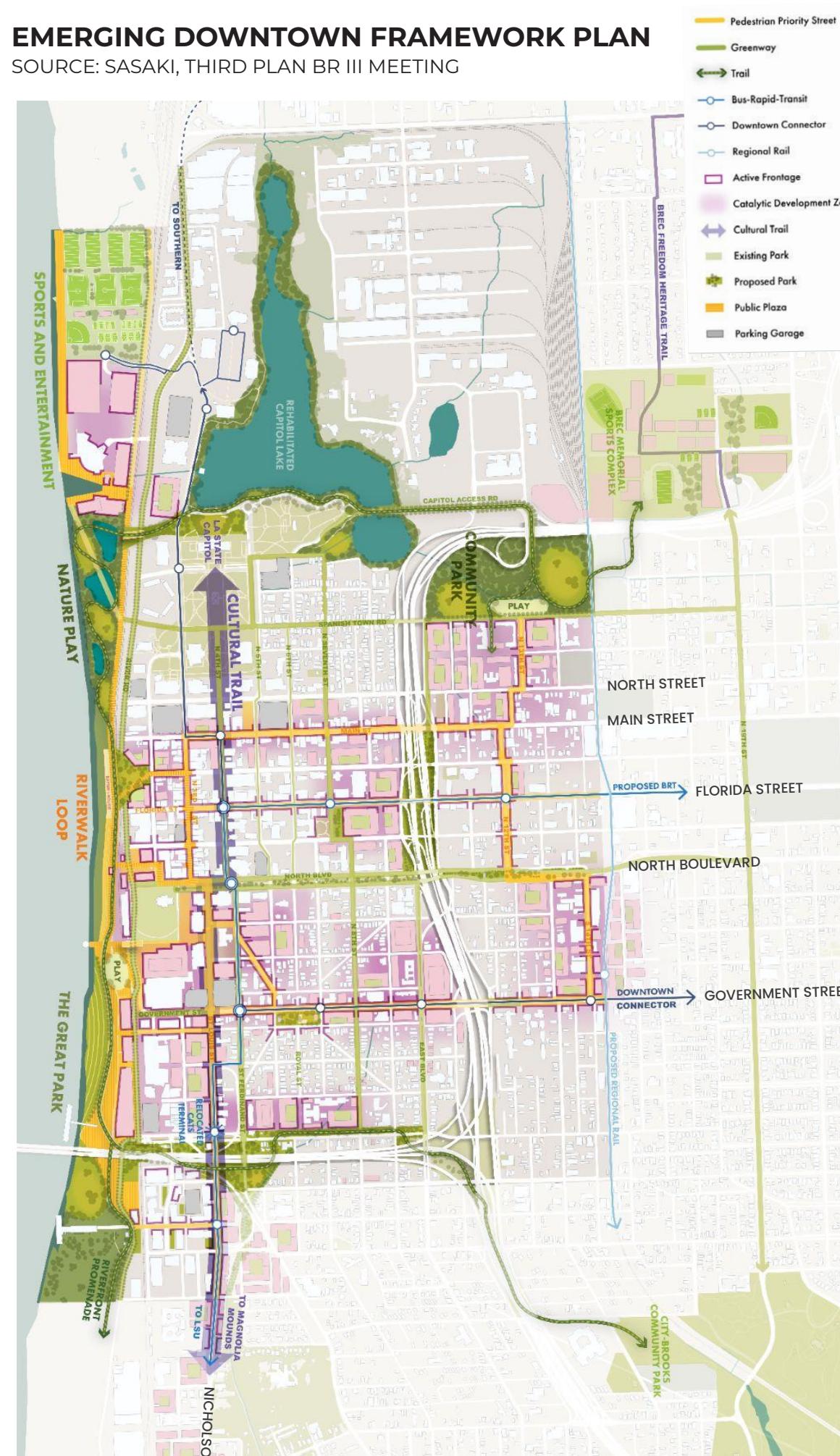
**ZENATECH** - 451 FLORIDA STREET. The company specializes in an AI division that will develop next generation drone technologies for US defense and homeland security applications.



