

# Greauxing Resilience at Home

City of Baton Rouge–Parish of East Baton Rouge,  
Louisiana: **Ardendale Master Plan and Guiding Principles**



GEORGETOWN CLIMATE CENTER



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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

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Louisiana is one of the hardest-hit areas in the United States as extreme weather events and regular flooding become more frequent and intense.<sup>1</sup> These challenges often fall “first and worst” on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color or “BIPOC” and low-income communities.<sup>2</sup> This is especially true in the U.S. Gulf Coast region and the state of Louisiana.

Over time, these challenges are being exacerbated by population increases and transitions as climate and non-climate drivers (e.g., people moving out of urban centers into more rural areas) influence where people choose — or are able — to live.

In southeast Louisiana, resilient, affordable housing initiatives are critical to ensuring equitable adaptation that takes into consideration the myriad overlapping challenges facing all Louisianans, but especially those living in communities that have long borne a disproportionate burden of risk.

Over a two-year period between fall 2020 and spring 2022, **Capital Region Planning Commission** and **Georgetown Climate Center** partnered with dozens of people from government, private, and nonprofit sectors and community stakeholders in Region Seven of the **Louisiana Watershed Initiative**.<sup>3</sup> The result of that partnership effort is **Greauxing Resilience at Home: A Regional Vision**<sup>4</sup> (Regional Vision), a resource to inform Region Seven’s ongoing work to increase community resilience by promoting affordable housing and nature-based solutions.

Regional and local governments in Region Seven can use the Regional Vision to identify potential legal, planning, and policy tools and projects to increase the affordability and availability of housing and the use of nature-based solutions. In addition, the Regional Vision offers insights for policymakers across Louisiana, throughout the Gulf Coast region, and nationally.

This report is composed of 24 individual case studies developed by Georgetown Climate Center to support the Regional Vision. These case studies describe best and emerging practices, tools, and examples from Louisiana and other U.S. jurisdictions to make progress on these complex and challenging issues. These case studies are intended to provide transferable lessons and ideas for regional and local governments addressing housing and mitigating flood risk as integrated parts of comprehensive community resilience strategies. Collectively, these case studies present a suite, although not an exhaustive list of tools and approaches that can be used to facilitate any of these efforts.

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1 STATE OF LA., LOUISIANA CLIMATE ACTION PLAN: CLIMATE INITIATIVES TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR 15–16 (Feb. 2022), available at <https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/CCI-Task-force/CAP/ClimateActionPlanFinal.pdf>.

2 See *id.* at 15–17.

3 The Louisiana Watershed Initiative is an effort to create a paradigm shift in floodplain management towards a strategy that approaches flood risk reduction from a nature-based solutions and land-use-based approach. A part of this approach includes identifying eight separate regional watershed management areas to assist in achieving cross-jurisdictional activities.

Region Seven is one of these eight watershed regions. Region Seven encompasses the upper part of the toe of Louisiana’s boot. It spans eastward from the Mississippi River near Baton Rouge across the Northshore (i.e., north of Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas) to Mississippi and along the Mississippi River to the Bonnet Carré Spillway. The region includes 13 parishes and 45 incorporated municipalities.

4 To reflect their connection to Louisiana’s cultural heritage, the project team and members of Region Seven that participated in this process chose to use the word “Greaux,” a French-inspired phonetic spelling of the word “Grow,” to brand this product.

Where possible, all the case studies share a consistent organizational format to allow easier cross-comparison of tools, processes, and takeaways:

- The **Background** section introduces the regional and local context (e.g., location, demographics) for each case study, including the following facing each jurisdiction: extreme weather risks, housing and environmental challenges, and development pressures.
- The **Housing** section focuses on the legal, planning, and policy tools and projects that have been designed and implemented to support the growth and preservation of housing affordability and availability.
- The **Environment** section highlights how vulnerable habitats like floodplains and other open spaces are being restored, conserved, and protected as a part of comprehensive resilience strategies to provide important ecosystem and community benefits like reducing flood risk and creating community assets, such as parks and trails.
- The **Community Engagement** section summarizes how governments have provided different types of public engagement opportunities and how affected residents have contributed to these planning and decisionmaking processes.
- The **Funding** section identifies how the programs, plans, and projects discussed have been funded by federal, state, and local government and private and nongovernmental sources.
- The **Next Steps** section captures the anticipated future actions that featured case study jurisdictions may take in implementing these tools and strategies.
- The **Considerations and Lessons Learned** section concludes with the primary takeaways from each example that other regional and local policymakers and communities may consider when developing or implementing their own housing and resilience strategies using these legal, planning, and policy tools.

