WORKSHOP REPORT:
BAYOU VERMILION

May 10, 2016
Vermilionville

Our voice. Our vision.

EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

Funded in part by a federal TIGER grant

DISTRICT
Bayou Vermilion

LOCATION
Vermilionville – May 20, 2016 (5:30pm – 8:30pm)

WORKSHOP TEAM
TBD

Carlee Alm-LaBar	LCG
Cathie Gilbert	LCG
Neil LeBouef	LCG
Emily Neustrom	LCG
Kelia Bingham	LCG
Bill Hunter	ASW
Lauren Boring	ASW
Kerry Frey	ASW
Wayne Domingue	ASW
Jeremy Durham	ASW
Cheryl Bowie	Right Angle
Rosemary Sullivan	Right Angle
Blake Lagneaux	Right Angle
Sarah Spell	Right Angle
April Guillote	Right Angle
AJ McGee	Right Angle
Katie Falgout	Right Angle
Donna Lejeune	Right Angle
Ashlyn Dupuis	Right Angle
Amanda Chapman	Right Angle
Harry Weiss	ETRT
Steven Picou	ETRT
Gretchen Vanicor	ETRT
David Cheramie	ETRT

This material is based on work supported by the FHWA under Grant Agreement P-8.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the Author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the FHWA.

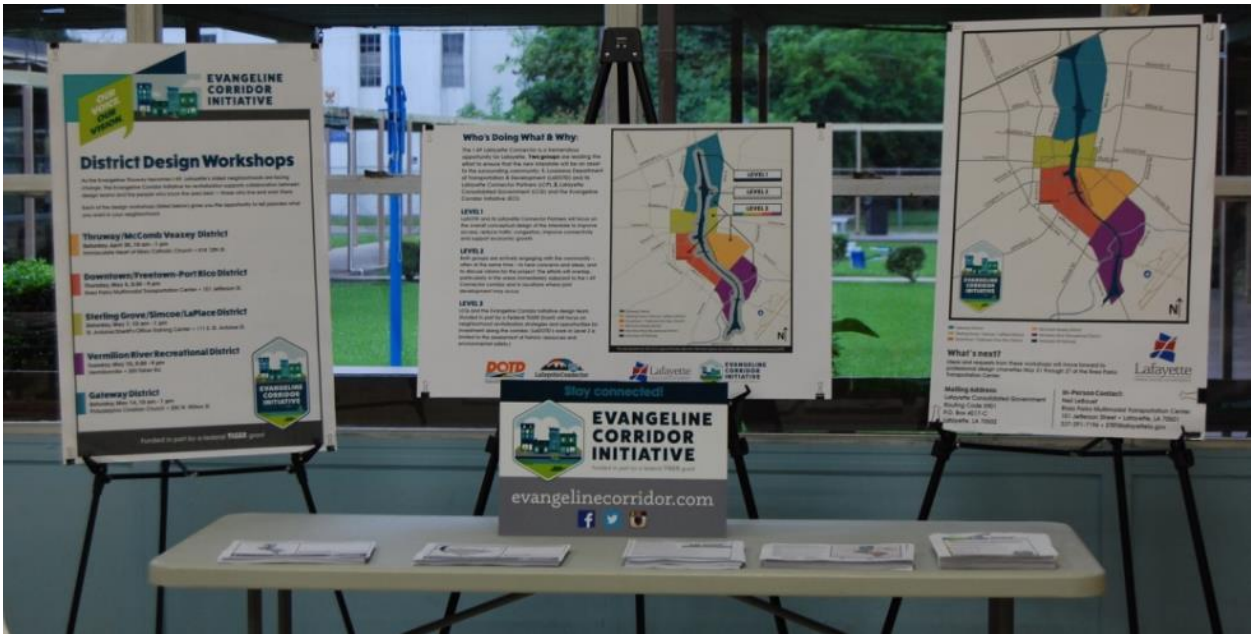
OVERVIEW

The purpose of the District Design Workshops was to bring together the communities adjacent to the existing Evangeline Thruway to lay the groundwork for developing a comprehensive future vision and plan for a renewed Evangeline Corridor. There is a great need for an extensive planning initiative to improve the districts at the neighborhood level, while linking them through a response to the unique environment that will be created by the anticipated I-49 Connector.

