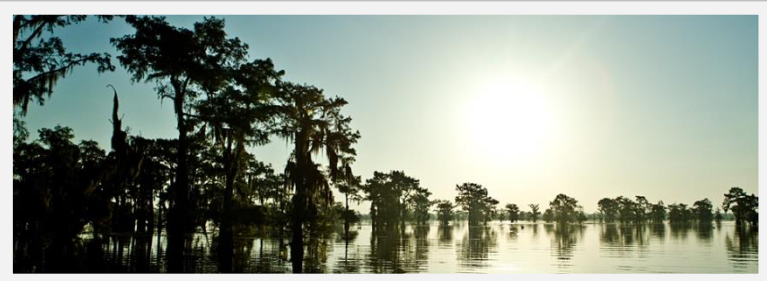




LOUISIANA PLANNING DISTRICT FOUR

# PLANNING FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE

2017 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY





*Serving Acadiana in planning and implementing economic, community, and transportation development opportunities.*

## **LOUISIANA PLANNING DISTRICT FOUR**

ACADIA PARISH

EVANGLINE PARISH

IBERIA PARISH

LAFAYETTE PARISH

SAINT LANDRY PARISH

SAINT MARTIN PARISH

VERMILION PARISH

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**ACADIANA PLANNING  
COMMISSION**  
Louisiana Planning  
District 4

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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APC Chairman

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APC Vice-Chairman

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University of Louisiana President

Jason El Koubi  
One Acadiana President/CEO

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

"It is culture, not blood that defines the Cajun culture of today."  
Jim Bradshaw, 1991



Ardoin, Cormier, Darby, Fontenot, Richard, Robideaux, and Savoy are all names reflective of the strong culture and leadership that exists in Acadiana. Located in the heart of Louisiana, it is the culture and the people that shape Louisiana Planning District Four, known as Acadiana. Music is a vital part of the region, as Cajun and Zydeco have taken their well-earned place throughout the world. Our food is as good as it ever has been. However, it is more about the local ingredients and the preparation of our food that draws people here. Authenticity is our creativity. A spiritual culture exists where faith, love and passion run deep! Most of all, the people of Acadiana are Resilient.

Those unique and authentic characteristics are the seeds of resilience during the economic downturns and natural disasters that currently plague Acadiana. Those characteristics are also the common threads uniting the towns and villages throughout the region. The cultural structure defines the region much more than the political and geographic boundaries; and is a vital component of developing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

The process of writing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is supposed to be greater than its product. This process, by that measure, has been successful. Collaborative planning, shared benefits, common problems, multi-jurisdictional partnerships, leveraged assets, and strategic regional influence are at the core of the goals and objectives set forth in this document.

Our elected leaders, economic developers, healthcare administrators, public works directors, government administrators and business leaders began the process in March of 2016. These leaders comprised the Acadiana CEDs Strategic Committee. For preparation, a region-wide pre-SWOT survey directing the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to be discussed was disseminated and answered by the committee. On June 30, 2016, Dr. Geoffrey Stewart, The Moody Company/BORSF Endowed Chair in Regional Business Development for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Dr. Michael Dunaway, the Director of the National Incident Management Systems & Advanced Technologies, led an engaged group of economic and government leaders. Voices from across the region joined together to speak openly about our assets and our vulnerabilities.

The CEDs Strategic Committee established two fundamental and critical components in this process: Collaboration and Resiliency. Both have been strategically emphasized in the formation of the goals and objectives outlined in the CEDs.

The CEDs espouses five goals relative to the advancement of regional priorities. First is to promote economic development strategies that foster stability and resiliency within Acadiana's existing industries. Second, is to strengthen and expand Acadiana's

economy by building global presence, local prosperity, and resilience, through strategic diversification with our energy sector rather than away from our energy sector.

Community planning and capacity building, downtown revitalization, and livability values are at the heart of the third goal. Building our governments' capacities and processes in cities and towns across the region is vital to successful economic development. Also critical, is building in livability values for our downtowns and surrounding areas. Promoting the development of vibrant, healthy, and resilient communities and improving living standards are essential for the strategic regional planning efforts.

Developing a resilient, integrated multi-modal regional transportation system for the movement of goods and individuals is the fourth goal. As we invest in our infrastructure, our over-reaching goals should always be to enhance connectivity for vehicles as well as for people. Planning for the movement of freight in addition to incorporating sidewalks, bike lanes, transit systems, and other enhancements into transportation projects creates resilient and dynamic communities.

Acadiana is currently experiencing an economic downturn due to the decline of oil and gas pricing. Simultaneously, the region is recovering from extreme inland flooding. The fifth goal is to foster resiliency by mitigating the impact of natural and man-made disasters and introducing sustainability within the local economies, communities and infrastructure. Following the August 2016 flooding, the region is leading the state towards inland watershed resiliency.

Significant growth is projected for Acadiana in the future. In addition, the region continues to be vulnerable to natural and economic disasters. It is critical for our governments and communities to collaborate on economic development, community development, transportation planning and resiliency initiatives to better preserve our economies and our cultures. Success of our goals is reliant on the depths of our Collaboration and our ability to keep Resiliency at the forefront of all planning! The 2016-2017 Acadiana CEDS process has set the stage for this type of success.

Our people, music, food, creativity, and resilient spirit, need forward looking economies and governments in order to survive and endure. I want to thank all who have had a part in the CEDS process. Your leadership will continue to be imperative as we work to implement the goals and objectives set forth in the 2017 Acadiana Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Kindest Regards,



Monique Boulet, CEO  
Acadiana Planning Commission

## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

### ACADIANA DESCRIPTION

The Louisiana Planning District 4, known as Acadiana, includes the 7 Parish Cajun and Creole heartland. Known for its' indigenous culture, food, and music, Acadiana has worked diligently to preserve its unique culture and this has positioned the region as a destination for tourism, education, and commerce. The region embraces its "wildcatter" or entrepreneurial spirit and is a leader in the production of our Nation's energy. Geographically, Lafayette is the hub of Acadiana and is located at the intersection of Interstate 10 and Interstate 49.

Fueled by an abundant supply of natural gas and petroleum the region is located within the Louisiana Chemical Corridor and is internationally known for its chemical manufacturing. Acadiana is home to a supply chain that services energy production in the Gulf of Mexico and drilling operations throughout the United States and the World. The high international demand for petrochemical and energy-related projects has created networks of key technology and supply chains deployed for building, operating and servicing these facilities.

A driver of the region's "wildcatter" spirit is The University of Louisiana, Lafayette, which is a Carnegie R2 - Doctoral University - Higher Research Activity. Based on its percentage of research and development expenditures funded by business, the National Science Foundation ranks UL Lafayette among the top 10 universities in the United States.

The resilient and innovative culture of its people is synonymous with the resiliency of the region's business environment even though the area is at risk to environmental hazards such as hurricanes, coastal subsidence, and global sea level rise. This unique culture has spurred advancements in manufacturing, all forms of energy production, healthcare, financial services, and aviation. Acadiana's inclusion in the National Highway Freight Network and Louisiana's Tier 1 Freight Network further strengthens its role and position in the continued manufacturing, production, servicing, and financing of operations that all rely on the United States' Gulf Coast infrastructure.

### LOUISIANA PLANNING DISTRICT FOUR

Louisiana's Planning District 4 is made up of seven parishes in the heart of Louisiana's Cajun Country. These parishes include Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin and Vermilion Parishes. Rich in culture and tradition, the region is a tight knit group of towns connected by bloodlines and history. While the culture is world-renowned for its uniqueness, there is a common trait that is visible both in the culture and in the way local governments have worked together. That trait is a fierce and bold independence. It is strength from a cultural perspective but is a weakness from a governance perspective. This fierce independence has created silos in planning and thinking. For many years, there has been talk of "regionalism", however, that talk has not traditionally materialized into action especially without an active Planning District. Since 2015, regionalism in Acadiana is evolving. February of 2015 saw the creation of both a new regional Planning District and a new regional

chamber/EDO. Two parallel efforts working independently, simultaneously, and often collaboratively to bring both our business communities and our governmental jurisdictions together to leverage assets, talents and efforts.

The Acadiana Planning District, Inc., is a new entity, currently working on a formal designation from the U.S. Office of Economic Development Administration (EDA) to become the official federal Economic Development Designee for Acadiana. It is working strategically to bring our governments together for stronger, smarter and more effective planning and implementation. The APC's mission is to serve "*the Public Sector in planning and implementation of Economic, Community and Transportation Development throughout the region known as Acadiana*". The governing board of the Acadiana Planning Commission is made up of the elected Parish and Police Jury Presidents.. Originally seeded by EDA and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), the APC board, together with support from each of their councils, filed Articles of Incorporation on February 23, 2015. They have since worked closely together to define a unified vision that this document will both communicate and help implement.

## **RESILIENCY AND COLLABORATION**

The 2017-2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy promotes two key areas which are essential for the success of the region: Resiliency and collaboration. Because of its geographical position, Acadiana has and will continue to experience almost every aspect of a disaster: Evacuations, evacuees, wind, water, flooding, power outages, etc... Many of these are exacerbated by coastal wetland loss, subsidence, global climate change, and sea level rise. With each disaster, our communities become smarter, safer, and stronger.

Acadiana is known for its cultural resiliency, this document hopes to use that strength to transcend planning into economic and government resiliency. In addition to resiliency, the CEDS was designed to bridge organizational boundaries and foster a greater sense of cohesion among public and private sectors for the advancement of regional priorities. These priorities were identified and will be implemented through collaborative efforts. Economic resiliency, according to EDA, becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Economic practitioners in this sense are required to be responsive to a community's needs and plan for long-term economic durability or "steady state".

While resiliency must be factored into all community and economic planning efforts, its' impact is dependent upon the collaborative efforts of stakeholders from across the Acadiana Region. One of Acadiana's unique strengths is the natural connectedness and almost singular, yet diverse, culture among its communities. Merriam-Webster defines collaboration "to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor." Moving the region forward and positioning it to compete globally, nationally and within the state, has become the focus of the region's leading organizations, such as the APC, One Acadiana and its' seven economic development organizations. The CEDS was designed to transcend organizational boundaries and to foster a greater sense of cohesion among public and private sectors for the advancement of regional priorities.



## RESILIENCY

Resiliency may be a catch word for some, but in Acadiana it a critical planning component and is a consideration in each of the goals and strategies identified in the CEDS. The Acadiana region deals with continuing threats to both its economic and physical landscape, due its specialization in the oil and gas service industry and its location on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Acadiana is currently recovering from the most recent natural disaster, the August 2016 floods, while also experiencing the depths of an ongoing economic downturn that began with the most recent slump in crude oil prices.

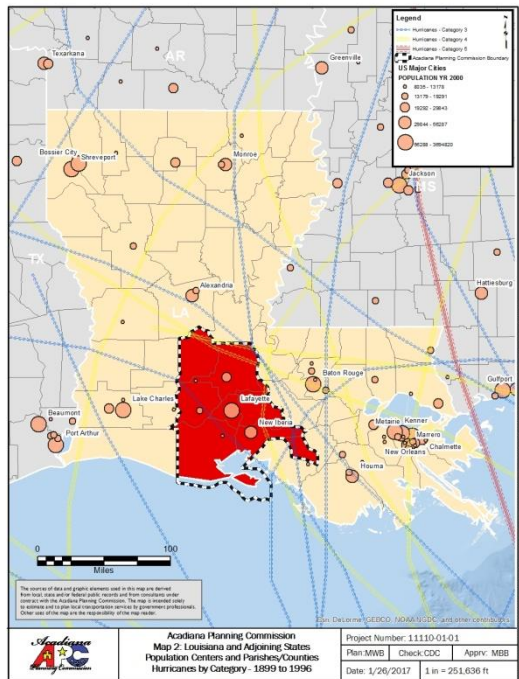


Figure 1: Hurricanes 1899 to 1996

critical to the future of Acadiana and is one of the keys to success in the goals and objectives of the region. As the region aims for economic expansion, it is understood that the economy should diversify within energy sector and not away from it. This includes exploring alternative methods for oil and gas extraction and the development of alternative energies.

Waterways are vital to the commercial and recreational activities of the region. Seaports, rivers, lakes, bayous, canals, and spillways dot the landscape. Storms and hurricanes that emerge from the Gulf of Mexico are the traditional natural threats that have plagued Louisiana. Figure 1 illustrates the entry patterns of hurricanes from the coastal areas of Louisiana and their dissipation throughout the surrounding areas. Acadiana is especially vulnerable and often acts as the gateway for hurricanes within the Southern US border. From the August 2016 floods a new reality, apart from hurricanes, emerged. As residential development has become increasingly suburban, inland flooding and housing

The communities in Acadiana are on a constant quest for economic resiliency. While Acadiana has made a consistent effort to diversify its economy in past decades and has had incredible success in doing so, the heart and soul of the region remains oil and gas exploration and production. The innovative engineering and entrepreneurial spirit throughout Acadiana produces efficient and effective solutions for the industry's ever changing needs. However, the region's economy is always vulnerable to global conditions that influence the price of oil and natural gas making economic resilience elusive. Ongoing economic diversity and resilience is



Figure 2: Louisiana Planning Districts

and flood plan management have become just as critical as coastal considerations in both economic and community planning for Acadiana.