## PROJECTS IN PLANNING

## EMERGING DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK PLAN

SOURCE: SASAKI, THIRD PLAN BR III MEETING



## PLAN BATON ROUGE III

In 2025 Plan Baton Rouge III (PBR III) was launched, another major DDD strategic Plan Initiative. Sasaki was chosen to lead an updated downtown master plan that builds on Plan Baton Rouge I (1998) and II (2009). Both plans boast more than two decades of significant investment, changing market conditions, and evolving community priorities. These previous master plans served as the foundation for several significant projects: The Main Street Market, state worker/building consolidation, hotels in the core of the Central Business District, the Downtown Greenway, Central Green, Shaw Center, and riverfront connections to name a few.

Plan BR III is designed to guide long-term growth by aligning public and private initiatives with today's economic realities and opportunities. The process emphasizes robust community and stakeholder engagement, a comprehensive downtown needs assessment, and analysis of growth and investment scenarios. The final outcome will include a final plan, identification of strategic sites, and clear implementation guidelines and action steps to support continued momentum in Downtown Baton Rouge. The DDD assisted with community engagement for PBR III's development by promoting public feedback meetings and encouraging participation from downtown stakeholders. Through targeted communications, coordination with partner organizations, and promotion across DDD channels, the District helped ensure that residents, business owners, and institutional partners were informed and invited to contribute to the planning process via online surveys and three open house events held downtown. Completion of Plan Baton Rouge III is expected in early 2026.

## River Center

In 2025, the City established an Oversight Committee to guide the revitalization of the Raising Cane's Center, aiming to modernize its facilities and attract more conventions. The committee is working with Hunden Partners as the owner's representative on the River Center project. The renovation is expected to boost local tourism, attract high-profile events, and strengthen the city's reputation as a premier destination for conventions and conferences.



## Lincoln Theater

The historic Lincoln Theatre opened in 1949 and served as a major cultural venue in Baton Rouge. Though it closed in the 1980s, recent investments have restored key architectural and building systems. The \$4 million renovation includes an expanded theater, lobby, and gallery spaces. Construction is underway with completion expected in 2026.



## River Road West Trail

This project extends the existing 10-foot River Road multi-use path north from the Queen Casino entrance to nearby residential complexes. Due to right-of-way constraints, portions will narrow to a 5-foot walking trail before ending at Riverview Condominiums. The trail will provide residents a safe connection to the Mississippi River levee and downtown. Construction is expected to begin in 2026 and is funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant.



## Civil Rights Trail

This community-driven public art project celebrates Baton Rouge civil rights heroes through storytelling installations on utility boxes in Beauregard Town. Residents and stakeholders nominated honorees, provided feedback, and selected artist Bryson Boute to design the graphics for the project. The graphic artwork will transform utility boxes and build upon other Civil Rights Trails in Baton Rouge. Installation is anticipated in early 2026.



## Third Street Flower Pots

DDD is continuing to partner with Visit Baton Rouge to manage the maintenance and watering of flower pots along Third Street. The effort supports the ongoing beautification of the Third Street corridor. The program enhances curb appeal for residents, workers, and visitors. A fresh round of plantings can be expected in early 2026. Maintenance is provided through a contracted service.



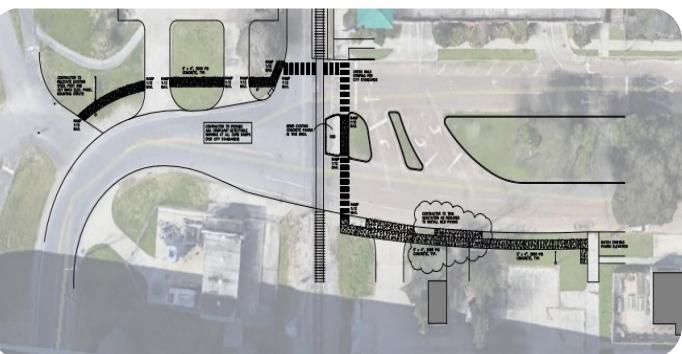
## Hotel Lincoln

Opened in 1955, Hotel Lincoln was the first Black-owned hotel in the area and was featured in the Green Book. A \$1.1 million renovation was announced in December 2024 to the historic building into 12 residential units with three commercial retail or office spaces. Construction began in October and is scheduled for completion by November 2026.



