



BATON **ROUGE** NORTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Plan 2019-2024



618 Harding Blvd. Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70807

Organization

The Baton Rouge North Economic Development District (BRNEDD) is in the Parish of East Baton Rouge of the State of Louisiana. The District was created by Louisiana State Legislative Acts 433 and 528 in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The District is a political subdivision of the state created for developing the area within its boundaries in order to provide for substantial economic activity and employment opportunities. The District is managed by a thirteen-member board of commissioners that are appointed as defined by the legislative acts.

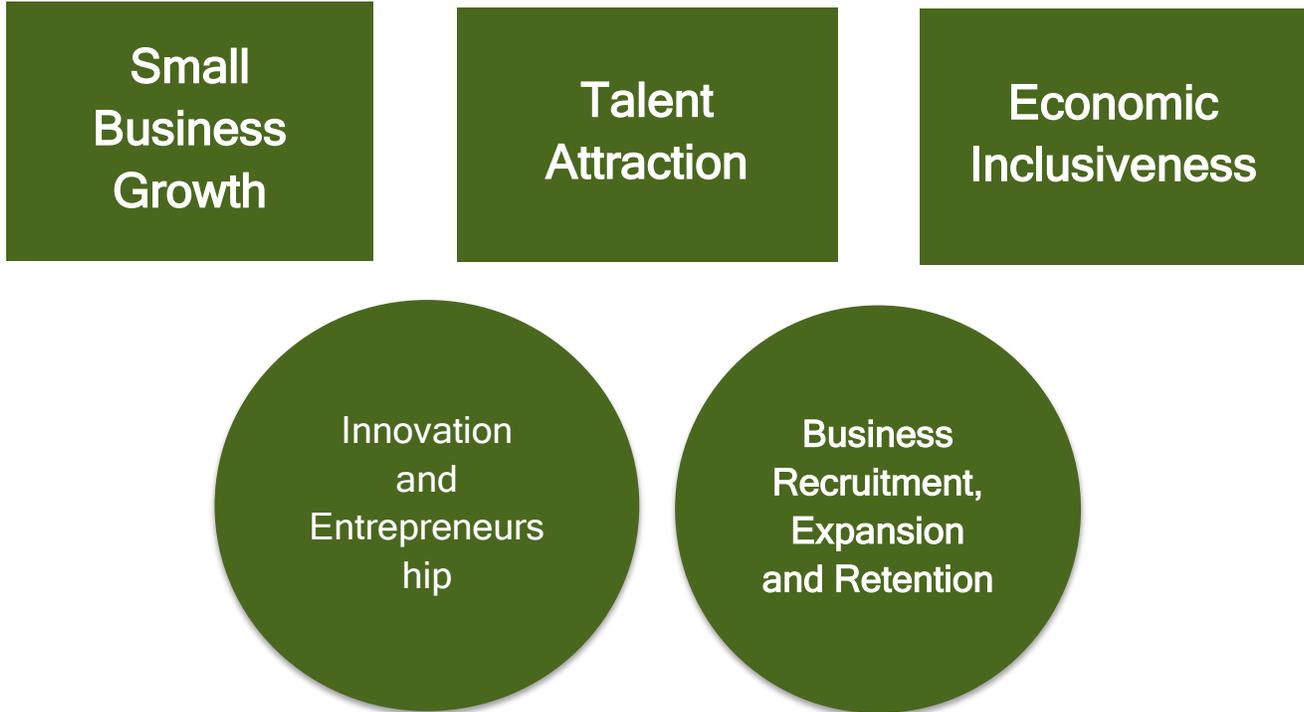
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The BRNEDD Strategic Plan was developed by a Strategic Plan Subcommittee that included representatives from government, higher education, chambers of commerce, nonprofits, and the private sector. These members met or corresponded with the BRNEDD Staff to determine plans, goals and objectives consistent with the Board's mission. The members of this committee will be instrumental in coordinating efforts, sharing data and resources for future programs.

The structure of this Strategic Plan begins with eleven key core goals that simplifies broad actions for any economic development agency. All detail action plans or programs should be consistent with these core economic development strategic core goals.

