

# WORKSHOP REPORT: GATEWAY DISTRICT

May 14, 2016  
Philadelphia Christian  
Church



**Our voice. Our vision.**



**EVANGELINE  
CORRIDOR  
INITIATIVE**

Funded in part by a federal **TIGER** grant

## DISTRICT

Gateway

## LOCATION

Philadelphia Christian Church – May 14, 2016 (10am – 1pm)

## WORKSHOP TEAM

Carlee Alm-LaBar	LCG
Cathie Gilbert	LCG
Neil LeBouef	LCG
Bill Hunter	ASW
Lauren Boring	ASW
Kerry Frey	ASW
Wayne Domingue	ASW
Steve Oubre	ASW
Debbie Jaubert	ASW
Skye Miller	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
Ben Berthelot	ETRT
Mitzi Moss Duhon	ETRT

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*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.*

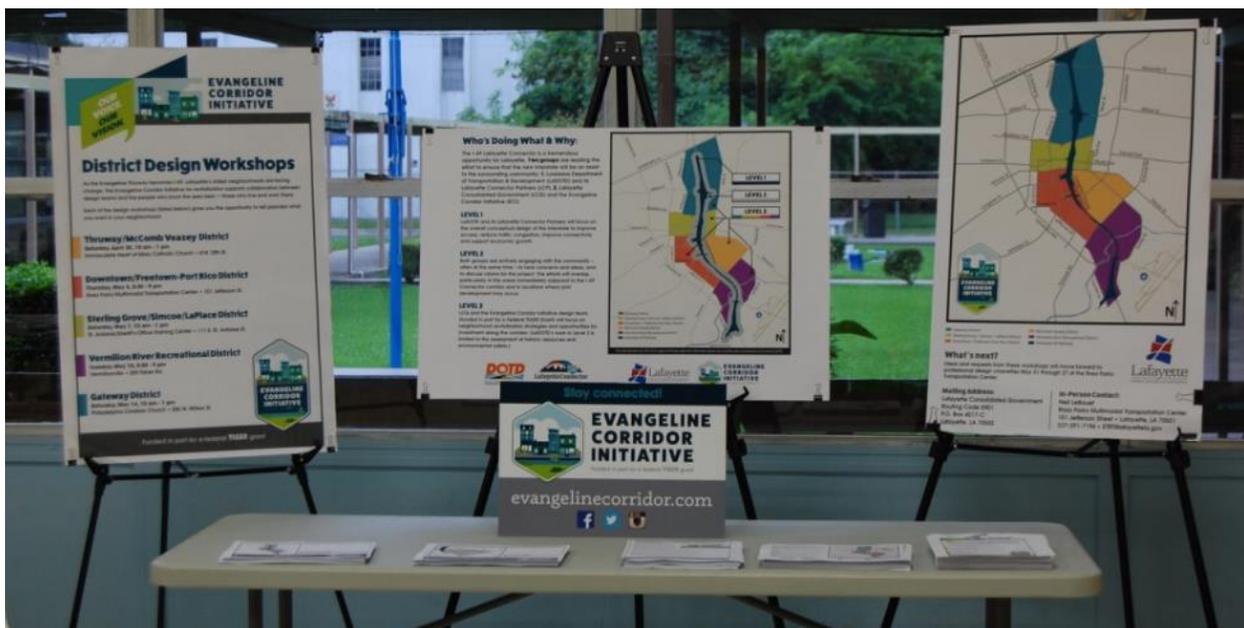
## OVERVIEW

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.





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a gateway to Lafayette, the district residents were concerned with the current retail and business offerings. Many voiced they were able to get most of their daily needs met within the district, but quality was something they felt was lacking. Additional shopping, family restaurants, and “mom and pop” stores were among the establishments the participants desired.

Many were concerned about existing businesses. Seeing stores, restaurants, and services leave the district is troublesome for the community. There is a desire to preserve the businesses that have been operating in the district and attracting a higher quality of businesses as they locate within the district. A variety of shopping and retail experiences are lacking in the neighborhood and there is a high demand for more options. Revitalizing the retail in the district could start with the Northgate Mall. Some revitalization efforts have been made, but overwhelmingly the workshop participants felt that this should be a priority as it is an eyesore in the district. Priority was also given to replacing chain and big box stores with local “mom and pop” retail.

Several participants voiced a concern regarding the disinvestment of the north part of the city and felt that it is difficult to draw economic development to an area that is so distanced. This area has a large investor base that should be brought to the table in development conversations. Tax credits including a TIF is another revitalization option.

### **Local Assets**

Historic buildings, churches  
Business owners vested in the community  
Alice Boucher School  
SWLA Health Center  
Post office  
Walmart  
Super One  
Home Depot  
Banks  
J. W. Faulk School  
Shoppers Valley  
Family Dollar, Dollar Tree, Dollar General

### **Desirable Elements**

New business – hair salons, pharmacy  
Amenities – shopping, eating, basic necessities  
New grocery store – smaller scale  
Fabric/sewing store  
Hotels  
More restaurants including family restaurants  
Healthcare, EMT access, walk-in clinic  
New office building/event center

### **Challenges**

Motel near Priscilla behind the Shell gas station

Remove the abandoned building near Home Depot  
Northgate Mall  
Low income  
Disenfranchised (not connected to the city)  
Putting wrong businesses here  
Everything going to the southside

*“We’re the most economically distressed area in the path”*  
*“Build more in North Lafayette! Bring variety here and diversity”*

## SAFETY

The safety of the neighborhood was a concern for many participants. While most noted the sense of community and closeness of the neighbors as an asset of living in the Gateway District, many still expressed safety as a main concern. Some explained that they did not go out after a certain time and were very careful when traveling in the district. Crime, prostitutes, sex offenders, and drug activity were among some of the safety issues that were brought up at the workshop.

Many were complimentary of the current police station and happy with their relationship with the officers that work in the district. Yet many were wanting more of a police presence to mitigate the crime issues and some perceived the current police force as not proactive enough for the current level of crime. Community policing on bike and on foot and re-establishing the neighborhood watch would be beneficial for the district.

Lack of maintenance is contributing to safety issues. Overgrown trees provide opportunity for homeless to linger. Poor lighting, poles too far apart, and damaged/broken lighting promote crime in many areas.

Homelessness is an issue that many members of the community discussed. Most of the participants expressed the desire for programs that address the homeless and more centers and housing.

### **Desirable Elements**

Additional lighting  
More lighting at MLK around the walking track, near I-49, and the strip shopping mall to create sense of security  
Additional police presence

### **Challenges**

Hotel to immediate north of the Travel Host big drug problem  
Homeless camp near Walmart  
Safety concerns at the park

*“I’d rather be safer than convenient”*  
*“We don’t want tent cities”*

## CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Participants of the workshop voiced the need for more options for children and young adults after school. Early development, after school care, and community programs were among those listed. More community services available in the neighborhoods would aid in the revitalization of the neighborhood. Also mentioned were the block parties that the neighborhood used to have. Bringing these back would also help with the neighborhood revitalization and creating a stronger sense of community.

Many participants expressed concern for the elderly community and wondered if there are any grants or programs available to help them.

### **Local Assets**

Church and faith community  
Parental and community involvement  
UL and its graduates; keep local talent  
Multi-cultural people

### **Desirable Elements**

Charter School  
More colorful in the Gateway District  
Preserve St. Genevieve Church  
Free music  
Strengthen Pastoral Alliance  
Community outreach, they want their voices to be heard

### **Challenges**

Low socio economic status  
Underperforming schools

## **RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The community members use the parks often and expressed a desire to increase maintenance to make the existing parks more usable. Pocket parks are desirable as well. Maintenance of existing recreation areas and facilities would allow for meaningful recreation within the district. Additional parks and open space with options for various outdoor sports are needed in the district

### **Local Assets**

100-year oak tree  
Martin Luther King Park and Heymann Park

### **Desirable Elements/Specific Suggestions**

Keep the Visitor Center in this corridor  
Upgrade park and MLK Center  
Skating rink  
Theater  
Bowling  
Upgrade park and MLK Center

Connect the parks  
Botanical garden  
Bird sanctuary  
Educational Recreation  
Museum/art facility  
Area across from Northgate Mall – public park, playground for Charter School  
Community gardens

### **Challenges**

Kids don't play outside

## HOUSING

Most concerns revolved around current property value and how values would be affected by I-49. Others mentioned were the elderly community and available housing options. Many were supportive of revitalization and list organizations like North Lafayette Redevelopment Authority (NLRA) and Habitat for Humanity to help with these efforts.

### **Local Assets**

North Lafayette Redevelopment Authority (NLRA)

### **Desirable Elements**

Repurpose old buildings  
Ordinance limiting trailers

### **Challenges**

Some residents will not pay homeowners association fees

*"I'm concerned the I-49 connector will depreciate our city"*

## ENTERTAINMENT

Many expressed the desire for more entertainment options for all ages within the district that are safe, accessible, and well-maintained. Some entertainment options, for example a movie theater, used to be located in the district, but are no longer an available option. A diverse mix of activities would not only satisfy the neighborhood needs, but could also attract people from a wider area.

### **Desirable Elements**

Bowling  
Paint ball  
Movie theater  
Age-appropriate kid's area, for those under 12  
Skating rink  
Cart ranch  
Miniature golf

Walking path  
Library access  
Museums  
Aquarium  
Art classes, floral arranging  
Continuing education  
Aquarium near Louisiana Avenue close to I-10  
Night entertainment opportunities that feel safe  
Near the post office is area with open space (land) where tennis or basketball courts could go

## BEAUTIFICATION

Like its name, the Gateway District is a gateway into Lafayette and should be treated more appropriately as such. Landscaping, art, murals, lighting, and other gateway elements were listed as desirable elements. Overall beautification of the homes in the district and an improved streetscape on most streets for enhanced walkability and increased quality of life.

Landscaping and street trees are welcomed beautifying additions to the neighborhood. These elements would make the community aesthetically pleasing and more livable. Conversely, dilapidated properties, abandoned vehicles, vacant housing, and lack of maintenance have a very negative effect on the community and character of the district.

Litter and trash were mentioned as being a huge problem in this district. Most felt that the city did not give attention to these items. A more grassroots effort may include neighborhood clean-up days driven by community members to help get the trash out of the district.

Noise was also a source of concern. The heavy traffic along the Thruway produces a great deal of noise disrupting homeowners. Most were afraid the I-49 project would only add to this issue. Although many wanted to mitigate the noise problems, it was indicated that an unattractive sound barrier (like that on Ambassador Caffery) was not a desirable solution.

Proper lighting was mentioned as a neighborhood need. In addition to safety lighting, lighting to enhance architectural and landscape features as well as artistic lighting in key areas are desirable elements in this districts. Emphasis was placed on making the Gateway District “more colorful.”

### **Desirable Elements**

More maintenance (cut grass, change/repair lighting, trim trees, etc.)  
More art  
Parks and gardens near Home Depot  
Enhanced streetscape  
Re-do Simcoe Street  
Everywhere they are doing work – plant trees!  
Clean up area near Patterson and N. Richter  
Gateway and entrance signage

### **Challenges**

Pollution  
Vacant land and blight  
Bayberry Point overgrown  
Garbage cans and bins staying on streets devalue property  
Tear down hotel that edges interstate

*“We like the open and quiet and want to keep it that way”  
“Gateway to Blight”*

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Most people felt there has been no attention from city or parish regarding infrastructure concerns and maintenance. Streets are in poor condition and need resurfacing in many areas. Poorly maintained drainage has led to flooding in several areas.

### **Desirable Elements**

More maintenance  
Re-do Simcoe Street  
Re-stripping at Willow/Thruway not visible especially at night  
Resurface roads  
Bayberry needs a lot of work  
Ditches need to be cut and cleaned

### **Challenges**

City response poor at best  
Streets and drainage – lack of maintenance

## ACCESS/MOBILITY/CONNECTIVITY

The heavy traffic on the Evangeline Thruway traversing the Gateway District causes access and connectivity issues. Crossing the Thruway is difficult and many neighbors are frustrated by the lack of priority given to the neighborhood traffic.

Residents asked for a more walkable, pedestrian friendly experience with appropriately scaled and properly maintained sidewalks. Many residents are dependent on walking as their only mode of transportation, especially the elderly, so walkability is a priority in the community. In some cases, additional or wider sidewalks may be necessary and in other cases lack of maintenance negatively affecting walkability.

Bike lanes on Moss Street are perceived as wasted and most of the community is not in favor. However, often stated was the need for bike lanes and trails.

### **Local Assets**

Transit System

### **Desirable Elements**

Service road along I-10  
Request Martin Luther King name for Willow Exit  
Bridge over the coulee to El Sido's  
Covered bus stops  
Bus to airport, mall, and DMV  
Crosswalks  
Bike trails  
More bus stops  
Need more walkability

### **Challenges**

People drive fast even if speed limit is low  
Concerned about being cut off from Moss Street

*"Big concern is that this won't happen while we are still here. Will our kids or grandkids see it?"*

## CONNECTOR-RELATED FEEDBACK

### NOTES ON THE CONNECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & OPTION CONCEPTS

#### **General Concerns**

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How will this affect us?

---

Will the roads change?

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Will we be able to walk around (after connector is built)?

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Elevated roads (like Baton Rouge) make me cringe.

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Regardless of the interstate design we don't want the (negative) integrity of the neighborhood to remain.

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We don't want (what happened to) NOLA or Baton Rouge

---

How will the state upkeep the corridor – perpetual maintenance

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What advantages will this (Interstate project) have on us?

#### **Specific Connector Options Impact Concern**

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In addition to Willow, is there another connector exit?

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Not in agreement with all overpass locations.

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Elevation start and end and impact on existing businesses and residents.

#### **Suggestions and Desires**

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Put tennis/basketball courts underneath the new Interstate.

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Build an overpass to cross over.

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It's our job to get "Camellia Boulevard" look (with) green space and walking paths along the Interstate.

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Corridor should not be over a blighted area.

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We need lighting near I-49.

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Design it to abate homelessness.

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Do not want interstate to house the homeless.

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Request Martin Luther King name for Willow exit.

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# APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP CONTENT RESULTS

## MAPPING EXERCISE

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





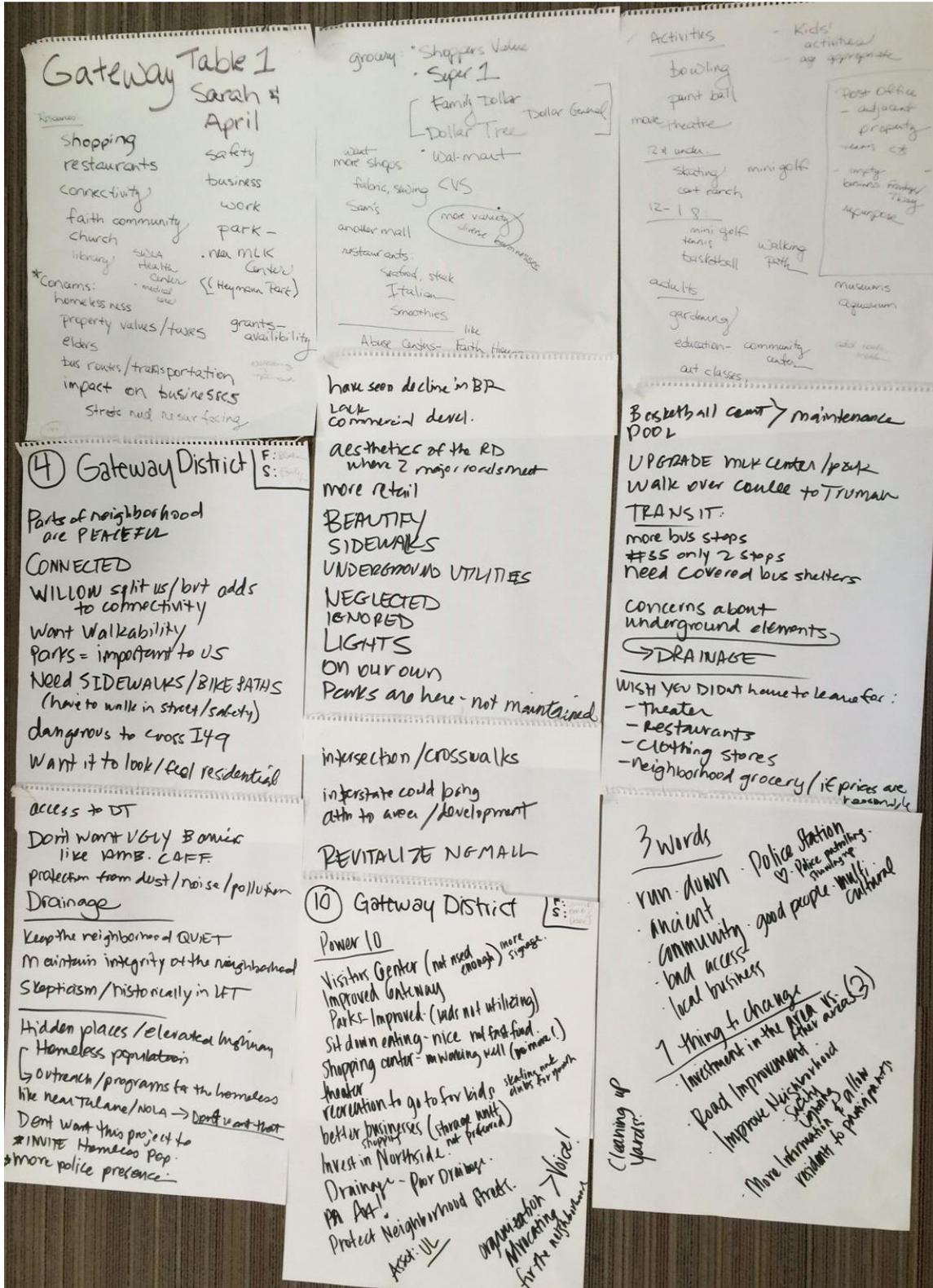






# POWER OF TEN FLIP CHARTS

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



Walmart-homeless camp  
 City adjudicated prop. families problem  
 When they need to leave the district they go home "what we need is RESPECT FROM THE CITY"  
 1/19  
 Noise problem  
 Overpass tunneling  
 Lighting! plenty of illuminated housing  
 Sidewalks - not enough  
 Safety of neighborhood  
 Concerned about property near cemetery  
 Fine - not able to get cemetery  
 Concerned about ELUWANT

## 9 Gateway District

Convenience (location)  
 good food  
 longtime res. sense of community  
 St. Anthony park (safety concerns)  
 Several hotels  
 trees block view of welcome center  
 Peoples should be the first place you see  
 Churches - people working together  
 Development potential @ Northgate  
 need more parks  
 more economic dev. mall/shopping more upscale  
 more restaurants  
 had some options (but down)  
 bike trails  
 sidewalk MS  
 improve walk-paths  
 Create an entrance landscaped park  
 signage  
 Alighted areas  
 trees around interstate  
 movie theater  
 playgrounds/Rec centers  
 green space w/ courts  
 lots of running world best man ownership  
 abandoned properties

3 words  
 high-middle  
 Abandoned properties  
 Potential friendly  
 Lost neighborhood watch  
 Streetscaping on main streets  
 Street trees small scale landscaping  
 One change - improve streets - resurfacing (acid painting)  
 Overall neighborhood Beautification - house upkeep - door hangers make a do work  
 Bus development - Small & franchise  
 milk/pizza carwash - Very nice!  
 Bright, colorful nice fence  
 Emergency - ground parking  
 Neighborhood cleanup

Waking us back  
 Funding  
 back of new economic development used to make it a destination  
 Political  
 Neg. perception  
 Doing activities  
 Young adults mentorship  
 job training getting them off the street  
 recreation need to start young  
 more early childhood ed. opportunities  
 evening (night child) care after school  
 one boys & girls club  
 child care facilities are full  
 Truman Community center - no one like more  
 need alternative routes esp. @ park hrs.  
 Crossing driveway better made  
 not happy w/ MS changes  
 MLK Center expansion  
 Community programs  
 post underutilized Richard magbo Junior

## 5 Gateway District Workshop

Words to Describe  
 • low income  
 • Disenfranchised / not connected to the city  
 • Crime  
 • Low SES  
 • Disconnected family structure  
 • Underperforming schools  
 • Low community involvement  
 • Need church interaction/involvement  
 • Community services/police protection not readily available

- Lack of maintenance  
 -> drains  
 -> city-owned ditches
- Abandoned properties/homes/  
 -> private owned
- Lack of amenities  
 - businesses - healthcare  
 - entertainment  
 - food
- Trailers -> people are living in
- Stray animals
- Police chase
- Lack of concern from city
- Not a priority • Cut-off

### Things Needed

- Healthcare on the Northside - ER
- Viable school districts  
 - low parent involvement  
 - low community involvement  
 - parenting courses  
 -> from schools or churches
- No advocates for education
- Malls -> revitalize Northgate
- Restaurants
- Proper service roads (Ex Scott, CA)
- Lighting along interstate & roads
- LCVC at the gateway of the city

### Places for children

- Kms center
- 
- 

### Past amenities

- Bowling (never had)
- skating rink

## Neil T. Lebouef

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**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

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**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](mailto:baldwinh555@gmail.com)> wrote:

>

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>

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