## South Boulevard Trailhead

The South Boulevard Trailhead Connection will soon be better connected to the nearby parking facilities, linking sidewalks over the railroad tracks to the Mississippi River levee trail. The project also improves access to nearby restaurants, entertainment venues, and interstate parking while adding wayfinding signage. Design is nearing completion, with construction expected to begin in the first quarter of 2026.



## River Road East Trail

The River Road Multi-Use Corridor will connect pedestrians and cyclists to downtown amenities and the State Capitol area by enhancing the walkability on the East side of River Road. The project connects to other transportation networks and enhances safety and connectivity in a highly active riverfront corridor. This project focuses on pedestrian sidewalk improvements on the east side of River Road and is expected to begin construction in 2026.



## Vehicular Wayfinding Restoration

DDD received \$50,000 in ARPA funding to restore downtown historic signage and vehicular wayfinding. The project applies new finishes and updates content from the award winning 2008 Sasaki design and is part of a broader signage restoration effort. Vehicular wayfinding restoration is scheduled for completion in 2026 and the subsequent phase II project will focus on pedestrian wayfinding.



## Prince Masonic Temple Apartments

The Prince Hall Masonic Temple, built in 1924, is being redeveloped into a mixed-use affordable housing project. The renovation will create 46 mixed-income residential units at 1335 North Boulevard. The building once housed the Temple Theater, which hosted nationally known performers. The project preserves a historic structure while addressing downtown's growing housing needs.



## Heron II

Key Real Estate and John O. Hearn are planning a second residential development adjacent to the existing Heron apartment building and the Downtown Greenway. The former structure on the site was demolished in 2024, and design work is underway. The project is expected to include 200–250 residential units with a potential retail component. The development is expected to attract downtown workers and university students.



## Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit is a high-quality rapid transit mode for buses combining physical and operating improvements into the existing integrated transit system. The Plank-Nicholson Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) connects neighborhoods, employment centers, medical facilities, and major destinations. It is intended to promote revitalization on these corridors by encouraging transit-oriented development and supporting small business activity. The route is intended to bring riders to the downtown area via Florida Street, 4th Street, St. Louis Street, and Nicholson Drive.



## Third Street Parklet

The Third Street Master Plan identifies parklets along each block to activate underutilized loading zones, without removing any parking. These spaces will provide seating, greenery, and a street buffer while improving walkability. Collectively, the parklets are envisioned as “front porches” for Third Street. Designs will remain flexible to serve users throughout the day and evening. Construction is expected in 2026.



## Spanish Town Condos

The Historic Preservation Commission approved a multi-unit condominium development in the Historic Spanish Town Neighborhood near the State Capitol and Capitol Lakes. The project includes a public promenade, gazebos, and a community center. Additional building permits have been issued, paving the way for this project to move forward.



## Riverfront Enhancements

Improvements to the Riverfront Plaza were implemented in 2018 and 2019 based on plans and recommendations from CARBO Landscape Architecture focused on lighting, planting, and circulation was hired to further enhance the areas within and adjacent to the plaza and dock. Some of the enhancements include: upgraded event space, ‘no-mow’ wildflower planting areas, additional security lighting, concrete repairs, and ADA improvements. However, the over 40-year-old plaza is still in need of significant upgrades to the fountain system. Interim design concepts are being explored to enhance and activate the space while a broader riverfront vision is developed through Plan Baton Rouge III.



