



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"The country is reaching the end of the useful life of a lot of our infrastructure, and we're going to have to replace and rebuild a lot, so I want people to be thinking about this. We ought to do it better than we did it the last time."*

- Anthony Foxx, former U.S. Secretary of Transportation

## TRANSFORMING THE EVANGELINE CORRIDOR

For decades, local, state, and federal money has been used to build highways through many American cities, often disrupting neighborhoods and suppressing economic opportunity. A new, community-minded approach is underway. Federal grant dollars, administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, are designed to restore and improve challenged communities. Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants support planning that fosters connected neighborhoods, healthy activities, job creation, and economic growth.

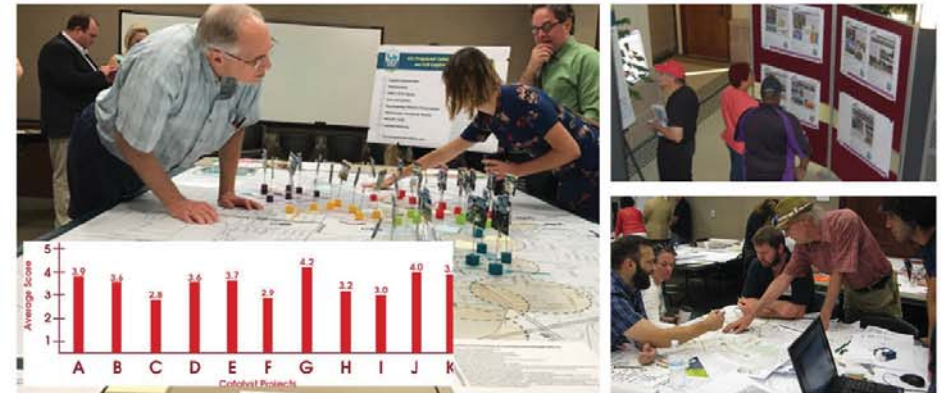
When Lafayette Consolidated Government was awarded a TIGER grant in 2014, the Evangeline Corridor Initiative (ECI) was created to spur neighborhood revitalization in areas adjacent to the Evangeline Thruway and to help prepare residents and business owners for the challenges posed by the impending Lafayette I-49 Connector project, which is the upgrade of the current Evangeline Thruway (US Hwy 90) into a limited-access elevated interstate.

The ECI Project and Planning Consultant Team (ECI Team), which comprises architects, designers, planners and communications professionals, was created to facilitate public input and create design guidelines for each district as well as a comprehensive revitalization plan for the Corridor.

The ECI project will guide development that supports corridor neighborhoods by providing:

- **Planning and design concepts for infrastructure improvements to promote connectivity, provide alternate modes of transit, and drive economic development**
- **Recommending new land-use patterns surrounding the Connector and Evangeline Thruway that promote mixed-use development while strengthening adjacent neighborhoods**
- **A plan for implementing specific interventions, often identified as Catalyst Projects, that will provide neighborhood improvements that enhance the quality of life for corridor residents**

The goals of this project are to reclaim and expand community assets. A primary aim of the initiative is to reconnect the city fabric, which has long been interrupted by the railroad and the Evangeline Thruway.



Images from various public engagement event activities including: Catalyst Project Evaluation and Voting, Charrette Design Studio, Open House, and Open House sample project rankings results

## Engaging the Community

The backbone of the ECI Team's strategy is active and sustained participation throughout the entire project process. Team members took this initiative into Corridor neighborhoods, talking with residents, business owners, clergy, and other community leaders about what neighborhood planning would mean to them.

Community meetings and workshops were organized for small group discussion, so that individual insights and opinions could be better heard. Public events included opportunities to give feedback on the project. Information about the design/planning process was also shared via email, radio and television interviews, social media, postcards, fliers, and yard signs. Other outreach efforts have included:

**Meetings with community leaders** - These meetings were designed to garner support and to ensure that in each of the five districts' stakeholders are reached and encouraged to become involved in the Workshop and Charrette process and beyond.

