

Greauxing Resilience at Home

City of Baton Rouge–Parish of East Baton Rouge,
Louisiana: **Scotlandville Community Strategic Plan**



GEORGETOWN CLIMATE CENTER

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Louisiana is one of the hardest-hit areas in the United States as extreme weather events and regular flooding become more frequent and intense.¹ These challenges often fall “first and worst” on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color or “BIPOC” and low-income communities.² 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**.³ The result of that partnership effort is **Greauxing Resilience at Home: A Regional Vision**⁴ (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.

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

Scotlandville Community Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 2019 and 2022, Southern University worked with community partners in Scotlandville, located in north Baton Rouge, to develop a blueprint for improving housing and other socioeconomic outcomes for Scotlandville’s residents. The Scotlandville Community Strategic Plan¹ (Community Plan) is an example of how one Louisiana community has used public participation and community planning to address housing shortages and other challenges in a chronically disinvested community. The Community Plan also helps to highlight the role that universities and other nongovernment institutions can play to develop and implement comprehensive community visions for housing and other services to help increase local resilience.

BACKGROUND

Scotlandville is a community in north Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and home to approximately 10,000 residents.² Historically founded as an African-American community, Scotlandville was incorporated into the City of Baton Rouge in the 1970s, during a national recession and a time when there was limited funding and political will for urban programs that support socioeconomic development.³ The disinvestment continued in the following decades, leading to chronic challenges like a shortage of affordable housing, food deserts, lack of public transportation, economic deterioration, and disparities in health outcomes between residents of different races and income strata.⁴

¹ S.U., SCOTLANDVILLE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (DRAFT) (NOV. 19, 2021), *available at* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e8353f4ee1414582f95ad5f/t/61dc681b1f21c424f877fca2/1641834553773/ScotlandvillePlanDraft_for+website.pdf.

² *Id.* at 92.

³ Yousef Danesh, The Unsuccessful Struggles of a Black Community to Incorporate: A Case Study, Scotlandville, 30 J. BLACK STUD. 184 (1999).

⁴ S.U., SCOTLANDVILLE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (DRAFT) 7 (NOV. 19, 2021), *available at* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e8353f4ee1414582f95ad5f/t/61dc681b1f21c424f877fca2/1641834553773/ScotlandvillePlanDraft_for+website.pdf.

As a result, Scotlandville faces persistent housing challenges, including an aging and deteriorating housing stock and a shortage of housing for very low-income renters and homeowners (or households that make between 31–50 percent of Median Family Income).⁵ Three quarters of Scotlandville’s housing stock consists of single-family homes, which severely limits options for students, young professionals, and the elderly who generally cannot afford this type of residence.⁶ With roughly the same percentage of housing built before 1979, much of the available housing in Scotlandville is over 30 years old and in need of repairs or other updates, which can contribute to community blight and a significant number of vacancies.⁷ Indeed, in 2019, approximately 20 percent of the housing units in Scotlandville were vacant, a relatively high number that poses challenges for attracting investments and boosting the community’s image.⁸

Today, Scotlandville continues to be anchored by Southern University (SU), a historically Black, land grant university that initiated a series of planning documents in 2019 to focus investments on meeting the needs of its students and the Scotlandville community at large. The foundational plan, IMAGINE 20K: 2018–2030, was drafted through a collaboration between SU and A&M College. IMAGINE 20K prioritizes ten goals to help align the university’s academic programs to the workforce needs of its students, as well to support infrastructure and other community improvements to meet the needs of Scotlandville’s residents. To support the goals identified under IMAGINE 20K, SU developed two additional plans to facilitate its implementation: (1) the SU Strategic Master Plan (Campus Plan), which focuses on physical improvements to the campus; and (2) the Scotlandville Community Strategic Plan (Community Plan), which aims to create a more vibrant, mixed-use community that supports SU’s students, faculty, staff, and other residents with housing and other services. The final version of the plan, which is anticipated to be released in 2022, is the focus of this entry.⁹

OVERVIEW OF SCOTLANDVILLE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The Scotlandville Community Strategic Plan (Community Plan) was developed by Southern University and the Southern University System Foundation to help shape long-term development

⁵ *Id.* at 94–97.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.* at 95.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ The development of the Community Plan was initiated in 2019 to support the implementation of IMAGINE 20K. The Community Plan itself built on two previous planning efforts from 2011: the Scotlandville 2030 Comprehensive Community Development Plan (SCCDP) and the Scotlandville Gateway Community Improvement Plan. The SCCDP, which was incorporated into the East Baton Rouge Parish Comprehensive Plan and adopted by the East Baton Rouge City Parish in 2018, set the community’s priority for the next 20 years. The Community Improvement Plan was more narrowly focused on the Scotlandville Gateway community. *Id.* at 6–7.

among public and private stakeholders, including city staff, the Metro Council, Planning Community, nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders.¹⁰

The Community Plan reflects a multi-year community engagement process with Scotlandville's residents and other neighborhood stakeholders who provided critical input into the content of the plan (see the part below on Community Engagement). The framework of the Community Plan is organized in two sections: the first section provides the community visions and recommendations, while the second provides supporting research and background analysis.