An initial SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) was introduced to provide an initial review of programs that may need to be prioritized in the near term.

The content of the strategic plan is organized around the five strategic goals:



A refined SWOT analysis was conducted for each category with consultation from a supporting agency that already contributes to an aspect of the economic development cycle. This analysis was an extrapolation of economic and community development problems and solutions that are incorporated within relevant materials from the supporting agency's existing plan in which the District is within.

The Strategic Plan uses the term objective (ends) that contribute to the goals and the action steps (means), which are derived from the specific objectives. The objectives should be actionable and later measurable to ensure that the action or program is effective in accomplishing a specific goal.

The BRNEDD Annual Strategic Plan is a useful road map that will be updated as needed. It offers a framework that should provide focus to the Board and staff. The Strategic Planning process allows collaboration from other agencies to ensure the organization is not working in a silo but acts as hub or center of economic development for North Baton Rouge and as a result contributing to the success of the entire Parish of East Baton Rouge.



Mission Statement

Our mission is to advance economic development in North Baton Rouge that drives investments, foster job creation and cultivates public and private sector partnerships.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the leading economic development and jobs organization, in North Baton Rouge, leveraging our expertise and innovation to advance a sustainable, inclusive and vibrant economy.

District Initiatives

1. Assist in fostering an environment where everyone can thrive in a robust local, state and global economy.
2. Identify and recruit district liaisons who will champion the goals and objectives of the organization.
3. Market the strengths of North Baton Rouge.
4. Work with our regional and state partners in order to build a workforce that plays to our strengths.
5. Support the expansion of the arts.
6. Support the funding of infrastructure, such as streets, roads, and broadband.
7. Advocate the reduction in unnecessary regulation that may hinder business activity.
8. Support our existing primary employers.
9. Business Recruitment, Expansion and Retention

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is a strategic planning exercise that will categorize internal or external factors that are essential to achieve the BRNEDD Vision Statement. These are generally identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that may be considered or prioritized. We, the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District, as a general policy, should strive to maintain our strengths, strengthen our weaknesses, and turn threats into opportunities.



Strengths

Airport

The Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport is one of the District's greatest assets. Airports connect cities to the world; therefore, the airport's relationship to our economy is important because this relationship could have large implications for the future growth of North Baton Rouge, and the entire the Parish and Region.

Talent Attraction

The District has within its proximity higher education anchors such as Southern University, the Baton Rouge Community College and Louisiana State University. The District should maintain a relationship with these anchors to align educational programs to the jobs of the future.

Strong Petrochemical and Manufacturing Company Presence

The District has one of the largest petrochemical operations in North America located in its proximity, employing nearly 5,000 employees.

Mississippi River

One of Louisiana greatest assets and the forgotten asset of North Baton Rouge. There are still deep-water areas along the river in North Baton Rouge that can attract a new industrial business. This means a potential increase in jobs for the residents in the district and region.





Weaknesses

Budget

The District's only source of dedicated funding is a 2% hotel/motel tax. This is estimated to generate a projected annual revenue stream of \$200,000. This is insufficient to accomplish the goals or the mission of the District.

Crime

Whether it is a reality or a perception, crime eludes to a sign of past disinvestment and current poverty. In some cases, crime is a result of lack of quality job opportunities. Some studies suggest that effective education reduces crime in communities in the long term.

Blight

Blight is a major impediment to economic development within the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District and the Parish. It is estimated that over 55 percent of the East Baton Rouge Parish's blighted properties is within the District's boundaries.

Opportunity

Baton Rouge Zoo

If maintained at a high quality will be a major economic driver because tourism dollars introduce new dollars to the surrounding area instead of recirculated dollars. The District should understand the economic impact of an improved zoo to take advantage of potential opportunities in or around the existing site.

Networking and Collaboration

Create Networking opportunities and build collaborative environments amongst Contractors, Economic Development Agencies, Community Leaders, and Elected Officials.

Howell Place

Howell Place is a 200-acre tract of North Baton Rouge land that has been transformed from unused acreage to a multi-use commercial land industrial park.



Threats

Flood of 2016

The Flood of 2016 was a tragic event that affected a large swath of the District. Despite the tragedy, the event may be an opportunity to improve some of our existing housing stock and commercial structures. This could threaten those residents who are on fixed income and desire to age in place within their community. The cost associated with renovations can deter citizens to return which also increases blight.

Access to Capital Funding

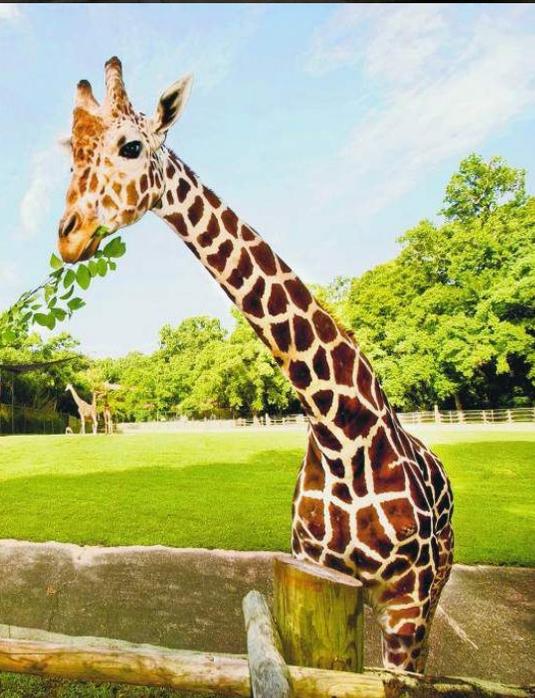
The lack of access to capital often presents a crippling effect on businesses. Those businesses who are successfully winning bids on contracts are having difficulty waiting 30+ days to receive payment for the work their business provided and cover cost to operate while waiting on payment. Bonding is also a factor that hinders small businesses from participating in the purchasing and procurement process.

Cortana Mall

The mall will need a reuse or repurpose as it begins to continue to lose stores and other non-traditional tenants who came after the mall began to decline. We will need to work on identifying a firm that specializes in repurposing malls after they close. This development is huge, and all the parcels are not solely owned by one owner.



Goals and Objectives



Small Business Growth



Policy Initiative: Attract, recruit, retain and enhance investment and businesses that create new job opportunities.

SWOT Analysis:

The District is surrounded by some major employers such as Exxon Mobile and Southern University. Addition to some major employers, the District is comprised of many small businesses. There is a plethora of resources in regional ecosystem that may impact entrepreneurs within the District. The entrepreneurs within our District may be need access to capital or the capacity to obtain such capital in order to expand. The BRNEDD will work with stakeholders within the community to give small businesses a seat at the “economic development table”, empowering these businesses to secure contracts, grow their staff and develop the employment pool within the district which can lead to an increase in disposable income and a renaissance in our neighborhoods.

Supporting Agencies:

Louisiana Economic Development, SUBR Small Business Development Center, Metromorphosis, Urban League of Baton Rouge, SU College of Business, Southern University (SUBR), Southern University Law Center, the North Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce and EBRP School Board

- 1.2 Objective** Build partnerships with Southern University (SUBR), SUBR Small Business Development Center, the North Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce and Louisiana Economic Development (LED), financial institutions and etc.
- 1.2 Objective** Provide resources for small business owners to obtain technical assistance, learning how to properly bid on and securing contracts, enhance marketing & branding, apply for SBIR or other loans, increase workforce, and improve facilities.
- 1.2 Objective** Celebrate small businesses for their unique contributions to our communities by hosting groundbreaking and ribbon cuttings.
- 1.2 Objective** BRNEDD should leverage public-private partnerships to leverage funding, the assets and expertise to create jobs, attract businesses, and drive revitalization efforts.
- 1.4.1. Action Item** In partnership with Southern University EDA Center for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development Center, the North Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce and Louisiana Department of Economic Department (LED) organize and provide programs and services to assist the, retired, laid-off and young residents of the District in becoming successful enterprisers.
- 1.4.2. Action Item** *Develop key relationships with local businesses and public organizations such as ExxonMobil, the Baton Rouge Metro Airport, BREC and Southern University to participate in projects that facilitate economic growth through business activity.*
- 1.2 Objective** BRNEDD as a public entity should identify private partners and projects that act as catalysts for civic and social infrastructure.
- 1.5.1. Action Plan** *BRNEDD should create an action plan to engage public and private organizations to cultivate an economic ecosystem for small business, innovation, and entrepreneurship within the District, to include*
- 1.5.2. Action Item** Comprehensive assessments and appraisal of community assets and systems,
- 1.5.3. Action Item** *Strategic Planning Sessions to identify areas of growth, opportunity, and improvement, and*
- 1.5.4. Action Item** *Development of implementation strategies and specific action plans for each area of improvement and growth.*
- 1.2 Objective** Partner with Southern University EDA University Center for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center and other agencies to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship and provide support for smaller local businesses.
- 1.6.1. Action Item** BRNEDD should create a program that monitors the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem and how it impacts the businesses within the District.
- 1.6.2. Action Item** Business retention programs should be based on an inventory of existing business and regular meetings with those businesses.
- 1.6.3. Action Item** In collaboration with the Southern University's EDA University Center for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship develop a mentoring program for local entrepreneurs.
- 1.6.4. Action Item** BRNEDD should act as a resource center for startups and existing businesses looking to expand within North Baton Rouge.
- 1.6.5. Action Item** Promote awareness of existing businesses to Baton Rouge North residents.
- 1.2 Objective** Partner with local financial institutions that are willing to be a source of funds for entrepreneurs seeking working capital.

- 1.7.1. Action Item** the BRNEDD should create a data base of banking institutions willing to expand capital access in the District.
- 1.7.2. Action Plan** the BRNEDD should develop a subcommittee of the Program Committee of the Board which will meet regularly to how we can help develop and guide capital programs to the needed areas of the District.
- 1.7.3. Action Item** The data should be divided into two sectors commercial lending and residential lending. Both have different requirements and capital levels need to justify success. Commercial lending is in most cases, is lending for specific projects. Residential lending focuses on individuals seeking a home purchase.
- 1.7.4. Action Item** Work with other community partners to insure client education and are aligned with that of the financial institutions. Identify partners that oversees financial education for several lenders for residential home purchase.



Talent Attraction



Policy Initiative: Partner with educational institutions in the District to prepare young people for greater employment workforce opportunities.

SWOT Analysis:

Education is pivotal in providing workforce training necessary for the growth of our community's economy which should strengthen the fiscal health of the entire Parish. BRNEDD, is committed to co-creating ladders of opportunity to sustain a qualified workforce for Baton Rouge's economic growth, especially the northern portion of the city. As a policy, BRNEDD should align the future workforce with the jobs of the future. BRNEDD should assist in the coordination with the schools within our district to align workforce development efforts to match the skills needed by target industries.

BRNEDD has a strength in workforce development because of its proximity to major higher education anchors such as Southern University, Baton Rouge Community College, Louisiana State University and multiple trade schools graduating thousands of students every year providing a foundation for research, innovation and workforce development. A weakness may be the quality of our public K-12 school system. The Parish is an employment center for the metropolitan region. The District is the home of a stable industrial base that offers stable employment. Generally, the Capital Region has shown improvements for high-demand occupations for which there were potential shortfalls, and the workforce pipeline for most occupations is robust. Over the next year, the largest projected workforce demand is for electricians, registered nurses, computer coders and carpenters. Over the last year, the occupations for which the most trainings have been completed are registered nursing, welding, accounting, and heavy

truck driving. Regional businesses have continued to forge public-private partnerships with local institutions for skilled craft and customized trainings. Private employers must continue to fund and engage in programs to encourage those looking to enter the skilled craft workforce to hone their soft skills.

The Capital Region still has challenges ahead surrounding the local workforce pipeline. Because significant shortfall gaps occur in occupations within industries that, overall, have a sufficient number of completers indicates that an increased effort in terms of guiding students into these shortfall occupations is needed. While occupations like welding and medical assistance experienced a surplus, occupations such as pipefitting and nursing assistants within their respective industries experience significant shortfalls, despite relatively similar median salaries. It is incumbent on training institutions, employers, and others in the community to point this need out to individuals considering careers in these industries.

The EBR Schools' Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) at Ardendale will open its doors this year to students. This half-day program, open to 11th and 12th grade students from all high schools in the EBR System, will offer training for Jump Start pathways in healthcare, IT/software development, skilled trades and manufacturing. Educational institutions must continue to strive to provide meaningful opportunities for student engagement in schools and workplace environments and area businesses need to better partner with local education/workforce systems in the region to ensure a robust and well-trained workforce pipeline.

The District has an employee to residential population ratio of 44 per 100 residents. The ratio is used to evaluate the ability of the economy to create jobs. A ratio below 50 percent is considered low. In comparison the Parish has an employee to residential population of 62 per 100 residents. The unemployment rate for the Parish is 4.2% while the District has an unemployment rate of 8.3%.

Supporting Agencies: Southern University, Baton Rouge Community College, Louisiana State University and multiple trade schools Louisiana, EBRP School Board, Workforce Commission, Urban League of Baton Rouge, SU College of Business and Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce.

2.1 Objective Foster relationships with Southern University, Baton Rouge Community College, and LSU and area high schools to establish a long-term collaborative program for improving education and career training programs in the District.

2.1.1. Action Item Work with local businesses and public organizations to establish a robust summer programs focused on 9-12th grade students.

2.2 Objective BRNEDD and its partners shall address the training needs for individuals that reside within the District with emphasis on the unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers aiming to improve their careers through advanced training in the high growth markets of manufacturing and industrial sectors.

2.2.1 Action Plans: The BRNEDD should advocate and help duplicate successful programs like the North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative. This program provides no-cost, fast-tracked training to qualified participants from the North Baton Rouge area.

2.2.1.1 Action Items: The BRNEDD should focus on assisting small business owner gain access to additional worker training program. In many cases some of the classes are at a small or nominal fee to the participant.

2.2.1.2 Action Item: Many business owners in North Baton Rouge could use training themselves to improve their personal productivity and that of their workers also. Some of this training could be coordinated through the SU SBDC and the SU College of Business.

2.3 Objective Lead and collaborate with developing sector strategies for workforce development in targeted industry clusters.

2.4 Objective Identify how we can connect citizens within the district who are either under-, and unemployed workers seeking jobs in high-demand industries in partnership with post-secondary institutions and regional employers.

2.5 Objective Engage consistently with post-secondary education institutions and employers to ensure skill development remains adaptive to industry needs.

2.6 Objective Convene workforce development stakeholders to form a differentiated strategy in encouraging citizens to participate in credential attainment and job readiness.



Economic Inclusiveness



Policy Initiative: Create an environment whereby BRNEDD can foster opportunities for an increase in the earning potential of households and businesses within our district.

SWOT Analysis: Inclusive economic growth focuses on long-term economic sustainability by investing in increased productivity for employers and workers, expanding access to opportunities that develop demand-driven, future-oriented skills, leveraging distinctive and diverse community-based assets and inspiring creative collaboration among public and private partners, education institutions, foundations and non-profits to improve quality of life for all North Baton Rouge's citizens.

Higher incomes amongst those residing in the district can be seen as an indicator for economic inclusiveness. An increase in disposable income is the overarching goal and pivotal transition to the other aspects of economic inclusiveness. The estimated median household income for the households within the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District is \$28,4759 compared to \$47, 950 of the households within the entire Parish of East Baton Rouge or \$56,124 of all United State households.

Another indicator of Economic Inclusiveness is home ownership and the value of that home. Currently, 38.2% of the 36,130 housing units in the area are owner occupied; 48.3%, renter occupied; and 13.5% are vacant.

Currently, in the U.S., 55.6% of the housing units in the area are owner occupied; 33.1% are renter occupied; and 11.3% are vacant. In 2010, there were 35,733 housing units in the area - 44.5% owner occupied, 45.3% renter occupied, and 10.2% vacant. The annual rate of change in housing units since 2010 is 0.49%. The current median home value in the area is \$101, 855, compared to a median home value of 189, 794 for the Parish.

Supporting Agencies: Louisiana Economic Development, Louisiana Research Park Corp., LSU Business Incubator, SUBR Small Business Development Center, CAFA, Federal Reserve, CAUW, Capital Region

Planning Commission, Capital Area United Way, Southern University College of Business, Southern University Law Center, SU Innovation Center.

- 3.1 Objective** Identify companies and income producing trades with the highest potential for growth, training, and income upward mobility.
- 3.1.1 Action Item** Partner with agencies that provide personal financial education as a key to the sustainability of income for citizens of the District. Programs that provide budgeting, investing, legal matters (wills) and income/ asset protection are areas many American have poor education in these areas.
- 3.1.2 Action Item:** Work directly with community partners like the United Way, Mid-City Development, SU College of Business EDA and Insurance Institute to develop classes for the public on personal finance.
- 3.2 Objective** Assist small businesses with the need to identify and address barriers for women-, minority-, and disadvantaged business enterprises.
- 3.3 Objective** Clearly define a cluster-based strategy to target retention and recruitment using data, aligning the innovation economy with anchor industries. This requires partnerships and collaborations with LED and BRAC.
- 3.4 Objective** Coordinate a list of businesses in North Baton Rouge and identify the services and products they offer. Work to disseminate this list with large industry, firms and prime contractors.
- 3.5 Objective** Work to find avenues to secure opportunities for Prime and Sub Contractors to build mutual beneficial relationships.
- 3.6 Objective** We should assist existing agencies that offer credit repair, homebuying counseling, foreclosure counseling, financial education, risk management, wealth management, and estate or succession planning.
- 3.7 Objective** We should assist existing agencies that offer credit repair, homebuying counseling, foreclosure counseling, financial education, risk management, wealth management, and estate or succession planning.
- 3.7.1 Action Item** the District will act as a conduit for the various organizations which provide both public and private sector financial education.
- 3.7.2 Action Item** the District will work with institutions like schools, religious institutions and nonprofits to market the need for proper financial education for the building of wealth and assets.
- 3.7.3 Action Item** the District should have a target program with our community partners that will help business owners evaluate their current business practice and develop a succession plan in case the unexpected happens.
- 3.8 Objective** We should assist Capital Area Finance Authority with highlighting their programs that assist qualified contractors with interim construction financing and home purchasing financing through one of their mortgage loan programs such as the Capital Advantage Program, Purchase Advantaged Powered.
- 3.8.1 Action Item:** The District should work with financial institutions within our area to ensure that they meet their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) obligations. The CRA was enacted to prevent and encourage financial institutions to help meet the credit needs of low and moderate-income neighborhoods.

Innovation on Entrepreneurship



Policy Initiative: Increase the number of entrepreneurs we have in the northern portion of the city. Fostering opportunities for Innovation and entrepreneurship yields opportunities that can be used to improve our homes, neighborhoods, create new businesses or support existing businesses by the creation for solutions to their problems with current technology and software.

SWOT Analysis: At a time when policy makers are pooling efforts to restore growth and overcome the global economic and financial crisis, specific attention has been focused on innovative entrepreneurship, as it can play an important role in contributing to economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction, and can help address key social challenges.

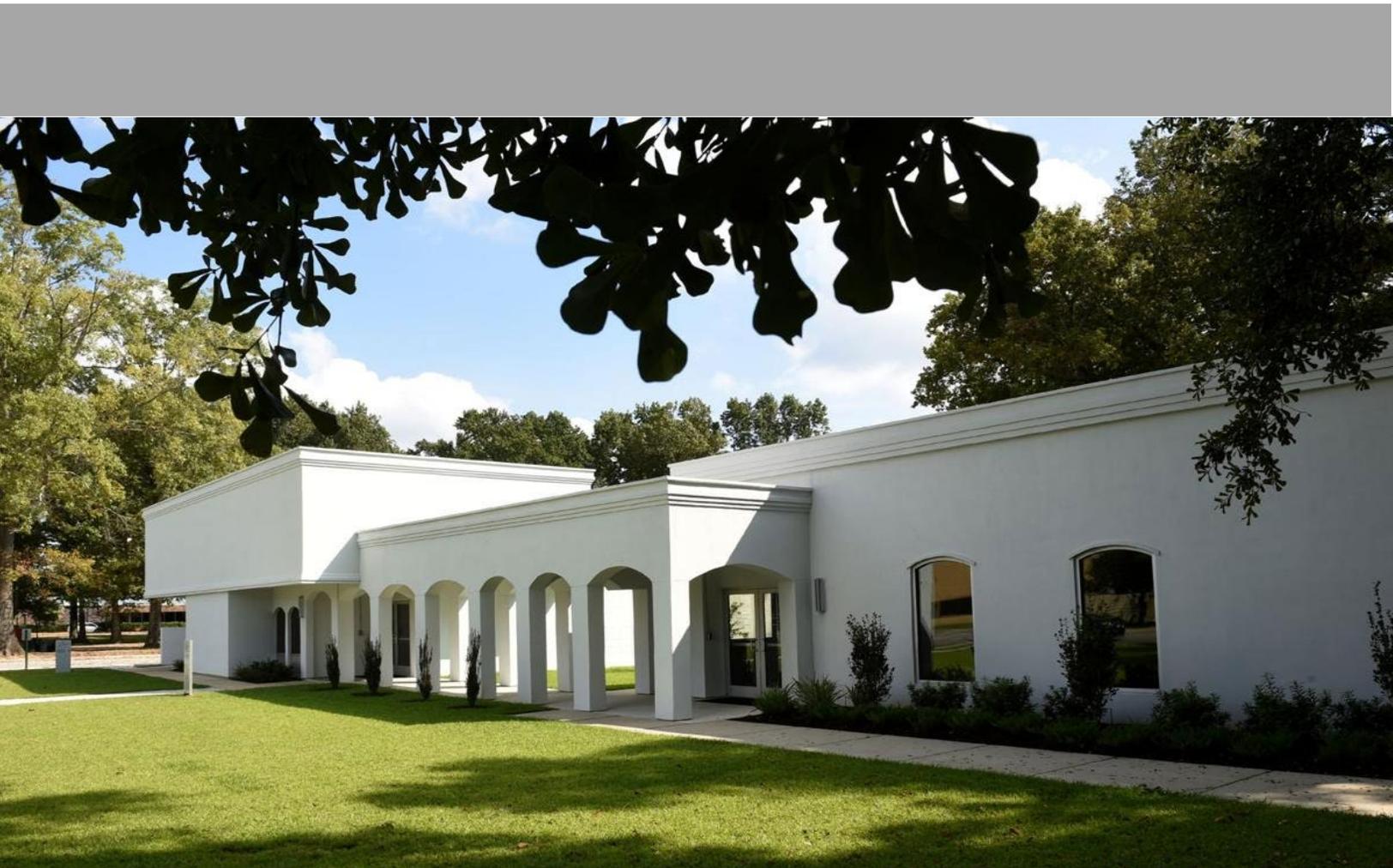
The BRNEDD, will work closely with entrepreneurs along with the other supporting agencies, to catalyze investment in their growth, because Baton Rouge is a city in search of opportunity for its citizens. This will be intentional about investing our time and talents in opportunities to assist companies with identifying the role they should play in creating innovation and new ideas to create solutions to our problems and create long- term economic prosperity.

There is a study underway now regarding the entrepreneurial environment in the Greater Baton Rouge Area. This study is reviewing the role both the Louisiana Research Park and Louisiana State University Small Business Incubator plays a role in the development of entrepreneurialism in the Capital Region. BRNEDD, should be looking for ways to partner with the Research Park and add value to the programming that they provide for the region. The Research Park is an asset in our district as well.

Supporting Agencies: Louisiana Economic Development, Louisiana Research Park Corp., LSU Business Incubator, Southern University College of Business, SU Innovation Center, SU College of

Business, Southern University (SUBR), SUBR Small Business Development Center, Southern University Law Center, Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce

- 4.1 Objective** Determine the needs within the existing business base and ensure those needs are met.
- 4.2 Objective** Attract early stage companies to the region and target companies whose owners have ties to the community.
- 4.3 Objective** We will monitor and analyze private and public-sector investment trends and models designed to stimulate commercialization of new technology products and services as new sources of economic prosperity. In collaboration with regional and state leaders, we will promote strategies that align with our region's aspirations to lead the knowledge-based economy.
- 4.4 Objective** Asset-based business enterprise. Retain, expand and diversify business enterprise that capitalizes on the region's natural, cultural, and economic assets.
- 4.5 Objective** Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Position the BRNEDD district as an attractive and supportive place for creative and entrepreneurial people.



Business Recruitment & Expansion



Policy Initiative: The BRNEDD, will expand existing industries and recruit cluster-based targets in partnership, to assist in job growth and more opportunities for our district residents. We will also create open communication with all our businesses located in the area especially our hoteliers.

SWOT Analysis: Business Recruitment, Expansion and Retention program signifies to a company that the economic development organization recognizes that the districts most important attractor of future businesses are those businesses already invested and the likelihood of seeing new job opportunities come from those businesses already in our community. Increase in our attention towards their success ensures our residence within the district will have an opportunity to access jobs and possible higher wages. It can be measured qualitatively or quantitatively and can be reflected in our community's access to disposable income. An increase in disposable income attract the likelihood of new businesses more importantly a grocery store.

Supporting Agencies: Louisiana Economic Development, Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce and SUBR Small Business Development Center

- 5.1 Objective** Develop Business Visitation Program: The most significant enhancement to a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program for the district would be the prioritization of visits with all North Baton Rouge businesses on some regular basis, optimistically visiting all businesses within a 3-year cycle.
- 5.1.1 Action Item** Include all businesses in the rotation: Corporate, retail, restaurants, industry and service.
 - 5.1.2 Action Item** Visit all businesses within a 3-year cycle.
 - 5.1.3 Action Item** Verify accuracy of business data and contact information.
 - 5.1.4 Action Item** Identify issues of importance to businesses, obstacles to their success, and opportunities for assistance.
- 5.2 Objective** Work with LED and BRAC on BRE initiatives within the district. Identify opportunities to assist industries within the district that could provide solutions to problems as well encourage growth.
- 5.3 Objective** Increase internal capacity to assist with cluster-based strategy to define lines of partnership with economic development stakeholders.
- 5.4 Objective** Strengthen internal expertise by defining lanes of ownership among the BRNEDD team and developing internal project management processes and metrics.
- 5.5 Objective** Implement systems and structures within the office to assist and engage the economic development agencies within the state and region which can potentially generate key leads in the city and beyond.
- 5.6 Objective** Focus on preparedness by engaging real estate developers and our Economic Development partnerships to create a pipeline that may steadily supply data on workforce, site locations, and cluster-based activity.

The Citizens of North Baton Rouge needed an avenue to gain better control of the future of the area, thus, the Development of the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District. While other sections of the City-Parish such as Downtown had the Downtown Development District, North Baton Rouge did not have a specific advocate focused strictly on the future economics of North Baton Rouge.

This plan serves as a catalyst for a very complex process which identifies long standing issues which have hampered economically the improvement of North Baton Rouge. One of the clear indicators for change was the vote of support given to this young organization before we had even proven ourselves to be a viable agency for change. This plan will serve as a guideline for the Board and Staff to accomplish attainable goals and measurable outcomes.

The model used in this plan will not solve all the issues plaguing North Baton Rouge but through the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District we will focus attention and bridge the gap of groups which have operated in silos for many years. Together with our community partners will help the District on the journey to success thereby improving the entire Parish of East Baton Rouge.