## I-110 Underpass Lighting Project

The I-110 Gateway Enhancement Project will install colored LED lighting beneath the interstate. Improvements will enhance safety and visual connectivity between the Downtown Greenway and Government Street bike lanes. WHLC Architects is completing design and construction documents. The project is a partnership with the DDD and Visit Baton Rouge that supports broader efforts to improve downtown gateways. The development of final plans for the first phase of the project began in 2024 and a mock-up is expected in 2026. Installation for the permanent light installation is also expected in 2026.



## Street Tree Enhancements

In continuation of the DDD's plans to revitalize the downtown tree canopy, plans are underway with Baton Rouge Green and the City of Baton Rouge to identify funding sources to infill empty tree wells and strengthen the downtown tree canopy. As part of this project the City of Baton Rouge is currently in the process of treating trees with insecticides. Trees are currently being treated and there are plans to plant new trees in early 2026.



## New Visit Baton Rouge Building

Visit Baton Rouge will relocate its headquarters to 232 Lafayette Street, a historic building across from the Hilton. The renovation will more than double its current office space. Planned features include a visitor center, event space, pop-up retail, and interactive exhibits. The project is expected to be completed in early 2027.



## New Orleans/Baton Rouge Passenger Rail

The Southern Rail Commission has proposed an Amtrak passenger rail service planned to bring twice-daily trains from a Downtown Baton Rouge station to New Orleans, strengthening downtown's role within the Gulf Coast Corridor. The service would improve access to jobs, visitors, and development opportunities while supporting a broader regional rail network across the South. In 2024, the Southern Rail Commission was awarded \$400,000 through the Interstate Rail Compacts grant program to expand passenger rail throughout the region. Amtrak passenger routes from Alabama to New Orleans are currently underway.



## Capitol Lakes

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officially added the Capitol Lakes to its Superfund National Priority List, prioritizing the lake system for pollutant clean-up. A remedial investigation to determine the extent of the contamination and possible clean-up methods is currently underway. In addition, a data-collection project spearheaded by the LSU AgCenter has installed various temporary stormwater remediation systems intended to collect debris before it enters the lake. The project is intended to assist in informing a statewide litter remediation manual.



# DDD INITIATIVES





# 5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

## DDD STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2023, under new leadership for the first time in more than 30 years, the Downtown Development District engaged Baton Rouge-based consulting firm LaFargue to assess the trends, forces, and stakeholder perspectives shaping Downtown Baton Rouge and to develop a five-year strategic plan to guide the organization's work. The planning process was intentionally designed to prioritize broad and inclusive stakeholder engagement, recognizing that the vitality of Downtown Baton Rouge has far-reaching impacts across the Capital Region.

The DDD's five-year strategic plan reflects the vision of DDD leadership, informed and strengthened by extensive stakeholder input, and serves as a clear framework for guiding the organization's operations over the next five years.

The plan is an adaptable, forward-looking roadmap that articulates organizational goals and identifies the actions and resources needed to achieve them. Initiatives outlined in the plan complement—and directly and indirectly support—the creation and implementation of the Plan Baton Rouge III master plan.

### ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE



### BUILDING UP THE CORE: PLANNING, PROJECTS, & INFRASTRUCTURE



### IMPROVING THE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE FOR ALL MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY



### ENHANCING COMMUNICATIONS FOR TRANSPARENCY, BRAND BUILDING, & PROGRESS



## Downtown Plan Stewardship

The DDD serves as the steward of Downtown Baton Rouge's master plans, ensuring that community-driven visions are translated into coordinated projects, strategic partnerships, and actionable progress. Through consistent leadership and collaboration, the DDD guides long-term implementation that strengthens the heart of the city. Over 85% of master plans PBR I & II have been implemented resulting in approximately \$3 billion in new investments downtown within the last two decades. PBR III builds on downtown's unique strengths, recommending strategies to reconnect assets and neighborhoods to the riverfront and downtown core.



## Stakeholder Engagement/ Facilitation

The DDD also prioritizes stakeholder engagement and facilitation, actively involving local property owners, businesses, residents, elected officials, and community organizations in decision-making processes to ensure that downtown's development initiatives reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The DDD hosts bi-monthly commission meetings to share updates with stakeholders on ongoing projects, developments, and events. In addition, the DDD distributes targeted email marketing for downtown business owners and residents and hosts neighborhood events for downtown residents to build better connections with each group.