Broadly, "Part 1" was developed through a robust public participation process and identifies Scotlandville's challenges, visions, and goals. Specifically, Part 1 proposes goals and recommendations organized under five key visions:

1. **Thriving Community:** Creating a mixed-use community where all residents can participate in Scotlandville's economic expansion.
2. **Welcoming Neighborhood:** Expanding housing types to meet the needs of different types of residents at different income levels.
3. **Community Image and Beautification:** Creating more public art and using streetscaping to improve the overall look of the community.
4. **Healthy Community:** Improving healthy equity in Scotlandville by reducing food insecurity and encouraging green development.
5. **Connecting Scotlandville, Southern University, and Beyond:** Highlighting Scotlandville's history and culture, and increasing the university's engagement with Scotlandville's broader community.¹¹

In the second half of the Community Plan, "Part 2" provides background information to support and contextualize the recommendations under Part 1, including research on local trends in housing, economic development, transportation, and land use and zoning.

HOUSING

One of the most prominent themes in the Community Plan is the focus on creating and preserving affordable housing for all of Scotlandville's residents. The focus on providing more affordable housing and enhancing the surrounding built environment for residents from all income levels is infused throughout four out of the five key vision areas, as captured below:

¹⁰ *Id.* at 5–7. The Community Plan was drafted by a project team consisting of the Center for Planning Excellent (CPEX), a statewide nonprofit planning organization in Louisiana; nonprofit partners (Community Against Drugs and Violence, or CADAV); and consulting groups (Sinektics, LLC; JQUAD Planning Group; Vectura and Associates).

¹¹ *Id.* at 21.

1. **Thriving Community:** In order to “increase opportunities for commercial and residential development,” the Community Plan recommends working with partners like the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District to identify potential development sites and to spur infill construction and economic development.¹² As part of the process, the Community Plan suggests whether zoning changes may be required to implement high-density multi-family housing. Similarly, the plan proposes working with the East Baton Rouge City–Parish to ensure clarity around zoning codes and the permitting process in order to better streamline redevelopment in the community.
2. **Welcoming Neighborhood:** The Community Plan recommends a long list of action items to achieve three primary housing goals: (1) expand the variety of housing types to accommodate residents at all income levels; (2) bring vacant properties back into the market and into productive use; and (3) assist residents with homeownership and neighborhood improvement. Common action items to achieve these goals include: (A) recommending the city–parish review and amend zoning ordinances (e.g., to allow mixed-use developments by right or create standards for infill development); (B) prioritize certain vulnerable populations, such as seniors, by developing cottage or cluster housing to enable seniors to own or rent smaller-sized homes that require less financial equity to acquire or resources to maintain; and (C) work with a broad coalition of stakeholders from the grassroots to city level — including Build Baton Rouge and the Scotlandville Community Development Corporation — to achieve multiple goals, from developing strategies to acquire vacant and blighted properties to increasing housing literacy among residents.¹³
3. **Community Image and Beautification:** In addition to strategies that create and preserve affordable housing, the Community Plan includes measures to enhance not only the community’s physical appearance, but also improve safety within neighborhoods.¹⁴ For example, the planning team recommends implementing a beautification program along a key corridor, Harding Boulevard, through tree-planting, landscaping improvements, and adding pedestrian amenities to improve neighborhood connectivity. Under the plan, the community also interested in adopting a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach, which focuses on improving the built environment (e.g., improving signage, adding crosswalks) to reduce crime.¹⁵
4. **Healthy Community:** The Community Plan emphasizes the role of housing security as one of several key Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) that can help shape health

¹² Objectives cited in quotation marks refer to specific goals under each of the five key focus areas of the Community Plan. *Id.* at 25.

