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CHARRETTE REPORT



Our voice. Our vision.



EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

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

EVANGELINE CORRIDOR CHARRETTE TEAM

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... and with the participation of hundreds of local residents, business owners and neighborhood groups!

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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.



LIST OF ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS DRAFT

LCG	Lafayette Consolidated Government
TIGER (Grant)	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
ECI	Evangeline Corridor Initiative
ETRT	Evangeline Thruway Redevelopment Team
ASW	Architects Southwest
DPZ	Duany Plater-Zyberk and Partners (DPZ Partners)
LaDOTD	Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
LCP	Lafayette Connector Partners
R.O.D.	Record of Decision
R.O.W.	Right-of-Way

DISCLAIMER:

Image content displayed herein, specifically maps and design concept plans, are not represented to a technical scale. They are illustrated here simply to convey preliminary ideas and concepts produced during the Charrette. The concepts and strategies represented will be refined towards the production of District Design Manuals and a comprehensive Final Report. In those official final production documents - concept plans, maps, and any supportive design drawings - will appear to technical scale where appropriate and applicable.

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“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, U.S. Secretary of Transportation

INTRO

The following “Executive Summary” outlines key considerations and takeaways from the Design Charrette held May 20-27, 2016. It points to principles of smart growth planning and sustainable neighborhood design while addressing specific challenges and concepts for the Evangeline Corridor communities. Expanded detailed descriptions and narratives regarding strategies and impacts are illustrated in subsequent sections of the report.

For decades local, state, and federal money has been used to build highways through many American cities, often disrupting neighborhoods and creating disconnections from opportunity. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx has advocated for this practice to be overhauled in favor of community-minded projects that foster growth, health and livelihoods. Foxx has urged leaders to consider three key principles when making decisions that will ultimately impact thousands of residents.

Anthony Foxx’s Principles for Leaders

- 1) While transportation needs to connect people to opportunities, it should also “invigorate opportunities WITHIN communities.”
- 2) Projects need to take into account communities that “have been on the wrong side of transportation decisions” and understand how to make them thrive again.
- 3) Projects should be built for and by the communities they go through.

PROJECT GOALS and AIMS

The goals of the ECI closely align with Secretary Foxx’s principles. The result of a 2014 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Grant (TIGER) - a federal program whose mission it is to help restore challenged communities - the ECI Project seeks to prepare communities for the impending I-49 Connector by establishing mitigation objectives including:

- **Create planning and design concepts for infrastructure improvements that promote connectivity, provide alternate modes of transit, and drive economic development.**
- **Develop new land-use designations focusing on areas surrounding the roadway mainline to promote mixed-use development while strengthening and protecting adjacent neighborhoods.**
- **Institute a sustainable funding plan for implementation of the new corridor plan, including the identification of strategic catalyst projects throughout each district to spur community growth.**

At the Charrette, the ECI Team’s main approach to achieve these objectives was to incorporate principles of Smart Growth from a neighborhood-first perspective. Smart Growth is a development method that simultaneously serves the community, economy, and the environment. Using this approach, the ECI Team looks to create great places filled with collaborative interaction and participation among residents.

A primary aim is to re-connect the city fabric interrupted and damaged by the original Evangeline Thruway. By fostering distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place, the ECI project can help reclaim community values and assets. This is achieved by creating identifiable district centers with various mixed-use developments and housing types along streets that are safe and walkable. Throughout the Charrette, these principles and goals framed the focus of the ECI work, forming the basis of analysis and preliminary concepts for the corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods.



Image of the existing Evangeline Thruway

DISTRICT OVERLAY STRATEGIES

District Strategies and concepts developed at the Charrette covered two scales – corridor-wide and neighborhood level. There are five districts addressed in the ECI project that serve as corridor building blocks, but the overarching need is to meaningfully reconnect the historic fabric of the city that was separated by the building of the Evangeline Thruway in the 1960s – and to make certain that construction of a new Connector does not perpetuate or worsen the situation. From an overall planning perspective, strategic decisions can help prevent less desirable outcomes while promoting enhanced community cohesion. Main strategies to strengthen community and mitigate major infrastructure impacts include:

Establish a clear and formalized roadway network that connects all five corridor districts.

Enhance the feeling and perception of the main local thoroughfares throughout the Corridor (i.e. Jefferson, Johnston, Louisiana, Taft, Congress, Simcoe, Cameron, Twelfth, Pinhook). Employing complete streets methods, especially around the central core, with clear signage indicators and way-finding could help users navigate this network. In the case of the corridor’s neighborhoods, complete streets initiatives will be primarily retrofits that plan for a variety of transportation options (pedestrians, bikes, transit) and support neighborhood-friendly development. This primary network should include supportive land use designations, community nodes (see below) and transitions into neighborhood-scale streets with increased connectivity and pedestrian-friendly pathways.

Establish primary centers or nodes within each District as a building block to the neighborhood.

Nodes are strategic areas within districts where various activities converge to foster community. They are often served by a primary roads and paths network that offers clear and easy access points within and outside the districts, in some cases breaking down arbitrary district boundaries. Nodes should be identified and designated for their unique qualities that serve the communities they define and people that use them. Within the corridor, these identified nodes should contain a healthy mix of uses and amenities ranging from commercial/retail, residential, recreational, educational and civic – creating centers for community-wide cohesion and economic lifeblood.

Define secondary neighborhood level nodes that have clear connections to primary district nodes.

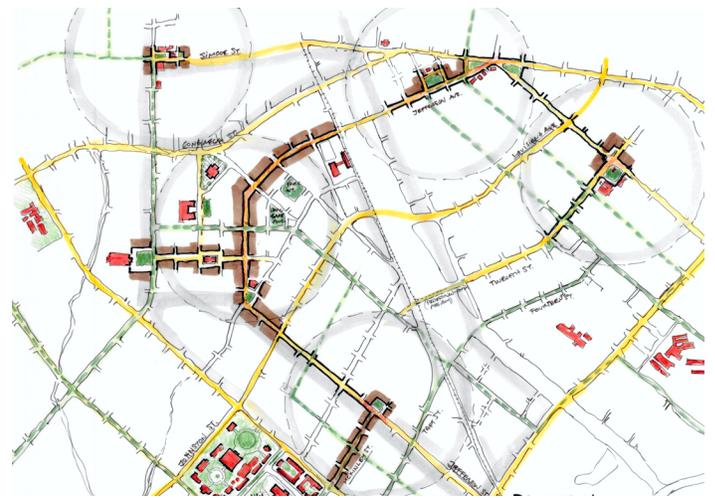
Secondary nodes within each district have synergy with and function much like primary centers, though at a smaller scale and with more particular localized uses such as pocket parks, dog parks, or neighborhood gardens. These nodes create neighborhood-centered gathering zones that foster interaction and reduce fears by providing security beyond formal policing and barriers. While the establishment of a network of pathways and primary node centers may require reconfiguration of certain roads, it is often wise and cost-conscious to take advantage of existing infrastructure when defining secondary nodes.

Carefully consider the Area Level 2 zone around the Connector as a strategic transitional space.

To mitigate impacts to the neighborhoods, it is envisioned that the Area Level 2 zone (500 ft. adjacent on both sides of planned interstate) serve as a mixed-use buffer and transition from the Connector mainline infrastructure that can aid in beginning to establish the walkable environment that indirectly fosters a cohesive community. As this area will undoubtedly receive the greatest impact from the Connector, it is seen as a crucial transitional zone that should incorporate designs for local multi-modal traffic including pedestrians. Certain infrastructure decisions and the critical design response to those resulting elements will determine the success and strength of these strips.

Mitigate Connector impact by planning for interim use of LaDOTD-held properties.

It is assumed that many of the properties that LaDOTD has been purchasing throughout the corridor will lay dormant until construction begins. Consideration and formal agreements must be developed between LaDOTD and LCG so that these areas are not left desolate, further contributing to blight, uncertainty, and decline. Certain alternative temporary uses and activities could benefit longer-term neighborhood connectivity and revitalization, especially across the Area Level 2 zones.



Concept sketch of neighborhood nodal networks - Downtown to McComb-Veazey



Concept sketch of neighborhood nodal networks - LaPlace to Sterling Grove

NEIGHBORHOOD-CENTRIC CONCEPTS and the ROLE of CATALYST PROJECTS

The engagement and feedback gathered from residents at the initial District Design Workshops focused on unique neighborhood qualities and nuances based on concerns and opportunities people perceived for their area. The compiled Workshop reports for each district provided crucial insight for the ECI Team at the Charrette as consultants began interpreting comments and aspirations into planning concepts. During the Charrette, the ECI Team was able to further engage residents during the creation of these ideas to understand the value and appropriate links to their initial feedback. The discussion with residents directly influenced the diverse preliminary concepts and potential catalyst projects in each district.

Catalyst projects are identifiable tangible actions that can help drive neighborhood interaction, spur further development, and influence investment within the community. They are grouped by various levels – 1) sweat-equity projects; 2) city-funded support; and 3) grant awards. Sweat equity projects, sometimes also referred to as tactical urbanism, are actions that can be achieved in a quick manner with impassioned community collaboration in place of vast financial resources. These actions could include overtaking vacant lots for public use, street cleaning programs, and small building or house façade treatments. Meanwhile, local government support could help achieve signature projects that come with higher costs and longer timeframes such as major road improvements as well as projects with moderate costs such as the small greenway along Garfield St in Freetown. Additionally, statewide and national grant foundation programs allow for various projects to occur usually based on particular themes, such as the Kresge Foundation Health Grant awarded to McComb-Veazey in 2015.

The choice and scale of proposing catalyst projects reflects the varying complexities of overall district development. Some corridor districts are more defined by dense neighborhoods while others are defined by more urban commercial fabric or recreational landscapes. And some districts have a mix of fabrics. Using this framework above for identifying potential projects, the concepts and preliminary ideas developed at the Charrette will be refined and confirmed through a next round of community engagement. The intention is to ultimately form the basis for District Design Manuals that will contain more detailed implementation guidelines that reflect the unique characteristics of each district.

Gateway

The Willow St. interchange presents a rare opportunity to envision a renewed entrance to the city and its historic core while contributing to the overall revitalization of a key commercial zone of the city. Collaboration with LaDOTD could result in the planning for an iconic gateway flanked by enhanced formal recreation spaces and mixed-use development opportunities such as a retrofitted Northgate Mall site. Cultural and civic entities could also serve as area catalyst components.



conceptual vision for iconic gateway at the Willow St. interchange

LaPlace | Sterling Grove | Simcoe

LaPlace and Sterling Grove contain unique distinctions and desires among residents. While smaller community projects (Victory Garden) are already underway in LaPlace, attention could be given to address issues of homelessness by leveraging diversity and community support towards reclaiming a community node at the junction of St. John and Simcoe St. Revamped bus stops and other streetscape features and a connection to St. James Church can help. Strategic transition should occur along Congress St. between Downtown and LaPlace as fabric shifts from urban street frontage buildings to neighborhood scale. Meanwhile, Sterling Grove's historic and walkable fabric could benefit from a more purposeful and accessible neighborhood center. The area around the Senior Art Center was identified for potential enhancement of landscape features and programming that could catalyze and invite everyday activity.



Conceptual vision for iconic gateway at the Willow St. interchange

Downtown | Freetown | Port Rico

Downtown is a primary economic driver in the city and is attempting to further its attractive value. The new re-striping project at Congress St. can hopefully give way to a reconfigured 2nd/3rd St. intersection that invites safe crossing for pedestrians while paving the way for mixed-use development fronting the street edge that could help reduce speedy thoroughfare traffic. As Freetown/Port Rico regains momentum, a community node at the McKinley / Jefferson St. intersection will help spur local scale commercial activity along two corridors helping to link UL campus to Downtown. A re-imagined market square with permanent and temporary structures at this junction could help move this development idea forward. As with the transition to LaPlace, the transition from Downtown to Freetown/Port Rico along Johnston St. should be carefully considered with an appropriate mixture of housing, commercial, and civic development that benefits community use and growth.



conceptual vision for neighborhood node at Jefferson St. and McKinley St.



Conceptual vision for reconfigured Congress St. / 2nd and 3rd St. interface

McComb-Veazey

Neighborhood projects are already underway in McComb-Veazey, from art murals to a community garden at 14th and Magnolia St. Based on previous plans and feedback from residents, the 12th Street has been earmarked as a local main street corridor. Pushing this potential, a larger district node was identified at the 12th / Surrey St. intersection revolving around the Immaculate Heart School and Church and adjacent commercial activity. Enhancing the streetscape from sidewalks to a few new infill buildings could help redirect investment here that supports a clear understanding of neighborhood identity. Secondary nodes were identified along 11th St. Pontiac Point was envisioned as a safe neighborhood junction by potentially reclaiming parking lots as developable space. General overall strategies within the neighborhood focused on addressing crime and safety through expanding points of community familiarity and interaction.



Conceptual vision for district node at 12th and Surrey Sts. taking advantage of activity surrounding Immaculate Heart School and main st. concept (12th St.)

Bayou Vermilion

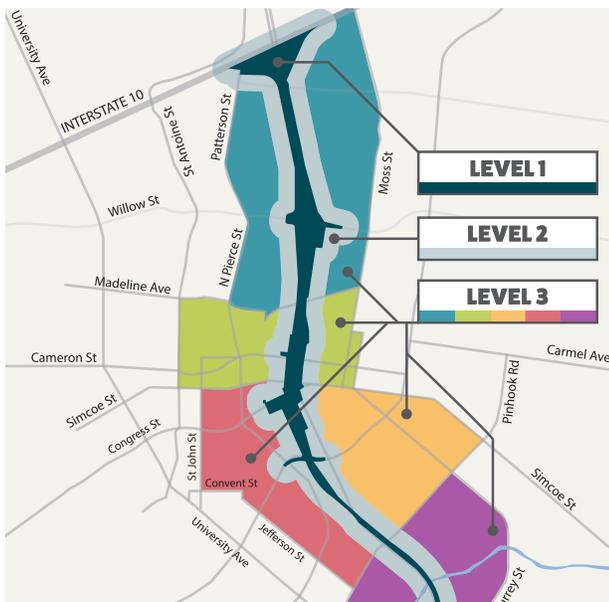
The potential to re-imagine the interface between the McComb-Veazey neighborhood, Heymann Park and the Vermilion River is key for growth in this area of the corridor. Consolidating portions of Heymann Park will ease maintenance and security (eliminating unused spaces) while drawing people towards the river's edge where small scale commercial entities could ignite everyday activity and use. The proposed pedestrian river crossings helps connect Heymann to Beaver Park and Vermilionville, creating a thriving recreational network for residents and visitors. At the currently privately-owned Trappey Plant site, further re-development could be conceived in collaboration with various catalyst projects across the Connector using the river edge as a passage link.



