

Greauxing Resilience at Home

St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana:
**Resilient Planning, Affordable Housing, Environmental,
and Funding Initiatives**



GEORGETOWN CLIMATE CENTER

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation** for its generous support and guidance, and without whom the partnership efforts with Louisiana and Capital Region Planning Commission and this report would not have been possible.

We also appreciate the work of the following individuals who helped us finalize, format, and publish this report: **Brent Futrell**, Director of Design, Office of Communications, Georgetown University Law Center; **Peter Raffle**, Communications Director, GCC; **Caren Fitzgerald**, Communications Associate, GCC; and **Mark Rupp**, Adaptation Program Director, GCC.

Last but certainly not least, we would like to specially thank and acknowledge the following individuals for taking the time to speak with us, review drafts, and provide insights that were invaluable in helping to

inform the development of the **Regional Vision** and these case studies: **Manny Patole**, Independent Consultant; **Christopher Tyson**, formerly Chief Executive Officer, Build Baton Rouge; **Gretchen Siemers**, Director, Planning and Special Projects, Build Baton Rouge; **Lee E. Melancon, III**, Director of Community and Economic Development, Mayor's Office of Community and Economic Development, City of Donaldsonville, Louisiana; **Bithia Ratnasamy**, Director of Housing, Executive Office, Atlanta Housing, City of Atlanta, Georgia; **Carolina Rodriguez**, Project Manager, Housing and Community Development, Department of City Planning, City of Atlanta, Georgia; **Jaren Abedania**, formerly Vice President of Real Estate, Westside Future Fund; **Bridget Wiles**, Chief Operations Officer, APD Urban Planning and Management, LLC; **O. Jesse Wiles**, Principal and Chief Executive Officer, APD Urban Planning and Management, LLC; **Amber Weaver**, Sustainability Officer, Office of Sustainability, City of Asheville, North Carolina; **Paul D'Angelo**, formerly Community Development Program Director, City of Asheville, North Carolina; **Stacy Merten**, formerly Long-Range Planning Manager, Planning and Urban Design Department, City of Asheville, North Carolina; **Vaidila Satvika**, Urban Planner, Planning and Urban Design Department, City of Asheville, North Carolina; **Marc Coudert**, Office of Sustainability, City of Austin, Texas; **Erica Leak**, Development Officer, Housing and Planning Department, City of Austin, Texas; **Erin Wood**, Planner, Watershed Protection Department, City of Austin, Texas; **Isaac W. Stein**, Design Principal, Dept.; **Maggie Tsang**, Managing Principal, Dept.; **Debbie Love**, City Planner, City of North Miami, Florida; **Christopher G. Miller**, President, The Piedmont Environmental Council; **John McCarthy**, Senior Advisor and Director of Strategic Partnerships, The Piedmont Environmental Council; **Cameron Herrington**, Living Cully Program Manager, Oregon; **Crystal Launder**, Housing Planner, Department of Housing and Human Services, City of Boulder, Colorado; **René C. Pastorek**, formerly Director of Planning and Development, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana; **Tara Lambeth**, Coastal and Water Management Division Lead, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana;

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No statements or opinions contained within this case study report, the Regional Vision, or Georgetown Climate Center's Adaptation Clearinghouse should be attributed to any individual or organization included in the above *Acknowledgements*.

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(background image) Credit: **Rachelle Sanderson**.

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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](#).

St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana **Resilient Planning, Affordable Housing, Environmental, and Funding Initiatives**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St. John the Baptist Parish is one of Louisiana's oldest settled areas. The parish is water-adjacent and predominantly rural. Over the last decade, significant weather events have highlighted the flooding and other risks that come with proximity to both the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Pontchartrain, the latter of which borders the parish. The parish's location in the path of New Orleans's evacuation routes compounds the need to prepare for flooding and hurricane events.

The parish has undertaken several initiatives to adopt development trends and patterns that will guide population growth in ways that make the parish and its communities more resilient to future rainfall and flooding risks. Namely, the parish developed a Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2014 and a Coastal Zone Management Plan in 2016.¹ Most recently in 2019, the parish partnered with the state and nonprofit philanthropy Foundation for Louisiana through the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) capital improvement process to create an Adaptation Strategy.