¹³ *Id.* at 26–33. Build Baton Rouge (formerly the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority). The Scotlandville Community Development Corporation is a local nonprofit that provides housing assistance to low- and moderate-income residents.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 34–47.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 46.

outcomes for residents across all income levels.¹⁶ In order to maximize other SDOH, such as healthcare access and neighborhood and built environment, the Community Plan includes recommended strategies to address food insecurity and environmental challenges, such as stormwater runoff. For example, the plan highlights installing green infrastructure (e.g., tree canopies, permeable paving) that can help improve stormwater management and decrease flooding, and developing community gardens or community farmer's markets to help reduce food insecurity.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community Plan was developed through a multi-year public participation process that included community meetings, interviews, and online surveys, through which residents and other stakeholders were able to provide input on the content of the plan.¹⁷ Specifically, the project team assembled a 27-member Stakeholder Committee that met six times between June 2020 and June 2021 to review research and other information presented by the project team, and to provide recommendations and other feedback on the creation of the Community Plan. The Stakeholder Committee reflected a diversity of community voices, including SU students and faculty, as well as Scotlandville residents, business owners, and community groups. The project team also held workshops for local high school students, who helped to identify priority issues, to better reflect the community's relatively young population.¹⁸ Finally, the project team partnered with the students in Louisiana State University's Student Design Studio, who met with the Stakeholder Committee members to develop designs for several of the projects proposed under the plan.

NEXT STEPS

As stated in the Community Plan, implementing the numerous recommendations will require significant resources.¹⁹ Accordingly, the Community Plan also identifies potential partnerships and funding resources that can be leveraged to operationalize the plan's many recommendations. The Community Plan's roadmap for implementation highlights not only the opportunity for building strategic partnerships between stakeholders, but also proposes a timeline for the first two years of implementation, including conducting demonstration projects to build community support, building an inventory of buildings available for renovation or development, and working with the City-Parish Planning Commission to identify barriers to development in the zoning process.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 48–62.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 14.

¹⁸ In 2019, over 98 percent of Scotlandville's residents identify as Black or African American, with nearly a third of the population under 20 years old. *Id.* at 92.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 80–84.

The Community Plan also includes potential funding options to implement the community's visions and recommendations. The plan's authors encourage the use of public-private partnerships between public entities and the private sector to help raise the necessary capital financing and develop the project management skills required to implement key recommendations, such as building mixed-use housing commercial developments. Additionally, the plan discusses leveraging a number of federal and state programs to help fund affordable housing projects, including:

- **New Market Housing Tax Credits (MNTC Program)**, a federal program that permits private investors to receive a tax credit in exchange for making financial investments in Community Development Entities, which facilitate the flow of private capital from an investor to qualified businesses in low-income communities;
- **Federal Opportunity Zone Program**, which encourages private investment in low-income communities by providing capital gains tax incentives in areas like Scotlandville and many parts of north Baton Rouge, which have been designated Opportunity Zones;
- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)**, a federal program that provides developers with tax incentives to finance the rehabilitation or construction of low-income rental housing;
- **Payment-In-Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)**, a state program under which a tax-exempt political entity (e.g., parish, city) acquires title to a property, thereby exempting the property from ad valorem taxes, in exchange for the property owner negotiating a separate form payment with the political entity; and
- **State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits**, which provide a 20 percent state commercial tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-generating historic buildings located in the Scotlandville Cultural District through 2025.

CONSIDERATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Scotlandville's Community Strategic Plan demonstrates the value of centering community nonprofit partners in conversations with residents and other stakeholders about community visions, goals, and recommendations. The development of the Community Plan was spearheaded by Southern University, which assembled a diverse team of stakeholders under the Scotlandville Strategic Plan Committee. The committee was able to harness its strengths in community engagement and its preexisting relationships with members of the Scotlandville community to draw out the voices of residents and other stakeholders who might not have otherwise been heard. Importantly, the planning process also demonstrated the value of incorporating voices from students and younger residents, who not only participated via community workshops, but also helped to provide architectural design concepts within the plan.

Unlike many planning documents in which proposed housing initiatives are contained within a discrete section, the Community Plan elevates affordable housing as a priority by incorporating goals and recommendations across all but one of the key issue areas. In doing so, the residents and project team recognize the centrality of housing to successful outcomes in all community goals, including neighborhood beautification and reducing food insecurity. Other communities can look to comprehensive plans like the Scotlandville Community Plan in order to integrate housing and other concepts to build both individual and community resilience.

Finally, the Community Plan reinforces the importance of providing pathways to operationalize the plan's numerous recommendations. The community planning process is not only a platform to identify common visions and priorities, but also an opportunity to identify specific actors from all sectors and their potential roles in turning the plan into action. The Community Plan was developed specifically to help implement a broader community vision under IMAGINE 20K, and therefore provided more detailed guidance on actions, stakeholders, funding sources, and potential partners to help execute the community's visions and priorities. Other local governments and communities can consider developing neighborhood-specific strategies to carry out broader ones like local comprehensive plans. As such, it is important to think about planning at both scales.