This Workshop Report is part of a series of five (5) district-based reports, each highlighting feedback gathered in five (5) separate 3-hour long community outreach events. The report(s) reflect the highly engaged open conversations that capture the concerns, aspirations, and suggestions that surfaced throughout various exercises led by facilitators along with groups of local neighborhood residents, business/property owners, and interested parties.

The report is divided into categories related to the overall planning effort that emerged directly from table conversations and exercises. Based around ideas of opportunities and challenges the elements include but are not limited to *economic development, culture and history, entertainment, safety, infrastructure, beautification, housing, recreation and environment* and *community*. A final section of the Report focuses on *Connector-Related Feedback* that serves as feedback that is collected by the ECI Team and delivered to the DOTD's Lafayette Connector Partners Team.

Lafayette Consolidated Government and the entire ECI team would like to express great appreciation to all those who participated in the workshops and shared the invaluable feedback that forms the basis of this report. The synthesized information contained herein directly informed the Charrette efforts and ultimately the plans and strategies designed for the neighborhoods and communities of each district.



EXIT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Much was desired in the Vermilion District in terms of economic development. A largely non-residential area, people called for new residential areas southwest of Oakbourne to North Beaver Park and the airport. The idea to reclaim small houses and restore older homes was widespread. People want walkable and inviting streets. There is a lot of "blight," not just here but in other districts. It appears to some residents that the system of buying and selling adjudicated properties is unclear and promises to address change in general are not met. It was thought that Downtown received more attention than the Vermilion area.

It was said that bikeways, playgrounds, and pedestrian zones should be part of the economic development plan in relation to the interstate project. The River was seen as a major development asset if you could entice infill along the river after the interstate - develop a place to visit. For example, in San Francisco the Ghiradelli factory was made into a mixed-use facility. Baltimore Inner Harbor, Chattanooga Riverfront Park (revitalized their downtown) or San Antonio Riverwalk are other examples. There are multiple opportunities for Riverfront potential at Trappey's property and other places along the river.

Beyond opportunities, there are a lot of challenges for development in the district. Despite the natural environment amenities and beyond elements like Vermilionville, it is not considered very walkable or tourist friendly as a southern gateway. There used to be more development along Surrey and Kaliste Saloom (i.e. restaurants and hotels). Enhanced, inviting gateway measures and destinations could be imagined to address this.

The airport and its planned runway and facility expansion is an issue and question at play. What impact will the connector have on runways, Airport access traffic, etc.? The airport approach for access is not very walkable and the transition between corridor planning and the airport could be tightened in terms of linking economic development potential at the Pinhook and Kaliste Saloom Rds. interfaces.

Desirable Elements and Mitigation

- Memorial/art parks to attract tourists and locals
- Grocery stores needed - farmer's market, restaurants to alleviate traveling outside the district
- Take advantage of urban agricultural potentialPublic transportation needs improvement - more bus shelters with benches
- Parts of district are not safely walkable or bikeable – to access commerce
  Underutilized areas need attention

SAFETY

There is a diversity of perspectives surrounding safety in the area – at the neighborhood and the recreation scale. Some participants claimed that in many cases (and areas) they believe the situation is admirable and relatively safe with general thoughts for improvement, while in others there are more serious concerns. And there are concerns that an interstate will increase some negative situations in the area.

From a street and traffic perspective, speed is a concern in the neighborhoods, especially around schools and access to schools (Ascension and ESA – see maps). Road work has already commenced at

the Kaliste Saloom interface and there are traffic jams occurring. Would the interstate increase or help this? Particular comments were made about Surrey St. in terms of making it more safe for traffic (turning lanes, widening?) and pedestrians.