According to the Economic Development Administration, threats to an area's economic resilience can be defined in three ways: "Downturns which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending; downturns in industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.)."

The Acadiana region is particularly vulnerable to the last two threats, due its specialization in the oil and gas industry and its location on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. The oil and gas industry is currently in a downturn due to the severe decline in the global price of its commodities. The Acadiana region has been struck by several hurricanes in the past 100 years, which has resulted in substantial losses of personal property and economic opportunities.

## **COLLABORATION**

Fostering a collaborative environment where organizations and agencies work towards common and strategic regional goals and objectives is the second key for success. Collaboration is a critical component in developing this CEDS and will be essential for successful implementation of the smart goals. Existing local, regional and state plans correspond with priorities set by regional stakeholders. Furthermore, private and public sector partnerships have been leveraged in developing the CEDS.

Central to the functions of Acadiana Planning Commission is its board that is comprised of the Parish or Police Jury Presidents from Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, and Vermilion parishes. These elected officials have utilized APC as a conduit for building relationships and respect for one another. Appreciation also exists for the ability to collaborate regionally which enhances each individual community and the region. On many fronts the APC board is pioneering initiatives through their collaboration on watershed and resiliency issues. Community capacity building, economic sustainability, transportation maximization, downtown revitalization, and commuter transportation are among other initiatives that have been prioritized. In many ways the Acadiana Planning Commission's is establishing a precedent of cooperation for future generations to follow.

### **Federal and State Collaboration**

It was the leadership and collaborative efforts of the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) working with Acadiana's neighboring LA Planning District 3, South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC), that allowed for the creation and success of the Acadiana Planning Commission (APC). 2014 saw one planning district spend time and resources working with leaders in the neighboring district sharing the potential and seeding what today is a commission leading the state in many of the regional conversations happening in both economic development and in resiliency. The 2016 Louisiana floods have also given the planning commission focused EDA guidance through the many FEMA National Recovery Framework meetings. EDA has played a vital role in helping APC lead its region through many of the federal processes and

opportunities provided after this disaster. Collaboration with our federal counterparts has been and will continue to be vital to Acadiana's long term and sustainable success.

Louisiana Economic Development, LED, the Louisiana Division of Administration Office of Community Development, OCD, and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHSEP) are vital to Acadiana's success as they bring statewide resources, perspectives, and leadership.

The Louisiana Association of Planning and Development Districts (LAPDD) is comprised of all 8 State Planning Districts working together as partners to advance the development of Louisiana. The Acadiana Planning Commission is one of these eight planning districts. Collaboration among the districts is essential for advancing the specific interests of LAPDD in disaster recovery, resiliency, job creation and retention and capacity. An important function of LAPDD, and similarly APC, is the development of partnerships to enhance communication between local, state and federal agencies post-economic disruption.

### **Regional Collaboration**

Since its formation in 2014, the Acadiana Planning Commission has focused on bringing our governments together and collaborating with other regional economic development organizations including the University of Louisiana Research Centers and College of Business, One Acadiana, and the Acadiana Economic Development Council.

The region has many strong assets and resources from which to build success, but critical to regional success is the unified effort put forth by the private and public sector. Through partnerships, the economic development organizations could better maximize the limited resources available to all levels of governments. Local governments in Acadiana are at a critical phase. Impacts from the decline in the economy and recent flooding events have left many areas overextended. Rural areas in particular require additional support to not only build their capacity, but also to deliver basic services. Harnessing economies of scale and leveraging assets in a manner that builds sustainable, resilient communities is prioritized for Acadiana's success!

Working together strategically, The Acadiana Planning Commission, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, One Acadiana, AEDC and many other agencies coalesce around a common goal of spurring growth and stability for the entire region. Together these organizations are defining the best path forward to create opportunities and leverage one another for advancing regional objectives.

### **CEDS OVERVIEW**

"A comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies". (EDA website) The CEDS analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources. A CEDS integrates a region's human and physical capital planning in the service of economic development. Integrated economic development planning provides the flexibility to adapt to global economic conditions and fully utilizes the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents. It attracts private investment that

creates jobs. A CEDS must be the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with broad-based and diverse public and private sector participation, and must set forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the region and clearly define the metrics of success. Finally, a CEDS provides a useful benchmark by which a regional economy can evaluate opportunities with other regions in the national economy.

The CEDS development was guided by the CEDS Advisory Strategic Committee, composed of a diverse group of local economic development professionals, business owners, representatives of the University of Louisiana, and elected officials. This committee met several times to set the parameters of the SWOT Analysis for the region, the framework for the CEDS. The committee helped to circulate the SWOT pre-meeting survey and answered questions on the survey to build a base for the SWOT Analysis.

After intense preparations and background work, the SWOT Analysis was held on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. A wide variety of community members participated in the event. Participants included local tourism officials, downtown development officials, and other community members. It was facilitated by Dr. Geoff Stewart and Dr. Michael Dunaway, professors at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. After the event, Dr. Stewart provided significant assistance in the analysis of the SWOT results.

As required by the Economic Development Authority (EDA), the APC’s CEDS provides a brief overview of the Acadiana region, an analysis of our regional economy and conveys regional goals and objectives as prioritized by community stakeholders. Livability principles and investment priorities, depicted below, are imbedded throughout the CEDS plan and serve as the basis for planning efforts.

**Table 1: Principles and Priorities**

<b>HUD-EPA-DOT LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>EDA INVESTMENT PRIORITIES</b>
Provide more transportation choices	Collaborative regional innovation
Promote equitable, affordable housing	Public-Private Partnerships
Enhance economic competitiveness	National Strategic Priorities
Support existing communities	Global Competitiveness
Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investments	Environmentally Sustainable Development
Value communities and neighborhoods	Economically Distressed and Underserved Communities

The CEDS is intended to be a responsive and flexible five-year strategic plan that will adapt to community changes and regional progress. Annually, the goals and objectives outlined in the CEDS will be evaluated to determine progress and identify barriers or challenges that may have arisen. Strategic committee members will be engaged in annual assessments to ensure regional priorities are relevant and responsive to the needs of their communities.

## SECTION TWO: SMART GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives set forth in this section were developed as a solution to the economic problems, or to capitalize on the resources, of the region thereby fostering a greater sense of regionalism in Acadiana. Stakeholder input was incorporated throughout the goals and objectives to garner support for regional priorities and solidify buy-in from key organizations. Additionally, state and regional plans were integrated within the selected priorities; key plans considered for inclusion were drawn from the following organizations: Louisiana’s Economic Development Department, One Acadiana, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana Office of Tourism, and local comprehensive plans from municipalities within the region. Four overarching themes encapsulate the regional priorities: Economic diversification and growth, community development, transportation infrastructure, and resiliency.

### ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION

Economic stability and prosperity are the primary motivators for many economic development organizations within the region. Acadiana’s oil and gas industry is its greatest strength and also its greatest vulnerability. The local economies’ susceptibility to fluctuations in the oil and gas industry has hastened the need for further developing the competitive advantage of other industry sectors. The focus of this area is two-fold: continued support for leading industries and promote the growth of secondary and emerging industries.

Table 2: Economic Growth

<b>GOAL ONE: ECONOMIC GROWTH</b>		
<b>Promote economic development strategies to foster stability and resiliency within Acadiana’s existing industries.</b>		
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>SUPPLY CHAIN DIVERSIFICATION</b>
Support and enhance Economic Development capacity to recruit, retain and grow businesses throughout the region.	Develop a qualified and skilled workforce with targeted training programs through the University, Community College and K-12 education system aligned with industry needs.	Work with manufacturers in Acadiana to support product line diversification and enhance resiliency during major industry shifts in the market.

Table 3: Economic Diversification

<b>GOAL TWO: ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION</b>				
<b>Strengthen and expand Acadiana’s Economy to build global presence, local prosperity, and bolster resilience.</b>				
<b>ENERGY</b>	<b>CULTURAL ECONOMY</b>	<b>AGRIBUSINESS</b>	<b>HEALTHCARE</b>	<b>NEW &amp; EMERGING INDUSTRY</b>
Position the Energy Corridor as a global leader in Energy servicing and manufacturing including new and emerging energy enterprises.	Further develop the region’s cultural economy by marketing national and internationally the areas unique culture, recreational opportunities, arts, tourism and entertainment.	Support farming, production, and processing of Acadiana’s agriculture and aquaculture products by enhancing collaboration within the industries and improving global marketing.	Further develop the competitive advantage of the region’s healthcare sector through education, retention and training for physicians and nurses.	Partner with private and public economic development organizations for the advancement of new and emerging industries.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Lately, the private sector is placing increased emphasis on quality of life and community character regarding business location and expansion. In this context, community development is a critical component of economic prosperity. As such, this focus area prioritizes downtown revitalization and improving the planning capacity of the region through the application of smart growth principles.

**Table 4: Resilient Communities**

<b>GOAL THREE: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES</b>		
<b>Promote the development of vibrant, healthy, and resilient communities in Acadiana to improve living standards through strategic regional planning efforts.</b>		
<b>COMMUNITY PLANNING &amp; CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	<b>DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION</b>	<b>LIVABILITY VALUES</b>
Develop planning capacity and/or regional planning support within the municipalities and parishes throughout Acadiana. Defining and achieving awareness and growth in a high Quality of Place within each town and the region itself.	Promote the development of thriving and sustainable downtown areas through strategic revitalization programs.	Enhance the unique characteristics of all parishes within Acadiana by leveraging federal and state resources and applying smart growth principals to improve community living standards.

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

A continued priority for the regional economy is transportation infrastructure. Because the Interstate and rail systems in the region are centered on Lafayette as a hub city, connectivity is critical for those who live outside of the hub. Stakeholders also voiced their desire for alternate modes of transportation to include public transit options. Lastly, this focus area incorporates current state initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure safety and behavioral objectives exhibited among vehicle occupants.

**Table 5: Robust and Resilient Transportation**

<b>GOAL FOUR: ROBUST AND RESILIENT TRANSPORTATION</b>			
<b>Develop a resilient integrated multi-modal regional transportation system for the movement of goods and individuals.</b>			
<b>MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>IMPORT &amp; EXPORT</b>	<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	<b>SAFETY</b>
Improve freight capacity with enhanced interstate flow, rail service, cargo air service, passenger air service and port accessibility.	Facilitate a globally competitive and positive business environment by increasing regional capacity to import and export goods and services, improving all primary freight corridors in the region	Enhance regional connectivity among the primary municipalities in Acadiana by improving roadways and increasing access to various modes of transportation.	Improve transportation safety measures within Acadiana through crash reduction mechanisms.

## RESILIENCY

Economic development practitioners are instrumental in building capacity for economic resilience. In Acadiana people have a sense of community pride that drives their resilient natures. Although innately resilient, our economy presents a continued vulnerability to natural disasters and susceptibility to fluctuations in the oil and gas industry. Regional priorities for resiliency are focused on developing a steady-state to withstand economic shocks and improving responsive initiatives after natural and man-made disasters.

Table 6: Regional Resiliency

<b>GOAL FIVE: REGIONAL RESILIENCY</b>			
<b>Build resiliency planning and strategic capacity to mitigate impact within Acadiana economies, communities and infrastructure associated with natural and man-made disasters.</b>			
<b>ECONOMIC RESILIENCY</b>	<b>COMMUNITY PLANNING &amp; CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION RESILIENCY</b>	<b>COASTAL &amp; INLAND WATER MANAGEMENT</b>
Develop sustainable and economically resilient communities by working with government entities and the private sector to rebuild businesses, retain employment and improve economic opportunities after natural and man-made disasters.	Build short and long-term community resilience by empowering local leaders and stakeholders and improving recovery outcomes for individuals and communities involved in disasters.	Work to efficiently facilitate the building and restoration of infrastructure systems and services to support viable, sustainable communities and improve resilience to and protection from future disasters.	Improve the watershed and coastal zone management practices in support of sustainable development.

## SECTION THREE: REGIONAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

### KEY REGIONAL TRENDS

The economic development environment in Acadiana has experienced tough times since late 2014 as the lower oil prices of recent years have disproportionately affected the region. This has resulted in drops in employment, sales tax revenue, per capita income; and in increases in unemployment insurance claims, the unemployment rate, and mass layoffs.