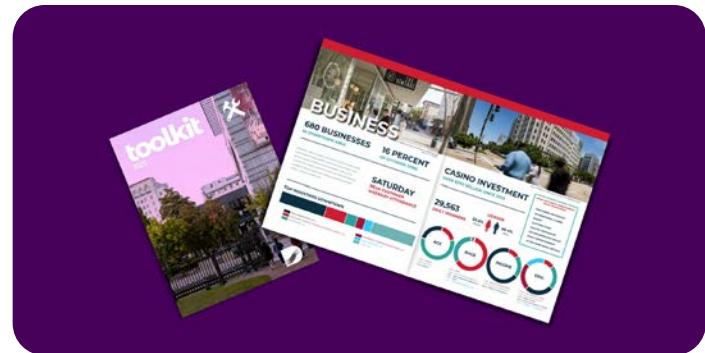
## Government/Stakeholder Liaison

The DDD serves as a key liaison between government agencies, elected officials, and downtown stakeholders, navigating regulatory processes while advocating for policies that support downtown investment and preservation. Throughout the year, DDD provided regular updates on major downtown initiatives that occurred during various Governmental agency/department meetings, participated on the River Center Steering Committee, and engaged in discussions related to new and evolving ordinances affecting downtown. This role ensures alignment between public policy, community priorities, and long-term downtown goals.



## Marketing & Public Information

The DDD actively promotes Downtown Baton Rouge as a destination for residents, visitors, and investors while ensuring transparent and accessible public communication. In 2025, DDD redeveloped its newsletter and launched The Drift, a refreshed publication design that significantly increased subscriber growth and open rates. Ongoing engagement across social media platforms further expanded visibility by highlighting downtown events, new businesses, and community developments, strengthening downtown's brand and awareness.



## Project Management

The DDD is the steward of downtown's master plans and utilizes the plans' recommendations to inform investment goals and develop projects for implementation. The DDD collaborates with downtown stakeholders/elected officials, advocating for funds to implement the plans' recommended projects - often writing and receiving grant funds to leverage resources. We effectively manage projects to ensure they are completed on time and within budget and meet a high quality of standards in order to maintain the momentum and confidence in the district's growth. The DDD currently leads or co-manages 40+ projects.



## Economic Development

The DDD focuses on fostering an environment conducive to innovation and investment within both the public and private sectors, enhancing downtown's infrastructural systems and quality of place to attract new developments and businesses, as well as supporting existing property owners and businesses. This is achieved through planning, prioritizing, advocating, and ensuring that the downtown area remains vibrant and economically robust.



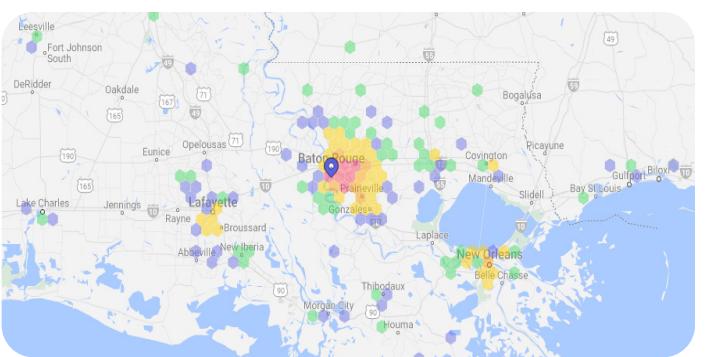
## Neighborhood Engagement & Security

Neighborhood engagement remained a priority, with DDD maintaining consistent communication and collaboration with downtown residents to ensure their needs and concerns inform district initiatives. Through dedicated funding and partnerships, DDD supported enhanced public safety measures, including neighborhood security camera programs, coordination with Entergy to expand LED lighting for improved nighttime visibility, and regular collaboration with the Baton Rouge Police Department and neighborhood stakeholders through duty reports.