A few additional notes about the case studies:

- **The case studies selected prioritize relatable and scalable models from places similar to Louisiana:** Wherever possible, Georgetown Climate Center aimed to acknowledge and lift up the work of jurisdictions and nongovernmental actors in Region Seven and neighboring watershed regions to inspire peer-to-peer sharing and actions from as close to home as possible. These resources are drawn from 12 states, with an emphasis on regions and local areas in the Gulf and Mid-Atlantic: Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Examples and lessons drawn from these regions are easiest to apply to a Louisianan context because they feature similar geography or analogous impacts from flooding and other climate effects.
- **There are no perfect, “one-size-fits-all” solutions:** While the case studies and resource entries informing the Region Vision are instructive for Region Seven and beyond, none of them are “perfect” examples of how to solve these complex and challenging issues. Georgetown Climate Center found no single case study or resource that provides a point-for-point or model for what Region Seven is trying to accomplish. No other jurisdiction identified is currently trying to integrate housing, flooding, equity, resilience, and population changes together in a single plan, ordinance, or policy. However, some jurisdictions are moving in that direction, or are making progress on discrete elements of what will eventually become a more holistic strategy. Therefore, this report and the Regional Vision draw analogous connections and recommendations that can be combined to facilitate more comprehensive planning and land-use efforts.

The case studies in this report were informed by interviews with practitioners and community leaders in charge of designing and overseeing this work. No statements or opinions, however, should be attributed to any individual or organization included in the *Acknowledgements* section of this report.

It is also important to note that the examples described in each case study are ongoing and the content included in this report is current as of spring 2022. For future updates about these and other case studies and the Regional Vision, please visit [Greaxing Resilience at Home: A Regional Vision](#) and Georgetown Climate Center’s [Adaptation Clearinghouse](#).

# *City of Baton Rouge – Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

## **Ardendale Master Plan and Guiding Principles**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Ardendale Master Plan and Guiding Principles (plan) is a planned community development in the Ardenwood area of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Ardendale consists of 200 acres purchased in 2012 by Build Baton Rouge (BBR), the city’s redevelopment agency. The site currently includes public housing, the automotive technology campus of Baton Rouge Community College, and several acres of wetlands.

As proposed under the plan, Ardendale will become a new urbanist community that will include the following types of planned projects: mixed-income affordable housing, infrastructure, quality-of-life amenities, and cohesive landscaping.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the new vision for Ardendale is to build amenities like housing, businesses, and green space and integrate public access across various community resources to grow socioeconomic resilience. As part of this vision, the plan also includes landscaping design rules that aim to encourage outdoor recreation and community gathering, mitigate natural hazards, and enhance neighborhood aesthetics and culture by using native plants. By balancing community needs and character, the plan demonstrates a multi-faceted and integrated approach to redevelopment that may be illustrative for local policymakers preparing for population growth due to climate change.

### **BACKGROUND**

Ardendale, formerly named Smiley Heights, is a community development project planned for a 200-acre parcel located in the Mid-City area of Baton Rouge, located in East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish, Louisiana. The Ardendale footprint currently includes the neighborhoods of Smiley Heights, and Melrose East. The Ardendale Master Plan will guide development of the Ardendale site and was created with inter-agency collaboration as part of the BR Choice Transformation Plan,

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<sup>1</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 4 (June 2014), *available at* [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf).

a broader initiative to revitalize the Smiley Heights, Melrose East, and East Fairfields neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup>

The Ardendale project began with work of the nonprofit Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAf) that later BBR took up.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, BBR purchased the land from several nonprofit owners in 2012 with the help of the city and the parish, which provided \$1.5 million from a disaster recovery grant and \$500,000 from an East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority grant, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

## ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Released in June 2014, the Ardendale Master Plan and Guiding Principles is intended to guide architectural styles and spatial relationships between buildings, sidewalks, and roads in the area. The plan is unique for its implementation of new urbanism, an approach to urban planning that emphasizes walkability, mixed-income housing, and quality-of-life amenities that support education, employment, and health.<sup>5</sup> Under traditional Euclidean zoning, land is generally zoned for only one use (e.g., residential, commercial, or agricultural). Comparatively, new urbanist planning embraces diverse land uses as a way to maximize resource access for all in the community.<sup>6</sup>

At the ground level, the Ardendale plan aims to serve everyday community needs by building housing, commerce, workplaces, and public spaces in close proximity to one another. The goal of advancing these design principles is to promote social objectives by minimizing transportation barriers, providing areas for recreation, and encouraging social bonds.<sup>7</sup> Chris Tyson, Chief Executive Officer of Build Baton Rouge, described the Ardendale plan's approach to revitalization