Historically the Acadiana economy has relied on natural resource extraction and processing which has left the economy vulnerable when oil prices are low. However, Acadiana has focused economic development efforts on not only bringing in additional capacity for extraction and processing, but also attracting new manufacturing plants, as well as attracting new professional and technical employers, which has diversified the labor market and will continue to add high wage and skilled workforce to the economy.

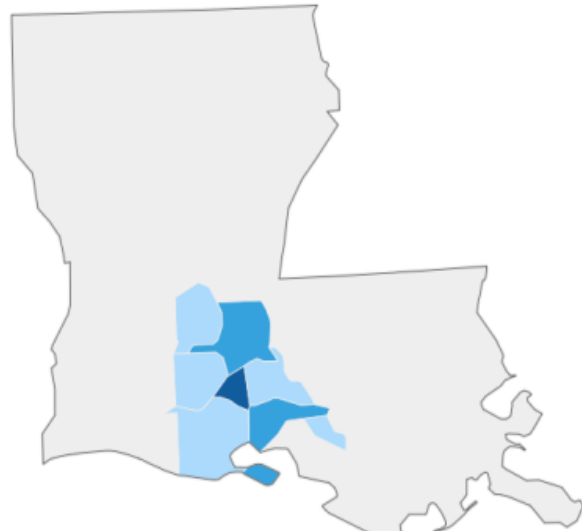
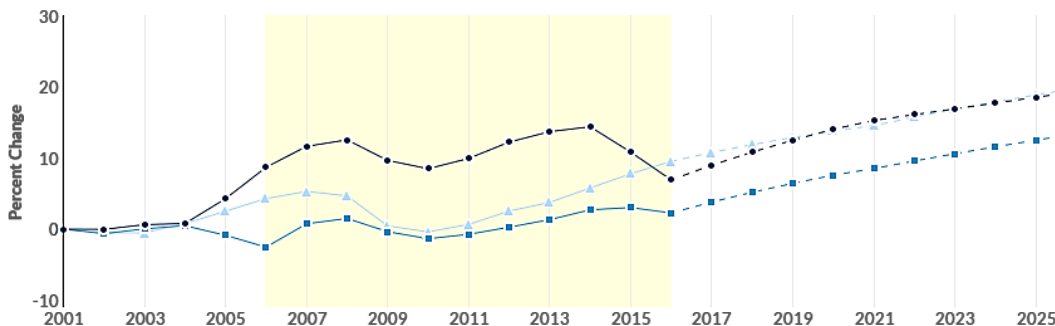


Figure 3: Louisiana Planning District 4  
Acadiana Planning Commission

### EMPLOYMENT

Acadiana's economy is closely tied to the wealth generated from its natural resources, particularly oil and gas, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. As depicted below, the regional economy has been marked by cycles of growth and recession that are largely tied to the price of oil and gas. A decline in oil and gas prices for the region is usually characterized by job loss not only in extraction related activities, but also in support industries such as trade, services and banking<sup>1</sup>. Acadiana experienced significant job loss and economic recession both in 2008 and 2014 that coincided with declines in global oil prices. As a result, the region has lagged far behind the state and nation for job growth over the last 10 years.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.math.lsu.edu/~neubrand/Vision2020.pdf>



Region	2006 Jobs	2016 Jobs	Change	% Change
● Region	263,007	258,717	-4,290	-1.6%
● State	2,046,723	2,147,565	100,842	4.9%
● Nation	150,944,871	158,524,651	7,579,780	5.0%

Figure 4: Emsi Q4 2016 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com









### POPULATION GROWTH

High population growth rates for younger working age persons (ages 25 to 44) suggest new residents are attracted to an area, growing the workforce, adding to the innovative base and launching new businesses (Stats America). Estimates for 2016 indicate a total population of 612,164 which is approximately 13% of the State of Louisiana. In the last 5 years, Acadiana has experienced a growth rate of 4.1% whereas the state grew 2.7%. Younger working age persons comprise 33% of the total population in Acadiana.

### GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

Gross Regional Product measures the final market value of all goods and services produced in a region. This figure is the sum of earnings, property income, and taxes on production. As the chart details, Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction continues to have a significant presence and importance in the Acadiana economy. The drop in oil prices, coupled with the significance of the oil and gas industry on the Acadiana economy, has had a detrimental impact on the economy.

Table 7: 2015 Gross Regional Product (in millions) 2

NAICS	Industry	GRP (2015)	% of Total	
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$5,307,845,284.32	19%	
31	Manufacturing	\$2,355,934,140.81	9%	
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$2,016,098,255.65	7%	
90	Government	\$2,021,822,254.31	7%	
44	Retail Trade	\$1,698,034,311.77	6%	
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$1,696,323,532.22	6%	
23	Construction	\$1,309,766,630.91	5%	
42	Wholesale Trade	\$1,480,200,093.90	5%	

<sup>2</sup> Emsi Q4 2016 Data Set | www.economicmodeling.com

## ECONOMIC DISTRESS

Distressed communities are often at a distinct competitive disadvantage in attracting the higher levels of private capital, investment in facilities and equipment that drives the creation of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs. In analyzing distressing economic factors the CEDS compared rates for unemployment, income, cost of living and poverty rates within the region and to the national average. Unemployment and income especially are two factors by which federal agencies gauge eligibility for grant funding.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

In the last 24-month period the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a 6.8% unemployment rate for Acadiana which is above the national rate by 1.7%. Individual parishes within the region are faced with significantly higher 24-month unemployment rates; Iberia Parish (8.4%), St. Landry (8.2%) and Evangeline (7.5%). This rise in unemployment is reflected in the layoffs experienced in the region. In 1988 Louisiana enacted The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) which requires larger employers to notify the state of mass layoffs. As the chart below details, staff reductions extend beyond oil and gas employers and include manufacturing and telecommunications companies.

**Table 8: Acadiana Announced Layoffs<sup>3</sup>**

Date	Company	Reduction #
2/2/2017	Freeport-McMoran	19
12/30/2016	Freeport-McMoran	16
12/22/2016	Deep Cor Marine	116
10/14/2016	Aramark Healthcare Services	243
7/1/2016	Blue Sky Innovations	58
4/21/2016	Helmerich & Payne	50
4/18/2017	Carbo Ceramics	61
4/11/2016	GE Drilling	77
2/24/2015	Parker Drilling	150
6/19/2015	Exterran	48
11/25/2015	Noble Drilling	130
2/27/2014	Cox Communications	58
6/1/2014	Teche Federal	97
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,123</b>

### INCOME

Per capita income in the past 12 months (in 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars) for the Lafayette metro area was \$26,359, below the US number of \$28,930. As the hub, Lafayette's economy is more stable than the surrounding parishes and is not designated as an economically distressed parish according

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission

to the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). Parishes outside of Lafayette, as an aggregate, reflect a much lower per capita personal income as all are below the state and national rate.

**Table 9: Per Capita Income by Parish<sup>4</sup>**

Area	Per Capita Income
Acadia	\$20,552
Evangeline	\$18,484
Iberia	\$23,977
Lafayette	\$30,240
St. Landry	\$19,156
St. Martin	\$22,983
Vermilion	\$23,261
Lafayette Metro Area	\$26,359
Louisiana	\$24,981
US	\$28,930

### POVERTY RATES

Community distress is often associated with the minimization of well-being and individual outcome. Louisiana in general has one of the highest poverty rates in the nation. Acadiana as an aggregate has a poverty rate of 21%. Rural parishes such as Evangeline and Acadia suffer from higher poverty rates which could largely be attributed to increased automation. Parishes with higher poverty rates are primarily agriculturally based economies that generally have low-paying jobs which is the case for both Acadia and Evangeline.

**Table 10: 2015 Poverty Rates Planning District 45**

Geography Name	Total Poverty Rate	Poverty rate under 18
Acadia Parish, LA	23.7	32.5
Evangeline Parish, LA	25.7	32.1
Iberia Parish, LA	20.8	32.7
Lafayette Parish, LA	17.0	20.7
St. Landry Parish, LA	27.0	37.2
St. Martin Parish, LA	18.3	27.9
Vermilion Parish, LA	18.1	23.6
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>28.1</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>20.7</b>

<sup>4</sup> 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.statsamerica.org/distress/distress.aspx>

## ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

In recent years Acadiana has suffered economic disruptions from the decline in oil prices and from the most recent flood event. Consequently, communities are beginning to think differently in terms of recovery and resiliency. As a region, our aim is to become economically resilient in order to better withstand disruptions and maintain the competitive advantages of the area. The following section will examine industries expected to experience growth in the next decade and a cluster analysis to examine the ability of the region's existing infrastructure to meet the future needs of industry. Additionally, we will explore the regions human capital and its productivity capacity as components of resilience.

### OCCUPATIONAL GROWTH

The Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction industries are expected to experience modest job growth over the next decade. Occupations tied to that industry have the highest average earnings in the region at \$99,047 and will continue to be attractive for job seekers in the future. Outside of the oil and gas industries there are several sectors predicted to experience significant growth. Within the next seven years Louisiana Workforce Commission forecasts high demand in the region for jobs in the healthcare and tech industries, specifically the occupations of physical therapists, home health aides, and information technology specialists.

**Table 11: Fastest Growing Occupations Through 2024, Lafayette - Acadiana - Regional labor Market Area 4\* (Ranked by percent growth)<sup>6</sup>**

Occ. Code	Occupational Title	10 Year Growth	10 Year % Job Growth	2015 RLMA 4 Annual Average Wage
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	60	42.9%	\$36,264
31-1011	Home Health Aides	820	38.7%	\$19,697
15-1133	Software Developers, Systems Software	30	37.5%	\$61,035
15-1132	Software Developers, Applications	40	36.4%	\$62,069
29-1123	Physical Therapists	90	33.3%	\$65,104
31-2022	Physical Therapist Aides	80	32.0%	\$22,888
53-2012	Commercial Pilots	50	31.3%	\$84,074
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	30	30.0%	\$52,512
15-1134	Web Developers	40	28.6%	\$52,881
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	30	27.3%	\$77,177
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	560	26.4%	\$45,285

\*Regional Labor Market Area: Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Mary, St. Martin & Vermilion

### CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Clusters, which are regional concentrations of related industries, make regions uniquely competitive for jobs and private investment. Traded clusters serve markets in other regions or nations, and are concentrated in regions that afford specific competitive advantages. Local clusters sell products and services primarily for the local market and are located in every region. According to US Cluster

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.ldol.state.la.us/>

Mapping, Acadiana’s employment cluster ratios mirror that of the US Economy with traded clusters at 36% of the total share. Traded clusters typically serve as the backbone of the economy and drive the competitive advantage of the region. As such, the top three employment fields for traded clusters are interconnected to the oil and gas industry. Distribution and electronic commerce and business services are employment fields that directly or indirectly support oil and gas.

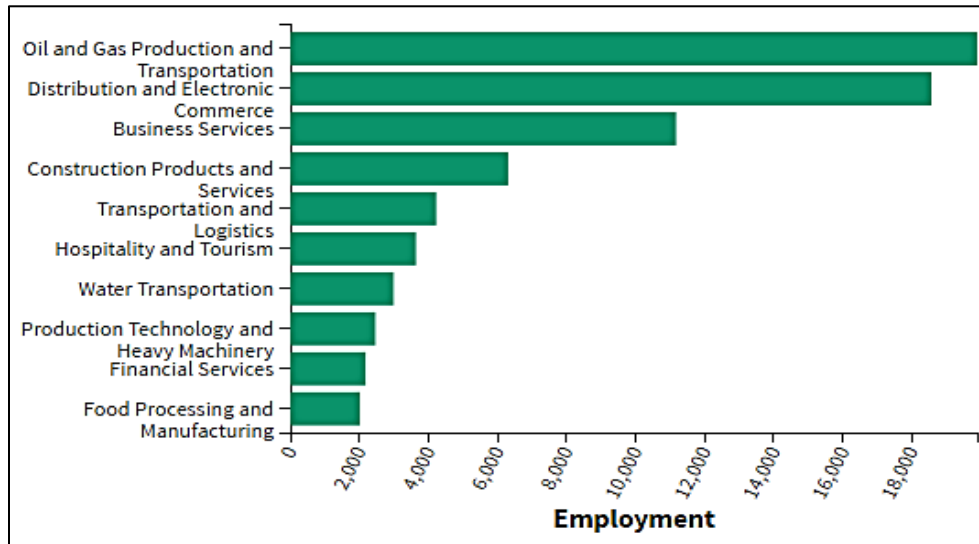


Figure 5: Employment by Traded Clusters

Health Services, Hospitality, and Real Estate and Development, as depicted below, are the top employment specializations in the region. Healthcare remains the top specialization likely influenced by the continued expansion of major regional healthcare networks such as Lafayette General Health and Opelousas Health Systems. Acadiana Ambulance and Lafayette General are also two of the top employers in the region. Additionally, the top program completion among university students is healthcare and related programs which likely feed into the demand for healthcare related jobs. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette has one of the largest nursing programs in the U.S., and boasts passing rates that consistently exceed national and state averages.