**District Workshops** - A workshop was held in each district to engage directly with district community members and to get a better understanding of the opportunities, insights, and concerns in each area.

**ECI Design Charrette /Open Studio** - The Charrette, a dynamic phase of the planning process, was the primary mechanism of the ECI Team for public engagement strategy. The multi-day inclusive design session, invited public participation into the most intense moments of design dialogue and conceptualization.

**Meeting in a Box Campaign** - Facilitated by LCG, a series of Catalyst Project evaluations termed "Meeting in a Box" gave community members of the Corridor an opportunity to study, comment on, and rank the District Catalyst Projects.

**Catalyst Project Open House** - In an open house format, the community was once again invited to confirm, evaluate and rate the Catalyst Projects by district. Additionally, the framework for the ECI Final Report and District Design Manuals were unveiled for public viewing and comment.

**Implementation Planning Open Houses** - Presentation of the draft Final Report and District Design Manuals, highlighting the implementation strategies and steps to move the ECI Plan forward.

## PROJECT HISTORY

When the Evangeline Thruway was built in 1963, it introduced high-speed traffic into a primarily African-American neighborhood that had developed in a traditional grid pattern. What was once a walkable community with neighborhood businesses suffered over the decades from a *de facto* barrier. The noise and lack of cross connectivity made the Thruway a dividing line between these neighborhoods and the rest of Lafayette. Today, the Evangeline Thruway is one of the most dangerous roads in Louisiana for pedestrians.

The need to connect Interstate 10 (I-49) through Lafayette was first identified as a need in the 1980s. In 1999, UL Lafayette issued the Blue Book, a document that outlined various designs and strategies for the Corridor. There was a great deal of project momentum in the early 2000s, including the Corridor Preservation and Management Action Plan (2002), a Record of Decision (ROD) and Environmental Impact Statement (2003), and an initial Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process begun by LaDOTD and its consultants (2006). The Evangeline Thruway Redevelopment Team (ETRT) advisory committee was established by the Action Plan and was initially convened in 2008. Around this time a lack of funding stalled the project, which led to uncertainty and further disinvestment in the Corridor.

In 2014, LCG was awarded a U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER Federal Planning Grant (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) to begin neighborhood and corridor-wide planning in anticipation of the design and engineering of the I-49 Connector Project. As expected, simultaneously, in 2015, LaDOTD began its context-sensitive design process (CSS) which has made community input a priority.

The TIGER Grant was later branded as the Evangeline Corridor Initiative (ECI) to be representative of and reflect the local area where its planning efforts are to be focused. The ECI is about neighborhood revitalization planning alongside the future I-49 Connector – what we know today as the Evangeline Thruway. The mission encourages community input to make the Corridor the best it can be. A team of consultants comprising of local and internationally respected experts was assembled to assist LCG with the project.

As a result of LCG being awarded the TIGER grant, the ETRT was reconstituted in 2015 to guide the ECI planning and implementation process. Alongside the LaDOTD I-49 Connector Project, the ECI consultant team (along with LCG and the ETRT) engaged in a comprehensive planning process to revitalize Corridor communities.

In 2015, the Evangeline Thruway Redevelopment Team adopted this vision statement.

### THE ETRT ENVISIONS AN I-49 CORRIDOR THAT:

Repairs the division caused by the Evangeline Thruway.

Restores connections between neighborhoods and people throughout the corridor, including Downtown and the surrounding areas.

Reverses the decades of disinvestment in Lafayette's urban core, stimulates urban revitalization and drives investment along the corridor and in adjoining neighborhoods through smart design, careful planning, and best practices.

Remediates environmentally contaminated properties and returns them to safe, productive use.

Establishes a new standard for excellence nationwide for the design and implementation of a context-sensitive urban interstate, and "gets it right the first time."

Improves local and regional traffic safety, increases access to transit, provides meaningful recreational opportunities, and implements crime prevention through environmental design strategies.

Encourages civic and commercial activity in people-friendly, desirable spaces below the elevated spans and along the footprint of the Connector.

Provides creative, three-dimensional solutions for an alternative Connector design that the entire community can embrace.