Vision of re-imagined networks around Heyman Park and Vermilion River interface

IMPACT OF CONNECTOR CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES

Successful revitalization within the corridor will depend on how well neighborhoods can plan, strategize and mitigate impacts from the proposed Connector. After analyzing the alternative Connector concepts developed by the LaDOTD/Lafayette Connector Partners (LCP), the ECI Team concentrated on several elements and configuration options outlined in a resolution directed and adopted by the Evangeline Thruway Redevelopment Team (ETRT) (ETRT Resolution 2016-002). Working within the framework of this resolution which also included mitigation aims such as promoting neighborhood connectivity, access to jobs and medical services, and the economic vitality of the Thruway, the ECI Team focused on the three planning levels set forth by the Record of Decision (R.O.D.). Area Level 1 represents the designated Connector right-of-way, Area Level 2 the 500 feet on each side of the right-of-way, and Level 3 the adjacent corridor neighborhoods.



R.O.D. Level designations in relationship to ECI Districts

Against the backdrop of community feedback defined by initial outreach at district design workshops, it was clear that the hopeful perceptions, needs, and concerns of residents would be directly impacted by the chosen Connector alternative. Therefore, the ECI Team devoted necessary focus to an analysis and conceptual study of these impacts in order to understand and address certain elements of the LaDOTD alternatives in a neighborhood context. The earlier workshops served to inform each area of analysis and ultimately design considerations. Topics discussed closely echo the smart growth principles stated earlier and range from issues such as crime/safety, disinvestment/neglect, and lack of access to opportunities such as commercial/retail amenities, recreation space, and foremost - connectivity.

The Charrette work reflected this feedback and was channeled through the design and engineering expertise and experience of the ECI consultants. Beyond clear differences in connectivity, the ECI Team highlighted the comparative and diverse qualities which led to questions, considerations, and revelations. Key takeaways

- A well-designed signature bridge with considerable height could carry certain visual reference appeal and iconic imagery for the community, ECI designs and engineering analysis indicates that a semi-depressed mainline ensures the most unfettered access and renewed connection between the east and west side of the corridor while ensuring the least impact into the Downtown along Cypress St. In the semi-depressed option, mitigating the impact of interstate access ramps and noise would likely be easier.

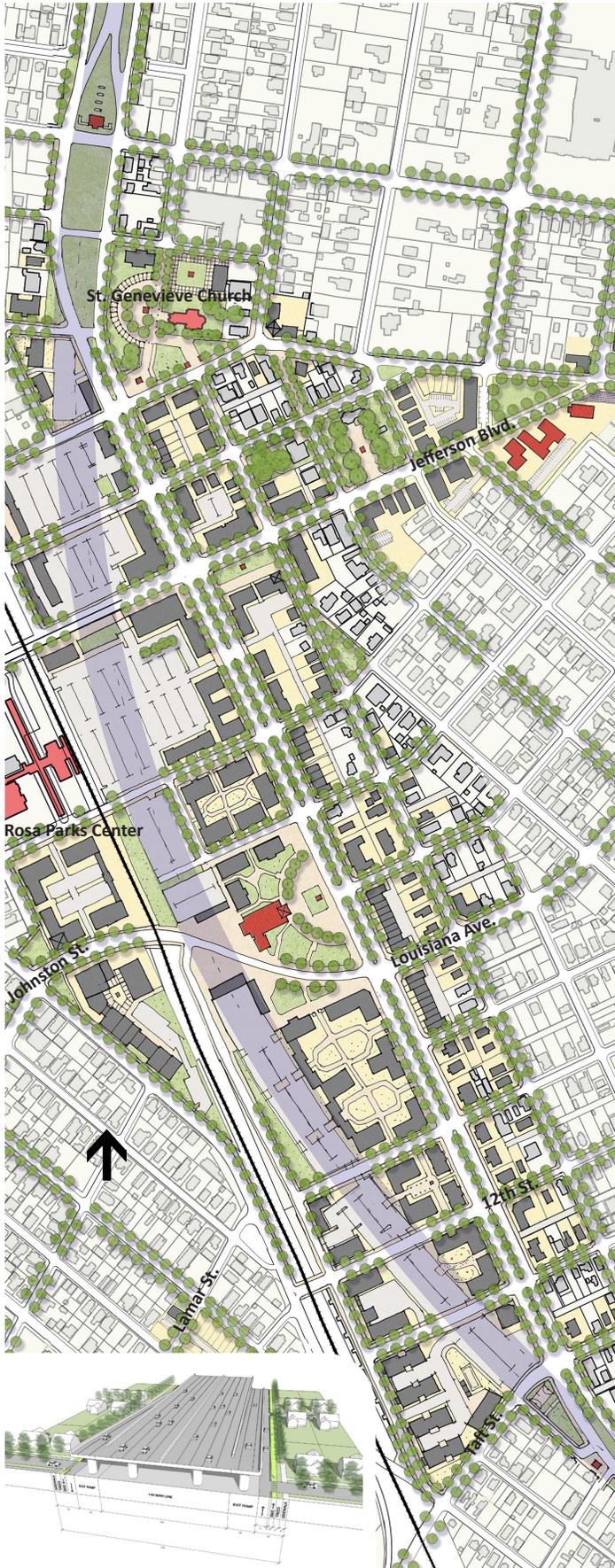
- Impacts of the connector on safety were a primary neighborhood concern. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a strategy used by planners in the design process to mitigate safety considerations and there was clear community feedback that CPTED strategies were needed throughout the corridor. As also cautioned in the UL Community Design Workshop's Blue Book (2000), an elevated mainline poses challenges to safety because unwanted activity (peddling, sleeping, and camping) can gravitate towards dark isolated spaces underneath the structure. For maximum neighborhood protection, CPTED strategies must be deployed regardless of the chosen design alternative.

- Connector scenarios considered within the ECI work (elevated and semi-depressed) dealt with re-envisioning the Evangeline Thruway stretch roughly between E. Simcoe and Taft St., though in different ways. A semi-depressed option promotes appropriately scaled development on both sides of a wide, formal boulevard that would ease a similar urban fabric transition into the re-purposed Evangeline Thruway fronting the McComb-Veazey neighborhood. An elevated mainline may yield a different urban development scenario characterized by parking lots underneath and adjacent to the structure flanked by buildings to shield and mitigate impact before addressing neighborhood transition.

- Both primary scenarios yielded higher return tax value than the adopted R.O.D. concept and the current Thruway configuration of today. Semi-depressed options displayed greater development potential for the area due to the freed-up land space provided by the berm covers (see following sections for further insight on value-added analysis).

From the ECI analysis and design responses, it was clear that the various Connector alternatives will yield different impacts on the neighborhoods, especially when it comes to access and impacts within Area Level 2. Equally important to the varying degrees of challenges each scenario might produce are the significant opportunities each might bring to improving the existing condition of the corridor. Corridor-wide design concepts were created to address these issues and opportunities and will be refined throughout the ECI process. The resulting corridor plan and District Design Manuals will aim to address the significant impact of whichever Connector version is ultimately chosen.

Elevated Mainline with Signature Bridge concept showing re-purposed Thruway



Typical Elevated Mainline cross section

Semi-Depressed Mainline with Cover concept with re-purposed Thruway



Semi-Depressed Mainline with Cover cross section (around Taft St. scenario)

ECONOMIC VALUE ADDED THROUGH DESIGN

During the Charrette, preliminary economic analysis and modeling were performed alongside the creation of design concepts to test the incremental potential of ideas and proposals. Concerning the possible Connector scenarios, certain choices and design elements will have diverse effects on economic return. Implementing principals of smart growth that inherently are designed to drive positive economic development can also have reverse affects if handled improperly. This section briefly outlines some takeaways regarding value-added solutions resulting from the preliminary design concepts produced.

Strategic reconnection of neighborhoods allows for enhanced possibilities of development.

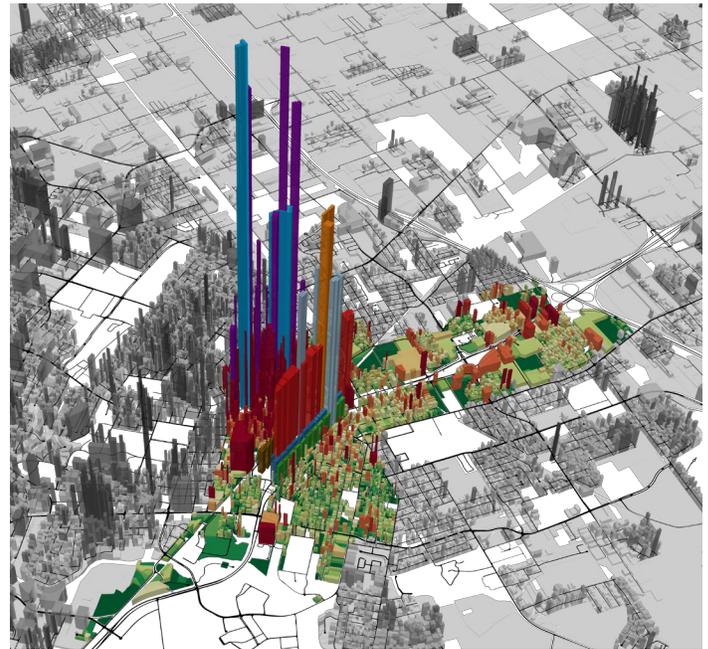
Creating better access between districts should provide more use of amenities such as parks, schools, and civic facilities. Establishing networks of park space such as re-connecting Heymann Park, Beaver Park and the Vermilion River leverages existing assets in order to create a major attraction. Likewise, the North Gateway would benefit from an ambitious re-imagining and feasible development program that could enhance the physical entrance into Lafayette, while fulfilling its economic potential as a major commercial zone for North Lafayette and beyond.

Area Level 1 and Area Level 2 solutions should also be considered based on economic outcomes.

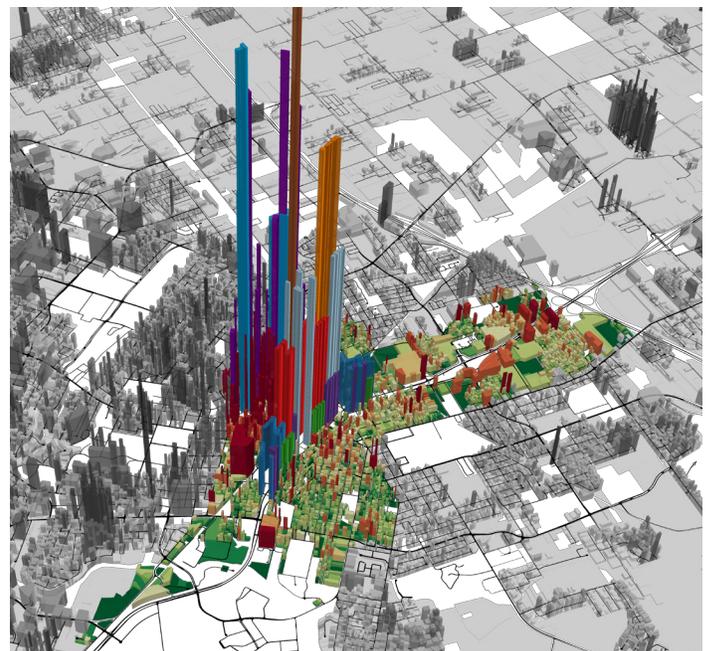
The ECI Team analyzed the Connector and adjacent development potential not only from a physical construction perspective, but also from an economic return-value outlook. While the state considers how to meet the federal mandate of meeting the “purpose and need” of the project, local government can examine alternatives through the lens of the long-term tax base. Economic modeling indicated stark contrasts between primary scenarios considered and the adopted R.O.D. Connector alternative as well as other new alternative concepts presented by LaDOTD. This was largely due to land made available for development and the urban fabric impact particularly around proposed interchanges and interstate access ramps. It should be noted that later alternatives from LaDOTD generally perform better than conventional interstate designs.

Responsibly designed Connector options will yield significantly higher financial dividends and development potential.

If principles of smart growth planning and community impacts are considered as priorities in the design process, alternative connector scenarios can have heightened positive economic impacts on the area. According to calculations, well-designed options will provide significant tax generating potential regarding properties, which in turn could result in funding that flows back into the community. This could be achieved by way of a design with unique signature bridges and a repurposed Evangeline Thruway that offers varying degrees of access, or perhaps more so with a semi-depressed partially covered landscaped option that promotes enhanced access between neighborhoods and allows more land available for development.



Financial Projection Model -
Elevated Mainline with Signature Bridge showing increased value productivity



Financial Projection Model -
Semi-Depressed Mainline with Cover showing significantly higher productivity peaks due to increased land development potential around the core downtown

TRANSLATING KEY FINDINGS TOWARDS NEXT STEPS

The primary strategies and considerations presented here represent the results and interpretations of the Charrette work and will form the framework for the next level of design refinements. Maintaining a critical feedback loop with the community, including further engagements, will be crucial to producing the final level of strategy refinements and catalyst project identification necessary to the ECI design process. Equally important will be the response to the next round of Connector concepts released by LaDOTD. The ECI Team's ultimate goal is to consolidate concepts and strategies directly based on community feedback and professional insight that can be outlined in District Design Manuals to help guide the implementation of catalyst projects and long-term growth.

The District Design Manuals are to be shared with the community through a series of educational workshops to help community leaders and residents understand how to take certain projects forward either through grassroots collaboration or with the technical and financial support of local government. A comprehensive Final Report will contain more in-depth content regarding visualizations, technical language and policy-level strategies that could potentially be adopted through subsequent related planning processes led by LCG.

ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC

The Key to Public Participation

Community Design and Planning is not meant to be produced in a vacuum. This may be obvious today, yet participatory actions still present unique challenges for development processes. The key to progress is realizing that participation is not something you simply plug in only if you have time, but rather it plays a fundamental role in making design and planning efficient and effective. True participation underpins successful partnerships and good governance. It cultivates ownership, responsibility, and critical consensus around an idea, all of which are essential to sustaining place and community.

Recognizing the need for advanced strategies of participation and acknowledging the successes and challenges of prior community engagement efforts, particularly those experienced during the Lafayette Comprehensive Plan effort, the Evangeline Corridor Initiative (ECI) Team developed a 3-phase approach to the community engagement and planning process. To address the area and neighborhoods adjacent to the Evangeline Thruway, we initiated a series of Leadership Meetings, District Specific Workshops and a Design Charrette to coincide with the I-49 Lafayette Connector Partners (LCP) planning effort.

Methods of Reaching the Community

The ECI Team began its efforts by tapping into local leadership (non-governmental) including church pastors, community figures, and local organizations. These small “kitchen table” meetings served to identify key individuals and groups that would assist the ECI Team in drumming up attendance and participation, creating sustained partnerships and igniting community mobilization for the duration of the project. At these meetings we introduced the Evangeline Corridor Initiative’s intentions and framework including Workshop and Charrette processes, addressed questions and concerns regarding the I-49 Connector project, and sought assistance on the logistics of neighborhood engagement.