Other distinct clusters, depicted in Figure 7, that offer a competitive advantage to the region include oil and gas, fishing, jewelry, construction, and water transport.

# Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification

Lafayette, LA Economic Area, 2014

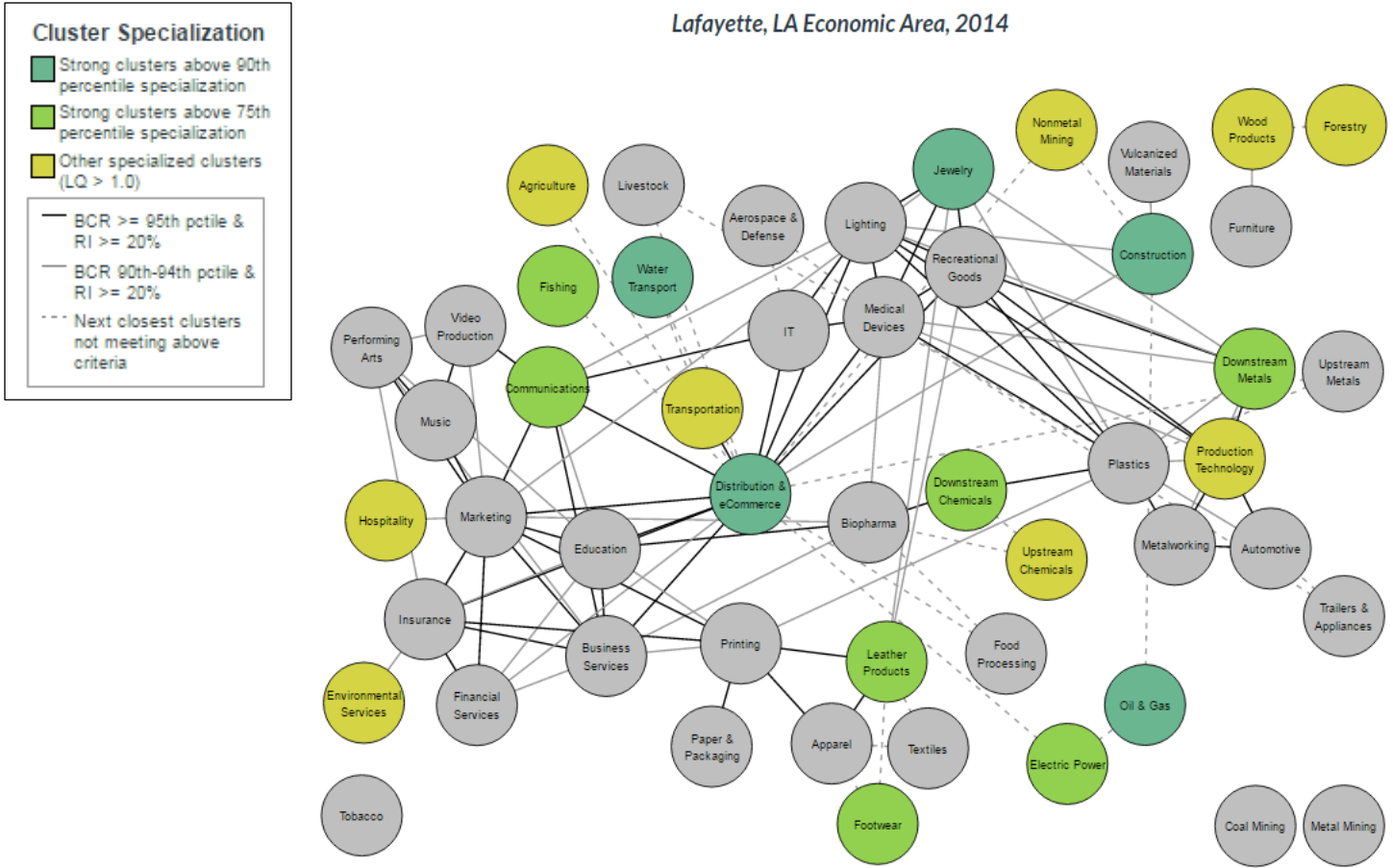


Figure 6: Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification 2014

Acadiana’s proximity to the Gulf provides a distinct advantage in the aquaculture and fishing industries. Louisiana is the top provider of shrimp, oysters, crabs, crawfish and alligator in the nation. Fisheries in Louisiana are a vital part of the state’s economy creating an overall impact of \$2.4 billion annually<sup>7</sup>. Acadiana is also home to five ports providing access to navigable waterways, including the Gulf of Mexico: Port of Iberia, Port of Krotz Springs, Port of Vermilion, Twin Parish Port, and Mermentau River Harbor and Terminal District.

The remaining clusters can be attributed to high regional employment in several industries. For example, the jewelry cluster is largely due to Stuller, INC which established its manufacturing and administrative headquarters in Lafayette and employs 1,200 workers. Likewise, distribution and eCommerce clusters have significant presence and opportunity throughout the region. The recently announced FedEx Regional Distribution Center will join WalMart as global companies utilizing Acadiana logistical benefits to locate large distribution centers. In eCommerce, the region has great

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.louisianaseafood.com/industry>

potential for expansion from steady growth in its existing high tech firms and the entrance of some new ones (e.g. CGI, Enquero, Perficient, Waitr).

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is a measure of the population's capacity to contribute to innovation with necessary skills and knowledge and is a factor of an area's human capital. Approximately, 43% of the population in Acadiana has some form of college education as compared to 60% of the entire U.S. Higher percentages of college education have a significant effect on GPD per worker growth.

**Table 12: Education Levels for Planning District 4<sup>8</sup>**

Education Level	2016 Population	2016 Percent
Less Than 9th Grade	41,192	10.3%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	44,110	11.0%
High School Diploma	142,276	35.5%
Some College	74,494	18.6%
Associate's Degree	21,684	5.4%
Bachelor's Degree	54,059	13.5%
Graduate Degree and Higher	23,188	5.8%

### TECHNOLOGY BASED EMPLOYMENT

Six occupation clusters are often thought to be closely associated with the production of innovations. They include information technology; engineering; health care and medical science practitioners and scientists; mathematics, statistics, data, and accounting; natural science and environmental management; and postsecondary education and knowledge creation<sup>9</sup>. Acadiana is uniquely positioned to lead “technology-based economic development in the state of Louisiana which can be credited to the capabilities of the Informatics Research Institute at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The center focuses its research, development and technology transfer activities on fostering technology-driven innovations in a wide range of application domains including healthcare, education, economic and workforce development, energy/oil & gas, and business process automation such as telemedicine, informatics and renewable resource technology”<sup>10</sup>.

### UTILITY PATENT GRANTS

New patented technologies provide an indicator of individuals’ and firms’ abilities to develop new technologies and remain competitive in the economy<sup>11</sup>. Louisiana, in a 2013 national ranking by the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), was listed below the national average in patent credits. Acadiana, however, produces a reasonable amount of patents in Louisiana which is a good indicator of its ability to be resilient through innovation. Figure 7<sup>12</sup> illustrates the number of patents issued to

8 Emsi Q4 2016 Data Set | [www.economicmodeling.com](http://www.economicmodeling.com)

9 <http://www.statsamerica.org>

10 <http://www.cbit.louisiana.edu/>

11 <http://www.statsamerica.org>

12 [http://www.waybetterpatents.com/comingsoon/maproom/20150331\\_map\\_room.html#wsc](http://www.waybetterpatents.com/comingsoon/maproom/20150331_map_room.html#wsc)

Louisiana inventors by parish in 2015. Firms requiring a highly skilled and specialized workforce are drawn to innovative areas.

Frank’s Casing Crew and Rental Tools, Inc, an oil and natural gas company, is a significant contributor to the number of patents produced and a lead company in the types of patents produced in the area. Patents credited to the region comprise mostly oil and gas-related innovations for extraction purposes. As illustrated in table 13, the largest number of utility patents granted for the Lafayette MSA is wells (shafts or deep borings in the earth) for oil and gas. Other classes listed, ranked for year 2015, are also connected to the oil and gas industry.

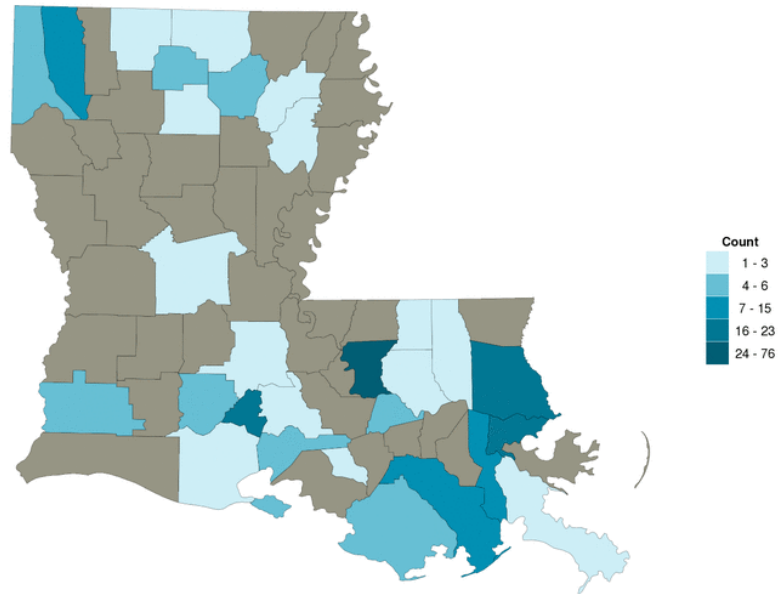


Figure 7: Utility Patents by Parish

Table 13: Count of 2000-2015 Utility Patent Grants

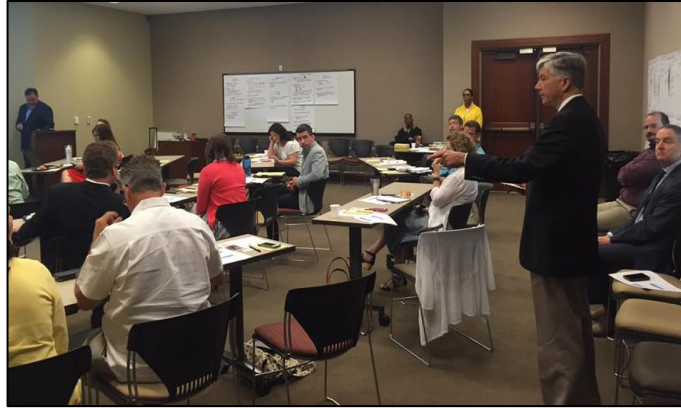
Class Title	2013	2014	2015	2000-2015
<b>ALL CLASSES</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total : 815</b>
Wells (shafts or deep borings in the earth, e.g., for oil and gas)	16	21	23	229
Hydraulic and Earth Engineering	2	2	6	22
Fluid Handling	1	3	3	15
Boring or Penetrating the Earth	4	3	2	75
Metal Working	0	1	2	11
Material or Article Handling	1	2	2	11