Flooding in this area is an issue due to proximity of the river and floodplains. Hurricane evacuation is a major point of consideration.

From a security and safety standpoint, conversations focused around making safe and accessible improvements to park areas, the river and streets. Beaver Park and the area around Vermilionville which is healthy and inviting during the day, is dark and questionable in the evening and night despite activities still occurring at these times. Street lighting and road striping could be added in areas. Safe access to the river and parks from parts of the neighborhoods and the airport is highly desirable.

Within the few neighborhoods in this district, crime is an issue – burglaries, guns, drugs and shady activity. This filters to the park areas at times. Would the interstate invite more crime?

Desirable Elements

- Crossovers needed at Surrey and in some across the river (pedestrian?)
- Solar strips on road
- Streetscape improvements - lighting
- Speed mitigation
- Access considerations

CULTURE AND HISTORY

There is a link between cultural history and recreation in the area. The district is the cultural crossroads of Lafayette and the birthplace of the city. It was also home to Native American culture – indian mounds still exist. This history should be promoted and shared and the heritage explored further in Heymann Park. Vermilionville remains a major community asset with continued attraction and possibilities that could be expanded and could enjoy greater access and connection to other destinations and the neighborhood.

Desirable Elements

- Enhance and explore Native American History (Heymann Park and area)
- Update Vermilionville maintain its attraction
- Historic structures recognized

RECREATION, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY

The advantage of the natural environment is the cornerstone of this district. Recreation opportunities abound. Plenty of activities already occur and many more could be enhanced in terms of improving and making better use of parks – diversity of use, safety measures and access to parks that link better to neighborhoods. The existence of abundant natural environment destinations and character is what links other primary community elements and development as covered in this report. Participants of the workshop already utilize these areas, but also see room for updates and considerations for change. A consolidation of the particular feedback is listed below and overlaps with other categories mentioned.

ACTIVITIES

- Parks – no sidewalk to Jean Lafitte Park and sidewalk from airport around to Surrey.
- Open areas with more parks. Keep what parks we have.
- Make a riverwalk. River is a huge feature but there is no access to that river.
- Heymann Park – move sidewalk/walking trail closer to the river. Same with Beaver Park.
- Add sidewalks from Beaver Park all the way to Pinhook.
- New launch at North Beaver Park – maybe a kayak launch. More boat launches.
- There is an existing bike path from General Mouton across South Beaver Park to Vermilionville.
- Add a pier along the walking path like in Mandeville. Have it cross the river a couple of times. Also increase the size of the bridge for walkability.
- No parks in Oakbourne area. Can we add pocket parks? Park on other side of Thruway and Lil Woods parks are underutilized.
- Healthy and accessible river.
- Lafayette is a great recreational place. Need park setting for lunch and a park for kids.
- Connect Beaver Park to Heymann Park.
- Boat parade.
- Bandshell and picnics.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- Concerns about flooding.
- Drainage issues including along River Road and the coulees near Kaliste Saloom.
- Are we messing with the hydrology of the river?
- People think the river is dirty. That is a misconception. It is cleaner and safer than people realize.
- What are the noise and light pollution going to be?
- Remove noise all along corridor/connector especially near Kaliste Saloom.
- Environmental concerns in that area – just clean it up and get it out of there.
- Contamination along railroad (oil, lead, etc.) from Simcoe to Taft. Need community awareness.
- Implement quiet zones near railroads.

EDUCATION

- Need more educational opportunities about our history and culture and our local flora and fauna.
- Better quality of schools.
- Better way to display the watershed exhibit; needs better building; Vermilionville could use that building as a classroom, etc.
- People think the river is dirty.

HOUSING

Though there aren't many residential neighborhoods within the district boundaries, there are neighborhoods adjacent and opportunities to expand residential development to some degree that have closer access to and be more integrated with park areas.

Desirable Elements and suggestions

- Reclaim small houses throughout the District. Older homes restored and not torn down.
- French-quarter-style sections or blocks (?). Something you can walk through.
- Neighborhoods off of Michael Allen would be great for underserved, young families.