Immediately following the Leadership Meetings, Architects Southwest (ASW) and Right Angle, in coordination with Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG), produced a series of public information materials. This included establishing a LCG hosted website, Facebook page, and e-mailers. Postcards (Image 1) and flyers were designed to inform and invite residents to participate in each of the District Workshops as well as clarify the ECI’s relationship to the LCP project.

You are invited to the

Evangeline Corridor Initiative PUBLIC CHARRETTE WEEK

MAY 21-27
2016

Please join us all week as we envision the future of the Evangeline Corridor in our Charrette — a public brainstorming and design studio. Come by to meet with our Charrette Team and make comments or ask any questions. You ARE part of the Team!

KICK-OFF EVENT
Saturday, May 21
 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. | Lafayette Public Library
 301 W. Congress Street

OPEN CHARETTE STUDIO: Visit with our designers.
Sunday, May 22 – Friday, May 27
 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. | Rosa Parks Transportation Center

OPEN HOUSES: View and comment on work-in-progress.
Monday, May 23 6 – 8 p.m. | Rosa Parks Transportation Center
Wednesday, May 25 12 – 1:30 p.m. | Rosa Parks Transportation Center

CHARRETTE PLANNING / DESIGN PRESENTATION
Friday, May 27 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Immaculate Heart of Mary School Cafeteria
 corner of 12th & Surrey



**EVANGELINE
CORRIDOR
INITIATIVE**
Funded in part by a federal TIGER grant

evangelinecorridor.com

Facebook Twitter Instagram

Image 1: Charrette Postcard

PRE-CHARRETTE ACTIVITY

District Specific Workshops

Planning for unique neighborhood realities within the Evangeline Thruway Corridor is perhaps the ECI Team's greatest challenge. The area is home to a diverse mix of demographics, incomes and land uses – of which encompass the Downtown Core Cultural Business District, the North Gateway I-10 interchange Commercial area, and industrial zones along the railroad. These neighborhood pockets are constantly vying for inclusion against a backdrop of disinvestment and physical obstacles.

The ECI Team planted itself deep in the heart of the community. Through individually-curated Workshops we captured direct and focused feedback regarding challenges and opportunities for community revitalization. The Workshops were guided by a series of exercises that targeted different levels of response from residents, land owners, and business leaders.

1st Exercise: Power of Ten

The 'Power of Ten' concept speaks to realities, aspirations and scale. It is based on the idea that great cities have 10 great neighborhoods; those 10 neighborhoods have 10 great places; and those 10 places have 10 things to do. The first exercise allows for a quick deduction of thoughts and realizations of a place – what is there, what works, what doesn't. Through prompted questioning, open dialogue and chart scribing, ECI facilitators guided participants to come up with a list of those things that define their neighborhood and what their neighborhood should strive for. Responses tended to be mostly positive and impassioned, though the exercise also generated comments surrounding challenges and concerns (Image 2). Confronting hard truths about local obstacles and problems was equally important to understand how the community felt and what areas needed more attention and strategies. The key was to listen to residents, document viewpoints and rally around ideas.

2nd Exercise: Asset Values Mapping

Asset Mapping is a primary transition step in the design engagement process as it allows residents to directly translate and influence planning concepts from a grounded lived-in perspective. This exercise goes one step further from the 'power of ten' dialogue by placing responses and ideas within a physical context. Participants used markers, pens and different colored sticky notes to express perceptions, ideas, and concerns. Mapping where a positive event occurs or where a concerning issue unfolds helped the community and the Design Team understand how to construct a representation of realities on the ground. Ideas previously given were now attached to a real location on the map. It also helped to illustrate the possibilities of planning for the community from a needs-based approach, rather than a glorified wish list. Together we addressed systematic transformation and highlighted key entry points, topics and areas of the neighborhoods that the Team would consider and focus on during the detailed production at the Charrette. Participants gained a sense of ownership over the creation of maps that would ultimately influence the planning.



Image 2: Area residents at the Sterling Grove / Simcoe / LaPlace Workshop



Image 3: Residents mapping at the Downtown, Freetown / Port-Rico Workshop

PRIME TIME: THE CHARRETTE PROCESS

Methodology

The public Charrette is fast becoming the preferred way to address the planning challenges facing communities. Evolving from its origins in 19th century at the famed École des Beaux-Arts in Paris where students would be assigned a time-sensitive task, the Charrette model has come to describe a rapid and intense creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution.

The Charrette is the cornerstone of the ECI participatory design effort. Led by ASW, it brought together experts in urban design & planning, landscape design, traffic engineering, city economics, communications and civic art. Over 8 days, the Consultant Team collaborated with neighborhood residents, community stakeholders and city officials to envision design concepts and strategies for the Evangeline Corridor (Image 4). The primary goals of the Charrette were to gather further community design feedback in real-time, to strategize neighborhood revitalization, and to mitigate impacts that the Connector may bring to adjacent Districts. In order to support the neighborhood level strategies, the ECI Consultant Team focused certain efforts on providing comment and input on the Connector options, resulting in suggested alternatives for the Corridor.

The results illustrated in this report were shared with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) and Lafayette Connector Partners (LCP) Team to solicit further analysis considerations for refinement concepts during evaluation. The direct hands-on manner in which ideas were generated with residents should have unique influence on an LCP decision process that ultimately matches community goals.

Complementing the production of our Open Design Studio, specific stakeholder meetings, public open houses, and milestone presentations were scheduled to address particular topics and share work-in-progress. Alongside a sensitive facility design project, the transparent participatory nature of the ECI Charrette went a long way to promote awareness, create ownership of ideas, and establish community trust and belief. The following sections will highlight the Charrette process.



Image 4: The Charrette in process

Site Area Tours

Beyond the extensive pre-Charrette existing condition analysis provided by local reconnaissance and compiled primarily by ASW, the first necessary action of the Charrette was to acclimate the entire ECI Consultant Team to the project site area through comprehensive tours of the Evangeline Corridor and the adjacent neighborhoods. These group tours introduced the ECI Team to urban realities and neighborhood nuances while exposing challenges and opportunities. During the site tours, representatives of ASW and LCG were able to share their local understanding and community work experiences with the other consultants. The group visited examples of housing including pockets of historic homes as well as new multi-family housing blocks. We also visited various civic art pieces and spoke to people who had participated in the efforts. Gaining first-hand knowledge about projects helped the Consultant Team understand the challenges and processes that the communities face.

The most critical takeaway from the site tours was the diversity of physical landscapes, use of spaces, and neighborhood character (Image 5). The group witnessed the quick transition between small scale single-family detached houses, commercial areas, and heavy industrial zones in a relatively small catchment area - providing a unique local transect perspective (a transect is a planning tool to understand the delineation between physical landscapes). Questions arose as to why certain areas or neighborhoods hadn't been able to expand or gain momentum while others had. Observations gave way to discussions on the commercial development along the North Evangeline Thruway where ground conditions consist of economy hotel chains, fast food restaurants and strip malls with anchor big box retailers.

These site tours provided an initial guide as to where the ECI Team would direct their focus during the Charrette and how the overall scale of a Corridor-wide vision would be connected and complementary neighborhood level concepts and strategies.



Image 5: Existing conditions along the Evangeline Thruway

Kick-Off Presentation

To mark the start of an intense, highly collaborative design week, the ECI Team hosted an initial Kick-Off engagement on Saturday, May 21 at the Lafayette Public Library downtown. Around 100 people attended the event including members of the ECI Consultant Team, LCG, ETRT, various professional stakeholders, and a diverse mix of local Corridor residents. The goal of the Kick-Off presentation was to drum up excitement for the week's schedule and to provide informative background information on the Corridor's evolution and the ECI project's goals as well as clarification on the role the ECI project plays in parallel to the LaDOTD I-49 Lafayette Connector effort.

Steve Oubre of ASW began the evening with an overview of what is sacred about Lafayette culture and what is particularly unique about the Northside (Image 6). He introduced what people should expect at the Charrette, explaining the dynamic actions, methods and reasons why we engage in such efforts and what we want to achieve by promoting direct participation and feedback from engaged citizens and stakeholders. Oubre also described the details of the TIGER Grant and the unique opportunity it provides, having received this Federal attention and support. A short video interlude followed with passionate testimonial guidance on the importance of good planning and serious citizen engagement from US Secretary of Transportation, Anthony Foxx.

Scott Polikov of Gateway Planning took the floor for a brief interlude to talk about the fact that Lafayette is not alone in this significant kind of planning effort, illustrating examples across the US where cities and community neighborhoods are dealing with infrastructure projects and development implications. He showcased large-scale projects from the Dallas/Fort Worth area that involved long-term collaboration from local government, professional collaboration and resident stakeholders to create thriving places.

Steve Oubre returned to the podium to discuss the challenges and backdrop of the LaDOTD Connector project and what impacts the proposed concept alternatives have on the ECI effort and which elements the ECI Team would be paying particular attention to throughout the Charrette week (ETRT Resolution 2016-003 was issued prior to the Charrette to guide the ECI Team on certain planning variables, including aspects of Connector designs from the 4 and 6 series and local networks/street conditions - See Appendix). Oubre wrapped up by highlighting overarching elements and drivers of sustainable urbanism. These included contextual and environmental sensitivity; connectivity; walkability; multi-modal transit including biking and public transport; mixed-use development; economy; urban parks, landscaping and wayfinding; public art and culture.

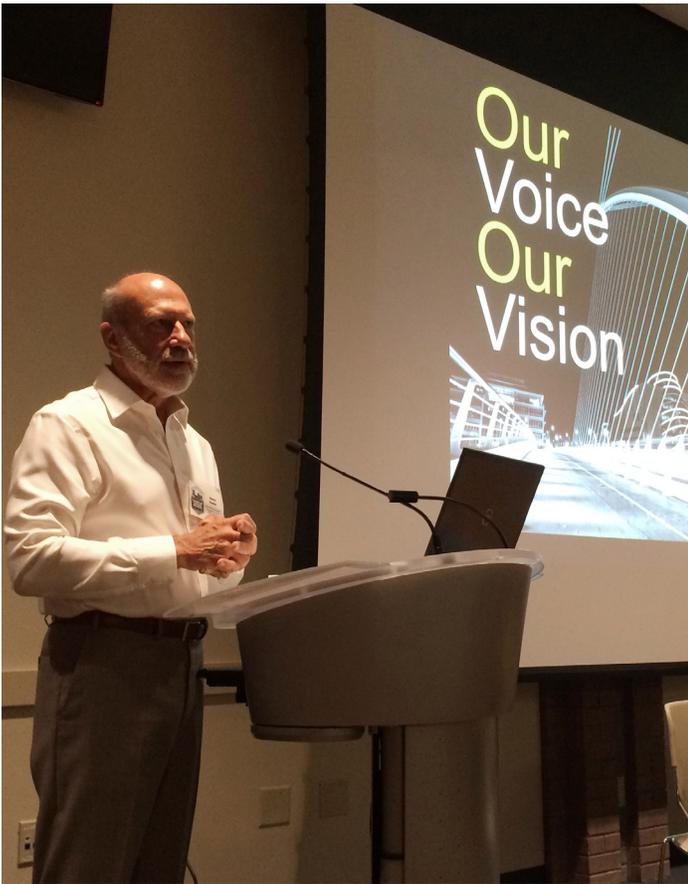


Image 6: Steve Oubre leads the kick-off presentation

District Workshop Recap Session

Prior to kicking off the design production, the ECI Team hosted a District Workshop Recap Session which was meant to offer neighborhood residents who participated in the original Workshops the opportunity to view how the ECI Team synthesized the dialogue and feedback received. Methods of scribing and response diagramming were presented to provide a level of transparency that could engage residents and make them feel comfortable that their ideas would indeed be heard and applied during the Charrette. For those individuals that were not able to attend the District Workshops, this session offered a chance to further explain exactly how our engagement process strategy unfolded in real time and what results it yielded. The public was invited to ask questions to clarify our methods and confirm how we reached certain conclusions and findings.



Image 7: Community members checking in on the ECI Team progress

Open Design Studio | Framework and Production

Throughout the week of May 23-27, the ECI Team established an Open Design Studio at Rosa Parks which allowed for continued transparent interaction between the ECI Consultant Team and the community at large. Residents and local leaders were encouraged to stop by the Studio throughout the week to check on the status of the various planning components, provide additional input, and to ensure that the team was on the right track. Opening each day from 8am-7pm gave community members a flexible drop-in convenience. More than 600 people visited the Open Design Studio throughout the week to view the progress (Image 7).

During this time, ECI designers and planners took to delegating various tasks in order to address the comprehensive scope elements. The ECI Team analyzed feedback from the District Workshops and existing condition analysis in order to establish a basic platform and an entry point framework to guide initial concepts and direction. While some members of the Consultant Team studied overarching elements such as engineering, transport, and economics, others dived into neighborhood scale design responses and recommendations. The Team worked on transferring this feedback and synthesis into conceptual designs that began to reveal potential urban strategies and solutions.



Image 8: Discussing mainline alternatives with DOT, LCP, and Acadiana MPO

Open Design Studio | Stakeholder Meetings

To support conceptual design production, the ECI Team held a series of ten technical meetings with specific stakeholders and organizations. These targeted engagements were intended to elicit particular dialogue and feedback around key themes surrounding the Corridor. This included conversations with representatives of police & fire safety, parks & recreation, the Arts, historic preservation, housing services, social services, and the business community. Meetings were also held with the LCP Team and the Acadiana MPO (Image 8). Focused stakeholder meetings helped gauge acceptance of concepts and strategies as the ECI Team attempted to refine plans for the future conditions of the Evangeline Thruway Corridor.



Image 9: Joe Minicozzi leads a talk on the economic factors within the project

Open Design Studio | Breakfast & Lunch Talks

To highlight the depth of knowledge, experience and expertise within the ECI Consultant Team, we decided to host a series of thematic lectures throughout the Charrette week. The informal breakfast and lunchtime talks complemented the targeted stakeholder meetings and exposed the public to educational insight into certain planning elements and methodology that would be deployed during the Charrette. On the morning of Monday, May 23, Rick Chellman of TND Engineering explained the benefits and logic behind promoting walkability through the implementation of complete streets. At lunch on Monday, May 23, Wes Michaels of Spackman Mossop + Michaels showcased examples of landscape urbanism projects ranging from the tactical neighborhood scale to more formal institutional and civic applications and infrastructural gateways. On Tuesday morning, May 24, Joe Minicozzi spoke about innovative methods in economic data mapping projections and the role they play in giving feasibility to long-range planning strategies (Image 9). His firm Urban3 had previously begun the application of a Return on Investment (ROI) model for the Lafayette area. The last public lunch talk was given by Todd Bressi on May 24 where he described dynamic art projects as catalysts for community building and longevity, highlighting examples that define culture and youth involvement as well as city identity.