## SWOT ANALYSIS

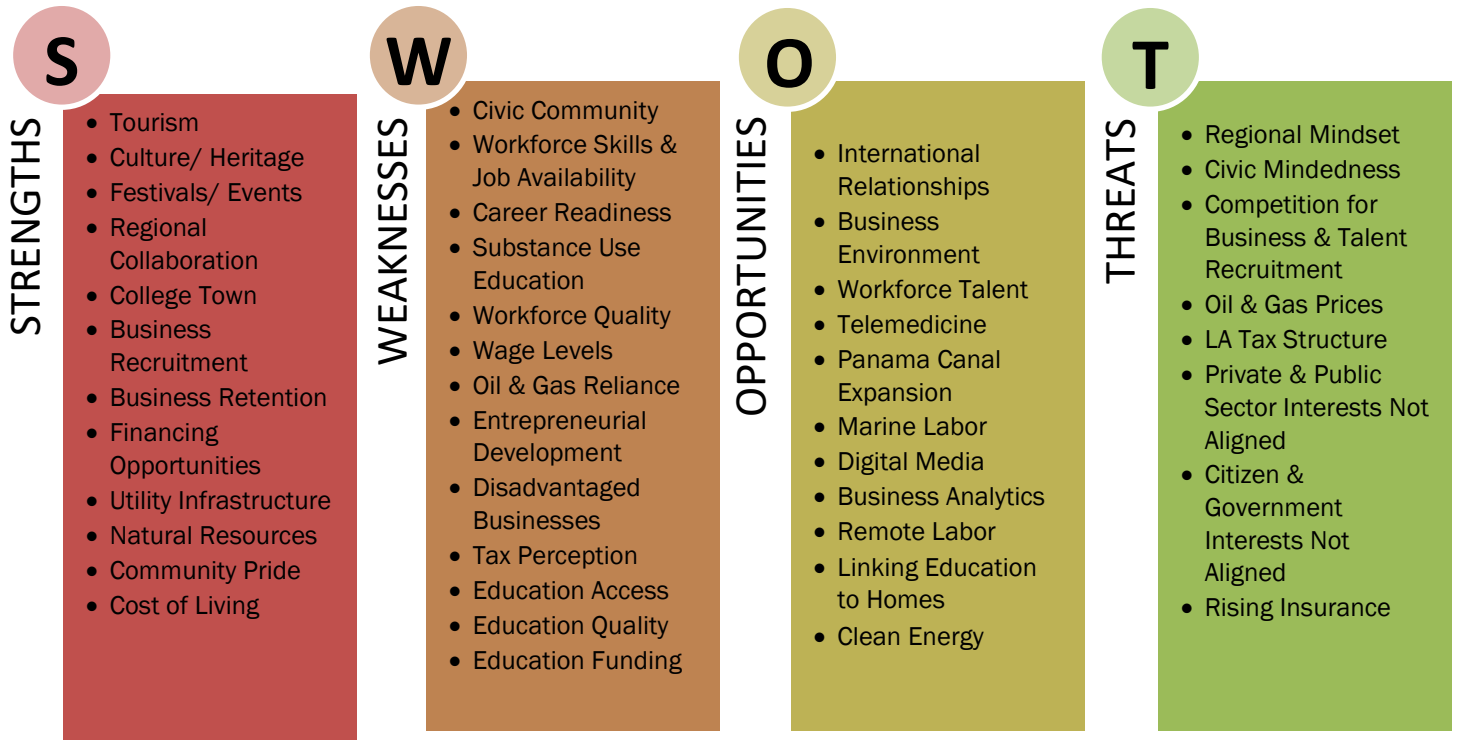
As a nascent regional planning commission, this CEDS document is APC’s initial economic development strategy. It has been developed with a Strategy Committee to access their knowledge base and engage and coordinate with existing economic development initiatives. The committee consists of a geographically diverse group of community leaders within the Planning District 4. It is charged with developing the SWOT analysis that provides the backbone of the CEDS. It started meeting in March of 2016 to review the background information for the region and provide input as to how the CEDS should proceed. The Strategy Committee provided the framework for the direction of the SWOT and solicited participants from their home communities to contribute to the SWOT development.



On June 30, 2016, the Acadiana Planning Commission held a SWOT Analysis event attended by over 30 community leaders in the region. A month prior to the SWOT workshop stakeholders were surveyed in order to provide a foundation by which the workshop discussions could be guided. Survey findings are outlined in Appendix B. The SWOT was facilitated by Dr. Geoffrey Stewart of the University of Louisiana and Dr. Michael Dunaway of the National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies Institute.

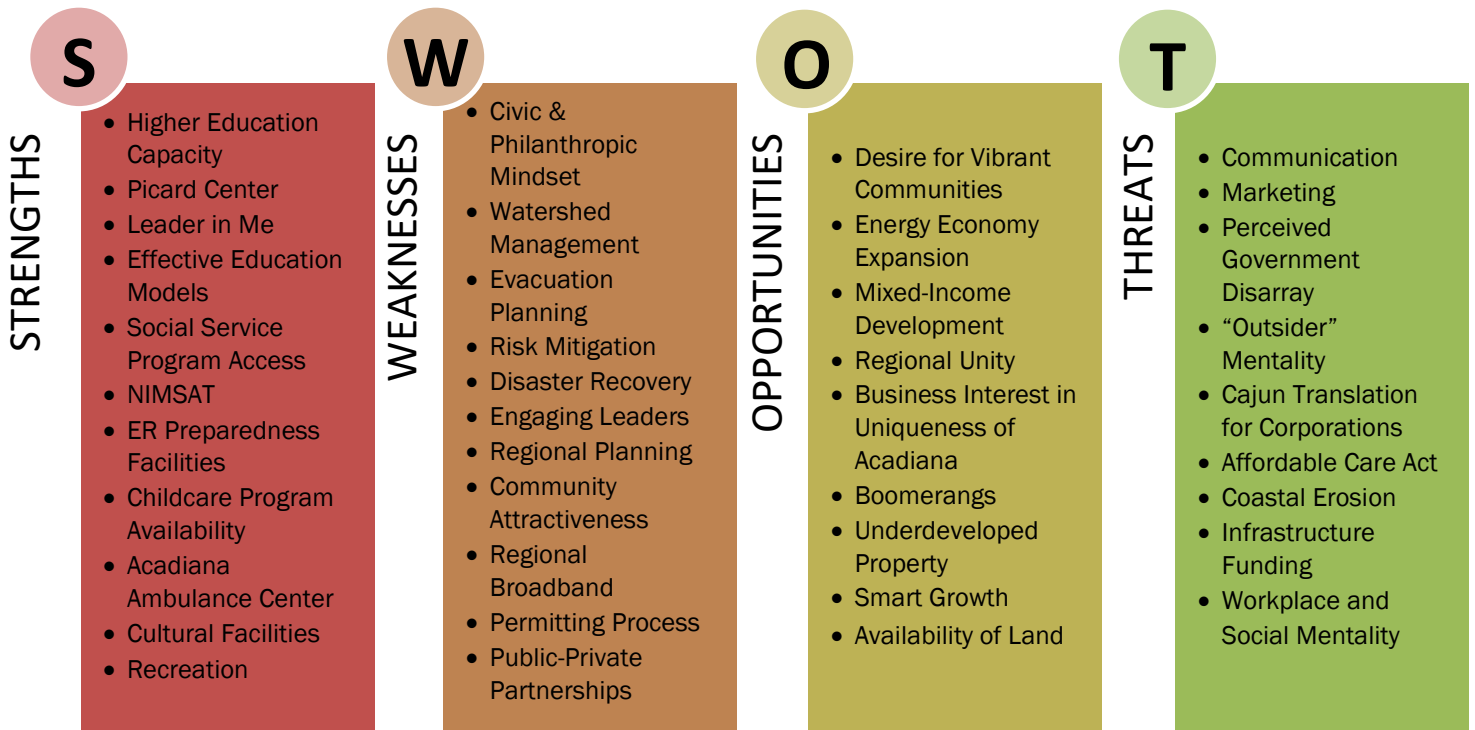


The event provided a broad opportunity for community leaders to provide input and direction on the state of the economy in the Acadiana region. The resulting analysis identified several key areas for leveraging opportunities into clear strategic goals and activities.



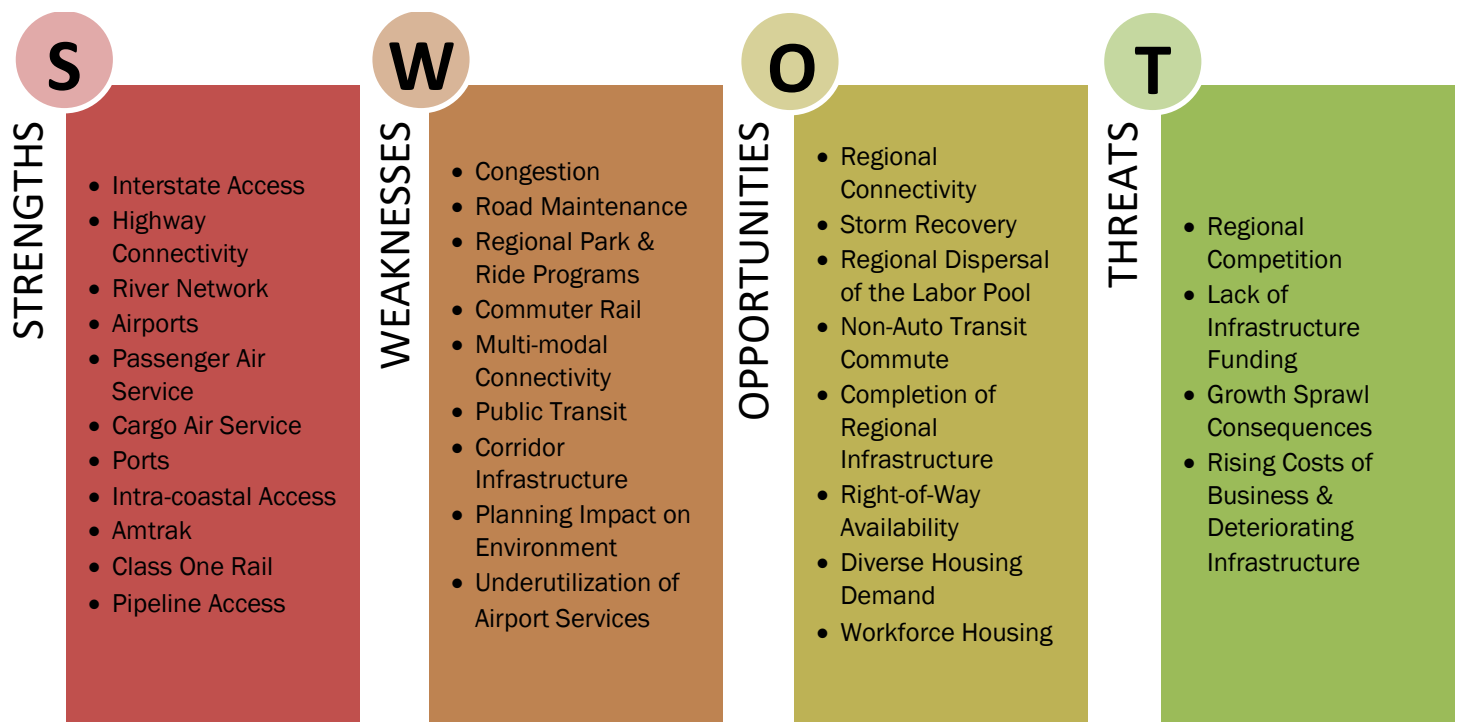
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Figure 8: SWOT Tourism, Education, Workforce Development, Business Development



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Figure 9: Community Planning, Development, and Resiliency



## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Figure 10: SWOT Transportation, Infrastructure and Assets

## SECTION FOUR: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS while providing information for the CEDS Annual Performance Report, as required by EDA. These regular updates keep the strategic direction and action plan outlined in the CEDS current and the plan as a whole relevant. The evaluation framework is an important element of the ongoing planning process. The evaluation framework, with its associated measures, should cascade from the strategic direction and action plan, which, flow from the SWOT analysis. Performance measures are identified to evaluate the progress of activities in achieving the vision, goals and objectives.

Measures were selected upon what was indicated as important to the region, what conditions the region needs to reverse or create, and what regional assets can be leveraged. In effect, the measures reinforce the relevant data and background information collected, SWOT analysis undertaken, and strategic direction and action plan developed to help identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to Acadiana's assets, limitations, and overall ability to build capacity<sup>13</sup>.

The goals selected are intended to be broad and provide a primary direction by which the region expects to advance. Specifics on how the region plans to implement the goals are outlined through the objectives. Objectives are to be realistic, flexible and responsive to the state of the regional economy. Strategies, projects and activities are the mechanisms by which the objectives could be met. Identification of priority activities included broad-based participation from regional stakeholders, involving those affected by the proposed activities and those that can ensure their success. Outputs and outcomes will qualitatively and quantitatively demonstrate milestone accomplishments.

Annual reports submitted to EDA by Acadiana Planning Commission will clearly reflect the progress accomplished and communicate milestones to regional stakeholders.