Collectively, the plans offer a variety of principles, goals, and policies related to the parish's growth and development. Those policies and development planning goals encompass prioritizing natural features, such as adopting green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) solutions and conserving open space, in addition to addressing the socioeconomic dynamics that come with planning for affordable housing. In general, the parish seeks to preserve low-density and conservation-oriented development trends across most of the parish, much of which is flood-prone. This approach will discourage floodplain and open space development by directing population growth and affordable housing investments toward drier, denser areas of the parish. These efforts are supported by public engagement, external partnerships, and federal and innovative funding sources.

¹ Note, this list is not exhaustive of plans related to affordable housing, flood mitigation, and resilience in the parish. For example, the parish created a Recovery Plan post-Hurricane Isaac. This list is only intended to be representative of the plans discussed in this entry.

Other local policymakers working to address rural flood, population growth, and housing management issues can look to St. John the Baptist for their policies directing population growth toward denser, more urban areas. Those policies allow the parish to preserve rural and flood-prone areas and maintain parish character and reduce risk to homes and infrastructure.

BACKGROUND

St. John the Baptist is a rural parish in Louisiana with a total population of approximately 42,000 residents.² The parish's population increased after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, though St. John itself is vulnerable to Gulf Coast hurricanes.³ One of the original 19 parishes created from the Territory of Orleans, St. John the Baptist was the second permanent settlement in Louisiana.⁴ Over a dozen parish structures are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁵

The area is 213 square miles, and the largest population center is an unincorporated, Census-designated area called LaPlace.⁶ Median household income is slightly higher than the state average, though the proportion of people with bachelor's degrees is lower.⁷ English is the only language in 93 percent of households, and 88 percent of workers travel alone by car to work.⁸ Mean travel time to work is 30 minutes.⁹ As a history-rich parish with agrarian roots, the parish's residents generally support low-density rural development and historical preservation.¹⁰

The parish's proximity to the Gulf puts it at risk of hurricane damage. As such, storms like Katrina, Isaac, and Ida have caused severe damage in southern parishes like St. John. Following the post-

² *St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana*, U. S. CENSUS BUREAU, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0500000US22095> (last visited Sept. 21, 2021).

³ Matt Scallan, *Population in St. John, St. Charles parishes nears 100,000 mark*, NOLA (Feb. 22, 2011), https://www.nola.com/news/politics/article_0f3cab98-188e-5230-a358-3a9c066e09.html.

⁴ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 83 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Quick facts: St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/stjohnthebaptistparishlouisiana/POP010220> (last visited Sept. 21, 2021).

⁷ Median household income in the parish is \$57,000, while the state average is \$51,000. Twenty-five percent of individuals in the state have a bachelor's degree or higher, while 16 percent of the residents in St. John have a bachelor's or higher. *St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0500000US22095> (last visited Sept. 21, 2021).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Quick facts: St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/stjohnthebaptistparishlouisiana/POP010220> (last visited Sept. 21, 2021).

¹⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 83 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>; ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 83 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbcompresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

Katrina population rise in the parish, Isaac damaged over 12,000 parish homes (nearly half the homes that existed in the parish pre-Isaac).¹¹ In 2021, Ida flooded numerous homes, resulting in stranded residents and evacuations.¹²

The parish also has significant relationships to several large inland bodies of water, and nearly half the parish's total area is classified as some form of wetland.¹³ Even more of the parish (nearly 90 percent) is designated as a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), which consists of the 100-year or one-percent annual chance floodplain.¹⁴ The Mississippi River bifurcates the north and south halves of the parish, and its northern extension is bordered by Lake Pontchartrain to the east and Lake Maurepas to the northwest. The southern half of the parish wraps around a portion of Lac Des Allemands, another local water body. The parish is also bifurcated by Interstate 10, which runs parallel to the Mississippi River. Interstate 10, the main egress route for the New Orleans area during weather-related evacuation events, is also the main egress route for St. John in addition to St. Charles and St. James parishes.¹⁵

OVERVIEW OF SELECT PARISH PLANNING EFFORTS

In response to impacts from repeated hurricanes and weather events, the parish has taken multiple initiatives to address these risks that come from its proximity to both rising sea levels and congestion-prone evacuation routes. The parish is a Class Seven participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)'s Community Rating System (CRS), and is a member of a CRS user group facilitated by a regional collaborator.¹⁶

¹¹ Littice Bacon-Blood, *St. John Parish bounces back from Hurricane Isaac*, NOLA (Aug. 23, 2021), https://www.nola.com/news/weather/article_2fd6be93-3472-51a6-9486-767cfa89477a.html.