- Remove ratty buildings along Surrey.
- Remove abandoned buildings – replace and reuse when possible.
- Apartments near Lil Woods and Beaver parks.

ENTERTAINMENT (COMMERCIAL)

Conversations around the recreational amenities feeds into stakeholders' different ideas about entertainment. New launches at Beaver Park North (boats and kayaks) could be advantageous. More commercial programming within parks – bandshell, picnics. The Boat Parade is big pull – this could be made into a more regular activity.

Desirable Elements

- Jean Lafitte Park needs better streetscape – enhance sidewalk from airport around to Surrey.
- Connect Beaver Park to Heymann Park.
- More informal lunch options in park setting and for kids.
- Enhanced entertainment activity around the river.

BEAUTIFICATION

Beautifying the area and making destinations more appealing is a main goal of the district participants. Public areas need to see improvement in general, including enhancement to parks and streetscapes. Identify areas throughout Lafayette to plant native and wild plants long the coulees that aren't cemented – an arboretum for native plants. While the area has large green space and parks, smaller scale pocket parks could be conceived in certain neighborhood streets. A few park areas, such as Lil' Woods, are considered under-utilized by some.

Desirable Elements

- Remove noise along Corridor - near Kaliste Saloom Road – use landscaping.
- Emulate Main Street in New Iberia – mirror along the river and make use of Surrey.
- Enhance areas around the airport.
- LUS keeps cutting back oak trees at the power lines – how to mitigate?
- Airport exit on Surrey could be a wide, beautiful boulevard all the way to Pinhook and University and made into a gateway.

"Lafayette is not an over the top place - just need to clean it up."

"Bring the river back."

INFRASTRUCTURE

In general, things like maintenance, drainage, and flooding were main concerns regarding infrastructure and streets. Many calls for improvements and mitigation were discussed. Parts of the area are in a floodplain and the river can flood regularly (see safety section above) .

ACCESS/MOBILITY/CONNECTIVITY

Once again access to and through the neighborhood is a key element. People want to be connected to other parts of the community and the city beyond. The Thruway made this idea more difficult and this is an opportunity to improve those journeys. This project could also be that opportunity to mitigate the disconnect.

Residents of this district have particular questions and concerns about the current state and future of Pinhook which some say is a challenging road to navigate (too narrow?). This major road could be a prime pilot for an enhanced multi-modal facility.

Rosa Parks was highlighted as a decent facility that is fairly easy to access and has good links to UL campus. Public transportation provision and access to it is important. Many think that it needs improvement in general, mainly through frequency and increase in numbers and character of bus stops. Access links to the airport and to Vermilionville were mentioned specifically.

In terms of multi-modal transportation, biking was discussed as a major opportunity. People want increased road presence, safer measures and the designated access links for cyclists.

Desirable Elements

- More road presence for cycling - bike racks, bike lanes, routes (education and promotion of mode!).
- Solar strips on road.
- With the interstate construction, could you tunnel under Beaver Park?
- Bus Shelters for school kids! - Better bus stops in general! More transport opportunities.

CONNECTOR-RELATED FEEDBACK

NOTES ON THE EVANGLINE THRUWAY (EXISTING & FUTURE USE)

Challenges, Concerns, and Existing Use

- Hurricane evacuation is huge.
- Concerned about after the interstate about the ramps and frontage roads. Make sure cross-traffic connections happen. Increase crossings over the Thruway – not reducing!
- After the interstate, turn the Evangeline Thruway into two two-way boulevard, or one two-way boulevard with a lot of public spaces.
- After the interstate, perhaps light rail service from Opelousas to New Iberia (big wish).
- Concerned about connectivity when the interstate comes through – biking or walking across the Thruway is already difficult.

NOTES ON THE EVANGLINE THRUWAY (EXISTING & FUTURE USE)

- Option 6A option was the favored option by one group.