Four emphasis areas comprise the general framework for the action plan development, including: economic development, community development, transportation and resiliency.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.eda.gov/files/ceds/CEDS-Content-Guidelines-full.pdf>

## ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES
<p><b>Goal One</b> Promote economic development strategies to foster stability and resiliency within Acadiana’s existing industries.</p>	<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	<p>Support and enhance Economic Development capacity to recruit, retain and grow businesses throughout the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate regional collaboration to develop industrial and commercial sites</li> <li>Regional collaboration of an Asset Based Community Development Plan and identification of regional wealth building assets</li> <li>Implement a consistent, non-political professional permitting and regulatory environment throughout the region</li> <li>Explore policies and initiatives for sustainable economic development organizations</li> <li>Organize collaborative meetings around industry clusters</li> <li>Further develop the economic roles of local universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional priorities are identified</li> <li>Strategic goals agreed upon</li> <li>The region engages in Strategic Funding efforts</li> <li>Major projects agreed upon are funded and executed with full regional support, one-by-one.</li> <li>Regional code enforcement</li> <li>Economic Development GIS regional repository</li> <li>Number of meetings for industry clusters</li> <li>University of Louisiana at Lafayette is designated as a University Center by the Economic Development Administration</li> </ul>
	<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<p>Develop a qualified and skilled workforce with targeted training programs through the University, Community College and K-12 education system aligned with industry needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate skill training programs targeted to specific business</li> <li>Leadership and soft skills training programs</li> <li>Support growth opportunities with high wage levels and benefits</li> <li>Decision analytics focus at the university level</li> <li>Regional public and private education leaders to discuss the regional workforce needs and to learn about existing programing in the region</li> <li>SLCC Rapid Retraining program funding</li> <li>Improve understanding of agricultural business opportunities</li> <li>Bridge the gap between private community investment and educational-workforce output</li> <li>Establish and communicate workforce policy priorities with the regional legislative delegation</li> <li>Collaborate on healthy workforce initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LAGCOE hosted job fairs</li> <li>UL-SLCC-LSU-E agreements</li> <li>Number of students who completed Leader in Me</li> <li>More accessible student financial aid structure</li> <li>Nepris implementation</li> <li>Number of cross training programs</li> <li>Number of meetings where workforce development is a focus</li> <li>Workforce policy priorities identified</li> </ul>
	<b>PRODUCT LINE DIVERSIFICATION</b>	<p>Work with manufacturers in Acadiana to support product line diversification and enhance resiliency during major industry shifts in the market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the UL research centers/institutes/programs</li> <li>Develop work product for multiple industries</li> <li>Leverage existing product lines and manufacturing capabilities for new opportunities</li> <li>Explore Renewable Energy sources</li> <li>Build infrastructure</li> <li>Facilitate applied industry sponsored research, technology transfer and commercialization by working with UL</li> <li>Increase connections on local sourcing opportunities</li> <li>Enhance collaboration on small business development assets, initiatives and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of meetings with UL research centers/institutes/programs</li> <li>Number of manufacturing patents obtained</li> <li>Number of product lines diversified</li> <li>Number of locally sourced products</li> <li>Number of infrastructure projects</li> <li>Number of initiatives that promote small businesses development and entrepreneurship (EX: UL Small Business Development Center, Office of Innovation Management, College of Business, Opportunity Machine, INNOV8)</li> </ul>

## ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH (cont.)

GOALS	OBJECTIVES		STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES
<p><b>Goal Two</b> Strengthen and grow Acadiana's Economy to build global presence, local prosperity and bolster resilience.</p>	<b>ENERGY</b>	Position the Energy Corridor as a global leader in Energy servicing and manufacturing including new and emerging energy enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit new energy products</li> <li>Increase awareness of existing renewable manufacturing in LA</li> <li>Support offshore renewable technologies exploration in the Gulf</li> <li>Promote carbon capture sequestration</li> <li>Develop Renewable Portfolio Standards, RPS</li> <li>Leverage LAGCOE as a global marketing engine</li> <li>Define marketing and recruitment markets to accomplish: Marketing and publicity campaign on the assets and abilities around the region.</li> <li>Interpret UL Lafayette's Energy Institute into key economic development activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engineering, fabricators, manufacturing</li> <li>Wind, Solar, bio-energy, carbon capture sequestration</li> <li>Marketing and publicity campaign on the assets and abilities around the region.</li> <li>Strategic Local presence at OTC – Louisiana exhibition area.</li> <li>Explore other marketing/exhibit opportunities</li> <li>Louisiana Energy marketing material in all Louisiana booths, joint branding opportunities</li> </ul>
	<b>CULTURAL ECONOMY</b>	Further develop the region's cultural economy by marketing national and internationally the area's unique culture, recreational opportunities, arts, tourism and entertainment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host bi-annual, meetings to improve tourism collaboration</li> <li>Conduct joint marketing efforts within Acadiana, Louisiana and surrounding Gulf States</li> <li>Utilize parks and recreational facilities for sporting events</li> <li>Create &amp; publish regional tourism agendas/trails for visitor &amp; tourists</li> <li>Leverage the role of artists in society</li> <li>Develop sustainable base funding for tourism organizations</li> <li>Integrate agriculture within ecotourism</li> <li>Improve cultural competence in "Cajun Branding"</li> <li>Promote waterways as assets for cultural and economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing materials are developed for food trails, boudin trails, dancing trails, paddling trails, LAGCOE and LeCentre event visitors</li> <li>Unused or underutilized recreational facilities host sporting and other similar events</li> <li>Regional tourism meetings are conducted</li> <li>Visitor spending within Acadiana increases</li> <li>Decrease in dependence on hotel/motel tax among tourism organizations</li> </ul>
	<b>AGRIBUSINESS/ FOOD PROCESSING</b>	Support farming, production and processing of Acadiana's agriculture and aquaculture products by enhancing collaboration within the industries and improving global marketing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve regional food systems through the establishment of food hubs and farmers markets</li> <li>Create a cold storage capacity building</li> <li>Improve the region's ability to recover from agricultural disruptions</li> <li>Leverage federal and state resources to enhance regional capacity to locally process food</li> <li>Increase and enhance the capacity/ assistance for small scale farming operations (vegetables, fruit, grass-fed beef)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in number of food hubs and farmers markets</li> <li>Collaboration with partners takes place</li> <li>Brand Identity is developed (better utilization and collaboration with existing marketing entities like Louisiana Seafood Promotion Board, Department of Agriculture, and any other commodity groups)</li> </ul>
	<b>HEALTHCARE</b>	Support expansion of the healthcare industry through education, retention and training for physicians and nurses to better meet community needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a graduate medical program and additional residency spots</li> <li>Integrate UL informatics into telemedicine development</li> <li>Support safety nets for those without health insurance</li> <li>Support and facilitate the expansion of the LSU medical school to the Acadiana region in collaboration with UL Lafayette</li> <li>Develop an emphasis on rural healthcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage decline in predicted primary care physician shortage</li> <li>Safety net implementation</li> <li>LSU medical school study for Acadiana is conducted to determine feasibility</li> </ul>
	<b>NEW &amp; EMERGING INDUSTRY</b>	Partner with private and public economic development organizations for the advancement of new and emerging industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve collaboration among Economic Development Organizations to better support the private and public sectors</li> <li>Explore regional broadband expansion</li> <li>Engage UL College of Business and other universities in entrepreneurship and business startup programs</li> <li>Utilize Target Industry Strategy to identify &amp; recruit potential new industry (Crude Oil Export, Information Technology, Pharmaceutical/Biomed, Aviation, manufacturing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement from universities within small business development occurs</li> <li>Number of meetings among economic development organizations</li> <li>Percentage of progress made towards meeting common goals and objectives</li> <li>Number of municipalities indicating need for broadband</li> </ul>

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

GOALS	OBJECTIVES		STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES	
<p><b>Goal Three</b>                      Promote the development of vibrant, healthy and resilient communities in Acadiana to improve living standards through strategic regional planning efforts.</p>	<b>COMMUNITY PLANNING &amp; CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	Develop planning capacity and/or regional planning support within the municipalities and parishes throughout Acadiana. Defining and achieving awareness and growth in a high Quality of Place within each town and the region itself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a local comprehensive/ community plan inventory</li> <li>• Create a regional comprehensive plan</li> <li>• Develop a toolkit for local comprehensive planning &amp; implementation that is consistent with a regional plan</li> <li>• Promote the reuse of Brownfields sites through identification, assessment and clean-up</li> <li>• Promote smart growth principles</li> <li>• Develop a regional GIS repository accessible to all municipalities and parishes in the region</li> <li>• Identify infrastructure investments to maximize funds</li> <li>• Strategic Place making</li> <li>• Gateway and corridor development</li> <li>• Land-use and transportation planning integration</li> <li>• Develop an inventory of Greenfields sites in the region</li> <li>• Improve intergovernmental cooperation between various political entities</li> <li>• Support and promote digital access to all public records</li> <li>• Develop standard public participation guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local comprehensive plans</li> <li>• Number of gaps identified</li> <li>• Number of Brownfields sites identified, assessed and cleaned</li> <li>• Communities have access to valuable planning tools and skill sets enhancing decision making throughout the region.</li> <li>• A regional comprehensive plan is adopted.</li> <li>• Regional Quality of Place Development- developing technology, talent and tolerance</li> <li>• Number of Greenfields sites identified</li> <li>• Uniformity among code enforcement is exhibited</li> <li>• Strategies for implementing comprehensive plans are developed</li> <li>• Number and scope of cooperative agreements</li> <li>• Number of public records indexed and databased</li> <li>• Number of community meetings and community forums</li> </ul>	
		<b>DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION</b>	Promote the development of thriving and sustainable downtown areas through strategic revitalization programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the creation of special, cultural &amp; historical districts</li> <li>• Invest in adaptive reuse of buildings for economic activities</li> <li>• Improve livability, bike-ability &amp; walkability in downtowns</li> <li>• Redevelop blighted &amp; abandoned properties</li> <li>• Encourage the use of facade improvements</li> <li>• Support downtown education facilities</li> <li>• Improve public sector investment in downtown areas</li> <li>• Increase the number of housing units and housing options</li> <li>• Improve healthcare access in downtown areas</li> <li>• Eliminate blighted and abandoned properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of state-sponsored Main Street Programs</li> <li>• Number of buildings for reuse</li> <li>• Number of relocations to reusable buildings</li> <li>• Number of Bike Projects</li> <li>• Number of Pedestrian Projects</li> <li>• Number of housing units in Downtown Districts</li> <li>• Number of blighted and abandoned properties</li> <li>• Number of facade improvements</li> <li>• Reduction in long-term vacancy rates</li> <li>• Number of publicly funded projects in downtown</li> </ul>
			<b>LIVEABILITY VALUES</b>	Enhance the unique characteristics of all parishes within Acadiana by leveraging federal and state resources and applying smart growth principles to improve community living standards (health, education, and culture).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop connections for cultural &amp; recreational programming</li> <li>• Encourage buy-in for philanthropic &amp; civic development</li> <li>• Explore strategies for increasing the attractiveness of Acadiana culture for national and international business</li> <li>• Promote healthy living through increased recreation</li> <li>• Improve access to locally sourced food</li> <li>• Develop regional food hubs</li> <li>• Promote equitable, affordable, and expanded housing options</li> <li>• Improve access to cultural resources and programming</li> <li>• Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investments</li> <li>• Preserve communities' unique characters &amp; integrity</li> <li>• Develop strategies to address adjudicated properties</li> <li>• Improve access to public health and safety</li> <li>• Increase access to quality education</li> <li>• Support development of community and public spaces</li> </ul>

## TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

GOALS	OBJECTIVES		STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES
<p><b>Goal Four</b> Develop a resilient integrated multi-modal regional transportation system for the movement of goods and individuals.</p>	<b>SAFETY</b>	<p>Improve transportation safety measures within Acadiana through crash reduction mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify locations for transportation safety improvements</li> <li>• Reduce impaired driving incidents through high-visibility enforcement, improved driving education and local policy changes</li> <li>• Increase adult and child passenger safety belt use through marketing and education campaigns</li> <li>• Reduce young driver crashes by increasing awareness of the dangers associated with distracted and impaired driving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local safety improvement projects completed</li> <li>• Number of safety improvement projects identified</li> <li>• Number of impaired driving crashes</li> <li>• Number of distracted driving crashes</li> <li>• Number of crashes involving unrestrained drivers</li> <li>• Number of bikers in local municipalities</li> <li>• Reduction of fatal and severe within the Acadiana Region</li> </ul>
	<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	<p>Enhance regional connectivity among the primary municipalities in Acadiana by improving roadways and increasing access to various modes of transportation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality of rural roadways through the prioritization of the A-Link roadways</li> <li>• Plan and implement the I-49 South and the Lafayette Connector projects</li> <li>• Develop regional transit bus routes from Lafayette to the surrounding municipalities</li> <li>• Assess the need for bike share programs</li> <li>• Conduct light rail feasibility studies</li> <li>• Implement carpool and rideshare matching programs, school pool and vanpool</li> <li>• Explore funding options for regional transit operations</li> <li>• Engage and develop relationships with the rail providers</li> <li>• Assess the existing rail infrastructure throughout the region</li> <li>• Explore highway improvement options in rural areas</li> <li>• Explore and utilize waterways as means of transportation</li> <li>• Explore private car service expansion throughout the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased mobility for employees and student populations</li> <li>• Number of repairs on existing major rural roadways.</li> <li>• Number of riders utilizing the pilot bus route</li> <li>• Number of bikers in local municipalities</li> <li>• Number of individuals who car pool</li> <li>• Number of individuals who vanpool</li> <li>• Number of students who car pool</li> <li>• Number of areas identified for light rail service</li> <li>• Number of people who have access to multi-modal transportation options</li> <li>• Reduction in congestion for commuters</li> </ul>
	<b>IMPORT &amp; EXPORT CAPACITY</b>	<p>Facilitate a globally competitive and positive business environment by increasing regional capacity to import and export goods and services, improving all primary freight corridors in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of I-49 South as an Energy Corridor and a hurricane evacuation route</li> <li>• Complete planning, design and funding structure for the Lafayette Connector</li> <li>• Develop cargo accessibility to the Acadiana Regional Airport</li> <li>• Develop enhanced passenger service to the Lafayette Regional Airport and Acadiana Regional Airport</li> <li>• Dredge Port of Iberia and the Intracoastal Canal</li> <li>• Regional coordination and support of all air and water ports throughout the region</li> <li>• Conduct a regional aviation study to identify opportunities</li> <li>• Identify a regional conduit for import/export capacity</li> <li>• Develop/ leverage relationships with the port authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made on I-49 South</li> <li>• Progress made on Lafayette Connector</li> <li>• Greater access to international freight</li> <li>• Import/Export Assessment to find barriers to growth and mitigate findings</li> <li>• Increase the import/export tonnage</li> <li>• Regional coordination and support of all air and water ports</li> <li>• Regional aviation study is funding is identified</li> <li>• Aviation study is conducted</li> <li>• An agency assumes ownership for import/export capacity</li> </ul>