Image 10a: Community members attend an open house event to view progress

Open Design Studio | Open Houses

No moment in the engagement loop is more crucial for feedback than the Open House. As the ECI Team worked throughout the week addressing issues stemming from on-going dialogue and site visits, two evening Open Houses were held in the main hall at the Rosa Parks Center to share the work-in-progress with the community (Image 10a/b). Conceptual plans and designs of each neighborhood district were on display for residents and community members to view and comment on. Among the questions and conversations was a healthy level of debate regarding what should and should not occur. Enthusiasm was voiced for opportunities as residents were able to realize the connections to synthesis based on the District Workshops. The layout of the real-time exhibits also helped attendees begin to understand concepts and overlapping principles being developed within adjacent neighborhood districts and throughout the entire Evangeline Corridor.



Image 10b: Community members attend an open house event to view progress

Final Presentation

On Friday, May 27, the ECI Team and LCG hosted a Final Presentation (Image 11) at the Immaculate Heart School Gym. Joel Robideaux, Mayor-President, opened the evening thanking the packed crowd for their support during this challenging process and important time in Lafayette’s history.

Steve Oubre of ASW presented a compilation of the work produced throughout the Charrette highlighting principles of smart growth planning and why it is so crucial for Lafayette. Through the design concepts, it was easy to see the complex process of bringing positive change to the neighborhoods. It was equally easy to see the opportunities that exist if the proper steps are taken to ensure inclusion and connectivity from a physical and social standpoint. Alongside preliminary neighborhood level concepts for each of the defined ECI Districts (Area Level 2 and 3), considerations and schematic alternatives for the Area Level 1 zone, including various Connector refinement concepts, were unveiled. The “semi-depressed cut-and-cover” scheme (series 6), having received very little clarity and attention previously, garnered increased interest. Oubre briefly covered some of the particular engineering components of the concepts before closing with the economic strategies and impacts that the alternative Level 1 designs and the neighborhood plans could have on the future of the Corridor. A brief Q&A wrapped the evening, marking the end to a highly active and often contentious Charrette week.



Image 11: An engaged crowd at the Final Presentation unveiling

DISTRICT PLANNING AREAS

Neighborhood Structure Strategy

Planning for the unique characteristics and realities of the Corridor Districts was a challenge. Given the diverse cultural and physical nature of each District, the ECI Team addressed the Planning Areas from both a structural collective standpoint as well as individually. While each neighborhood is distinct, together these Districts form the heart of the urban core of Lafayette where residents utilize transportation facilities, activity centers, parks, and civic institutions. The ECI Team worked at two scales, simultaneously analyzing broader connections and addressing detailed phenomenon within each neighborhood.

At the broad scale, key assets and connections were mapped throughout the study areas leading to proposed interventions to bolster these assets. Assets were identified as existing or future neighborhood centers, main streets, open spaces, stable housing clusters, and civic institutions including parks, schools, community centers, and churches. Priority connections were identified between these assets, highlighting existing networks and key connections throughout the Evangeline Corridor (Image 12a/b).

Expanding on existing assets within each neighborhood, the ECI Team began to identify and construct key improvement concepts to create neighborhood nodes and zones. These enhanced nodes focused around hubs of commerce, cultural activity and access from various points of the neighborhood. Proposals for these areas were schematically designed and illustrated to communicate neighborhood character and progress. The District Plan concepts were then assembled together to examine and develop connected networks between neighborhood nodes (see Images 15 and 16 on following pages). Transect methodology overlays which speak to transitional types of land use were employed to consider density, scale and appropriate development types (Image 13).

**As the I-49 Lafayette Connector refinement process moves forward through the end of 2016, the ECI Team will revisit initial strategy concepts that surfaced during the Charrette. This ongoing synthesis will allow the ECI Team to conduct further analysis, introduce additional neighborhood concepts and vet design refinements through follow-up engagements with the community and LCG to maximize the appropriateness and feasibility of the schemes for future implementation.*



Image 12a:
concept sketch of neighborhood nodal networks - Downtown to McComb-Veazey



Image 12b:
Concept sketch of neighborhood nodal networks - LaPlace to Sterling Grove

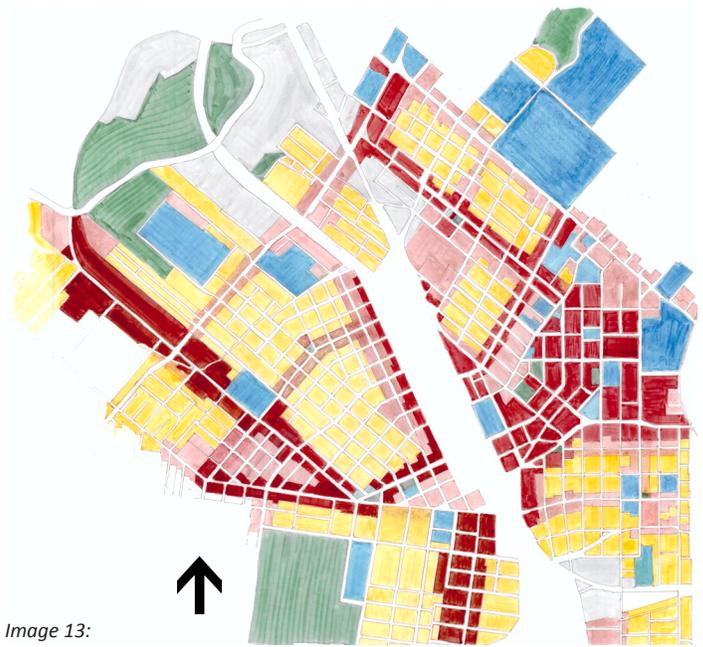


Image 13:
Transect concept density overlay (red = high, pink = medium, yellow = low)

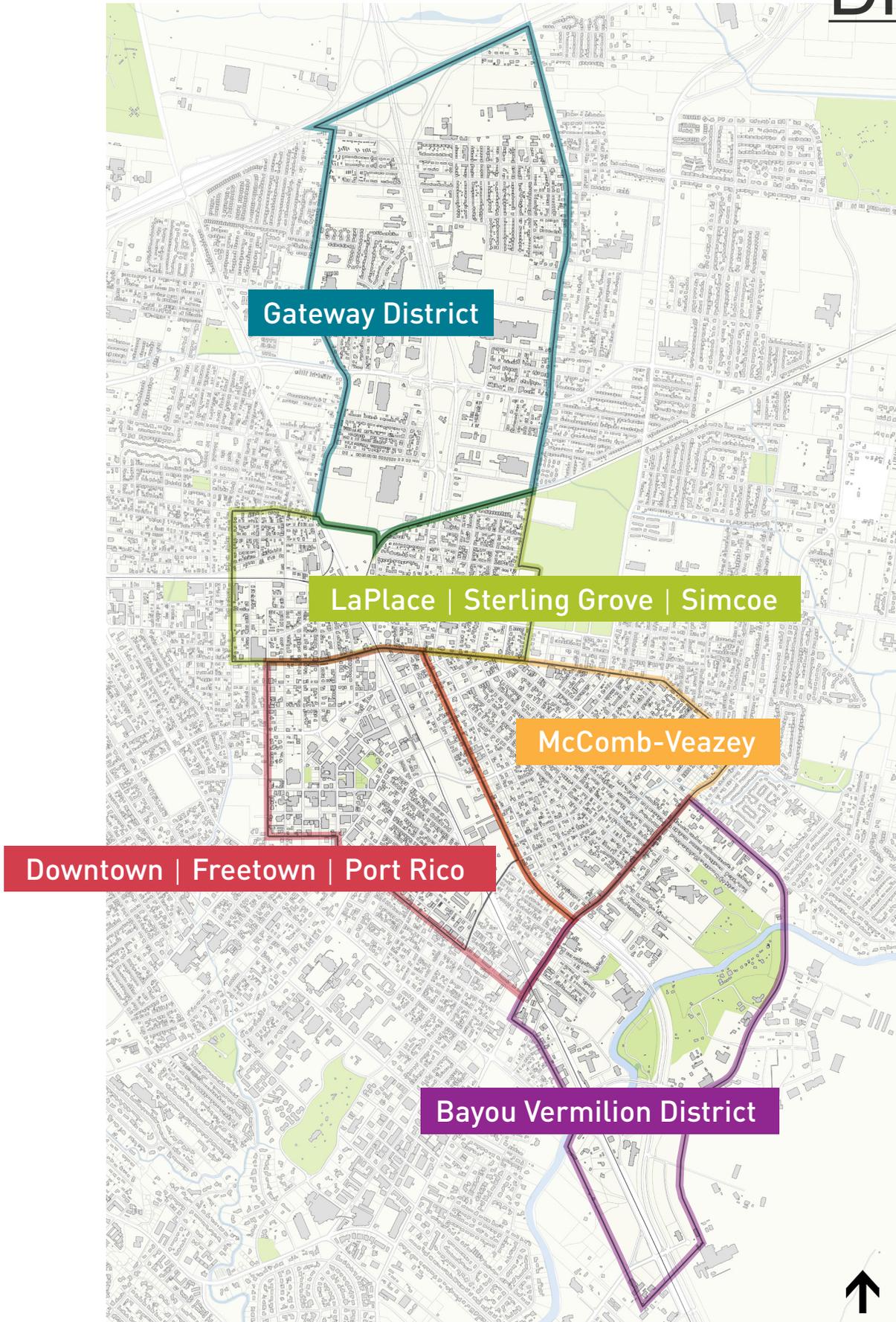


Image 14: Evangeline Corridor Map highlighting the 5 ECI Districts

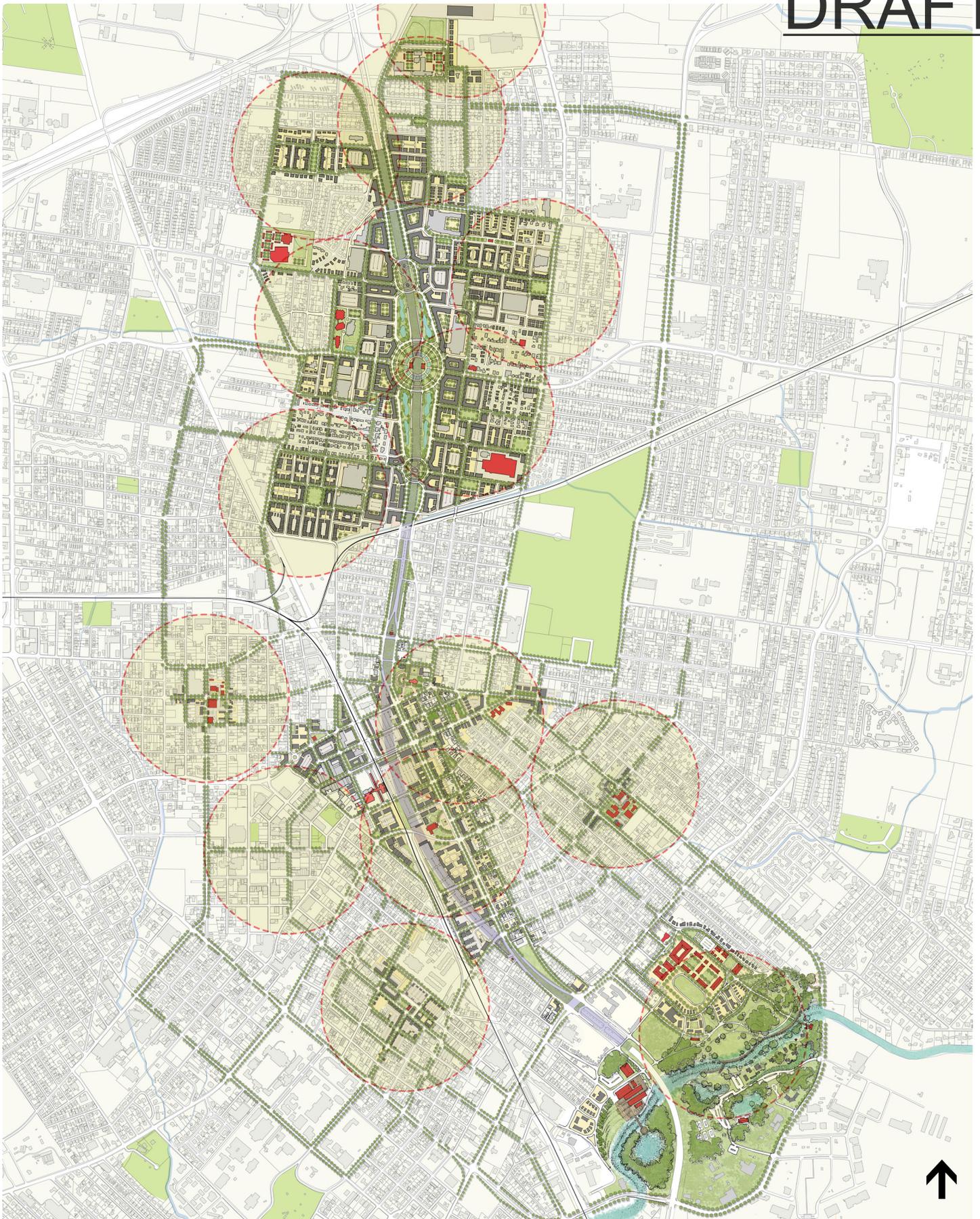


Image 15: The Evangeline Corridor with various preliminary neighborhood level concept nodal plans featuring an Elevated Mainline with Signature Bridge