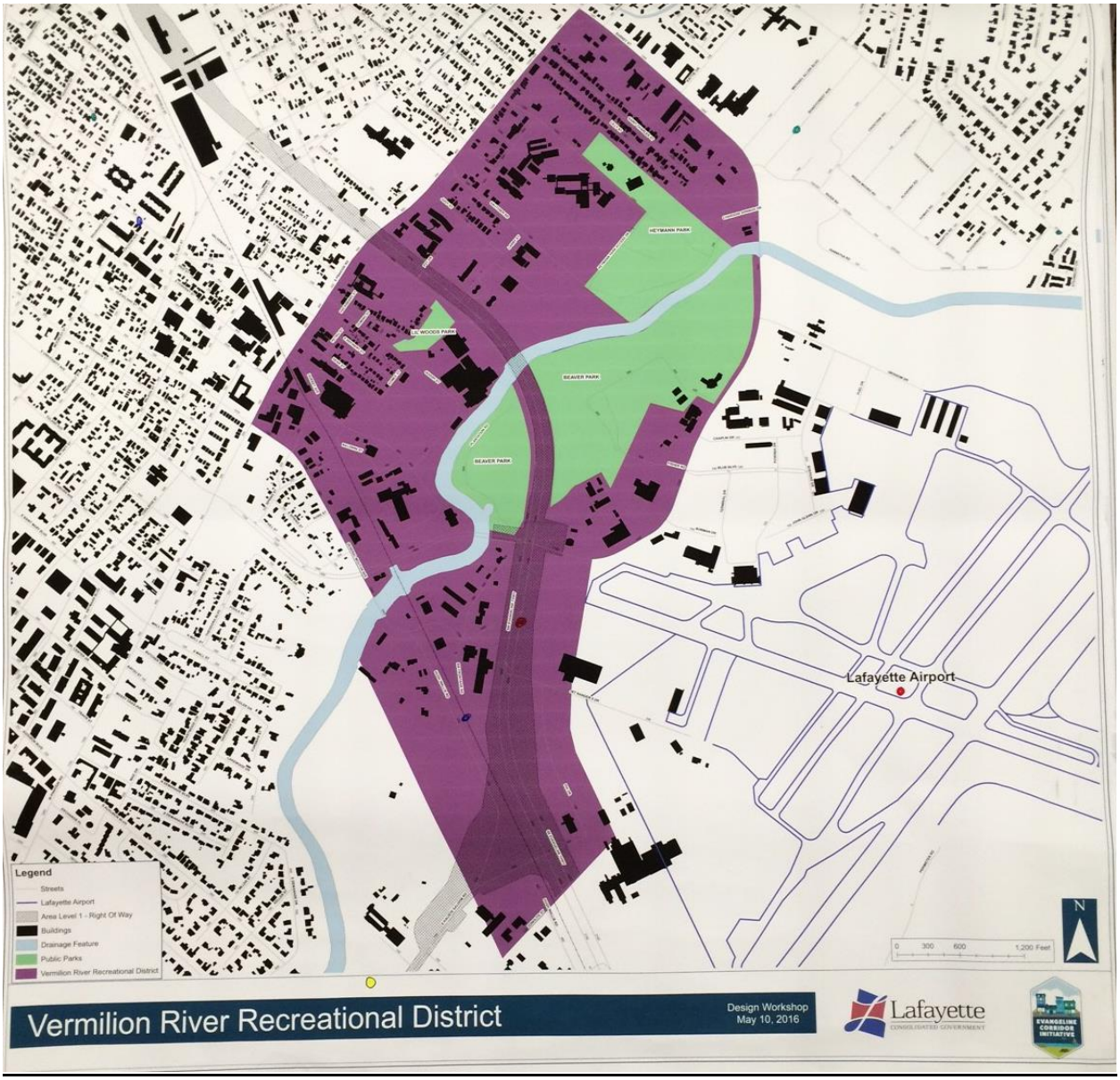
APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP CONTENT RESULTS

MAPPING EXERCISE

These images represent direct community comment and feedback elicited from the tables.