## RESILIENCY: SMARTER, STRONGER, SAFER

GOALS	OBJECTIVES		STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES
<p><b>Goal Five:</b> Build resiliency planning and strategic capacity to mitigate impact within Acadiana economies, communities and infrastructure associated with natural and man-made disasters.</p>	<b>ECONOMIC RESILIENCY</b>	Develop sustainable and economically resilient communities by working with government entities and the private sector to rebuild businesses, retain employment and improve economic opportunities after natural, man-made and economic disruptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center to expand Business Response and Recovery procedures in natural and man-made disasters</li> <li>• Support local businesses in economic downturns</li> <li>• Identify post-storm opportunities and connect larger projects with local providers in rebuilding efforts</li> <li>• Develop and promote business resiliency plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand Abdalla Hall to full Emergency Operations Center capacity</li> <li>• A framework for business resiliency plans is created</li> <li>• Number of business resiliency plans established</li> <li>• Number of communities with resiliency plans</li> </ul>
	<b>COMMUNITY PLANNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	Build short and long-term community resilience by empowering local leaders and stakeholders and improving recovery outcomes for individuals and communities involved in disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote land use management that improves development in less disaster-prone areas</li> <li>• Integrate smart growth principles and planning in proposed development sites</li> <li>• Implement housing solutions for sustainability and resilience</li> <li>• Support the preservation and restoration of historic properties through compliance of applicable environmental and historical preservation laws and Executive orders.</li> <li>• Leadership Development opportunities for elected leaders</li> <li>• Improve post-disaster collaboration among state/local/non-profit organizations (Red Cross, GOHSEP, FEMA, etc.)</li> <li>• Establish muster stations for emergency operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A GIS repository of parish property is designed</li> <li>• Number of communities exposed to smart growth principles</li> <li>• New building developments use flood planning and wind threats in building designs to greater levels than the minimum required.</li> <li>• Design a centralized repository information system tied to geographic information systems</li> <li>• Muster stations established</li> <li>• Protocols for communication post-disaster are developed</li> </ul>
	<b>TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESILIENCY</b>	Work to efficiently facilitate the building and restoration of infrastructure systems and services to support viable, sustainable communities and improve resilience to and protection from future disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop improvements to hurricane evacuation routes</li> <li>• Understand and apply design criteria principles that minimize flood impact</li> <li>• Promote best practices for farmland development</li> <li>• Support municipal detention versus neighborhood ponds</li> <li>• Support local community efforts to strengthen neighborhoods impacted by large transportation projects</li> <li>• Support educational efforts for storm water techniques that promote low impact development</li> <li>• Encourage incorporation of complete streets and low impact development solutions into roadway and transportation projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of designs that incorporated flood impact studies</li> <li>• Number of hurricane evacuation improvement opportunities identified</li> <li>• Number of community projects and programs for neighborhood revitalization</li> <li>• Number of educational programs on storm water techniques</li> <li>• Number of projects designated as low impact development</li> </ul>
	<b>COASTAL AND INLAND WATER MANAGEMENT</b>	Improve the watershed and coastal zone management practices in support of sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate a regional flood plain management study and long-term plan</li> <li>• Understand and apply design criteria principles that minimize flood impact</li> <li>• Create a Regional Flood Plain Management Authority</li> <li>• Develop and implement water quality programming</li> <li>• Implement priority water projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A watershed study is executed</li> <li>• Number of meetings and developed plans for regional watershed management</li> <li>• Flood levels decrease impacting fewer structures</li> <li>• Regional oversight is legislated to an Authority for collaboration and coordination of drainage and watershed projects</li> <li>• Water projects are prioritized</li> </ul>



## SECTION FIVE: ACADIANA REGION OVERVIEW

### GEOGRAPHY

The Acadiana Region's geographic area consists of 7 parishes, Acadia, Evangeline, Lafayette, Saint Landry, Saint Martin, Iberia and Vermilion, and 46 incorporated areas.. Economic Development District 04 is located in the juncture of two major systems: The Gulf Coastal Tallgrass Prairie and the Mississippi River Floodplain. As a result of large volumes of meltwater streaming southward at the end of the last Ice Age thousands of years in the past, the Mississippi River strayed westward into what is now south-central Louisiana. It expanded its floodplain by about fifty miles, and flowed through this area for approximately one thousand years. As a direct result of these historic climatic/geologic changes, present-day Acadiana straddles this configuration of river and prairie.

The western region of the area is dominated by the prairie ecosystem which stretches all the way into Texas. The southern and southeastern region is a coastal ecosystem, with the Atchafalaya Basin floodway providing the eastern edge of the area. The Gulf of Mexico holds the southern terminus. The northern region gradually flows into rolling hills. With the highest population and employment densities, the city of Lafayette exists as the urban center of the region.

### POPULATION

There is total population of 602,959 residents living in the region on a total land area 5,935 square miles, based on the US Bureau of Census American Community Survey 2010-2014 data. The population density for the region is 99 persons per square mile as compared to 105 persons per square mile for the state of Louisiana and 84 for the United States

**Table 14: Total Population by Parish 2014<sup>14</sup>**

Geography Name	Total Population
Acadia Parish, LA	62,498
Evangeline Parish, LA	33,745
Iberia Parish, LA	74,048
Lafayette Parish, LA	236,047
St. Landry Parish, LA	83,803
St. Martin Parish, LA	53,300
Vermilion Parish, LA	59,518
<b>Region</b>	<b>602,959</b>

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

**Table 15: Ethnic Composition by Parish<sup>15</sup>**

Geography Name	Year	Caucasian (%)	African-American (%)	Hispanic (%)	Asian (%)	Native American (%)
Acadia Parish, LA	2010	79.5	18.1	1.7	0.2	0.3
Evangeline Parish, LA	2010	69	28.3	2.3	0.3	0.3
Iberia Parish, LA	2010	62.2	32.0	3.1	2.4	0.4
Lafayette Parish, LA	2010	69.4	25.8	3.9	1.5	0.3
St. Landry Parish, LA	2010	55.9	41.3	1.6	0.4	0.3
St. Martin Parish, LA	2010	65.8	30.7	2.1	0.8	0.4
Vermilion Parish, LA	2010	80.9	14.3	2.4	2.0	0.4
<b>Region</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>68.4</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>77.1</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>

**Table 16: Median Age by Parish<sup>16</sup>**

Geography Name	Year	All People	Male	Female
Acadia Parish, LA	2010	35.7	33.9	37.3
Evangeline Parish, LA	2010	35.9	34.3	37.7
Iberia Parish, LA	2010	35.6	34.2	37.0
Lafayette Parish, LA	2010	33.2	32	34.5
St. Landry Parish, LA	2010	36.8	35.2	38.3
St. Martin Parish, LA	2010	36.3	35.1	37.6
Vermilion Parish, LA	2010	36.4	35.2	37.8
<b>Region</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>37.2</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>37.0</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>39.3</b>

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In the last several years, Acadiana has experienced a shift in its economy. Still the dominant industry in South Central Louisiana, oil production in the United States has declined due to the oversupply in the market. The Acadiana area shed more than 5,000 jobs from 2014 to 2015 according to estimates from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 3,300 of those jobs were in oil and gas, 14% of the mining sector. The rest of the lost employment was in the professional and business services sectors. These jobs are the highest compensated sectors that bring a lot of residual positive economic impact to the entire community. The loss of support to the secondary industries of food and dining, construction, and government through decreased sales tax revenue trickles down to decreased revenue for small

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

businesses and reductions in school funding, among other impacts. It is important for the economy of the region to further diversify yet still support the mining industry in order to stabilize during oil downturns and create resiliency in the community.

Significant events that have shaped the current state of the economy are enumerated below and illustrate the type of “boom and bust” sequences that have occurred since the early 1940’s.

### TIMELINE DESCRIPTION

1947: Superior Oil erected a drilling and production platform in 20 feet of water some 18 miles off Vermilion Parish, La, cementing the dominance of Acadiana in the offshore oil support industry

1970s—early 1980s: Acadiana parishes experience an economic boom due to high oil prices

1986: Oil price crash causes severe job losses and property devaluation

1990s: Region seeks to diversify economy by developing healthcare facilities, technology infrastructure, and cultural events

2000s: Resurgence in global oil prices creates new economic expansion in the region

2004: Lafayette creates the first municipal owned Fiber to the Home company, greatly expanding broadband access to the community

2010: Deepwater Horizon oil spill has long-ranging impacts on the expansion of offshore oil production and Drilling Moratorium

2014: The global supply of oil hits record highs due to excess production, severely affecting the economic outlook of communities with high concentrations of oil services companies like Acadiana

2016: August 2016 flooding inundates more than 55,000 homes, creating the worst US natural diasaster since Superstorm Sandy

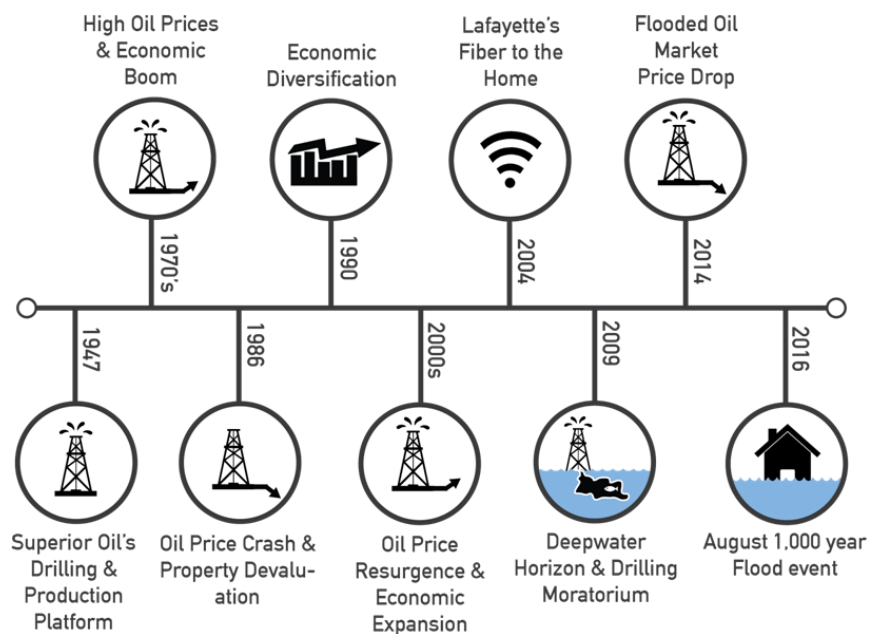


Figure 11: Acadiana Regional Timeline of Past Events

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND USE

Acadiana faces several challenges when it comes to creating and maintaining a stable workforce. The region is significantly underdeveloped in educational attainment compared to the nation. Local economic developers project that Louisiana will create more than 3,000 new engineering jobs in the

next five to ten years, and many Acadiana residents will miss out on these opportunities due to lack of training.

One Acadiana, the regional Chamber of Commerce, has two major Workforce Development and Education platforms as part of its Priorities for a Better Acadiana initiative. Ranging from improving early childhood education to increasing funding pathways for higher education, the organization is taking a broad approach for solutions to rectify the critical workforce development situation in Acadiana.

On the local level, Workforce Investment Boards are designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. There are two Workforce Investment Boards in Acadiana, located in St. Landry Parish and Lafayette Parish.

There are also several statewide programs, developed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. These include:

- Incumbent Worker Training Program
- Small Business Employee Training Program
- Small and Emerging Business Program
- LED FastStart

The programs also serve the dual purpose of assisting with small business and entrepreneurial investment.

## **TRANSPORTATION ACCESS**

Facilitating the movement of goods and services for economic purposes is one of the most important aspects of the US transportation system. Surface roadways, rail lines, ports, and other transportation infrastructure provide a vital lifeline for the business community in the area. Surface transportation, or traditional road networks, are the essential last mile providers of good and services for businesses. Businesses also rely on long-haul trucking that utilizes the federal roadway system.