<sup>2</sup> See BR CHOICE, <https://www.brchoice.com> (last visited July 29, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Ardendale, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND., <https://www.braf.org/ardendale> (last visited July 29, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Steve Sanoski, *RDA completes purchase of 198 acres for Smile. Heights*, BUS. REPORT (Feb. 1, 2012), [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/businessreport\\_RDA-completes-purchase-of-198-acres-for-Smiley-Heights-1.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/businessreport_RDA-completes-purchase-of-198-acres-for-Smiley-Heights-1.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 4 (June 2014), available at [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf); *The Charter of the New Urbanism*, CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM, <https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/charter-new-urbanism> (last visited July 30, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 4 (June 2014), available at [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf); *The Charter of the New Urbanism*, CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM, <https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/charter-new-urbanism> (last visited July 30, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 4–6 (June 2014), available at [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf).



as “not about rebuilding dated housing, but in rethinking the way we fight neighborhood poverty in the first place.”<sup>8</sup>

On a broader level, the Ardendale plan dedicates particular attention to the ways in which the built environment can facilitate and support community cohesion, highlighting the importance of placemaking and civic identity. For example, increasing the area’s walkability and green spaces can enable greater opportunities for socializing and chance encounters between residents, contributing to a mutual sense of responsibility and care for the neighborhood.<sup>9</sup> The goal of creating these social bonds is a community with stability, civic empowerment, and sustained socioeconomic growth.

As such, projects in the plan are centered around three primary goals: innovation, resilient design, and placemaking.<sup>10</sup> These principles inform the design guidelines for affordable housing and landscaping in Ardendale.

## HOUSING

One priority in the Ardendale plan is to renovate the site’s aging public housing and build new mixed-income public housing, including senior housing. The plan provides for the development of approximately 500 new mixed-income housing units.<sup>11</sup> According to J. Daniels, Chief Executive Officer of the EBR Parish Housing Authority, the mixed-income nature of new units in Ardendale is an intentional departure from the “traditional model of public housing that concentrates poverty in one place.”<sup>12</sup> Importantly, renovation of existing units will not begin before current residents are moved into a newly completed development, which will prevent current residents from being displaced.<sup>13</sup>

As part of the goal to diversify and evenly distribute different types of housing across the community — as opposed to concentrating affordable housing in discrete locations — the plan also proposes changes to the City of Baton Rouge–Parish of East Baton Rouge zoning ordinance to allow for alternative housing options, including garage apartment rentals or apartments over retail and office spaces that can serve as accessory dwelling units or “ADUs” to supplement the

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<sup>8</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>9</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 6 (June 2014), available at [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>11</sup> *Urban Planning*, BUILD BATON ROUGE, <https://buildbatonrouge.org/our-work/urban-planning/> (last visited July 28, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*



residential housing stock.<sup>14</sup> These changes could provide developers with greater flexibility and present unique opportunities for single-income housing.

## ENVIRONMENT

The Ardendale plan's landscaping vision encourages the use of plants and resilient designs to enhance both the area's local environment and natural resources and the values of community placemaking and also mitigate natural hazards like flooding and heat, filter water, and serve as gardens to produce food.<sup>15</sup> The plan includes green space guidelines that promote the use of native plants, street trees, rain gardens, wetlands enhancements, and community gardens.<sup>16</sup>

The Ardendale plan emphasizes ecological cohesion in its landscaping rules and promotes the use of local native plant species and green space designs that reflect the area's natural environment and history. These landscaping design rules can be integrated with infrastructure improvements to increase pedestrian walkability and neighborhood connectivity, for example, by mandating the planting of trees along all public streets.<sup>17</sup>

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

After receiving a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2014, city and parish agencies met with numerous community organizations to create the development proposal that ultimately won a \$29.5-million grant in 2019 (see below). These stakeholders included organizations representing youth programs, health and wellness, arts and culture, education, and the workforce.<sup>18</sup>

To determine goals for the community members of Ardenwood and surrounding neighborhoods, agency partners deployed surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions with local residents, businesses, and nonprofits.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ARCHITECTS SOUTHWEST, ARDENDALE MASTER PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 4 (June 2014), *available at* [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code\\_6\\_25\\_14\\_low-res.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ardendale-Design-Code_6_25_14_low-res.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 57.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 57–63.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 58.

<sup>18</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>19</sup> *Frequently Asked Questions*, BR CHOICE, <https://www.brchoice.com/faq> (last visited July 28, 2021).