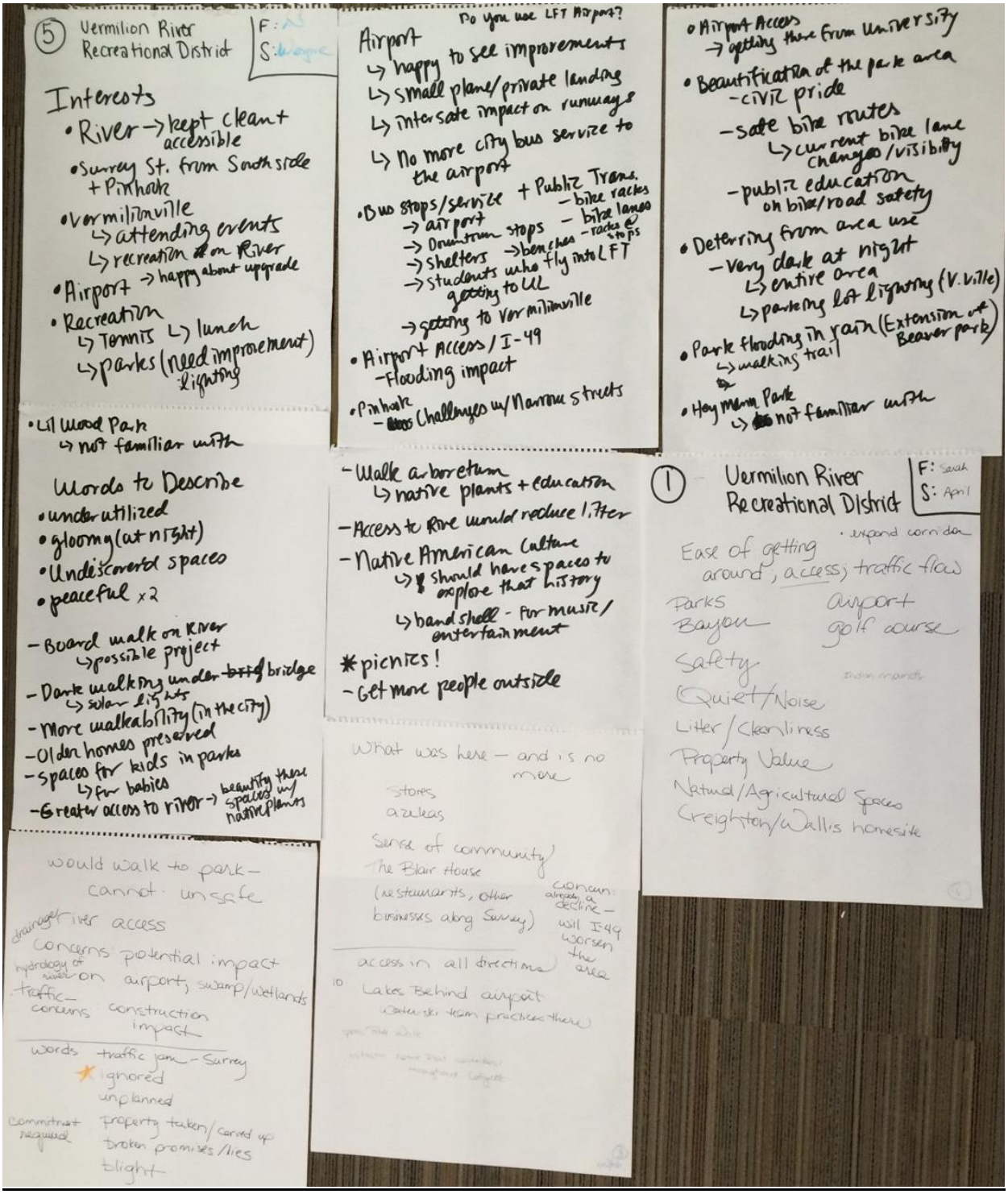
Lafayette Airport
BEAVER PARK
Legend
Streets
Lafayette Airport
Vermilion River Recreational District
Area Level 1 - Right Of Way
Buildings
Drainage Feature
Public Parks
0 300 600 1,200 Feet
N
Vermilion River Recreational District
Figure - Ground
Design Workshop
May 10, 2016
Lafayette
CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT
EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