### **AIR**

There are seven airports in the Planning District 4, one commercial and six classified as general aviation. The Lafayette Airport is primarily a commercial airport with passenger service provided by United and Delta Airlines. The passenger services enplane and deplane more than 400,000 customers on an annual basis. It has two air cargo operators, UPS and FedEx. The airport enplaned 11 million pounds of cargo and deplaned 55 thousand pounds in 2014. In New Iberia, the Acadiana Airport is a level 1 general aviation airport that assists in offshore oilfield operations. It recently started construction for a new terminal with the goal of providing passenger service to Houston.

### **PORTS**

Planning District 4 is a coastal region with good access to water transportation facilities. The ports of Iberia and Vermilion are coastal ports and the port of Krotz Springs is a shallow-draft inland port. The Acadiana Navigation Canal and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway provide access to the Gulf of Mexico for commercial activities.

## **RAIL**

In the Acadiana region there are three Class 1 rail freight corridors. There are two Union Pacific lines, located primarily in St. Landry Parish. One runs approximately adjacent to U.S. 190 E/W and the other line NW/SE. The two lines converge in the large switching yard in Livonia, just to the east of the St. Landry Parish line. The NW/SE line has one of the highest volumes in the state, moving more than 20 million tons of freight a year. The E/W handles 10-20 million tons of freight.

The southern line is jointly owned by BNSF and Union Pacific. In addition to carrying significant amount of freight, this line also services the Amtrak Sunset Limited. BSNF also has a Class 1 traditional carload switching yard in Lafayette. The line follows the US 90 corridor from the west to south into New Iberia and moves between 5 to 10 million tons of freight a year.

The Louisiana Delta Railroad operates two Class III short line operators on the southern line to service small agricultural operations in the region and the Port of Iberia. The Acadiana Railway Company operates three short lines off of the UP lines in Evangeline and St. Landry Parish, out of Bunkie, Opelousas, and Eunice.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Acadiana's rich cultural heritage and abundant natural resources has created an economic component of leisure opportunities. From festivals operating on an almost weekly schedule to fishing and recreation experiences galore, Acadiana has commoditized its unique spirit and supports many businesses that serve locals and tourists alike. The festivals and cultural events range across the region and bring a burst of revenue to the public and private sectors alike.

**Acadia Parish:** Rayne Frog Festival; Crowley Rice Festival; Crowley Main Street Program

**Evangeline Parish:** Chicot State Park; Cotton Festival

**Iberia Parish:** New Iberia Main Street Program; Delcambre Shrimp Festival; Bayou Teche; Rip Van Winkle Gardens

**Lafayette Parish:** Festival International; Festivals Acadiens et Créoles; Horse Farm UL Sports Events

**St. Landry Parish:** Liberty Theater; Opelousas Main Street Program; Southwest Zydeco Festival; Arnaudville Cultural District

**St. Martin Parish:** Crawfish Festival; St. Martinville Main Street Program; Atchafalaya Basin

**Vermilion Parish:** Abbeville Main Street Program; Gueydan Duck Festival; Vermilion Bay; Cattle Festival; Bastille Day; Chic-a-la-Pie, Shrimp Festival, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration; Day Lily Festival

The Acadiana region is also investing in its built environment to nurture an improved quality of life for its residents. These programs range from increasing the number of active transportation facilities and parks in the communities to investing in the Main Streets of the small towns.

These assets contribute to Louisiana's position as a world leader in tourism, in 2013 totaling up to 27.3 million visitors bringing \$10.8 billion in private and \$807 million in public revenue.

## ENVIRONMENT

Acadiana's unique environment is characterized by its wetlands, marshes, and coastal areas which serve as a natural barrier against hurricanes and tropical storms. The wetlands are the nursery grounds for shrimp, crabs and oysters, and the foundation of Louisiana's aquaculture industry producing 25 percent of the nation's seafood.

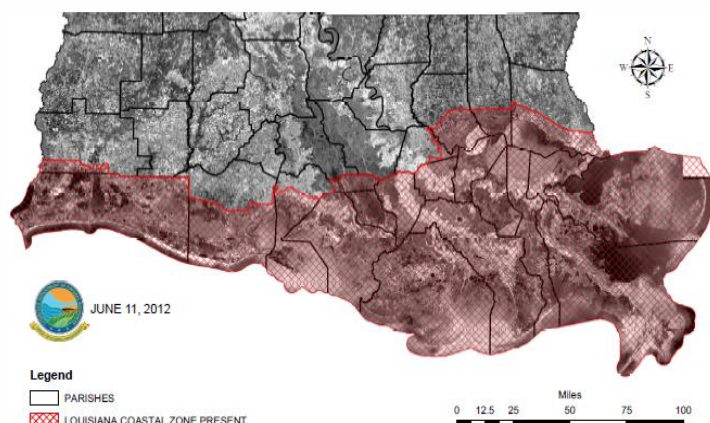


Figure 12: Louisiana Coastal Zone

Louisiana's Coastal Zone is under constant and increasing threat, with land loss, subsidence and sea level rise

combining to form a witch's brew of vulnerability. In this sense, Hurricane Katrina was but one catastrophic example of our changing environmental landscape, and one that cannot be viewed in a vacuum. In addition to Katrina, our state has been ravaged by hurricanes Rita, Gustav, Ike and Isaac, economically crippled by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and afflicted by countless smaller – but hardly insignificant – natural disasters ranging from riverine flooding to community-sized sink holes<sup>17</sup>.

A diminishing coastline is of regional importance, given the coast borders two Acadiana parishes: Iberia and Vermilion constituting nearly one-third of Louisiana's coast. Per the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the state has lost 1.3 million acres of land because of coastal erosion which accounts for 90 percent of coastal wetland loss in the lower 48 states. During the last 15 years, the coastal wetlands in the Acadiana Region were impacted by saltwater infiltration due to storm surges from the last several hurricane seasons which threatens the sustainability of the Chicot Aquifer.

Planning District 4 is geographically located above the Chicot Aquifer and supplies much of the areas drinking water. Fresh water in the Chicot and other southwestern Louisiana aquifers is separated from fresh water in southeast Louisiana by a saltwater ridge along the western edge of the Mississippi River valley.<sup>18</sup>

Acadiana is also home to the Atchafalaya River Basin, one of our country's most majestic and meaningful places. The Nature Conservancy is working with the state of Louisiana, partners, and other stakeholders to protect and restore this incredible place. It contains the only actively building delta system in the Gulf of Mexico and its survival is critical for the environment, economy, and people of the Gulf of Mexico and the entire United States<sup>19</sup>.

17 [http://www.doa.la.gov/OCDDRU/NDRC/LASAFE\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.doa.la.gov/OCDDRU/NDRC/LASAFE_Report_Final.pdf)

18 <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/Portals/0/evaluation/aeps/10ChicotAquiferSummary09-1.pdf>

19 <http://www.nature.org/photos-and-video/video/the-atchafalaya>

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LAFAYETTE



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M. Larry Richard  
Iberia Parish President

David Savoy  
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**APPENDIX A**  
**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**  
**TIMELINE AND ADOPTION PROCESS**

<b>March 8, 2016</b>	Introduction and review of the overall CEDS process with the Strategic Committee.
<b>April 13, 2016</b>	Discussed the SWOT process and selected facilitators with the Strategic Committee.
<b>May 24, 2016</b>	Evaluated and solicited subjects for the SWOT meeting finalized date and time, and selected SWOT participants.
<b>May 25, 2016</b>	A pre-SWOT survey was issued via email to gauge public opinion on the importance of the subject matter identified for the SWOT analysis.
<b>June 27, 2016</b>	Reviewed and approved the SWOT agenda with selected facilitators.
<b>June 30, 2016</b>	Conducted the Acadiana Regional SWOT analysis.
<b>July 5, 2016</b>	Reviewed the identified priorities with the SWOT facilitators and discussed next steps for CEDS development.
<b>July 12, 2016</b>	A presentation was conducted for the Planning Commission's Board outlining the SWOT results and soliciting feedback on next steps.
<b>October 15, 2016</b>	APC staff received additional training on CEDS development.
<b>December 5, 2016</b>	The CEDS goals and objectives were presented to economic development professionals to garner input and support.
<b>December 6, 2016</b>	APC Management Committee reviewed the goals and objectives.
<b>February 1, 2017</b>	The CEDS strategic committee reviewed goals and objectives and provided feedback to enhance priorities.
<b>February 7, 2017</b>	The finalized goals and objectives were presented to the Planning Commission's Board.
<b>March 3, 2017</b>	Strategic Committee approval for the finalized CEDS was received.
<b>March 15, 2017</b>	CEDS Final Draft underwent 30-Day Public Comment Period.
<b>April 2017</b>	APC Board approved and adopted the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Acadiana region.

## APPENDIX B

### REGIONAL SWOT SURVEY RESULTS

The Acadiana Planning Commission conducted a community survey prior to the regional SWOT analysis which was distributed to all members on the strategic committee and several community members in representative parishes. Respondents included elected officials from all levels of government, business owners and other civically involved community members.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette developed the questionnaire and utilized a 5-point Likert scale to gauge community strengths and weaknesses. Table 7 illustrates the survey results wherein 1 corresponds to level of weakness and 5 is the level of strength. Averages were calculated to illustrate the general response positions of all participants. Tourism and Community Support were ranked higher than other areas and were designated regional strengths.

**Table 17: Acadiana Planning Commission SWOT Survey**

<b>TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Highways	2.5	Economic Development Education - Elected Officials	3.1
Public Transit	1.6	Urban Planning and Development	2.8
Regional Park and Ride Service	1.8	Parish/Municipality Planning and Development	2.8
Multi-modal connectivity (bike, pedestrian, rail, etc.)	1.6	Permitting and Regulatory Process	2.9
Regional Park and Ride Service	2.8	Regional GIS Programming and Technical Support	2.9
Regional Roadway Connectivity	2.6	Broadband Access	3.2
Congestion	2.6	Economic Development Orientation of Elected Officials	2.5
Availability of Trucking/Motor Carriers	3.4	Regional Funding Coordination	2.6
Commuter Rail Service	1.5	<b>CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Passenger Air Service	3.2	Higher Education Research Capacity for Economics	2.6
Cargo Air Service	3.2	Aviation and Avionics	3.3
Ports	3.6	Informatics and Engineering Industry Development	3.5
<b>BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>2.9</b>	High Value Business Services	3.2
Permitting and Regulatory Process	2.9	Marine and Heavy Industry	3.8
Availability of Financing for Business Investment	3	Heritage Tourism	4
Diversity of the Economy	2.5	Agribusiness	3.4
Research Capacity for Industry Starts	2.8	<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
Research Capacity for Business Starts	2.9	Supply and Availability	3.2
New Business Recruitment	3	Education and Skill Levels	3
Management Level Recruitment	2.7	Productivity and Quality	3.4
Existing Business Retention	3	Wage Levels	3
Labor Management Relations	3.1	Diversity of the Economy	2.8
Overall Business Climate	3.2	Entrepreneurial Development	3
		Young Professional Retention	2.6
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>LANDS AND BUILDINGS</b>	<b>2.9</b>

Quality of Local Primary Education	3.1	Availability of Industrial and Commercial Sites	3
Quality of Secondary Education	3	Availability of Buildings	2.8
Presence of a Community/Technical College Campus	3.6	Costs of Sites and Buildings	2.9
Presence of a 4-year College Campus	3.8	Sites and Buildings Located on LED's Website	2.9
Higher Education Research Capacity	3.7	<b>LOCAL TAXES</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>	<b>3.7</b>	Sales Tax Rate(s)	2.6
Housing Availability and Cost	2.9	Property Tax Levels	3.2
Availability of Medical Services/Facilities	4	Inventory Tax	2.8
Availability of Commercial, Retail, Lodging & Restaurants	3.9	<b>UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Availability of Recreational Facilities/Activities	3.8	Availability/Capacity and Cost of Electrical Service	3.3
Availability of Cultural Facilities	3.8	Availability/Capacity and Cost of Natural Gas	3.3
Police and Fire Protection	3.7	Availability/Capacity of Water and Wastewater	3.3
<b>TOURISM</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>RESILIENCY FACTORS</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Heritage/Cultural	4.5	Coastal Resiliency	2.8
Food	4.8	Risk Mitigation	2.7
Music	4.6	Critical Support Assets	3.1
College Town	3	Energy Resiliency, Public Safety & Critical Infrastructure	3.2
Recreational Sporting Event Capacity	3.6	Storm Surge Protection/Flood Barriers	2.4
Professional Sporting Event Capacity	2.3	Evacuation Planning	3.2
<b>LOCAL INCENTIVES</b>	<b>2.7</b>		
Availability	2.7		
Attitude Towards the Use of Local Incentives	2.7		



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