

Morgan City and Berwick Louisiana

September 16–21, 2018



Morgan City and Berwick Louisiana

Building the Foundation for a New Economy
along the Atchafalaya River

September 16–21, 2018

About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 42,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision making is based on its members' sharing expertise on

a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2018 alone, more than 2,200 events were held in about 330 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Cover photos: ULI.

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies.

Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives, and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make

accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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A special thank you goes to Laura Dozar, Catherine Holcomb, Ruby Maize, Monica Mancuso, and Alice Pecoraro for their support in coordinating with local stakeholders and putting together the panel's briefing materials.

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In addition, the panel would like to thank the local officials and stakeholders who participated in discussion that ultimately decided to secure the services of the Urban Land Institute: mayors and council members, parish representatives, school board members, the director of the chamber of commerce and the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau, the parish economic development director, South Louisiana Community College—Young Memorial Campus, Port of Morgan City officials, South Central Planning District members, St. Mary Parish Foundation members, and local volunteers.

Finally, the panel would like to thank the more than 100 residents, business and community leaders, and representatives from across Morgan City and Berwick who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel over the week.

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The two bridges that connect the city of Berwick to Morgan City are considered a local landmark.



The cobranded seawalls of Morgan City and Berwick provide both necessary resilient infrastructure and a link between the two cities.

Logging and commercial fishing, particularly shrimping, provided for generations at the start of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, the offshore petroleum industry emerged at the forefront of the economy. Soon thereafter oil and oilfield service companies thrived within the community. The economic history of the region is captured in Morgan City's annual Louisiana Shrimp and Petroleum Festival, currently active for more than 80 years.

In the 1980s and more recently in the past five years, the oil industry has suffered from the decline in oil prices and in the transitioning of the oil industry itself. In 2016, the unemployment rate peaked at 9.4 percent and remained in May 2018 at 6.9 percent, substantially greater than the 4.0 percent average unemployment rate across the United States and the 4.7 average unemployment rate for Louisiana in 2018, creating a rising burden for this community. Significant job loss has occurred as oilfield and oilfield service sectors have transitioned from the Morgan City/Berwick area to the surrounding Fourchon, Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Houston regions. An example of this loss is the recent relocation of Petroleum Helicopters Inc. to Lafayette, Louisiana, from the world's largest heliport site, the Lake Palourde–Amelia area.

In late 2015, a group of citizens deeply concerned with the general economic and cultural deterioration of the Morgan City and Berwick areas was catapulted into action by the

closing of a historic school because of declining enrollment. These citizens formed the St. Mary Excel organization and invited local officials and interested community members to meetings to discuss possible avenues to spur revitalization. After two and a half years of deliberation and significant research, the group decided to raise the funds needed to secure the services of the Urban Land Institute.

The Panel's Assignment

St. Mary Excel—in close cooperation with mayors and council members, parish representatives, school board members, directors of the chamber of commerce and the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Parish economic development director, South Louisiana Community College–Young Memorial Campus, Port of Morgan City officials, South Central Planning District members, St. Mary Parish Community Foundation members, and local volunteers—defined the purpose for the ULI panel visit as increasing the Morgan City and Berwick population through job creation in diversified businesses, both new and existing. Their growing belief is that area residents must be more strategic in defining their community through a diversified economy. Drawing on the community's resources of the waterways and its strategic location, the ULI panel's assignment was centered on job creation and an improved quality of life.



GARRETT AVERY/LLI

Morgan City's emblem is a shrimp wrapped around an oil derrick, representing the two historic industries of the town. These are further celebrated at the city's annual Shrimp and Petroleum festival.

The panel was asked the following questions in three categories related to economic development, public/private partnerships, and infrastructure enhancement.

Business, Industry and Diversification

- How does the Morgan City/Berwick area diversify the area's economy using its major waterways to attract industry and grow its economy?
- What actions would you recommend for the Morgan City and Berwick Front Streets/waterfront areas so that the city and town might achieve the best return on additional investment they might undertake?
- What profitable industries and businesses, including those in emerging technological (cybersecurity, domestic terrorism prevention, school safety issues, digital media, software and game development, and others) and renewable energy fields (wind turbines, solar panels,

hydroelectric power, and the like) could be feasibly located in our area and what steps do we take to attract such employers?

- How do we work with existing area business and industry to support their expansion and continued fiscal growth?
- What is the best use for the property development along Lake Palourde?
- How can landowners with property to be developed in Berwick and Morgan City market and attract investors?