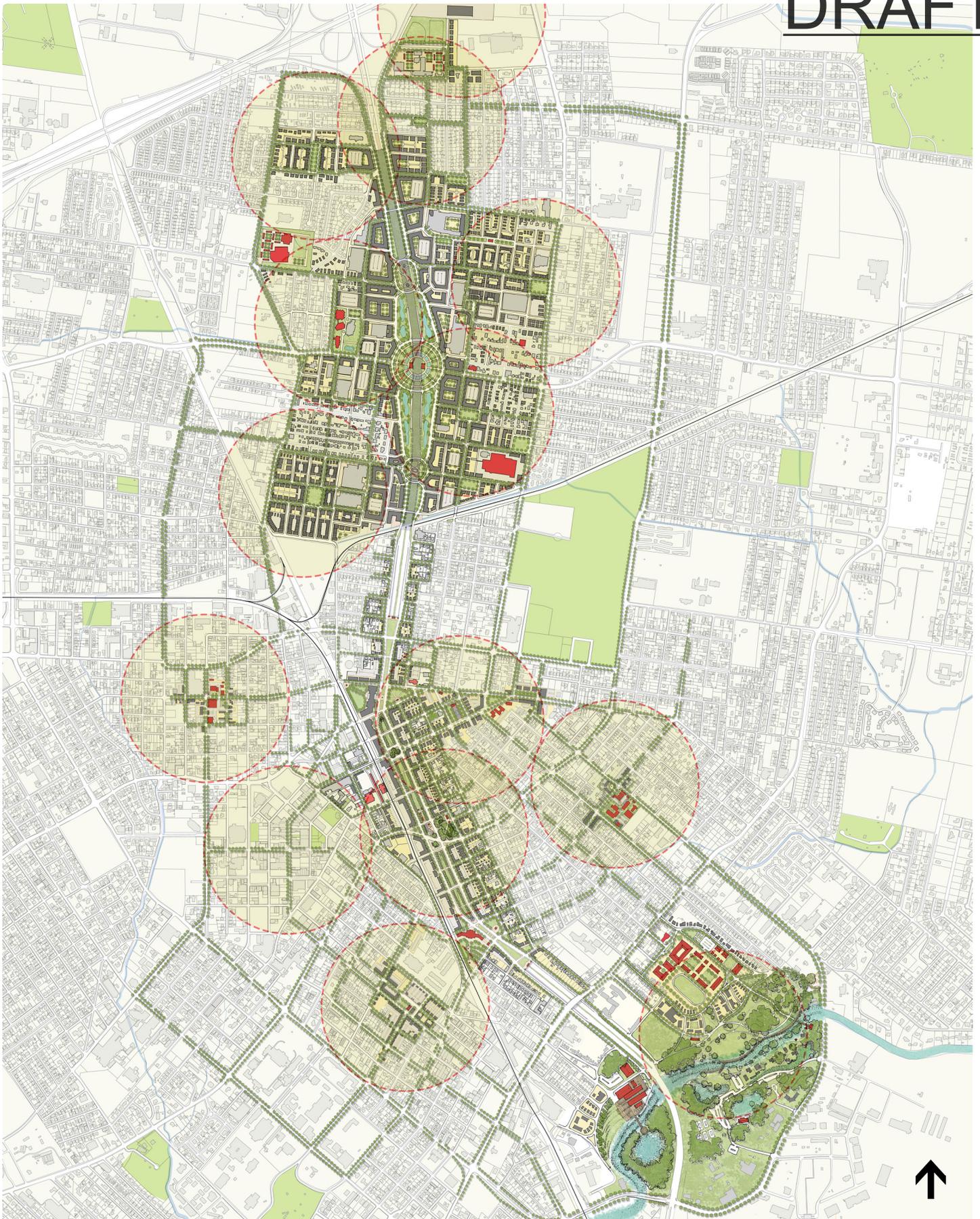


Image 16: The Evangeline Corridor with various preliminary neighborhood level concept nodal plans featuring a Semi-depressed Mainline with Cover



Image 17: Re-imagined intersection of Willow St. and the Evangeline Thruway showing a grand formal traffic circle and expansive landscaped green spaces with lined dense building development and a repurposed Northgate Mall site (on the left).

Gateway District

The Gateway District is a face to Lafayette. Regarded as underperforming physically and economically, the area still shows promise as an inviting gateway to the city characterized by a thriving commercial zone for mixed-use development. Laced with disconnected big box stores and travel hotels, fledgling strip malls, and fast food chains, the area was once dominated by traffic and activity around Northgate Mall. While the Mall no longer operates in its original format, its commercial viability hangs in the balance as new competition has developed nearby and throughout the city. The ECI Team saw great potential in redefining the area as a progressive unified gateway zone with mixed-scale urban development (commercial/retail) centered around an enhanced Willow St. interchange (Image 17).

Focusing on the four quadrants that would surround the proposed Willow St. interchange (Image 18), the ECI Team considered a thematic approach to each zone. For example, the former Northgate Mall site would be potentially retrofitted to form a more concentrated and activated 'town center' concept. Consuming recent additions such as the Home Depot and the Willow Charter Academy, this could reclaim the area as a destination for the Northside neighborhoods and the city beyond (Image 19). The denser development could also fill vacant land between isolated developments such as the travel hotels that line the Evangeline Thruway.

Across the mainline, a more civic zone could emerge around the existing Clifton Chenier Center and adapted Philadelphia Church site. Mixed-use liner buildings fronting necessary detention and retention areas resulting from the impending dense development could be treated as recreation amenities and provide a buffer to mitigate noise and direct physical impact from the interstate.

While this level of proposed development would have to be based on market demand and incremental investment, the ECI Team believes that this manner of progress would systematically address concerns of safety (adding eyes to the street and open spaces), low property values (enhancing the built fabric), and lack of access to entertainment/cultural activity (providing new and enhanced amenities) (Image 20 - next page).



Image 18: Aerial view of current Willow St. intersection at the Evangeline Thruway



Image 19: Rendering of the retrofitted Northgate Mall site



Image 20: Preliminary concept of Gateway showing re-purposed Northgate Mall site, enhanced Willow St. interchange grand roundabout and denser infill development



Image 21: Rendering of the proposed neighborhood node concept in LaPlace at St. John St. and Simcoe St.

LaPlace / Sterling Grove / Simcoe

The neighborhoods of this District stand in contrast to one another, divided for decades by the Evangeline Corridor. As one of the older areas of the city, Sterling Grove is laced with signature estates and moderate homes representing period architecture, as well as canopied streets. While parts of LaPlace echo the general historic character of Sterling Grove, the area is divided by major arterial roads and industrial land along the railroad spur. Here, lower income sections of the neighborhoods vie for economic growth and stability amidst disinvestment. Despite the unique differences between the two areas, residents spoke to similar concerns of wanting to safeguard their communities from a cultural and developmental standpoint.

The ECI Team acknowledged the challenge that social services agencies impart in LaPlace. Although social services may contribute to a concentration of homeless and individuals in need, there may be potential to use this active corner as a node the community could rally around. Identifying the intersection of St. John and Simcoe Sts. as a prime zone to create a center of civic activity, features such as St. Joseph’s Diner and St. James Church could anchor an area defined by diversity and community support. The Sunbeam-Evangeline Maid Bread facility could take on a retail component, giving an additional commercial boost to the area (Image 21). LaPlace has numerous sub-standard homes, abandoned lots, and approximately 60 adjudicated properties. The ECI process hopes to remedy this situation by introducing various housing types, infill strategies to link residential streets to civic zones, and re-imagining the Cameron/Simcoe St. corridors.

Sterling Grove has a separate set of issues. Containing a National Historic District, residents take great pride in their neighborhood. The threat to their lifestyle brought by a high speed interstate infrastructure adjacent to their neighborhood worries residents. So too does certain levels of commercial zoning and development directly and indirectly related to the proposed Connector.



Image 22: Vision of the proposed Sterling Grove town center (Pink house on left)

While offering a preliminary guide to potential private development trends, the ECI Team can help the community identify strategic locations of commercial activity that can complement and serve the historic neighborhood fabric.

Sterling Grove lacks a formal ‘town center’ or central public zone to complement the walkable nature of its streets. The ECI Team and residents identified the block surrounding the Senior Arts Studio (“Pink House”) as a potential node for the neighborhood (Image 22). Though not located in the geographical center of the district, its cultural legacy already speaks to community spirit and could promote more cohesion between Sterling Grove, Nickerson and Parkerson and the greater McComb-Veazey neighborhood to the South (see the McComb-Veazey section).

To mitigate the impact of the proposed Connector, appropriately-scaled mixed-use development along the neighborhood edge fronting the proposed infrastructure could create a transitional shield between the mainline and St. Genevieve Church, the area’s primary religious and cultural landmark (Image 23a/b). Another idea from the workshops and Charrette discussions with local residents was to relocate historic homes within the Connector right-of-way to other parts of the area to address vacant lot and infill opportunities (i.e. around the potential Arts Studio node).



Image 23a: The LaPlace / Sterling Grove / Simcoe District with various neighborhood nodes and raised mainline and "signature bridge" outline Level 1 alternative (Series 4) - shows neighborhood node at St. John and Simcoe Sts. in LaPlace and realigned St. Genevieve Church site across the Thruway adjacent to Sterling Grove

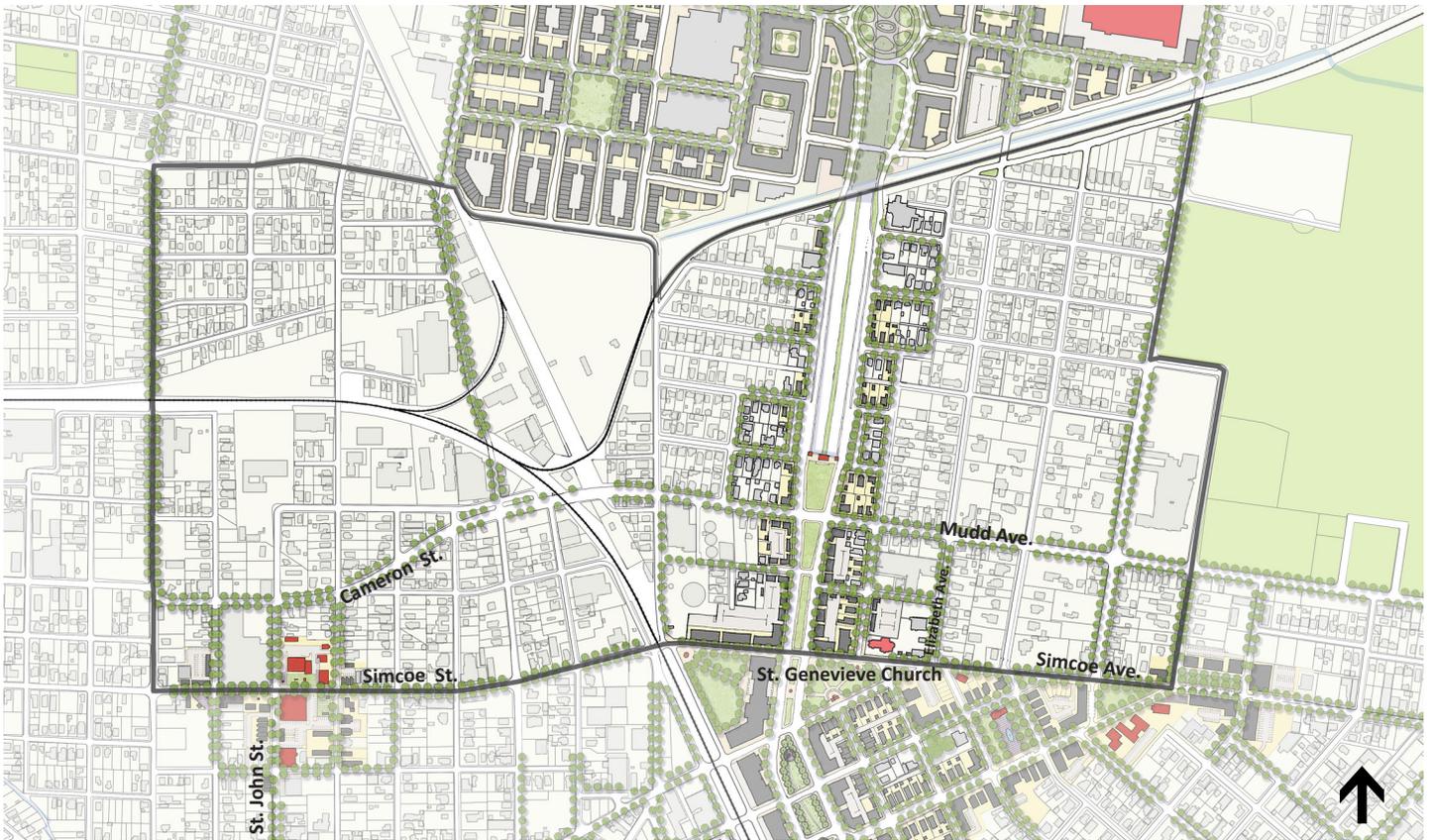


Image 23b: The LaPlace / Sterling Grove / Simcoe District with various neighborhood nodes and semi-depressed mainline and cover Level 1 alternative (Series 6) - shows neighborhood node at St. John and Simcoe Sts. in LaPlace and realigned St. Genevieve Church site across the Thruway adjacent to Sterling Grove

Downtown / Freetown / Port Rico

Downtown Lafayette is one of the city’s primary hubs of economic and commercial activity. Yet overall, the physical reality leaves opportunities for improvement. Efforts to revitalize Downtown have long been in discussion and recent business influx and ongoing safety measures indicates that Downtown may be primed to undergo a desirable mixed-commercial and residential transformation. As Jefferson St. begins to replenish itself, Congress St. has received great attention of late, led by LCG planning efforts and concepts from the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The ECI Team echoed some of DDA’s concepts when considering the Congress St. edge and adjacent property owned by LPTFA, which has a localized master plan in place (Image 24).

The ECI Team analyzed various impact criteria of the Connector options on the Congress St. and 2nd & 3rd St. interface, particular regarding access. A major concern interest was to consider alternatives that remove the intrusive interchange, whereby adopting new street condition measures, the Congress St. corridor could reactivate itself as a primary connection artery across the mainline. Mixed-use development patterns along Congress St. would create a thriving street frontage transition between Downtown and LaPlace.

As a mobility anchor for the Northside and the greater region, Rosa Parks Transportation Center should be maintained and the area around it enhanced to ensure access in the face of a proposed Connector. Any of LaDOTD’s considered options will greatly impact the Downtown edge across the railroad (Image 26). The ECI Team analyzed and considered alternatives to safeguard access to the facility while proposing adjacent redevelopment in attempt to promote cohesive neighborhood activity, for example along Garfield St.

The Freetown and Port Rico neighborhoods south of Johnston St. are distinctly more residential, though they are seen as extensions of a greater Downtown, with many residents taking advantage of the proximity to the commercial core. Frequently used and accessible urban amenities such as Borden’s already dot the Johnston St. edge of Freetown and some of this activity filters further into the neighborhood, creating the bones of a walkable structure unseen in most neighborhoods throughout the city.



Image 24: Downtown / Freetown / Port-Rico District showing raised mainline with “signature bridge”. Also shown are a potential community node at the Jefferson /McKinley Sts. intersection and reimagined Congress St.



Image 25: Rendering of a potential community node and market at McKinley and Jefferson Streets



Image 26: Downtown / Freetown / Port-Rico District showing a semi-depressed Connector mainline. Also shown are a potential community node at the Jefferson /McKinley Sts. intersection and reimagine Congress St. corridor

At the southern tip of the District, a primary community node was considered at the intersection of Jefferson and McKinley St. Once a more active zone, it has been in decline and is now ripe for re-investment. Taking a cue from the recently built 'Quarters' development targeting UL-Lafayette students, a denser mixed-use residential concept was developed alongside Jefferson and Lamar to fill vacant lots or replace some single-family detached houses. Inserting some local neighborhood scale retail/commercial entities could help activate the everyday street life in this area (Image 25 and 27).

The ECI Team conceptualized a network of pathways, including potential bike and pedestrian trails that could connect the UL-Lafayette campus through the Freetown neighborhood across Johnston St. to the Downtown core and beyond (see previous network drawing sketch on page 15). Taft, Garfield, Lamar, Vermilion and General Mouton Sts. were seen as crucial arteries within the neighborhood and as connections to adjacent areas. Secondary community nodes would be located within this network (along Convent St. and Gordon St.), consuming existing minor hubs of activity and small retail amenities that support the mostly residential fabric.