## Data Collection and Monitoring

DDD continued its commitment to data-driven decision-making by collecting and analyzing key metrics related to economic activity, visitation, and demographic trends. This included utilizing Placer.ai to gather and share event attendance and traffic data (vehicular and pedestrian), partnering with Baton Rouge Green and City-Parish GIS to update the downtown tree survey, and working with Southkick + Rolf to revise downtown building data. The updated building inventory identified additional structures now eligible for historic designation, unlocking new opportunities for preservation funding and reinvestment.



## Event and Public Space Management

DDD plays an active role in managing downtown events and public spaces to enhance vibrancy and ensure smooth operations. Staff coordinated closely with event organizers to support cultural events, parades, concerts, and community programming across downtown greenspaces. In total, more than 60 events were hosted in downtown greenspaces alone, with over 1,000 events taking place throughout the downtown area, reinforcing downtown as a regional hub for activity and engagement.



## Advocacy

At the local, state, and federal levels, DDD advocates for policies, funding, and programs that support downtown revitalization, safety, and economic growth. This year, DDD joined downtown leaders from across the country, including colleagues from the New Orleans Downtown Development District, to advocate for the federal Revitalizing Downtown Main Streets Act. DDD also played a key role in amplifying outreach for the community engagement meetings associated with Plan Baton Rouge III, the City's major downtown revitalization master plan. These efforts strengthen Downtown Baton Rouge's voice.





## PROJECTS

The DDD is the steward of downtown's master plans and utilizes the plans' recommendations to inform investment goals and develop projects for implementation. The DDD and Commission Project Workgroup collaborates with downtown stakeholders/elected officials, advocating for funds to implement the plans' recommended projects - often writing and receiving grant funds to leverage resources. The DDD leads or co-manages 40+ projects with a strong focus on schedule adherence, fiscal responsibility, and high design and construction standards, ensuring continued momentum and confidence in downtown's growth. Through disciplined project oversight and coordination with public and private partners, DDD advances initiatives that enhance connectivity, placemaking, and district identity. Examples of ongoing efforts include the I-110 Underpass Gateway Lighting Project, spanning from Louisiana Avenue to North Boulevard with a lighting mock-up anticipated on Louisiana Avenue in 2026, restoration of downtown signage, implementation of the Third Street Master Plan, and artistic utility box wraps honoring Baton Rouge's civil rights leaders. Trail investments such as the upcoming River Road East and West projects demonstrate how DDD leverages grant funding to supplement our modest budget to move projects forward.



## MARKETING

The Downtown Development District leads clear, consistent marketing efforts that keep Downtown Baton Rouge informed, connected, and growing. Through *The Drift* newsletter, the DDD shares updates on events, local businesses, development news, and downtown initiatives, while social media highlights daily activity and promotes the energy of the district. The DDD also supports downtown neighborhoods with dedicated newsletters and community events, helping each area stay engaged. In addition, the DDD produces stakeholder booklets and marketing materials designed to attract and support new businesses, providing clear information and tools that help drive investment and growth throughout downtown. Follow the DDD on social media below.

- @downtownbatonrouge
- @downtownbatonrouge
- Downtown Development District of Baton Rouge

# DOWNTOWN RECOGNITION

## Best of 225 Awards

Downtown Baton Rouge continues to stand out as a hub of excellence, with multiple local businesses earning recognition in the Best of 225 awards. A consistent standout is the Watermark Hotel, which has claimed the top honor for seven consecutive years, reinforcing its reputation as one of the region's premier hotels. Other downtown business have also made their mark placing in the rankings.

## 225 Forward

DDD Executive Director, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, is featured in 225 Forward, a special section of 225 Magazine that highlights leaders shaping the future of the Capital Region. The feature spotlights her vision for Downtown Baton Rouge, commitment to thoughtful growth and placemaking, and the collaborative work with Plan Baton Rouge III underway to plan the next phase of downtown's future.