Lafayette Airport
Legend
Streets
Lafayette Airport
Vermilion River Recreational District
Area Level 1 - Right Of Way
Buildings
Drainage Feature
Public Parks
0 300 600 1,200 Feet
N
Vermilion River Recreational District
Figure - Ground
Design Workshop
May 10, 2016
Lafayette
CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT
EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE


HEYMANN PARK
BEAVER PARK
BEAVER PARK
Lafayette Airport
Legend
Streets
Lafayette Airport
Area Level 1 - Right Of Way
Buildings
Drainage Feature
Public Parks
Vermilion River Recreational District
0 300 600 1,200 Feet
N
Vermilion River Recreational District
Design Workshop
May 10, 2016
Lafayette
CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT
EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

POWER OF TEN FLIP CHARTS

These images represent direct community comment and feedback elicited from the tables.



(4) Vermilion River Recreational District

F:
S:

Power of 10

+
RIVER
PARKS / Beaver
AIRPORT
VERMILIONVILLE
HISTORIC Structures/landmarks
HIST. Center of Lafayette
BIRTHPLACE
Potential for Riverfront (Trappey)
Untapped Potential of River

NEG:
LUS cutting tops of trees
LCG could get w/ experts arborists
AIRPORT looks great, but beyond → not welcoming
Better Landscaping
Better gateway
Surrey / Gateway
MILITARY/Veterans assoc in area lends itself to boulevard

Area behind airport (pristine)
don't infringe on it
leave it alone.

Perception of River:
- dirty / polluted
- unaware ↳ misconceptions b/c ppl see erosion sediment & think its dirty
- For residents, keep it very high or below grade ↳ testing being done
- Jan - Pensacola example
- tall bridge (signature image) overlooking LFT

Opportunity to develop at River Level
(feel outside of city
Nature (access)
↳ ex. of San Antonio
ex. Chattanooga
MIXED (hist./econ. pl → Renewal
HIDDEN (limited access. Easy City ppl don't go on the river)
CROSSROADS (where lots of cultures meet.)
WILDERNESS - on the edge of the basin

RIVER is underutilized
Parks aren't used.
People aren't aware
↳ Beaver Park
Abandoned boat launch at Heymann Park
Education about flora/fauna of the area - could be expanded

Local development
NO BIG BOX
mixed use development
no big parking lots

SAFETY:
- not safe -
Surrey / Simcoe
gunshots @ Heymann park
drug deal @ parks
shady dealings (ex. Beaver Park)
Children's playground
↳ very near the freeway
Sometimes extends to residential
ACCESS to Beaver Park
U-TURN to airport from NIV.

WISH
good shopping
good restaurants (more)
bike routes (more)

devel. along the river
grocery shopping / supermarket
most send kids to private schools
MOST areas not walkable / bikeable
tourists crossing PINHOOK
↳ very dangerous
SURREY - dangerous / scary
Not walkable / safe for tourists

change ONE thing:
USE of the RIVER / amb pace (Little Big Cup)
take advantage of nat. resources
TOO FOCUSED ON AUTO.
NOT WALKABLE
New housing for watershed exhibit
River-facing development vs road-facing
Delicate balance
Southpark example
You don't have to be on a boat to enjoy the river

Boardwalk safety access
Beautify PINHOOK
GROCERY STORES (small)
area has been neglected
more residential would prompt more need for shopping
Concern for AIRPORT runway - concern about extending it into wetlands.