Image 27: Neighborhood center vision on Jefferson St. between McKinley St. and Brainard Ave. and Lamar St. with mixed-used development at a neighborhood scale (market concept on far right - see image 25)



Image 28: Illustration of a re-imagined McComb-Veazey neighborhood center concept at 12th St and Surrey St. adjacent to Immaculate Heart School and Church site

McComb-Veazey

McComb-Veazey is a tight-knit neighborhood that enjoys pride and perseverance in spite of various neighborhood challenges. Taking cues from previous area plans, the ECI Team created concepts that could revitalize the local commercial zones as well as the surrounding residential streets. One example was a central node located at the corner of 12th and Surrey Sts., taking advantage of the activity around Immaculate Heart School and Church (Image 28). The community already identified the 12th St. corridor as a potential local main street spine for the area. A cultural zone could serve as the bookend to a mixed-use strip beginning at a newly repurposed and activated Evangeline Thruway zone. Here, various connector options have diverse impact on incremental mixed-use development and infusion of housing stock at an appropriate manner and scale (Image 31a/b).

Desiring better access to adjacent neighborhoods and areas, major arteries that could serve as connections across the Thruway were identified at Taft/14th St., Jefferson Blvd, S. Orange St. and Louisiana Ave. which provides a clear path all the way to I-10. Each artery possesses a distinct character that can be re-imagined to give the community a mix of local business activity and access to networks that are currently unavailable. Jefferson Blvd. has been ripe to reclaim its heyday as a commerce zone and Downtown link. A strategy was also proposed to continue 11 St. across the railroad providing a direct connection to Freetown.

Alongside the cultural center proposed at the 'Pink House' site on E. 3rd and Jefferson Blvd. serving Sterling Grove and McComb neighborhoods, a re-imagined Pontiac Point sees the Jefferson-Simcoe St. junction as a small, lively node with commercial retail, restaurants, and a safe accessible green space (Images 29/30).



Image 29: Aerial image view at the existing Pontiac Point



Image 30: Re-imagining of Pontiac Point intersection at Jefferson Blvd and E. Simcoe St.



Image 31a: McComb-Veazey District shown with the raised mainline / signature bridge, repurposed Evangeline Thruway zone and neighborhood nodes at 12th and Surrey Sts. including the Immaculate Heart School and Church site and reimagined Pontiac Point junction at Jefferson Blvd. and Simcoe St.



Image 31b: McComb-Veazey District shown with semi-depressed covered mainline, repurposed Evangeline Thruway zone and neighborhood nodes at 12th and Surrey Sts. including the Immaculate Heart School and Church site and reimagined Pontiac Point junction at Jefferson Blvd. and Simcoe St.



Image 32: Re-imagined Heymann Park Waterfront area with great lawn, river edge activity and pedestrian river crossing

Bayou Vermilion District

The Bayou Vermilion District is home to Heymann Park, Beaver Park and Vermilionville. Unfortunately the accessibility between these adjacent recreational components is weak. There is potential to attract more visitors and increase amenities within the public realm. At the district workshops, residents asserted that the park can feel unsafe during particular times of day. The ECI Team sought to change this by creating a series of landscaped networks throughout the District that could provide clear connections, access, and vantage points. Having awareness of the greater park area is also beneficial for wayfinding and safety.

The Vermilion River can be a great destination for the area. The leadership at Vermilionville is already making strides to reclaim the river for active recreation and use. Concepts were proposed to promote activity along the river edge taking advantage of all parts of the park, creating a great lawn that would overlook the river, offering views and a pedestrian crossing to additional public spaces adjacent to Vermilionville. Because this part of the River is absent of commercial boat traffic, it could further establish itself as a highly-used recreational waterway with complementary small-scale commercial services along its banks (Image 32).

From a neighborhood perspective, strategies were considered to merge the nearby McComb-Veazey District with Heymann Park. Using the Paul Breaux Middle School site as an initiator, the ECI Team looked at ways to reconfigure the institution into a modern learning campus. Reclaiming parts of the park by proposing additional residential elements on the backside of the school could bring everyday activity into the park by asserting a more purposeful overall use of the area. Strategies including downsizing would also allow for a safer park with more local eyes on the landscape while promoting frequent walkable access.



Image 33: Five-minute accessible walk zone in the Bayou Vermilion District

Other connections from Heymann Park were considered across the river on the backside of Vermilionville towards Beaver Park and across the proposed Connector mainline to the former Trappey Plant along the activated river edge. An additional pedestrian bridge from a potentially re-purposed Trappey Plant site to Spreafico Lake could allow greater access to the oft-cited abandoned character of the site. The main strategy was to view the entire District as a series of connected and accessible pockets with unique amenities, rather than isolated areas (Images 33/34).

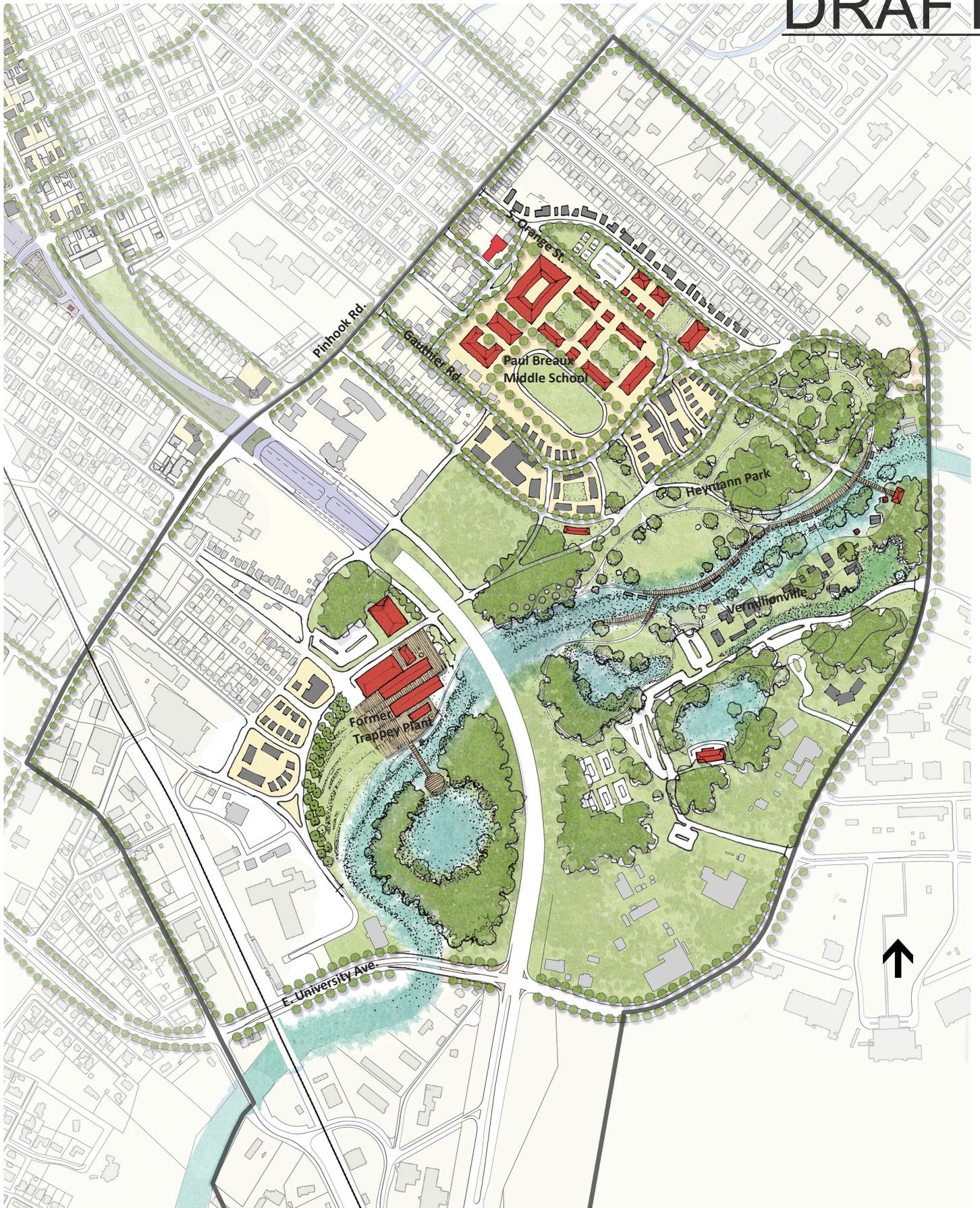


Image 34: District Concept vision - Bayou Vermilion District showing re-imagined Paul Breaux Middle School site, Beaver Park, Heymann Park revamp with Great Lawn, and connected landscape networks with repurposed Trappey Plant

Level 1 Analysis Overview

The Charrette process began with a presentation of LaDOTD's 19 Level 1 design concepts. Through a resolution, the ETRT directed the ECI Team to use the Charrette process to explore specific elements of the Connector alternatives' impact on neighborhoods. While initially evaluating the design strategies, the team found that many variations between options were similar across different series - relating to crossing locations, underpasses, and exit ramp configurations. The team determined that the importance and location of crossings, underpasses, and the impact of access ramps required a neighborhoods-first perspective. It could not be determined whether a crossing was important without analyzing neighborhood structure, centers, open space, institutions, and civic identity. The team then split into two groups - one looking at the neighborhoods, as described in an earlier section, and the other analyzing the physical details of the mainline design options with a focus on an elevated mainline with signature bridge sections and a semi-depressed partial cover scenario (Images 35/36 opposite page).

The ECI Team was not charged with technical details of the mainline configuration. Though a clearer understanding of the mainline details was necessary for examining impacts. For instance, Series 6 includes five designs, each of which affect adjacent properties differently. LaDOTD consultants indicated that design details had not been completely evaluated at this time. The design team then proceeded to gather information from LaDOTD consultants and analyze the series 4 and 6 mainline configurations in order to clarify constraints and options.

Both Series 4 and 6 were evaluated concurrently. In this section, we present analysis and evaluation of LaDOTD concepts, conceptual images, specific element details, and address questions raised during the analysis of each mainline alternative. The ECI Team also studied and conceptually strategized the configuration and impact of the existing Evangeline Thruway and this analysis is also presented briefly below.

Impact on the Evangeline Thruway

Each series of urban core concept designs included variations for the frontage road configuration and interface with the existing Evangeline Thruway. Three basic options were presented and tested for viability, excluding those that maintained frontage roads alongside the mainline, a concept with very little public support. The preliminary options were:

1. **One-way Pair:** Maintain the Evangeline Thruway as a one-way pair serving together as the frontage roads. (ex: 4A)
2. **Two-way Pair:** Maintain the Evangeline Thruway, convert to two-way, and use both as parallel frontage roads. (ex: 4C)
3. **Southbound Boulevard:** Revert the northbound Evangeline Thruway to local control and build a boulevard along the southbound Evangeline Thruway serving as a combined frontage road. (ex: 4D)

The first limitation is the existing right-of-way (R.O.W.) width of the Thruway. Currently the Thruway provides three travel lanes on each section (NB, SB) with little to no space available for sidewalks, street plantings, lighting, and bicycle infrastructure. Additionally a number of existing structures are built along the R.O.W. and in some cases encroach into it. Any reconfiguration that feasibly accommodates traffic, pedestrians, cyclists, and safety infrastructure including parked cars, trees, and lighting would require additional R.O.W. acquisition. Option 1A hints at reducing the Thruway to two lanes, though it's not clear on the intentions of using the remaining lane. The 'One-way Pair' configuration may require less paving for travel lanes, with two in each direction, however there is not sufficient existing R.O.W. for complete multi-use facilities. In general, one-way configurations are inherently dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

Because land to the west of the existing southbound Thruway is generally under-developed or already acquired by LaDOTD, the ECI Team determined that the 'Southbound Boulevard' concept appeared to be the most beneficial option for the neighborhoods. Drawing multiple configuration details, this option would concentrate a primary artery devoted to denser mixed-use development and thus create a new neighborhood-oriented street on the existing northbound section, provide for two-way travel which better supports local business, provide space for a wider R.O.W. to accommodate on-street parking and bicycle lanes, and provide a clear circulation path for vehicles.

The semi-depressed solutions investigated by the design team provided for an additional frontage road running above the semi-depressed mainline. By providing a second service road option that also functions as an integrated and navigable concourse road, this location simplifies vehicular orientation through the system, functioning similar to Concept 3A while not presenting the concept's undesirable elements such as impeding exit/access ramps. The ECI alternative calls for 'frontage' roads both on top of the semi-depressed main line and for the Southbound blvd.

LaDOTD Concepts 4A - 4C contemplated one roundabout along Johnston that spans the paired frontage roads. Concept 4D presents three roundabouts along the boulevard. Considering pedestrian and cyclist comfort and safety, there are concerns about the use of roundabouts along the frontage roads. Roundabouts are designed to provide free-flow movement for vehicles which is in direct conflict with pedestrian and cyclist safety through that particular part of system. Because the new mainline will carry a significant amount of the traffic currently using the Thruway, signals and turning movements should be less intrusive on the frontage roads. Therefore, the ECI Team concluded that from a traffic flow facility perspective and a pedestrian and cyclist safety perspective, the roundabouts are not entirely necessary in these configurations. Follow-up refinements will consider when and where roundabouts and other roadway features may be of benefit to the neighborhood street system and community goals.