¹² Julia Jacobo, Emily Shapiro, Ivan Pereira, Morgan Winsor, & Bill Hutchinson, *Almost 800 rescued in St. John the Baptist Parish after Hurricane Ida*, ABC NEWS (Aug. 30, 2021), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/live-updates/hurricane-ida-new-orleans-live-updates/?id=79696173>.

¹³ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 165 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

¹⁴ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 60 (2019), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

¹⁵ *West Shore Lake Pontchartrain*, U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENG'RS, <https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/About/Projects/BBA-2018/West-Shore-Lake-Pontchartrain/id/1244/> (last visited Sept. 21, 2021).

¹⁶ *Community Rating System Users Groups > FLOAT*, FED. EMERGENCY MGMT. AGENCY, <http://floodhelp.uno.edu/Portal.aspx?ContentID=91> (last visited Oct. 27, 2021).

The parish's 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, a plan which serves as a prospective statement of policy to guide the parish's future development.¹⁷ The parish code has begun to be updated to incorporate this plan.¹⁸

In addition, the parish developed both a 2016 Coastal Zone Management Plan and 2019 Parish Adaptation Strategy, to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The Coastal Zone Management Plan aims to protect, restore, and enhance the parish's coastal environment for its natural services including wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, and commercial uses.¹⁹

The parish Adaptation Strategy was created through the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments or "LA SAFE" community-based, capital investment process led by the Louisiana Office of Community Development and nonprofit philanthropy Foundation for Louisiana.²⁰ The strategy serves as a community-led resilience blueprint for the parish, and is meant to inform adaptation efforts at the parish level including flood risk reduction measures and preparing for influxes of individuals from other areas.²¹ The parish formally adopted the Adaptation Strategy by ordinance.

This summary will highlight resilience measures the parish is taking under each of these plans, in addition to zoning measures related to promoting affordable housing and green spaces. Other plans and initiatives are discussed where relevant.

HOUSING

Development and community expansion in St. John the Baptist Parish are constrained by area: the northern part of the parish includes the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area, the portions of the parish along the Mississippi have industrial buffer zones, and much of the parish is at risk

¹⁷ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 19 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

¹⁸ *See e.g.*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES ch. 1, art. I, § 111-1 (2019), *available at* https://library.municode.com/la/st._john_the_baptist_parish/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=SPBLADERE_CH1_11SU_ARTIINGE_S111-1WOPHDE; *Id.* at ch. 113, art. IV, § 113-624 (2017), *available at* https://library.municode.com/la/st._john_the_baptist_parish/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=SPBLADERE_CH1_13ZO_ARTVISI_DIV1IN_S113-624PUIN; *Id.* at ch. 113, art. IV, § 113-626 (2018), *available at* https://library.municode.com/la/st._john_the_baptist_parish/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=SPBLADERE_CH1_13ZO_ARTVIIPA_S113-676PUIN.

¹⁹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN I-1 (2016), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

²⁰ Jennifer Li & Alex Love, Georgetown Climate Ctr., Managing the Retreat From Rising Seas — State of Louisiana: Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) (2020), *available at* <https://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/resources/managing-the-retreat-from-rising-seas-oo-state-of-louisiana-louisiana-strategic-adaptations-for-future-environments-la-safe.html>.

²¹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 5 (2019), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

of flood hazards.²² These space constraints and low-density development trends have together contributed to housing supply gaps. This has resulted in a nearly-homogenous single-family landscape that has contributed to the growth in the number of manufactured homes in the parish, which serve as the predominant type of affordable housing for many people and families.²³ As of 2014, manufactured homes were the second most common type of housing in the parish.²⁴ Further, the overall majority of homes in the parish are slab on grade, which exacerbates flood risk for these non-elevated structures.