## FUNDING

Build Baton Rouge initially acquired the 200-acre area for \$2 million, with \$1.5 million coming from a disaster relief recovery grant and a \$500,000 grant from the East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority.<sup>20</sup>

In 2014, the City of Baton Rouge was awarded a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).<sup>21</sup> The award catalyzed the planning process for Ardendale, centering the area's needs for greener streetscapes, better access to supermarkets, and solutions for blight, crime, and unemployment.<sup>22</sup>

Over the next four years, government, nonprofit, and business stakeholders came together to support Baton Rouge's application for a competitive HUD Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) grant.<sup>23</sup> The focus of the CNI program is to revitalize blighted public housing and make catalytic improvements to vacant property, housing, businesses, services, and schools. In 2019, Baton Rouge was awarded a \$29.5-million HUD CNI grant, which will partially support project implementation.<sup>24</sup> Consistent with the goals of the CNI program, the Ardendale plan takes an intentionally comprehensive approach to affordable housing and community development.

As part of the MOVEBR program, EBR parish will also invest \$15 million into a pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare in the Ardenwood area, including Ardendale and surrounding

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<sup>20</sup> Steve Sanoski, *RDA completes purchase of 198 acres for Smile. Heights*, BUS. REPORT (Feb. 1, 2012), [https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/businessreport\\_RDA-completes-purchase-of-198-acres-for-Smile-Heights-1.pdf](https://buildbatonrouge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/businessreport_RDA-completes-purchase-of-198-acres-for-Smile-Heights-1.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Frequently Asked Questions, BR CHOICE, <https://www.brchoice.com/faq> (last visited July 28, 2021); East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority Plays a Major Role in New \$30 Million HUD Grant Application, EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH HOUS. AUTH., <http://ebrpha.org/br-choice/> (last visited July 29, 2021); Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>22</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* The CNI program emerged out of lessons learned from the first generation of federal housing projects, which has been criticized for enabling the concentration of poverty and contributing to patchworks of wealthy and impoverished neighborhoods within the same city. CNI is part of HUD's broader HOPE VI program, which focuses on revitalizing disinvested public housing projects into mixed-use developments.

neighborhoods.<sup>25 26</sup>

The Ardendale project as a whole is estimated to cost around \$200 million.<sup>27</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The plan is intended to be implemented through four different phases. In the first phase beginning in 2020, EBR Parish Housing Authority is expected to break ground on 500 new mixed-income units.<sup>28</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

For local policymakers, including in receiving areas confronted with redevelopment opportunities to accommodate increasing population, Ardendale demonstrates how new urbanist design can be used in lieu of more traditional approaches to planning and zoning to promote affordable housing, green space, and neighborhood revitalization. Furthermore, the Ardendale plan shows how urban design and revitalization initiatives can be informed by both the individual and social needs of a community. Rather than concentrating public and assisted housing in certain locations, Ardendale focuses on mixed-income housing built within walking-distance to community amenities related to education, jobs, commerce, social opportunities, and outdoor recreation.

While the Ardendale plan is not expressly a climate adaptation plan, its approach to community development is integrated with strategies to grow broader socioeconomic and environmental resilience. By integrating placemaking and environmental resilience goals, the plan's design principles for green space and infrastructure also demonstrate the potential for natural hazard mitigation to be incorporated with other development goals and initiatives. Coordinating all of these policies objectives is key to promoting holistic community resilience, especially in the context of a changing climate.

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<sup>25</sup> “The MOVEBR Transportation and Infrastructure Improvements Program is the most significant transportation infrastructure investment in the history of East Baton Rouge Parish. The 1/2 cent sales tax proposition, which excludes food and drugs, was approved by the voters of East Baton Rouge Parish on December 8, 2018. The tax became effective on April 1, 2019 and will continue for 30 years until March 31, 2049. Proceeds of the tax can only be spent on the list of projects approved by the voters.” *MOVEBR Program Overview*, MOVEBR, <https://movebr.brla.gov/page/movebr-program-overview> (last visited July 28, 2021).

<sup>26</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Neighborhood, radically reimagined*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 5, 2019), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2019/12/5/neighborhood-radically-reimagined>.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Gallo, *Baton Rouge eyes gigantic federal grant to boost Ardendale with housing, retail*, ADVOCATE (Aug. 30, 2018), [https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/article\\_603947f8-ac6c-11e8-ab7b-7f2dbd39f754.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_603947f8-ac6c-11e8-ab7b-7f2dbd39f754.html).

<sup>28</sup> Maggie Heyn Richardson, *Housing isn't enough*, BATON ROUGE AREA FOUND. (Dec. 2, 2020), <https://www.braf.org/stories/2020/12/2/choice-neighborhood>; *Ardendale Master Plan*, BUILD BATON ROUGE, <https://buildbatonrouge.org/our-work/urban-planning/> (last visited July 28, 2021).