Demonstrates an exemplary approach to community engagement and collaboration, where all parties place their trust in the process.

Concludes with a plan that provides such remarkable overall value that it drives community consensus.

For planning purposes, the corridor was organized into five districts  
**Gateway, Sterling Grove/La Place/Simcoe,**  
**Downtown/Freelown-Port Rico, McComb-Veazey,** and the  
**Vermillion River Recreational District.**



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Evangeline Corridor Initiative's Final Report is a call to action for community-led revitalization. It is the culmination of the work of the ECI Project Consultant Team which included two years of community engagement, analysis, and design study. The report includes:

- corridor-wide planning strategies
- principles for the design of streets and neighborhoods
- project implementation processes

It supports PlanLafayette, Lafayette Consolidated Government's comprehensive plan, which includes a comprehensive, long-range plan for the Evangeline Corridor. It is intended to be a useful document for LCG staff, residents and other stakeholders, providing recommended capital investments, policies, and land-use considerations.

What is important to understand is that capital investments guided by and supporting the activation of the ECI Plan will require careful coordination and informed consent by national, state, and local stakeholders going forward. The resulting economic development potential will enable the capture of a sustainable and thriving economy for both neighborhood residents and businesses in the corridor's five districts as well as for the statewide and national interests that seek a mobility solution through the I-49 Connector.

The content in the Final Report is organized into five chapters that focus on various elements of the ECI Team's work; an appendix contains supplemental information and analysis. The report includes excerpts from ECI District Design Manuals, which summarize urban design strategies for each district and describe how the Corridor-wide plan influences district planning.

## ABOUT DISTRICT DESIGN MANUALS

The District Design Manuals were created to provide district-specific information and guidelines for residents and community leaders, enabling them to respond to neighborhood needs and manage ongoing development. They are intended to be used in conjunction with this report. District design goals include:

- reconnecting disrupted urban fabric and pedestrian life while leveraging community assets
- creating primary district nodes and secondary neighborhood nodes as building blocks of activity
- enhancing the economic vitality of the Corridor by examining land use strategies
- establishing a formal multi-modal street network that connects all five Evangeline Corridor districts
- mitigating impacts of the proposed I-49 Connector

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

### 1 CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

**Core strategies to mitigate Lafayette I-49 Connector impact and revitalize neighborhoods**

This chapter introduces three pillars of revitalization: community development; street infrastructure networks; and economic growth. These strategies are designed to maximize urban and social development throughout Evangeline Corridor communities while supporting the ongoing rejuvenation of Lafayette's Downtown business district.

### 2 PLANNING ELEMENTS AND DESIGN CONCEPTS

**Diagrams, maps and images of key planning elements**

This visual study illustrates features that can benefit communities and users throughout the Evangeline Corridor. This chapter includes information such as historic development patterns and ideal locations for district centers and community nodes. It also depicts examples of landscape designs, safety features, and wayfinding systems.

### 3 INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS AND STREETSCAPES

**Principles and guidelines for best practices in street design**

This chapter discusses the benefits of employing Complete Streets methodology. This information is intended to guide local street and network improvements that support active, safe street life, and progressive urban development.

### 4 DISTRICT INITIATIVES AND CATALYST PROJECTS

**Community-driven revitalization**

District Strategies and Catalyst Projects can help build momentum in revitalizing the Evangeline Corridor. Catalyst Projects were generated with input from the community and refined by the ECI Project and Consultant Team. To support the district strategies, this chapter includes community design plans, illustrated street-level scene renderings, and step-by-step project plans.

### 5 CORRIDOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

**Tools for commercial and residential development**

This chapter focuses on the potential economic impact of a revitalized Evangeline Corridor and includes an implementation strategy matrix and guidelines for its neighborhoods. Technical analysis, redevelopment projections, and Corridor-wide and district-wide strategies are presented via economic narratives and refined return-on-investment modeling. In addition, this chapter discusses the ongoing responsibilities and advocacy efforts of the Evangeline Thruway Redevelopment Team.