REFINEMENT CONCEPT - 4C

Evangeline Thruway Paired Two-Way Connectivity System

(without additional RR grade separations)

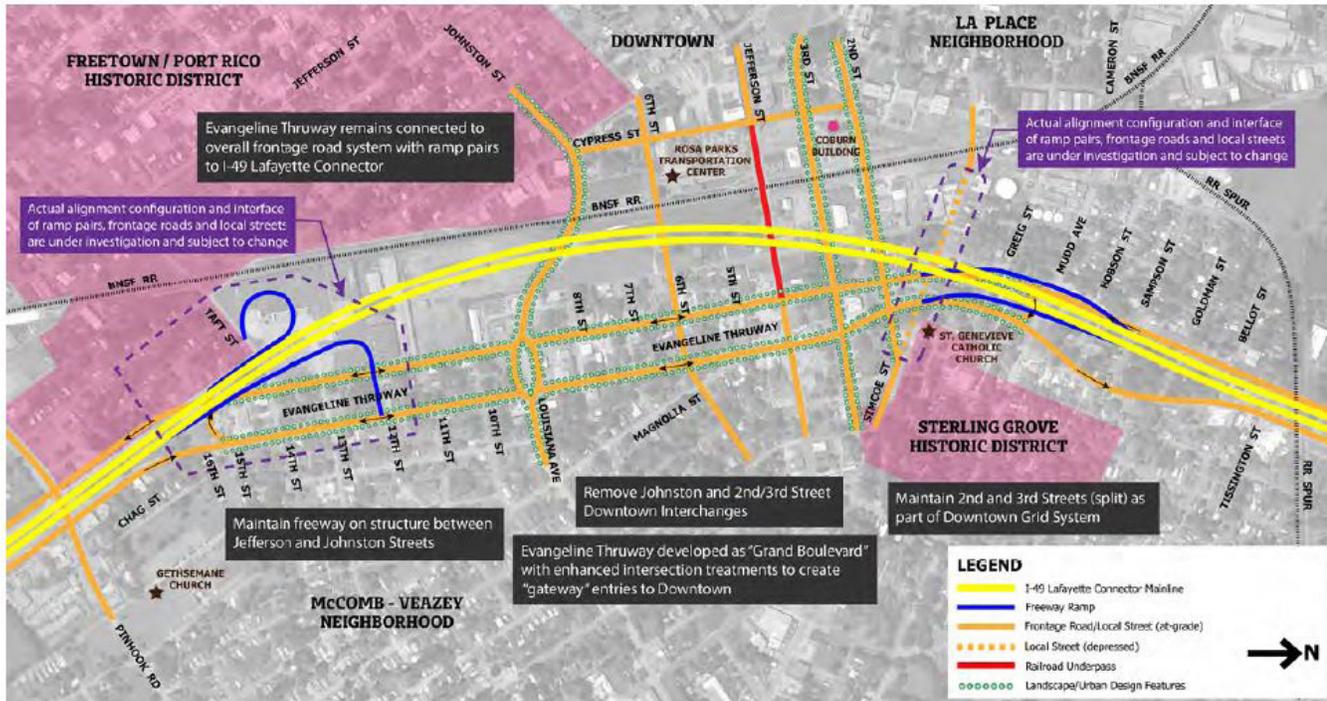


Image 35: DOTD Series 4 concept example examined by the ECI Team



REFINEMENT CONCEPT - 6B (First Draft)

Covered Semi-Depressed I-49 Lafayette Connector Mainline

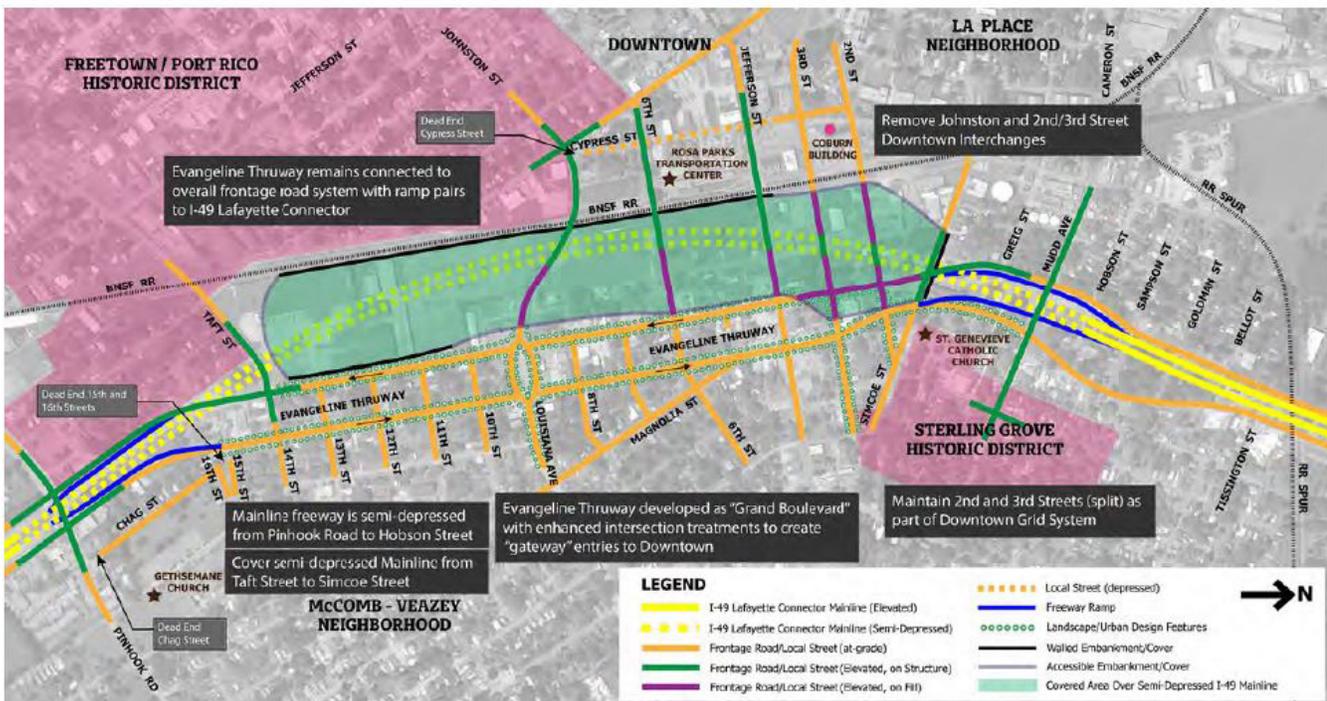


Image 36: DOTD Series 6 concept example examined by the ECI Team

LaDOTD Connector Concepts Evaluation

During the Charrette, the ECI Consultant Team developed a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) neighborhoods-first evaluation matrix of the 19 concept plans (Image 37 on opposite page). The ECI Team concluded that aspects of neighborhood-centric approach alongside specific geographic indicators were excluded. This matrix provided an alternative to the LaDOTD evaluation. Evaluation criteria addressed three primary categories: community connectivity - vehicular, pedestrian, public transportation, and bicycles - reversing disinvestment, and public safety / Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

General Findings

Based on each LaDOTD concept, the evaluation graphic illustrates success (green) and lack of success (red) in addressing an issue. The complete matrix essentially clarifies the results of the CSS design process to date. The base case concept (1A and 1B) was designed from a purely vehicle-centric standpoint, scoring well in vehicular access but almost entirely without success in other areas. As LaDOTD and their consultants began their CSS process, which resulted in the subsequent concepts, more successes began emerging for pedestrians, cyclists, and for neighborhoods in general. This also illustrates how some concepts, such as the partial access concept (5), achieves success in some areas that others do not. The overall outlook illustrates why the series 4 and 6 concepts achieved greater public support: they are generally more successful than others in regards to non-vehicular issues.

Community Connectivity

The neighborhood context analysis mapped neighborhood boundaries, centers (existing and future), civic assets (churches, schools, and parks), existing pedestrian and bicycle networks, and the primary streets connecting this fabric. For the evaluation, the list of street connections reflects those identified through the LaDOTD concepts as well as those identified as important through the neighborhood context analysis. The ECI Team evaluated whether connectivity is comfortably provided for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists along each of the streets identified. Successful streets were those with urban design improvements and those that do not include underpasses, an elevated section, or access ramp intersections. The ECI Team also evaluated whether the pedestrian and bicycle connectivity is provided along streets with existing bus stops crossing the corridor.

Reversing Disinvestment

This section evaluates the connection between neighborhoods and downtown, develop-ability of land adjacent to the corridor, freeway noise, the viability of the current Evangeline corridor, and the adjacency of access ramps to existing neighborhoods. Together these metrics determine whether the community is divided or connected by the corridor, and whether redevelopment will spur or hinder further private-sector investment.

Public Safety and CPTED

Generally within urban districts, large and isolated open spaces under or adjacent to elevated freeways are a public safety and maintenance challenge. Successful examples of this urban condition in Louisiana are lacking. This section evaluates the space within and adjacent to the mainline, considering public safety in an urban context, including CPTED concepts. In addition to the safety of users moving through the corridor, on-the-ground issues include: residual non-developable land, lack of open space supervision or “eyes on the street” from adjacent land uses, and dead-end streets.

ECI Alternatives Interpretation

Based on these evaluations the ECI Team sought to narrow and consider alternatives to the proposed LaDOTD concepts. On the following pages are two distinct alternatives; one representing a response to Series 4 concepts, one representing a response to Series 6. It was imperative to the ECI Team to understand the distinct character of what each option conveyed and offered to the corridor and what primary questions or considerations the various options elicited. Recognizing certain limitations of engineering analysis and design alternatives performed by LaDOTD prior to the Charrette, the ECI Team’s engineering consultants and designers carefully examined and offered conceptual iterations regarding the feasibility and visions of the LaDOTD concepts. The matrix chart on the right illustrates various key criteria the ECI Team used to gauge impacts of each concept series, including connectivity, reversing disinvestment, and public safety.

The ECI Team’s findings and proposals may indicate certain differences from the LaDOTD preliminary concept diagrams, but intended to stay within the parameters of the adopted R.O.W. and overall suite of LaDOTD’s package of options. Based on engagement and feedback from the community, the ECI Team is confident that the conceptual proposals on the following pages point to a desirable vision for the corridor neighborhoods, offering accessible connections, active landscapes, and economic growth opportunities that may not have been fully considered.

Evangeline Corridor Initiative: Context Sensitive Solutions Neighborhoods-First Evaluation

Evaluation Elements		Base Case (1)		Single Interchange (2)		Split Diamond (3)			Raised Mainline with Signature Bridge (4)						Parallel Access (5)	Depressed Mainline with Cover (6)				
		A	B	A	B	A	B	C	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	A	B	C	D	E
Community Connectivity: Vehicular Access	Mudd																			
	Simcoe																			
	2nd / 3rd																			
	Jefferson																			
	6th																			
	Johnston																			
	12th																			
	Taft																			
	Pinhook																			
	Evangeline																			
Community Connectivity: Pedestrian Access	Mudd																			
	Simcoe																			
	2nd / 3rd																			
	Jefferson																			
	6th																			
	Johnston																			
	12th																			
	Taft																			
	Pinhook																			
	Evangeline																			
Community Connectivity: Bicycle Access	Mudd																			
	Simcoe																			
	2nd / 3rd																			
	Jefferson																			
	6th																			
	Johnston																			
	12th																			
	Taft																			
	Pinhook																			
	Evangeline																			
Community Connectivity: Access to Bus	Jefferson																			
	6th																			
	Johnston																			
	Evangeline																			
Reversing Disinvestment	Developable Land																			
	Freeway Noise																			
	Evangeline Viability																			
	Ramp Adjacency																			
	Ped / Bike to Downtown																			
	Access to Downtown																			
Public Safety and CPTED	Pedestrian Safety																			
	Bicycle Safety																			
	Vehicular Safety																			
	Residual Land																			
	Open Space Safety																			
	Street Stubs																			

Image 37: Preliminary matrix evaluation of LaDOTD I-49 Lafayette Connector concepts with key criteria based on Smart Growth principles and ECI goals and aims



Image 38: Illustration of an elevated mainline alternative concept

Elevated Mainline Alternative

Examining and developing an alternative response to LaDOTD’s series 4 mainline design raised the following questions:

- How high is the mainline elevated along most of its trajectory?
- Where does the mainline become elevated?
- How high is the signature bridge and what is its highest point?
- What type of structure would a signature bridge use?
- Do access ramps at the Taft St. intersection have to loop?

The Record of Decision (ROD) specifies that the mainline must be raised a minimum of 22 ft. above grade to the bottom of structure (Image 39) In regards to where the mainline will be elevated on the southern end of the project, the primary constraints are the crossings at the Vermilion River and at Pinhook Rd. Due to the minimum 17 ft. clearance on Pinhook and a required 2.9% descent on the mainline, the mainline would be elevated until it reached the Vermilion River. To the north, the R.O.D. states that the mainline must pass over the railroad spur near Tissington St. and maintain a 22 ft. clearance.

The height of a “signature bridge” portion depends on the incline and decline constraints of the mainline. The highest point would likely fall midway between those constraints, located near the intersection of Johnston St./Louisiana Ave. Preliminary analysis indicated that using the 2.9% grade descent would avoid requiring an additional ascending lane, thus resulting in a maximum bridge height of 40 feet. Though it is not completely clear at this time what kind of structure LaDOTD believes is necessary or what is being contemplated or envisioned for final design implementation (Image 38).

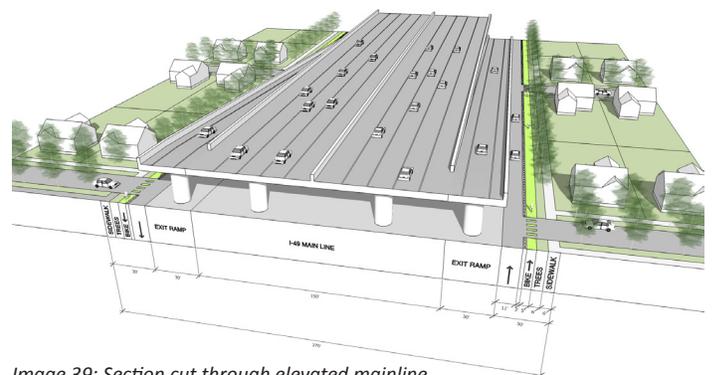


Image 39: Section cut through elevated mainline

LaDOTD concepts show access ramps at Taft St. that loop and hook in order to connect with the Evangeline frontage road. This configuration would eliminate developable real estate and could potentially create a confusing situation for southbound travelers entering the mainline from the frontage roads. Since the location of access ramps is typically set by exit spacing along the mainline and other elevation considerations, exit distance was investigated as a primary constraint. In this case, because the R.O.D. sets the clear height at 22 ft. and the Vermilion River crossing bridge is in place, mainline height may not be a factor in determining access ramp location.

To the north, Simcoe St. is one mile from Willow St. and the ramp designs parallel the mainline in LaDOTD’s concepts. The ECI Team assumed that the ramps and intersection at Taft St. could take on a comparable construction given the similarity in distances between exits and similar mainline height at both locations. The concept plan illustrated some of these considerations as well as a preliminary re-imagining of the Evangeline Thruway (Image 40).



Image 40: Representation of Elevated Mainline with Signature Bridge scheme showing re-purposed Evangeline Thruway and Southbound Boulevard concept



Image 41: Illustration of semi-depressed mainline with cover alternative showing green park space connections, development and a winding Johnston St. through the covered space

Semi-Depressed Mainline Alternative

Examining and developing an alternative response to LaDOTD's series 6 mainline design raised the following questions:

- How deep will the mainline be depressed?
- What clearance is required over the mainline to cover it?
- What is the depth of structure and fill on the cover?
- What clearance is required over the existing rail line?
- Is the mainline trajectory indicated in concept 6E viable?
- Can a retaining wall along the rail line be avoided (6B)?
- Do raised streets connections have to encroach into downtown?
- Are large open spaces atop a covered mainline safe?
- Can the areas of cover and fill be developed with buildings?
- Can underpasses be accommodated within series 6 concepts?

To address drainage, LaDOTD specifies a max mainline depth of 10 ft. below grade. According to core area elevation levels, depressing the mainline 10 ft. would retain around 5 ft. with which to drain. Because the frontage roads remain at grade, vehicles can use the frontage road if the depressed mainline were to become a problem in a major event. LaDOTD consultants state that the mainline must maintain 20 ft. of clearance where covered to account for vehicle clearances, ventilation, and lighting. Where the mainline is depressed 10 ft., the resulting cover can begin at 10 ft. above grade. Determining the depth of cover fill depends on the use above. Compensating for unknowns, the ECI Team chose 8 ft., resulting in 18 ft. above grade. LaDOTD indicates that the rail must maintain 23.5 ft. clearance where covered.