The parish's 2014 Comprehensive Land Use Plan identifies a lack of housing options as a specific area of focus.²⁵ To address this issue while preserving the parish's rural nature, the parish will aim to encourage new residential subdivision development only in non-rural areas that are already served by infrastructure, or where infrastructure can be constructed more easily.²⁶ By encouraging residential infill development, this approach can reduce sprawl and therefore, alleviate some of the pressure to invest in new and expensive infrastructure.²⁷ Increasing urban development density relieves development pressure on the parish's rural areas, floodplain, and environmentally sensitive resources.²⁸ Similarly, one goal in the 2019 Adaptation Strategy is to encourage Smart Growth (such as infill development in low-risk areas) to mitigate flood risk.²⁹ This can allow the construction of cost-efficient, pedestrian-oriented housing outside the floodplain and preserve the parish's rural areas from development.

The parish Land Use Plan seeks to promote the development of affordable housing through partnership opportunities with private sector entities to provide assistance for acquiring, rehabilitating, and constructing homes for low-income, first-time buyers, and assistance for redevelopment and rehabilitation projects.³⁰ Incentives may include financial assistance to nonprofits that purchase, redevelop, and resell vacant properties to low-income residents, and promoting innovative personal financing options for homeowners. The Adaptation Plan echoes

²² *Id.* at 71.

²³ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 27–28, 30, & 89 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

²⁴ *Id.* at 27–28.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.* at 2, 15, & 50–51.

²⁷ *Id.* at 51 & 176.

²⁸ *Id.* at 50.

²⁹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 49 & 86 (2019), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

³⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 96 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

this policy, recognizing that housing incentive programs can be used to promote movement into higher-density, higher-elevation areas.³¹

Through the Land Use Plan, the parish will aim to avoid concentrating low-income residents and families in certain parts of the parish, instead promoting mixed-income communities with improved access to transportation, job centers, education, and recreation.³² Financing options like the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit can facilitate this type of mixed-income development.³³ The Land Use Plan supports these efforts by encouraging the development of revitalization plans for target neighborhoods.³⁴

ENVIRONMENT

The residents of St. John the Baptist generally favor development patterns that preserve the parish's low-density rural character and historical features.³⁵ As a result, conservation measures including protecting wetlands, trees, and open spaces and promoting the use of GSI are consistent with the parish's priorities and aesthetic. Conservation itself comes with tangible benefits for St. John the Baptist because of the rich hunting, fishing, and other cultural, recreational, and economic assets that a biodiverse ecosystem creates.³⁶

Wetlands, Open Spaces, and Floodplain Management

In all three plans, wetlands protection policies reflect the importance of the parish's relationship with wetlands and water. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to limit wetlands development through innovative methods like transferring development rights from privately owned wetlands to other developable lands.³⁷ In the Coastal Plan, the parish recommends regulating development to avoid damaging wetlands and requiring development-related harms to wetlands be mitigated where they cannot be fully avoided.³⁸ Finally, the Adaptation Strategy recommends coordinating with the U.S.

³¹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 129 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>; St. John the Baptist Ordinance 19-43, "An ordinance adopting the St. John the Baptist Parish Adaptation Strategy developed by the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) Program to help guide resilient development in the face of growth and environmental change for the safety and welfare of St. John Parish residents." (adopted by the St. John the Baptist Parish Council on Sept. 24, 2019).

³² ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 8 & 97 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

³³ *Id.* at 97.

³⁴ *Id.* at 97–98.

³⁵ *Id.* at 43.

³⁶ *Id.* at 161 & 171.

³⁷ *Id.* at 158.

³⁸ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 5–7 (2016), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to leverage other ongoing coastal protection and restoration efforts.³⁹

In addition to wetlands, the Comprehensive Plan similarly aims for the parish to conserve open spaces as natural assets for their ecosystem services and values. As such, the plan includes policy goals to protect the natural environment and rural spaces from overdevelopment.⁴⁰ These goals are consistent with land-use designations elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, which mark most of the 100-year floodplain for undevelopable or agricultural land uses (no distinction is made between the two due to their interspersing throughout the parish).⁴¹ The Comprehensive Plan thus calls for the limited development of usable open spaces and trails, such as by incentivizing clustered development.⁴² The parish can also promote land-use patterns that will avoid or mitigate negative impacts on the local environment, encourage a variety of open spaces, and embrace Smart Growth, such as building standards for some types of new development that consider a maximum walking distance to nearby open spaces to ensure that people can be close to places like parks.⁴³

The parish further hopes to preserve floodplains as undeveloped open space, where minimal-impact uses like walking trails and other passive recreation can be prioritized instead of other types of development in the most flood-prone areas.⁴⁴ The Comprehensive Plan expressly discourages residential development in the 100-year floodplain and other environmentally sensitive areas.⁴⁵ This goal can be aided by the parish's policy of encouraging development in areas already served by infrastructure and the parish.⁴⁶ This use of infill to reduce flood risk synergizes with affordable housing development goals, as denser infill outside the floodplain reduces flood risk and distance to economic centers. The 2019 Adaptation Strategy reiterates this goal, and recommends updating the parish's zoning code to limit development in these areas while increasing the parish's use of green buffers.⁴⁷

³⁹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 124 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁴⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 10 & 48 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 49.

⁴² *See generally* the Affordable Housing segment of this text *supra*; ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 55 & 176 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁴³ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 178 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 55.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 50.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 2, 15, & 50–51.

⁴⁷ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 49 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

Preserving floodplain open space is consistent with the parish's goal of preserving natural hydrologic cycles for their natural benefits and resilience values.⁴⁸ This includes preventing damage to aquatic ecosystems as a result of development, such as restoring and/or mitigating any damages caused by development. Permeable pavement systems, rain gardens, and green infrastructure are all therefore encouraged.

Drainage

As laid out in the plans, the parish will aim to pursue projects that promote localized drainage projects like retention ponds, provide assistance to homeowners for flood risk mitigation, and leverage grant funding to acquire and floodproof repetitive loss structures. One such example comes from the Adaptation Strategy, which recommends developing policy mechanisms to allow for shared water detention areas.⁴⁹ Both the Comprehensive Plan and Adaptation Plan seek to complement hazard mitigation efforts through community outreach, such as making hazard mitigation knowledge available at schools and libraries.⁵⁰

Trees

Underscoring all of these efforts is the increased planting and maintenance of trees and vegetation. The parish Comprehensive Plan recognizes the use of native and noninvasive tree and plant species as a benefit to community health and resilience.⁵¹ In that plan, the parish therefore calls for incorporating those plant species into landscaping designs in greenway development and other public spaces, and using trees, vegetation, and other green buffers to reduce stormwater runoff.

Projects and Implementation

The parish's policies for open spaces, drainage, and trees can be seen in projects that have been undertaken since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Two areas identified as higher-flood risk in the plan have been the subject of streetscape and stormwater management enhancements. In addition, the parish has adopted a loan program to catalyze community projects, including

⁴⁸ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 182 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>; ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 5-3 (2016), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

⁴⁹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 109 (2019), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁵⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 159 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>; ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 109 (2019), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁵¹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 179 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

refurbishing parking lots to increase green space and stormwater management potential, while improving local community aesthetics.⁵² Lastly, the parish worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to address flood risks on the west side of Lake Pontchartrain.

Through the LA SAFE program, the state funded and supported the development of the parish's Adaptation Strategy. To aid the creation and implementation of that strategy document, the parish chose to restructure its zoning department to include a Coastal and Water Management Division, the first parish division dedicated to that purpose.

As part of that strategy, the state is funding two resilience projects prioritized by parish residents during LA SAFE's public engagement process.⁵³ The first is a complete streets project at Airline Highway and Main Street in LaPlace, the parish's largest population center.⁵⁴ The project, slated to be completed in May 2022, is funded through the state Office of Community Development as part of the National Disaster Resilience Competition.⁵⁵ The project includes green infrastructure installations to manage stormwater runoff, permeable parking, native plants, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

A second project is underway for the Belle Terre Boulevard streetscape, where complete streets will be developed to stimulate economic activity in the area while using green infrastructure to address flooding issues.⁵⁶ The project is an example of comprehensive design that aims to grow transit, resilience, hazard mitigation, and economic development benefits. This project is funded by the Gulf Coast Conservation Trust Fund.⁵⁷ This fund was established by the 2012 Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act to allocate penalties from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to promote restoration, conservation, green infrastructure, and tourism in Louisiana.⁵⁸

Two other projects unaffiliated with but similar to the LA SAFE projects — the Manchac Greenway and Garyville streetscape projects — are still in early stages of development.