Neil T. Lebouef

From: Heather B. <baldwinh555@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2016 12:34 AM
To: ETRT
Subject: Evangeline Corridor

Good evening,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment about the upcoming massive undertaking to plan and implement the Evangeline Corridor. Although I disagree that it is an essential expense, I do think that in the long run, if planned and implemented thoughtfully, this may rejuvenate many portions of our city. Considering an effort at this scale, something like landscaping might seem trivial, but I disagree and so do many experts in this area. This corridor is going to produce noise and air pollution, divide neighborhoods and have various impacts on the commercial properties associated with the area during implementation as well as following it. After many visits to places such as The Woodlands, Houston and Austin, Texas, which share many of the same native plant species as Lafayette, I think thoughtful landscaping with native plant species is paramount to an aesthetically pleasing city environment which envelops a park-like tone associated with some of the busiest parts of the city.

I would like to encourage the planners to consider incorporating native plants in the form of small and large scale plantings which would reduce maintenance/mowing costs, reduce rain runoff, improve water quality, and promote a more vigorous landscape which is aesthetically pleasing, and depending on placement, may serve to reduce noise, and promote a more environmentally friendly landscape to counter the hustle and bustle of the corridor.

Lafayette is an ideal location to incorporate such an effort because we are located in one of the most botanically and biologically rich locations in North America. Our soil types are amenable to restoring freshwater wetlands, bottomland and upland forests and beautiful native tallgrass prairie wildflowers. Landscapes with native vegetation require less maintenance, and are more vigorous throughout the year because they are locally adapted to environmental extremes such as our brutal summers and soggy winters. If one of the goals of the process is to promote unity between neighborhoods, then a vigorous and diverse landscape thoughtfully designed, may enhance the experience and use of communal areas such as parks, or pathways while promoting our city as a beautiful and environmentally mindful place.

Thank you for considering my comments.
Have a great day!

Heather Baldwin
Member of the Acadiana Native Plant Project

Neil T. Lebouef

From: Sarah SCHOEFFLER <cadistyle@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 9:13 AM
To: Heather B.
Cc: ETRT
Subject: Re: Evangeline Corridor

Excellent Heather Baldwin!! My sentiments also Sarah Schoeffler.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jul 28, 2016, at 12:33 AM, Heather B. <baldwinh555@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> Good evening,
>
> I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment about the upcoming massive undertaking to plan and implement the Evangeline Corridor. Although I disagree that it is an essential expense, I do think that in the long run, if planned and implemented thoughtfully, this may rejuvenate many portions of our city. Considering an effort at this scale, something like landscaping might seem trivial, but I disagree and so do many experts in this area. This corridor is going to produce noise and air pollution, divide neighborhoods and have various impacts on the commercial properties associated with the area during implementation as well as following it. After many visits to places such as The Woodlands, Houston and Austin, Texas, which share many of the same native plant species as Lafayette, I think thoughtful landscaping with native plant species is paramount to an aesthetically pleasing city environment which envelops a park-like tone associated with some of the busiest parts of the city.
>
> I would like to encourage the planners to consider incorporating native plants in the form of small and large scale plantings which would reduce maintenance/mowing costs, reduce rain runoff, improve water quality, and promote a more vigorous landscape which is aesthetically pleasing, and depending on placement, may serve to reduce noise, and promote a more environmentally friendly landscape to counter the hustle and bustle of the corridor.
>
> Lafayette is an ideal location to incorporate such an effort because we are located in one of the most botanically and biologically rich locations in North America. Our soil types are amenable to restoring freshwater wetlands, bottomland and upland forests and beautiful native tallgrass prairie wildflowers. Landscapes with native vegetation require less maintenance, and are more vigorous throughout the year because they are locally adapted to environmental extremes such as our brutal summers and soggy winters. If one of the goals of the process is to promote unity between neighborhoods, then a vigorous and diverse landscape thoughtfully designed, may enhance the experience and use of communal areas such as parks, or pathways while promoting our city as a beautiful and environmentally mindful place.
>
> Thank you for considering my comments.
> Have a great day!
>
> Heather Baldwin
> Member of the Acadiana Native Plant Project