LaDOTD Concept 6E presents a different mainline trajectory. Given LaDOTD's 55mph design speed standard, the ECI Team confirmed that the road curve radius in the proposed alternative presented at the Charrette would suffice and could be increased to a certain degree without affecting additional properties above.

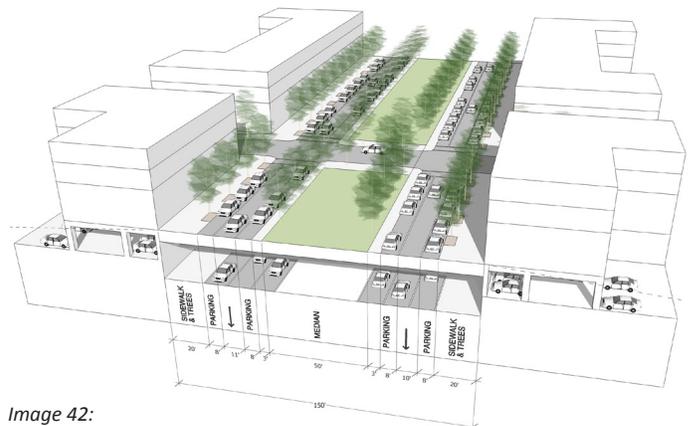


Image 42: Section through middle of semi-depressed mainline - cover above with avenue

LaDOTD Concept 6B shows a retaining wall along the railroad. The ECI Team determined that by keeping the railroad trajectory and incorporating the 6E mainline trajectory, it is possible that cross streets could descend to meet the rail at grade, thus not requiring a retaining wall. Following this logic, the ECI Team determined that streets crossing the mainline cover could also come to flat grade before reaching Cypress St. and the southbound Evangeline Thruway using a 8.1% incline/decline factor over 280 ft., falling below the 8.3% max ADA requirement (Image 42).

Well-designed open space can positively impact an area's safety. Concluding that some series 6 concepts show inactive and potentially unsafe edges, the ECI Team proposed limiting the scale of open spaces and having buildings face open spaces for security. Buildings can work atop the cover, but they need entry at street grade and the high point (Image 43). Underpasses were a concerning topic for emergency responders and semi-depressed options present unique challenges. Preliminary analysis shows that an underpass at Taft St. is a possibility to consider.



Image 43: Depressed Mainline with Cover showing avenue above with seamless connection across into downtown and McComb-Vezey through repurposed Thruway

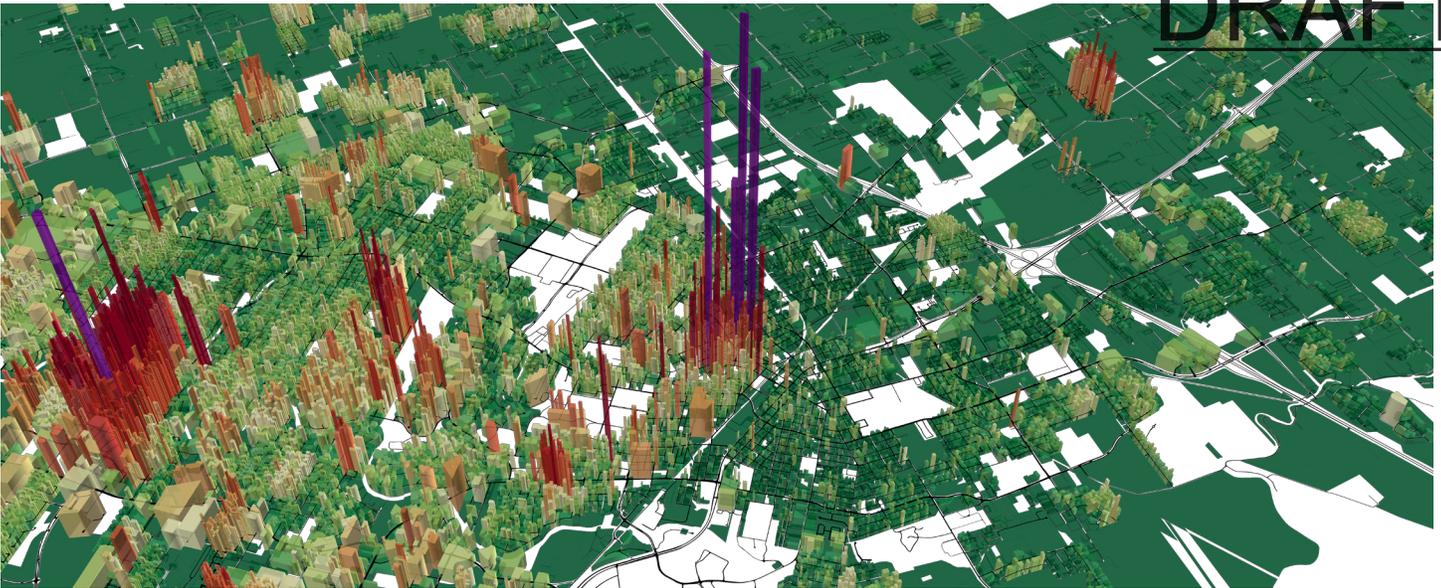


Image 44:
Current Lafayette Property Value Productivity Model showing and comparing the River Ranch development (on the left) and the Downtown core (on the far right peak)

Urban Accounting - Economic Analysis and Projections

A primary goal of the ECI effort is to create strategies that not only speak to community desires, but that are implementable. Economic analysis is critical in vetting and refining priorities and value projections for the proposed overall strategies and neighborhood level concepts. Based on the design concepts stemming from the Charrette, our economic strategy consultants, Urban3, worked to provide background information about the relationship between infrastructure and economics and to quantify the potential outcomes of that relationship (Image 44). The ECI Team presented information about development choices and local infrastructure investments. Findings were shared regarding tax productivity in Lafayette as well as the preliminary results measuring the fiscal return on infrastructure. The goal is to eventually provide the community with baseline economic tools and knowledge with which to approach the I-49 conversation. As designs are refined, further local economic forecasting will provide comparisons for investment implementation.

As concept alternatives demonstrate, infrastructure has a profound influence on development. Development, in turn, is the driving factor behind local fiscal health through efficient tax production. Urban3 performed an “urban accounting” exercise to put the designs into the context of tax production. The key component of this accounting is to divide the tax value by the amount of land consumed allowing us to compare development options more directly. Developable land is a finite resource. By accounting for its consumption on a per acre basis we can draw focus to differences in tax productivity. The analysis emphasizes property tax production because of its importance to the local budget and because it is the most direct impact on infrastructure and development choices.

Effective urban design, planning, and infrastructure improvements can increase land value and spur new development. As land values rise, denser development becomes commercially viable. Denser development in turn provides a significant rise in the

tax production from adjacent land. The study area currently has some suppressed tax values. There are several reasons for this, but some of those reasons include compromised urban structure, lack of accessibility, and under-utilized vacant lots. The low tax value is particularly stark when its proximity to downtown is taken into account. The I-49 Connector project can present an opportunity, through good planning and urban design, to enrich the area and subsequently attract new development. From a value standpoint, the design of this project is critically important due to its potential impact on neighborhood property values and the economic growth of downtown. According to Urban3’s model, downtown Lafayette is the fiscal engine of the parish.

Connector Option Impacts

The urban accounting models forecast future tax production from two connector scenarios: an elevated option (series 4), and a semi-depressed option with a cover (series 6). An elevated freeway would be relatively less productive than the semi-depressed option as its anticipated impact features less overall development which is also less dense (Image 45a). It takes comparatively longer for development in an elevated scheme to “come online” resulting in a potential loss of \$5 million worth of tax production over twenty years. Over time, the preliminary model anticipates that the value of additional public space, connectivity improvements, and incremental development pressure will yield an additional \$10 million in property taxes from today. In contrast, the semi-depressed option model offers more substantial urban development value in less time. Locating the interstate underground and covering it with a mix of public space and structures mitigates its detrimental impacts on new development and actually provides more of a stimulus (Image 45b). Our analysis for the “cover” is based on the Charrette concepts and the intention of the landscape-driven development and aesthetic treatment of the corridor. The level of high quality of design attention paid to the “cover” will have an effect on adjacent development, while lack of critical attention would have an equally adverse impact.

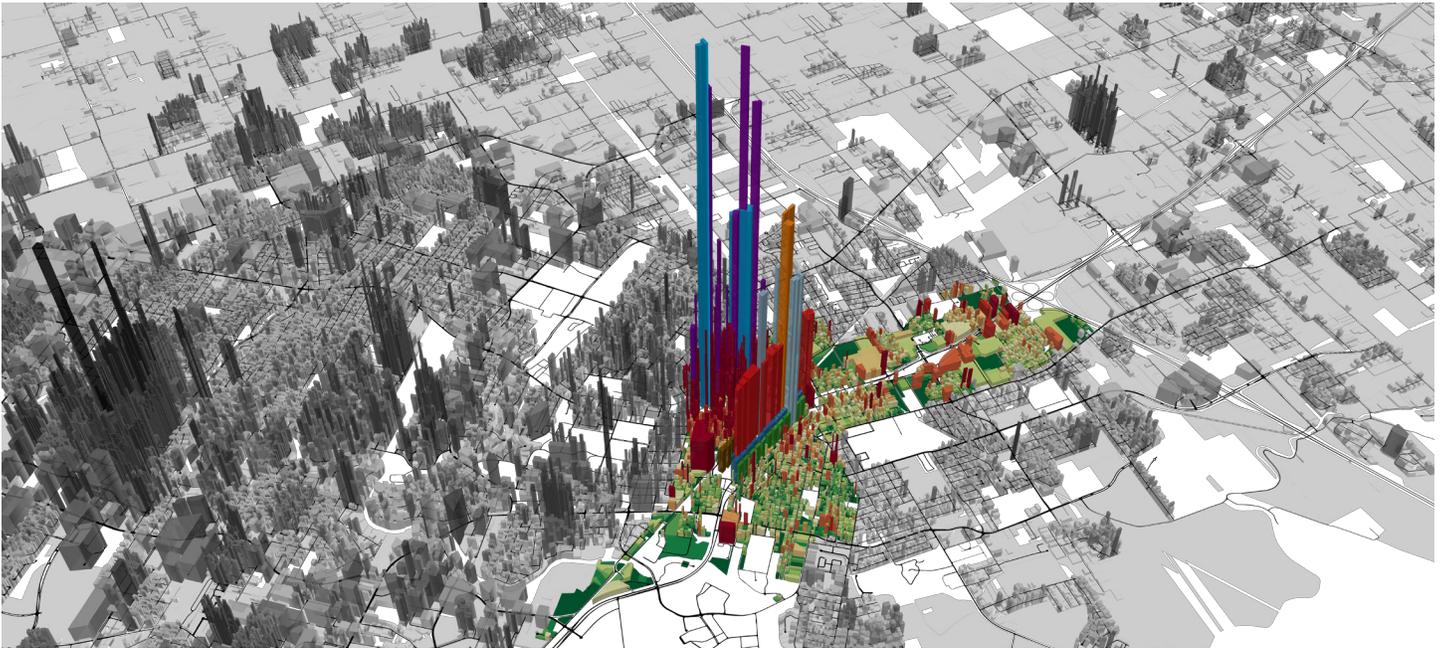


Image 45a: Financial Projection Model - Elevated Mainline with Signature Bridge showing increased value productivity

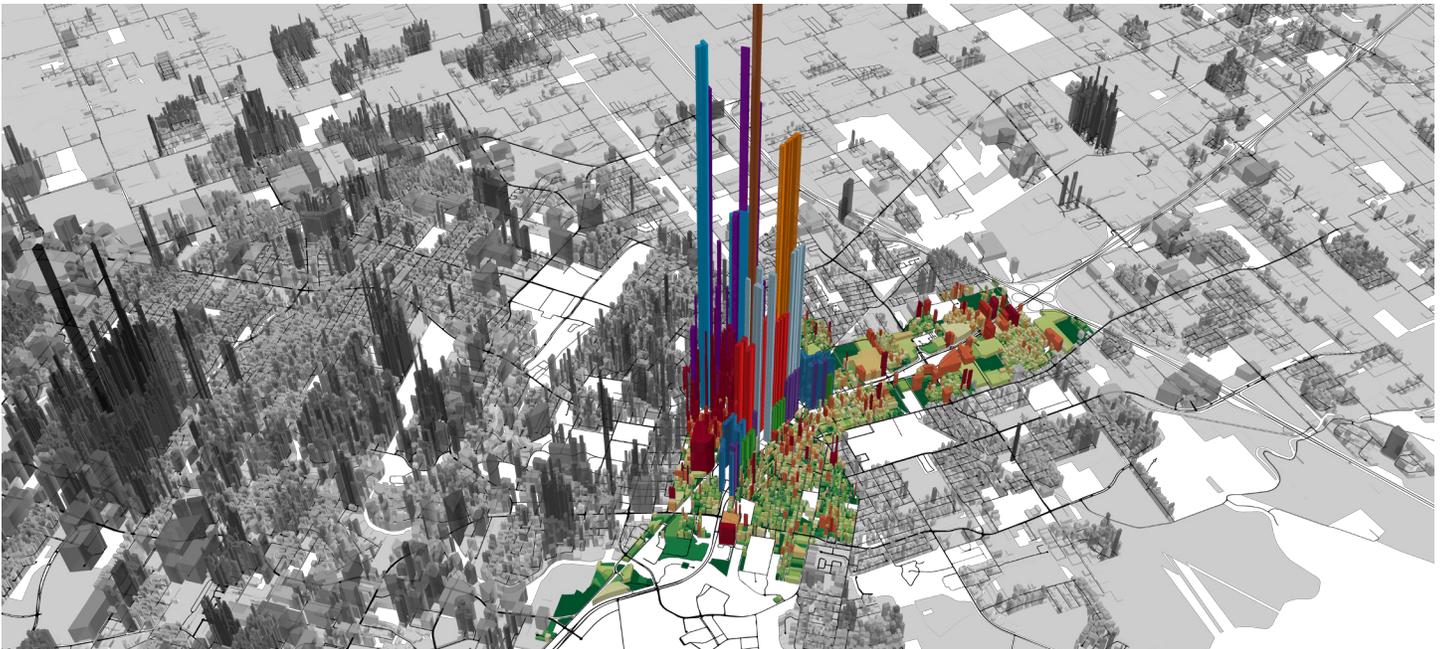


Image 45b: Financial Projection Model - Semi-Depressed Mainline w/ Cover showing significantly higher productivity peaks due to increased land area for development

DRAFT



EVANGELINE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE



Our voice. Our vision.