Lastly, levees are being used to reduce storm surge risks from erosion of Lake Pontchartrain's shoreline and during severe weather events, consistent with the goals of the Coastal Management

⁵² *Id.* at 174.

⁵³ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 35 (2019), *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁵⁴ *Airline and Main Complete Streets*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, <https://www.sjbparish.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning/Resilience-Projects#section-3> (last visited Sept. 27, 2021).

⁵⁵ *National Disaster Resilience*, U.S. DEP'T OF HOUSING & URBAN DEV., <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-dr/resilient-recovery/> (last visited Sept. 27, 2021).

⁵⁶ *Airline and Main Complete Streets*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, <https://www.sjbparish.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning/Resilience-Projects#section-5> (last visited Sept. 27, 2021).

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

Plan.⁵⁹ When the parish drafted its 2014 Comprehensive Master Plan, it specifically mentioned the then-proposed West Shore of Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane Protection Levee as a preventative measure that would reduce flood risk due to storm surge from the lake.⁶⁰ This is consistent with the parish's observations that significant flood risks exist for LaPlace, the parish proper, and the evacuation routes into and out of the parish including Interstates 10 and 55.⁶¹ Using a combination of statutory funding from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) and municipal bonding, the parish contributed nearly \$10 million to the levee project, which is expected to be completed in 2022.⁶²

In addition, the parish contributed nearly \$10 million to a separate project to construct a breakwater system along the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain as an additional line of defense from storm surge.

Place-Based Investment Loan Program

The parish has also established a local place-based loan program, which offers no- interest loans up to \$50,000 to projects for businesses and nongovernmental organizations.⁶³ The program covers the parish's four historic overlay districts and the major corridor overlay district. The program prioritizes projects that can leverage this funding to attract private investment. Forty percent of the loan amount issued under the program is forgivable when a project is completed.⁶⁴ Funding comes from a post-Hurricane Isaac Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG–DR) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD).

Three categories of projects are eligible for this program: replacing commercial signs, refurbishing and/or greening parking lots for better aesthetics and stormwater management, and making facade improvements for historical commercial structures. While the program is not limited to GSI, those goals are explicitly within the scope of the loan fund when applied to parking lots in historic or

⁵⁹ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 5-6 (2016), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

⁶⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 28 & 154 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁶¹ Interstate 10 runs from east to west and serves as an egress route from New Orleans. Interstate 55 runs north to south and allows northward egress from St. John the Baptist Parish. ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 28 (2014), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbpcmpresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁶² *Airline and Main Complete Streets*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, <https://www.sjbparish.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning/Resilience-Projects#section-5> (last visited Sept. 27, 2021).

⁶³ *Place-based Investment Loan Program Frequently Asked Questions*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH (July 2019), *available at* <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/faqs-sjb-place-based-investment-program-17july-2019-final.pdf>.

⁶⁴ *Place-based Investment Loan Program*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, <https://www.sjbparish.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning/Place-Based-Investment-Loan> (last visited Sept. 27, 2021).

corridor districts. This includes reducing the amount of impervious space in a lot, preserving green space, and other green stormwater management methods.⁶⁵

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Each of the parish's plans involves community engagement in its planning or implementation goals. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan was developed through a collaborative process, which drew input from a diverse set of entities including parish residents, government officials, and various stakeholders.⁶⁶ This collaboration informed parish planners about residents' desires to preserve the low-density nature of the parish.