## Business Report Best Places To Work

Multiple downtown businesses were recognized in the Business Report Best Places to Work awards, reinforcing Downtown Baton Rouge as a hub for strong workplace culture and career opportunity. This recognition highlights how downtown employers are at the center of work in the city, offering supportive and engaging environments for employees. Notable downtown honorees include Taylor Porter, Kean Miller, McGlinchey Stafford, Access Sciences, and more.

## LCASLA Award

The Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded the Third Street Master Plan a Merit Award for its innovative approach to envisioning a greener, more walkable corridor, with art, parklets, other street amenities and an enhanced urban canopy.

## International Downtown Association

DDD Executive Director, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, selected as an International Downtown Association (IDA) Board member at the 70th IDA conference. In addition, DDD Development Project Director, Iboru Udoeh spoke on a panel discussion regarding downtowns punching above their weight.

## Mayor's Recognition and Proclamation

DDD Executive Director, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, was recognized by Mayor-President Sid Edwards on joining the International Downtown Association (IDA) Board of Directors in addition to her service in leadership to Downtown Baton Rouge.

# DOWNTOWN RECOGNITION

## Best of Baton Rouge Awards

Best Downtown Baton Rouge Bar: Mother's Lounge  
Best Downtown Baton Rouge Restaurant: The Little Village  
Best Specialty Cocktails: Mother's Lounge  
Best Annual Event: Spanish Town Parade Party  
Best Casino: The Queen Baton Rouge  
Best Casino Entertainment: The Queen Baton Rouge  
Best Casino Player's Club: The Queen Baton Rouge  
Best Casino Sports Book: The Queen Baton Rouge  
Best Casino Restaurant: 1717 Kitchen + Cocktails  
Best Farmers Market: Red Stick Farmers Market  
Best Museum: Louisiana Art & Science Museum

## Committees and Boards

Live After Five Inc.  
River Center Project Oversight Committee  
Complete Streets Committee  
BREADA (Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance)  
International Downtown Association (IDA)  
International Downtown Association's Top Issues Council  
Plan Baton Rouge Advisory Committee  
Partners Southeast  
Ball Moss Committee  
America 250 Committee

## 100-Year Celebrations

Watermark Hotel Building  
Louisiana Art and Science Museum  
The Taylor Building

## 20-Year Celebration

Shaw Center for the Arts

# SPECIAL THANKS

## SPECIAL THANKS

We remain dedicated to the development and promotion of Downtown Baton Rouge as we move forward into 2026. We thank all of the countless individuals who support our mission and cause, enabling Downtown Baton Rouge to grow and develop into a place to live, work, and play. They include private developers, public agencies, and non-profit organizations. We are extremely grateful for the partnerships that make such extraordinary projects happen. Special thanks to Mayor-President Sid Edwards and the Metropolitan Council for the continued support of the DDD's vision.

Office of Mayor-President Sid Edwards

### East Baton Rouge City-Parish Metropolitan Council

Brandon Noel, Pro-Tem	District One
Anthony Kenney	District Two
Rowdy Gaudet	District Three
Aaron Moak	District Four
Darryl Hurst	District Five
Cleve Dunn Jr.	District Six
Twahna Harris	District Seven
Denise Amoroso	District Eight
Dwight Hudson	District Nine
Carolyn Coleman	District Ten
Laurie Adams	District Eleven
Jennifer Racca	District Twelve

### DDD Commissioners

Patrick Michaels	Chairman
Gary Jupiter	Vice Chairman
Joshua G. Hollins	Treasurer
Philip Jordan	Secretary
Suzanne Turner	
Eric Dexter	
Gary Black	

### DDD Staff

Whitney Hoffman Sayal, AICP	Executive Director
Casey Tate	Assistant Executive Director
Iboro Udo	Development Project Director
Schuylar Olson	Design and Marketing Coordinator
Ute Cress	Administrative Assistant
Houston Tullis	Student Intern
Sydney Milligan	Student Intern
Amanda Richter	Student Intern
Abdullah Nabil	Student Intern
Kendryx Periban	Student Intern
Christopher Abrahams	Student Intern



DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT