



St. James Parish, LA

Planning for Economic and Fiscal Health + Fiscal Impact Analysis Report and Suggested Next Steps

To: Michelle Octave, Chief Administrative Officer

From: John Robert Smith, Smart Growth America
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Executive Summary

Pursuant to our technical assistance award with St. James Parish, this Memorandum constitutes Smart Growth America's final report summarizing the recent *Planning for Fiscal and Economic Health* workshop, and suggesting possible [Next Steps](#) the city and region could take to craft a vision for the St. James Parish's future development.

Alex Hutchinson and John Robert Smith, representing Smart Growth America (SGA), met with regional leaders and residents on February 1 and 2, 2017 to provide assistance via the *Planning for Fiscal and Economic Health* tool, supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development.

Following a productive discussion with various stakeholders — including residents, advocates, business owners and elected officials — the following [Next Steps](#) are recommended:

- 1. Re-envision the Main Street and Lutchter Avenue corridors.**
- 2. Seek state and federal tax credits for restoration and reuse of historic properties.**
- 3. Improve segments of accessibility along River Road**
- 4. Develop marketing opportunities and an action plan for entertainment, culture and history**

5. **Provide opportunities for tourists visiting the Parish to explore communities located beyond the historic plantations.**
6. **Revise and update the Parish's housing assessment and comprehensive plans on a regular basis.**
7. **Leverage housing and the adjudication process (disposition process)**
8. **Seek opportunities to redevelop additional properties into senior and affordable housing**
9. **Develop an economic development organization**
10. **Work with existing and potential broadband Internet providers to increase the availability and reliability of Internet access**
11. **Create a marketing campaign for St. James Parish and liaise with the Parish's business community**

Need for assistance

St. James Parish sought outside guidance to address economic and population challenges that have been readily documented by academic study. Input from SGA through the *Planning for Economic and Fiscal Health* technical assistance tool can guide the community into sustainable prosperity by taking advantage of assets already at hand including the Mississippi River, existing tourism industry in the parish based on its historical plantation culture, well defined language and food steeped in cajun culture, designation by the Louisiana legislature as the Perique tobacco capital of the world, and the Bonfires on the Levee event.

Workshop Review

The SGA team began work in St. James Parish with a tour of the parish, including the town centers of Gramercy, Lutcher, and Vacherie.

The first day concluded with a public presentation, introducing some of the basic concepts of our work including a primer on the varying economic impacts of different development patterns. The presentation established a common language and set of ideas necessary for addressing St. James Parish's goals for the workshop.

Day two featured our long-form workshop. Invited participants gathered for a full day of presentations and breakout sessions which tackled some of the economic issues raised by St. James Parish's aid application in greater detail.

Attending leaders from regional agencies included:

- Glen Millet, St. James Parish Planning Commission
- Anna Choudhuri, South Central Planning and Development Commission
- Linda Prudhomme, Port of South Louisiana
- Steve Nosacka, Mayor of Gramercy, Louisiana

- Rachel Becnel, Jeremy Martin, and Mary Ellen Pratt, St. James Parish Hospital
- Michelle Octave and D’Laun Oubre, St. James Parish Government
- Timmy Roussel, St. James Parish President
- Eva Coleman, Area Agency on Aging Board
- Milton Cayette, Jr., Council on Aging Board Chair
- Ryan Benton and Haley Blakeman, Center for Planning Excellence (public presentation only)

A sense of ambition about St. James Parish’s future emerged from brainstorming sessions. Participants want to see St. James Parish develop in a way that offers its young people a real opportunity to find a meaningful job in the parish and raise a family there. This will continue the generational attachment of many families to St. James Parish.

Overall, participants indicated optimism and opportunity for achieving a Parish more amenable to the changes in national demographic patterns (see sections below) that reward walkable, active and compact town centers with better growth and greater prosperity.

The intent of these workshops is neither for Smart Growth America to create a plan nor bind the communities to any particular course of action, but to assist ongoing regional efforts to create a more vibrant, successful region, consistent with the goals of their envisioned plans.

The built environment and fiscal and economic health

Communities around the nation are always concerned about their fiscal and economic health. This is especially true of small towns and rural regions.

By *fiscal* health, we mean a local government’s bottom line: Does the life cycle cost of a project’s investment—upfront infrastructure, ongoing service provision and eventual repair and maintenance—cost more than what it produces in tax revenue?

By *economic* health, we mean the general economic well-being of the community and its region: How does new investment and development add to or detract from the creation of economic competitiveness, fiscal efficiency and sustainability, jobs, jobs access, retention of local youth, cultural identity and wealth?

In approaching these questions in the St. James Parish region, as in any part of the country today, it is important to bear three trends in mind:

Our nation’s demographics are changing in a way that profoundly affects the housing market in large cities and rural areas alike.

Demographic trends are moving the housing market strongly away from conventional suburban

housing.¹ That presents a significant opportunity for rural communities to compete for new growth. The two biggest demographic groups in the nation—retiring Baby Boomers and Millennials (18-39 year-olds) — both express strong preferences for a more walkable, urban/village lifestyle.

Data tell us that ten percent of all city-dwelling Americans would prefer to live in rural locales if those places were walkable, connected to the larger region and possessed a strong sense of character and place. That represents a pool of 26 million potential transplants that St. James Parish could compete to attract. Indeed, forty percent of Millennials prefer to live in rural places, provided those places have a vibrant rural fabric. The vast majority of net new households formed have no children at home, and most of them are one- and two-person households, which are much more likely to prefer a walking lifestyle.² These trends depart from those experienced in the latter half of the 20th century.

The formula for economic growth is changing.

Business growth used to be driven by large corporations that operated in a fashion that was both private in ownership structure and linear in manufacturing and production. In the past, new research breakthroughs occurred in sealed research laboratories controlled by the companies that owned them. Manufacturing and other business processes occurred in assembly-line situations, with little interaction across or inside industries. These conditions led to communities that featured large, sealed-off campuses and tended to be linear in their arrangements.

Today, business growth is driven by collaboration among many types of entities — private companies, research institutions, universities, and others — that must interact frequently and work together creatively. This trend requires cities and communities that encourage interaction and collaboration — the opposite of the older model described above. How communities are designed directly impacts their ability to create interactive and collaborative environments.

¹ See; “The Changing Shape of American Cities,” Luke J. Juday, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, March 2015.

“Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter,” William H. Frey, Brookings Institution, State of Metropolitan America Series, June 29, 2012.

² “Suburbs Try to Prevent an Exodus as Young Adults Move to Cities and Stay,” Joseph Berger, New York Times, April 16, 2014 (on-line at, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/nyregion/suburbs-try-to-hold-onto-young-adults-as-exodus-to-cities-appears-to-grow.html?_r=0.)

“See ya, suburbs: More want to live in the big city,” Greg Toppo and Paul Overberg, USA TODAY, March 27, 2014.

“Why urban demographers are right about the trend toward downtowns and walkable suburbs,” Kaid Benfield, bettercities.net, February 28, 2014.

“NAR 2013 Community Preference Survey: Americans Prefer to Live in Mixed-Use, Walkable Communities,” National Association of Realtors, November 1, 2013.

Most significantly, the innovation economy, as it is sometimes called, depends heavily on skilled workers. The companies that are driving innovation are pursuing highly educated talent, especially among Millennials. Increasingly, companies find it necessary to locate in places that their target workforce wants to live in. Increasingly, that means walkable communities. **People on the move are looking to relocate to places with a high quality of life. In fact, they are willing to sacrifice salary for location. High quality of life is defined more and more by the character of the town center than by the size of a front yard or square footage of a home.**

Similarly, the market for retail is changing. Suburban shopping malls and retail centers that thrived for decades are struggling as a result of oversupply and a shift in shopping preferences. With online buying playing a bigger role for consumers (especially for bargain hunters), many are looking for a more authentic experience when they shop in person. Consumers are demonstrating strong preferences for shopping locally at unique establishments that offer handcrafted, regional products. They prefer this experience to be a short distance from their homes and offices and within a comfortably walkable town center. This is bringing new value to traditional walkable main streets. St. James Parish and its neighboring communities, including the Gramercy-Lutcher Main Street and Lutcher Avenue, are well-suited to taking advantage of this shift in consumer choice.

Sprawling development patterns are making it more difficult for local governments to balance their budgets.

Development patterns that sprawl outward from town center require extensive investments in capital infrastructure and ongoing service delivery. Sprawling development requires more infrastructure to serve relatively few people and requires service providers such as firefighters and school buses to travel farther. More compact development patterns reduce both life-cycle infrastructure costs and operating costs.³

A 2013 study by Smart Growth America, *Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of the Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development*⁴, concluded that, compared to conventional suburban development, smart growth patterns can achieve savings of one-third or more in upfront infrastructure cost, and 10% annually in ongoing operating expenses. Smart growth development patterns can generate up to ten times more revenue on a per-acre basis.

More recently, SGA's *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown*⁵

³ For more information, see: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/research/the-fiscal-implications-of-development-patterns/>

⁴ The full report can be downloaded at <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/building-better-budgets>.

⁵ The report is available for download from <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why->

examines the characteristics, motives, and preferences of companies that have either relocated, opened new offices, or expanded into walkable downtowns between 2010 and 2015. Smart Growth America partnered with global real estate advisors Cushman & Wakefield to identify nearly 500 companies that have made such a move in the past five years. Of those, we interviewed representatives from more than 40 companies to gain a better understanding of this emerging trend. These companies' new locations are in areas that are dramatically more walkable than previous sites. The average Walk Score of the companies' previous locations was 52; the average Walk Score of the new locations is 88. Similarly, Transit Scores grew from an average of 52 to 79 and Bike Scores bumped from an average of 66 to 78.

This trend is visible across the country, in big cities and small ones alike and should be a factor in the economic development strategy of all communities, including St. James Parish.

Note: *Not all of these trends will be completely relevant in every situation. Rural communities are more reliant on private automobile ownership, and transit is often less feasible in these situations. But it is important to bear all three in mind in considering the fiscal and economic health of any community.*

Participant viewpoints

Attendees singled out a need for economic development and revitalization of existing corridors in order to attract new business to the city and keep existing residents in the parish. The brainstorming session identified a number of strategies that local officials might consider for accomplishing these goals.

The participants suggested the following ideas:

- Tourism encompassing the area's unique history, food and culture
- Re-envisioning Lutcher Avenue and Main Street
- Strategic planning to forge public-private partnerships
- Marketing and branding campaign
- Create unique community activities such as "Live After 5"
- Create infrastructure to promote growth
- Cooperative businesses
- Increase use of social media to promote the region

The community's typical development pattern has scattered retail and other necessities such as grocery stores and hospitals, forcing residents to rely on cars daily if these amenities exist in the Parish at all.

Participants expressed interest in inviting more efficient and compact development around the city and foster a vibrant and engaging sense of identity. They identified the following actions

needed to make each of their plans more successful, the obstacles in place, and the additional opportunities implementation would create.

Actions for Success

- Sustainable growth in population and economy over 20 years
- Programmed cultural events in the community celebrating its culture and history
- All segments of the community feel that their issues are heard by local leaders

Obstacles

- Young people leave the community for better opportunities elsewhere
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of educational opportunities to train people for available or potential new types of jobs that the community might attract
- Better and more accessible schools, retail, and recreational opportunities in neighboring Assumption Parish
- Lack of cohesive community vision
- Perception that there are insufficient opportunities for all segments of the community to be heard in the long-term visioning and planning process

Opportunities

- Leverage Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts, Historic tax credits, tax abatements and USDA grants for revitalization
- Local leaders have expressed interest in programs to reenvision and revitalize Lucher Avenue, Main Street, and other major corridors in the parish
- Branding and marketing campaign to bring new visitors, residents, and businesses to the parish
- Existing resources - sugar refining and tobacco heritage

Participants discussed the following topics during small group sessions:

Disconnects

- Industrial past attracted families to the community but can no longer support them
- Employment opportunities do not match the skills of the residents or
- Needed community services are not available

Assets

- Unique history, food, and culture of the area
- Sugar refinery and tobacco heritage

Targets for near term success

- Create a working group to study the mechanics branding and marketing the parish to the outside world

- Use “Live After 5” events and other community festivals to demonstrate the cities in the Parish
- Plan for Main Street and Lutcher Avenue corridor revitalization
- Capitalize on existing resources
- Take advantage of the Louisiana state legislature’s resolution designating the parish the Perique tobacco capital of the world
- Town hall meetings inclusive of all segments of the community
- Rehab facilities and create existing programs at a bigger capacity
- Create a #stjamesproud Twitter handle (and expand other social media presence)
- Vocational training programs

Recommendations

1. Re-envision the Main Street and Lutcher Avenue corridors.

St. James Parish should actively recruit new restaurants and other businesses to the Main Street and Lutcher Avenue corridors in Gramercy and Lutcher. A branding campaign will also encourage their revitalization and bring new businesses into the community. Further, special programming and events will attract people to the corridors in the evenings and on weekends to explore and linger at businesses and restaurants.

Local leaders should recruit a restaurant owner to open an establishment in one of the existing storefronts along these corridors. The parish could assist that property owner with façade loans, historic tax credits, and other incentives to ensure their business is successful.

A facade loan program will allow business and building owners within these corridors to improve the appearance of existing buildings by beautifying storefronts. The program could offer funds to borrowers who are able to repay the loans and who can show other financial resources to contribute to the overall cost of the project. For a sample storefront improvement ordinance from Soldotna, Alaska, refer to Appendix C.

A potential use for a vacant lot where a building has been lost in the town centers is for food trucks serving local cuisine. The search for a new restaurant could begin with pop-up restaurants on the weekends in vacant lots. With incentives, one or more of these food trucks could develop into a full-time restaurant. South Louisiana is also known for its distinctive coffee with chicory. These corridors offer an ideal location for a coffee shop featuring local coffee roasts.

The parish could also offer property tax abatements for private sector investments that achieve desired goals in the parish's town centers and residential areas. This allows the community to encourage projects that meet its redevelopment goals such as infill as well as provide improvements to building facades and interiors.

St. James Parish could embark on a branding campaign to highlight the unique culture and attractions. This effort could create unique signage for each corridor that gives them a sense of place and connection. The community could create and expand events in the town centers such as "Live After 5" featuring music or other entertainment. Many people will walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner following the performance. Further, the Parish should use a website and social media to market each corridor, their businesses, as well as Live After 5 or other special events.

St. James Parish could consider relocating its welcome center and the St. James Historical Society or other museum to one of these corridors. Allowing these institutions to serve as anchors will bring in tourists who are interested in learning more about the history and unique culture of the area. Further, by clustering activities in the town centers, you provide opportunities for new retail and restaurants to survive and flourish.

Finally, participants in the workshop noted a desire to participate in the redevelopment process in the parish. The re-envisioning process for Main Street and Lutcher Avenue should include opportunities for the public to provide input that shapes that vision. A committee consisting of diverse members of the community is one way to ensure that citizens' voices are heard as is a series of public visioning meetings at various locations within the parish.

2. Seek state and federal tax credits for restoration and reuse of historic properties.

St. James should work with interested private developers to access New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) and historic tax credits for redevelopment of properties in the town centers. The parish should also seek opportunities for twinning of state and federal historic tax credits with NMTC which incentivize business and real estate investment in low-income communities via a federal tax credit.⁶ Louisiana's Division of Historic Preservation administers the three historic rehabilitation tax credit programs.⁷

Income producing buildings:

⁶ For more information on this program, see http://www.newmarkets.org/section/aboutus/tax_credits

⁷ For more information, see <http://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/historic-preservation/tax-incentives/>

- Federal 20% Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program
- 25% State Commercial Tax Credit Program

Owner-occupied historic structures:

- 18.5% State Residential Tax Credit Program

Finally, USDA offers rural development grants in public facilities and housing. See Appendix A for more details.

3. Improve segments of accessibility along River Road

St. James Parish should take advantage of the proximity of River Road (Louisiana 18) to residential areas, town centers, and to the contour of the levee that defines this region. Opportunities exist, with the proper infrastructure support, for biking and walking along the natural contour of the levee.

Future subdivision developments should require sidewalks and, when feasible, bicycle lanes. This will increase safety for children and all pedestrians and bicyclists while encouraging residents to walk or bike to nearby destinations. Refer to NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide for recommendations.⁸

4. Develop marketing opportunities and an action plan for entertainment, culture and history

As previously noted, St. James Parish has a number of unique cultural and historic traditions that can be celebrated and preserved including music and food. The area is also known for its tradition of the Christmas Eve bonfires on the levee, bringing visitors from New Orleans and beyond. These are a few of the cultural amenities in St. James that offer potential to draw in tourists.

In June 2016, the Louisiana legislature passed a resolution recognizing St. James Parish as the Perique tobacco capital of the world. Long associated with this particular variety of tobacco, the resolution should be incorporated into this action plan. St. James could create tourist infrastructure around the local history of growing this product.

However, there is no place to readily buy foods, crafts, tobacco, music recordings, or other locally produced products that represent this culture. The Welcome Center and St. James Historical Society offer two potential locations for the purchase of these goods. Ideally, the visitor will be exposed at every stop they make within the parish to a piece of local culture they can purchase and take home with them at the end of their visit.

⁸ <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

The unique local cuisine also offers a draw to visitors. For example, providing opportunities to learn how to prepare dishes unique to Acadiana has the potential to become a tourist attraction in itself.

An action plan bringing together all of St. James Parish's unique entertainment, culture and history will create a marketable "St. James Experience". The goal of this plan will be to take stock in what the area has to offer and to work together as a community to implement the plan and leverage the area's resources to the outside world.

Workshop participants also mentioned the Pearl Star Culinary School as a potential draw.

5. Provide opportunities for tourists visiting the parish to explore communities located beyond the historic plantations.

Riverboats and luxury buses bring tourists visiting New Orleans and elsewhere to historic plantations on the west bank of the river in St. James Parish. Tourists could be encouraged to look above the levee to the communities surrounding the historic plantations or to venture across the river to the St. James (east bank) side. There should be a concerted effort by communities on both sides of the river to promote each other's tourism opportunities and market them to tourism companies - including new restaurants, retail, and cultural amenities that come about as a result. As noted above, moving the Welcome Center into one of the downtown corridors will encourage visitors to eat and shop in the area.

6. Revise and update the parish's housing assessment and comprehensive plans on a regular basis.

St. James Parish can offer existing and potential residents a greater variety of housing options at various price points. Residents of all income levels and all ages must call the parish home in order to create a sustainable local economy and tax base. For example, Millennials and Baby Boomers tend to prefer living and working in communities where they are able to walk to many of their daily needs. These individuals also may benefit from access to affordable housing options.

To accomplish this, the parish should revise its current zoning code to allow for a greater variety of housing options, including additional multifamily developments.

Further, the parish should update its housing assessment and comprehensive plans on a regular basis to reflect the ongoing development and changes that occur in St. James. These documents should seek actions that create new housing and new economic development within the parish.

As noted in more detail below, the parish should focus on reusing vacant lots or home sites within the town centers for new housing. Future assets in Vacherie should be clustered around existing and future infrastructure such as new roads, water, sewer, etc.

7. Leverage housing and the adjudication process (disposition process)

St. James Parish should work to enforce the existing building codes and bring structures into a state of good repair.

Also, when in the downtown core, the parish should seek to acquire delinquent properties sold for taxes. With control of the property, the parish would be able to leverage ownership to create the type of residential and commercial activity they desire in the town centers.

Smart Growth America's fiscal impact analysis shows that reusing vacant lots or homes within the town centers is the most fiscally sustainable choice for housing that the parish could make.

For sample ordinances related to vacant property maintenance and registry, see Appendix C.

8. Seek opportunities to redevelop additional properties into senior and affordable housing.

St. James Parish should seek properties suitable for redevelopment into senior and affordable housing. Workshop participants expressed a desire to see individuals who grew up in the area remain in the area as adults. Appendix A offers resources offered by USDA and other agencies to help create additional affordable housing projects in the parish.

9. Develop an economic development organization

St. James should create a coordinated entity to focus solely on economic development and leveraging publicly owned and/or underutilized sites. The St. James Parish community should create a committee, or preferably hire a full time staff member, to

coordinate and serve as a liaison amongst merchants, property owners, and publicly owned assets to strategize for future projects.

This entity will allow the community to proactively pursue potential new projects rather than waiting for opportunities to present themselves. The community should seek to develop a space for business incubation and/or coworking in either the Main Street or Lutch Avenue corridors to encourage new high tech industries to establish themselves in the parish.

This entity could also focus on developing affordable housing and/or senior housing in the Main Street and/or Lutch Avenue corridors by identifying suitable sites, finding zoning solutions to allow for more compact uses, and working with the development community to promote and market the site.

10. Work with existing and potential broadband Internet providers to increase the availability and reliability of Internet access

While many parts of St. James Parish are served by broadband Internet access,⁹ The parish should continue working with providers and the USDA Rural Utility Service to increase the availability and reliability of this resource to both residents and businesses in the community. Reliable high speed Internet access is an essential tool for attracting new high tech businesses (and the new residents, particularly Millennials that come with them).

Participants at the workshop noted a desire to keep younger residents in the parish. Better Internet access will also help attract opportunities that keep Millennials who want to remain in the area from leaving for New Orleans or other locations with more opportunities for young professionals.

11. Create a marketing campaign for St. James Parish and liaise with the Parish's business community.

A marketing campaign for St. James Parish would help advertise the community both online and offline. This campaign should strive to embody the unique features St. James Parish has to offer visitors and potential new residents. It will also provide new opportunities to market local businesses to new customers located both within and outside the community.

The campaign should market the community's proximity to nearby destinations such as New Orleans and the state capitol of Baton Rouge. The campaign could be run by the parish, a business group, or another existing community group within the parish.

⁹ <http://map.broadbandcatalysts.com/index.html>

It is notable that the town’s website has a business directory including lodging and restaurants.¹⁰ There is also an economic development page with information on starting a business and on tourism.¹¹ These resources should be expanded.

In addition, as noted by workshop participants, the parish should focus on expanding its social media presence. This offers a way to market the parish to potential visitors, new residents, and those seeking new business markets around the world. Social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook offer the opportunity to present the parish and its amenities as a destination utilizing the preferred communications style of many Millennials. Attendees suggested creating a #stjamesproud Twitter hashtag to help recognize and create “buzz” for the parish online.

Additional Analysis and Resources

Appendix A provides a summary of available funding and development resources from USDA and other sources. Appendix B provides the results of the fiscal impact analysis conducted by Smart Growth America for St. James Parish. Appendix C includes sample ordinances from other communities related to vacant properties and storefront improvements.

¹⁰ <http://www.stjamesla.com/shopping-hotels>

¹¹ <http://www.stjamesla.com/economic-development>

Appendix A: USDA funding and development resources

“To increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.”



Population Guidelines

Business Programs: 50,000 and below (exception is local foods projects)

Community Programs: 20,000 and below

Housing Programs: 35,000 and below

Water and Waste Water Programs: 10,000 and below

Community Connect Grant

Program Purpose:

Program helps fund broadband deployment into rural communities where it is not yet economically viable for private sector providers to deliver service.

Who May Apply:

Most State and Local Governments/Federally-Recognized Tribes/Non-Profits/For-Profit Corporations

Special Considerations:

SUTA/Strikeforce and Promise Zone Areas (Extra 15 points for scoring)

Application Grant Request Limits:

MINIMUM = \$100,000 MAXIMUM = \$3,000,000

Application Match Requirements:

Minimum = 15% of Grant Request

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$11 Million (5 out of 68 applications)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$11,740,000 Available

Grant Application Period:

Opened April 18, 2016 and Closed June 17, 2016 (www.grants.gov or Paper applications)

Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant

Program Purpose:

Assists rural communities to use telecommunications by purchasing equipment to connect remote locations to urban areas or other rural areas for purposes of increased education or healthcare opportunities.

Who May Apply:

Most State and Local Governments/Federally-Recognized Tribes/Non-Profits/For-Profit Corporations

Special Considerations:

SUTA/Strikeforce and Promise Zone Areas (Extra 15 points for scoring)

Application Grant Request Limits:

MINIMUM = \$50,000 MAXIMUM = \$500,000

Application Match Requirements:

Minimum = 15% of Grant Request

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$23 Million (75 out of 191 applications)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$19,000,000 Available (182 Applications Received)

Grant Application Period:

Opened January 12, 2016 and Closed March 14, 2016 (www.grants.gov or Paper applications)

Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loans

Program Purpose:

Bolsters the existing private credit structure through the guaranteeing of loans for rural businesses, allowing private lenders to extend more credit than they would typically be able.

Who May Apply:

Lenders with legal authority, sufficient experience, and financial strength to operate a successful lending program

Eligible borrowers:

For-profit business, Nonprofits and cooperatives, Federally recognized Tribes, Public bodies

Loan guarantee limits:

80% for loans of \$5 million or less

70% for loans between \$5 and \$10 million

60% for loans exceeding \$10 million, up to \$25 million maximum

Terms:

Interest rate negotiated between lender and borrower, subject to Rural Development review.

Real estate – 30 years, machinery and equipment -15 years and working capital – 7 years.

Initial guarantee fee of 3% with annual renewal fee of 0.5% on outstanding principal.

Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG)

Program Purpose:

Assist small and emerging businesses in rural areas

Who May Apply:

Public bodies, units of government and community-based non-profit organizations

Special Considerations:

Eligible costs include real estate improvements, equipment, utility/infrastructure, feasibility studies, engineering services, and/or technical assistance to small businesses

Competitive application process

Application Grant Request Limits:

Grants less than \$100,000 have highest competitive priority

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$674,519 (18 Grants)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$610,000

Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDLG)

Program Purpose:

Assist economic and community development projects in rural areas

Who May Apply:

Rural electric or telecommunications utilities

Special Considerations:

Real estate improvements, equipment, working capital

Pass-through funding

20% Match Required from utility

Application Grant Request Limits:

Up to \$300,000 to establish Revolving Loan Fund for electric or telecommunications utility

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$40,000,000 (National Competition)

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

Program Purpose:

Assist rural small businesses and agricultural producers by conducting and promoting energy audits, and providing renewable energy development assistance.

Who May Apply:

Farmers and rural small businesses

Special Considerations:

Grant is 25% of eligible project costs

Application Grant Request Limits:

\$500,000 maximum for renewable energy projects

\$250,000 maximum for energy efficiency

\$100,000 maximum for energy audit and rural energy development assistance

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$1,978,341 (85 Grants)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$819,000

Community Facilities Grant Program

Program Purpose:

Provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities

Who May Apply:

Public body or community-based non-profit organization

Special Considerations:

Essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community.

Does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.

Application Grant Request Limits:

Grant for up to 15%, 35%, 55% or 75% of proposed project depending upon population and MHI of proposed service area

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$314,000 (21 Grants)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$543,780

Economic Impact Initiative (EII) Grant Program

Program Purpose:

Provides funding to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural communities with extreme unemployment and severe economic depression

Who May Apply:

Public body or community-based non-profit organization

Special Considerations:

Essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community.

Grants may be made in combination with other Rural Development financial assistance.

Community facilities may include

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$118,700 (14 Grants)

FY2016 Budget Allocation:

\$118,700

Rural Community Development Initiative Grant (RCDI)

Program Purpose:

Provide funding to help non-profit housing and community development organizations support housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects

Who May Apply:

Public bodies and non-profit organizations

Eligible Uses:

Training sub-grantees; for example, home-ownership or minority business entrepreneur education

Technical assistance such as strategic plan development, board training, effective fundraising techniques

Application Grant Request Limits:

\$50,000 minimum award

\$250,000 maximum award

Matching funds equal to the amount of the grant award

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$155,000 (1 Grant)

Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Program

Program Purpose:

Provides grants to sponsoring organizations for the repair or rehabilitation of housing occupied by low- and very-low-income families and individuals.

Who May Apply:

State and local government entities and non-profit organizations

Eligible Uses:

Home must be in a rural area or community under 20,000 population

Repairing or replacing electrical wiring, foundations, roofs, insulation, heating systems, water/waste disposal systems

Handicap accessibility features

Labor and materials

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$86,273 (3 Grants)

Single Family Housing 504 Grants Program

Program Purpose:

Provides loan and grant funds to be used to pay for needed repairs to dwellings of very low income families. To remove health and safety hazards – leaky roofs, bad heating systems, structural problems, handicap accessibility.

Who May Apply:

Very-low income families or individuals

Special Considerations:

Home must be in a rural area or community under 35,000 population

Lifetime grant assistance up to \$7,500. Grants only available to applicants 62 years or older who do not have repayment ability.

FY2015 Funded Projects:

\$379,383(154 Grants)

FY 2016 Budget Allocation

\$367,834

Let's Talk!

What projects do you have underway or under consideration in your community?

What barriers/obstacles exist to successful implementation or completion of the project?

Are projects being hindered or threatened by government processes?

What projects would you undertake if money were not an issue?

What assistance or expertise do you need in your community to bring your project to fruition?

What assets are present in your community which are not currently being utilized fully?

Community and Economic Development (CED)

Partners With Potential to Assist Downtowns / Communities:

- Louisiana Division of Administration, Office of Community Development – Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Louisiana State University Cooperative Extension Service
- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
- Louisiana Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation – State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs)
- Community Foundations
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Local Foods/Local Places Initiative
- Brownfields Program (EPA and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality)

Appendix B: Fiscal Impact Analysis Results

Appendix C: Sample Ordinances

NOT PROVIDED