The Coastal Management Plan calls for a coastal zone management education and outreach program that trains staff to speak at local civic and educational events, make agency educational materials, maps, and other tools available, and create volunteer opportunities.⁶⁷

The LA SAFE process, which resulted in the selection of the Airline Highway and Main Street project and the development of the 2019 Adaptation Strategy, involved an extensive outreach and engagement process. Specifically, interested community members were engaged in a detailed set of workshops to input on project priorities and preferences.⁶⁸ The strategy's socioeconomic and resilience goals include integrating adaptation practices into all levels of government and each level of the educational system.⁶⁹

FUNDING

The Comprehensive Plan identifies multiple prospective funding sources to support the plan's initiatives and goals.⁷⁰ While the parish has a variety of funding sources (some for particular purposes, such as dedicated entertainment-sector funding for the Parks and Recreation Department), sources are often limited or are affected by economic conditions. In addition to general property taxes and municipal bonds, the parish describes special taxing districts,

⁶⁵ *Place-based Investment Loan Program Frequently Asked Questions*, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH (July 2019), available at https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/faqs-sjb-place-based-investment-program_17july-2019_final.pdf.

⁶⁶ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 1 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbcompresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

⁶⁷ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 5-12 (2016), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/program-document-czmp.pdf>.

⁶⁸ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH ADAPTATION STRATEGY 14-35 (2019), available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St.+John+the+Baptist+Adaptation+Strategy.pdf>.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 103.

⁷⁰ ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN 199 (2014), available at <https://www.sjbparish.gov/files/sharedassets/public/planning-amp-zoning/sjbcompresilienceplan-8-18-14.pdf>.

recreational impact fees, state community development funds, corporate and community sponsorship, leasing of public property, and other various grant programs.⁷¹

The LA SAFE planning process was funded by the Louisiana Office of Community Development (OCD).⁷² OCD received a CDBG–DR grant through HUD’s National Disaster Resilience Competition, which funded LA SAFE and the parish’s adaptation projects.⁷³

Regardless, it is important to note that some of the various plan’s goals related to affordable housing and flood mitigation can be implemented without funding for example, by updating parish zoning and land-use regulations.

NEXT STEPS

The parish has undertaken some work to downzone some of its most vulnerable conservation areas and create incentives to direct population growth into already-populated areas. However, these initiatives are still being implemented parish-wide. The parish is also working with the Center for Planning Excellence to update its zoning and subdivision code language to better incorporate resilience strategies.

The parish is also in the process of evaluating the Community Rating System Assessment developed as a part of the LA SAFE Adaptation Strategy to deepen its participation in the CRS program.⁷⁴ The parish updated the strategy to reflect the current CRS class and credit, and created an updated list of goals to accomplish before the 2024 CRS cycle visit in order to potentially reach a Class Five, from a Class Seven status.

CONSIDERATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Policymakers in rural Gulf areas seeking to manage population growth and flooding hazards can look to St. John the Baptist for its innovative zoning and planning practices, and the dedication of staff to coastal and floodplain management. One such initiative is the parish’s place-based loan program, which can incentivize developers and businesses to adopt GSI practices.

Policymakers may also look to St. John’s coordination of its Land Use, Coastal Management, and Adaptation Strategy plans. The parish’s plans are designed to work in tandem, thus maintaining consistent objectives across different initiatives and sectors. To date, St. John is also the only parish

⁷¹ *Id.* at 201–02.

⁷² Jennifer Li & Alex Love, Georgetown Climate Ctr., Managing the Retreat From Rising Seas — State of Louisiana: Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments (LA SAFE) (2020), *available at* <https://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/resources/managing-the-retreat-from-rising-seas-eo-state-of-louisiana-louisiana-strategic-adaptations-for-future-environments-la-safe.html>.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM ASSESSMENT — ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, *available at* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/lasafe/Final+Adaptation+Strategies/St++John+Parish+Final+CRS+Report.pdf>.

of six that participated in the LA SAFE process to formally adopt its LA SAFE Adaptation Strategy. This unified approach streamlines the parish's multi-plan efforts to manage growth in ways that preserve rural and flood-prone areas from development pressure.

The parish also serves as an example of one way to overcome capacity issues. Limited staff capacity can be an implementation challenge for smaller governments. By reorganizing its zoning department to create a dedicated coastal and floodplain management division, St. John relieved some of the pressure it was facing to incorporate resilience principles into its work. Other smaller parishes may similarly evaluate options to restructure their teams to adapt to evolving priorities and needs.