Financing and Contracted Partnerships

- How can landowners connect with potential funding sources and investors for property development?
- What additional public/public or public/private partnerships in the Morgan City/Berwick area can be formed to maximize resources for job training and prekindergarten through junior college education; recreation (gyms, pools, parks, ponds, and tennis courts); leisure and cultural activities (cooking classes, music, theater, dance, visual art)?
- What additional public/public or public/private partnerships in the Morgan City/Berwick area can be formed to protect and promote historical artifacts and sites (archives, museums, libraries, and architecture)?

Infrastructure

- Since Morgan City and Berwick are not eligible for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) road funds, what resources are available to secure funding and improvements for city and town roads (Highway 182, Highway 70, Morgan City Corridor, Patti Drive, and Old Spanish Trail)?
- How do we secure intermodal transportation (train and trolley services) and increased biking options in the Morgan City and Berwick area?
- How do we promote Morgan City and Berwick flood-level protection and resilience to maximize investment?

Key Recommendations

After spending a week in Morgan City and Berwick reviewing briefing materials, listening to residents, and conducting tours, the panel developed a deeper understanding of the aspirations, potential, and challenges of the area. This time helped build on some of the mixed first impressions the panel had when initially arriving. Morgan City and Berwick need to look forward to build on their natural and unique assets and to reverse the negative trends in business loss, population decline, and economic deterioration, but the panel believes that Morgan City and Berwick are ready to make that change.

Through the panel's process, the panel identified the following key recommendations that relate specifically to the immediate study area of Morgan City and Berwick as well as the city of Patterson and St. Mary Parish.

- **The past is history.** Any cyclical economy will have booms and busts. The study area has felt the curves acutely because of its strong tie to the oil industry. The time has come to learn from the past and support substantive diversification of the local economy. This step will require appointing newer, younger, and more diverse voices on committees who will participate in the decision-making process.
- **The study area is lively.** The existing calendar of events evidences the area's base to use and grow to become a greater visitor attraction. It has potential to support a tourism industry to share the regional culture, assortment of historic homes, existing industry, and assets like the Atchafalaya River and swamps. But a Tri-City brand needs to be identified to differentiate the area from the rest of St. Mary Parish and the Gulf Coast.
- **Differentiate downtown Morgan City and Berwick through specialization.** Both communities' downtown cores should be specialized to complement each other rather than compete. Morgan City should specialize in retail and commercial uses, and Berwick should specialize in recreational uses and grow the shrimp co-op.
- **The industrial sector has potential.** The study area is uniquely situated to ship and receive cargo throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Once a strategy is in place to maintain proper depth of the river, opportunities exist to better support existing businesses and position the area as an innovative maritime support hub situated in a safe harbor.
- **Understand your social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities.** Building resilience should be a priority for Morgan City and Berwick. Some shocks and stressors, such as the changing oil industry, are out of the community's control. But this can be an opportunity to make the Tri-City region a base for a new economy built around innovation and technology to mitigate these changes. The cost of doing nothing is extremely large.
- **A lot can be gained from collaboration and consolidation.** Although the study area once supported an expansive base of schools and industry, the administrations and citizens should strategize for best results from current opportunities in order to prioritize efficiencies in marketing, purchasing, and general services, business retention, and so forth. The consolidation of taxing entities whenever and wherever possible should occur.
- **The state of housing needs greater attention.** Expanding the range of housing options would support a greater variety of economic sectors and help reuse underused properties. Enforcement of code violations would go far in reinstating neighborhood pride and welcoming infill and housing revitalization, sometimes multifamily, development in both communities.

The panel's recommendations and observations are intended to lay a path forward by building on existing assets to establish Morgan City and Berwick as central to the Cajun Coast.

Market Context

BECAUSE OF THE STUDY AREA'S CENTRAL location on the Atchafalaya and the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway, the Tri-City region has developed into an important hub for industrial and commercial sectors. Employment trends in the study area demonstrate a concentration of jobs in manufacturing, construction, professional services, and transportation. These jobs support energy exploration, production, and delivery of oil and natural gas from the Gulf of Mexico. This segment of the labor industry represents the bulk of higher-income employment in the region.

The population in the immediate area is decreasing at a slow rate while population in the wider area is growing at a faster rate on a larger base (see figure at right). The population in the immediate area tends to be slightly older than in the region as a whole and earns significantly less. This trend has implications for the sort of retail, the type of housing, and the amount and type of medical care for which demand will increase. The next fastest growing demographic group locally is the 15- to 19-year-old age cohort. This group's growth may have the biggest implications for the Tri-City region. Over time, the population can

Residential Population within Drive Times

Year	5-minute drive	15-minute drive	35-minute drive
2000 (census)	10,338	31,933	90,854
2010 (census)	10,137	33,783	97,787
2018 (estimate)	10,243	35,671	102,938
2023 (projection)	10,230	36,294	105,308

DAVID GREINSELDER/ULI

Source: Esri.

be expected to continue to age with the fastest-growing groups being older.

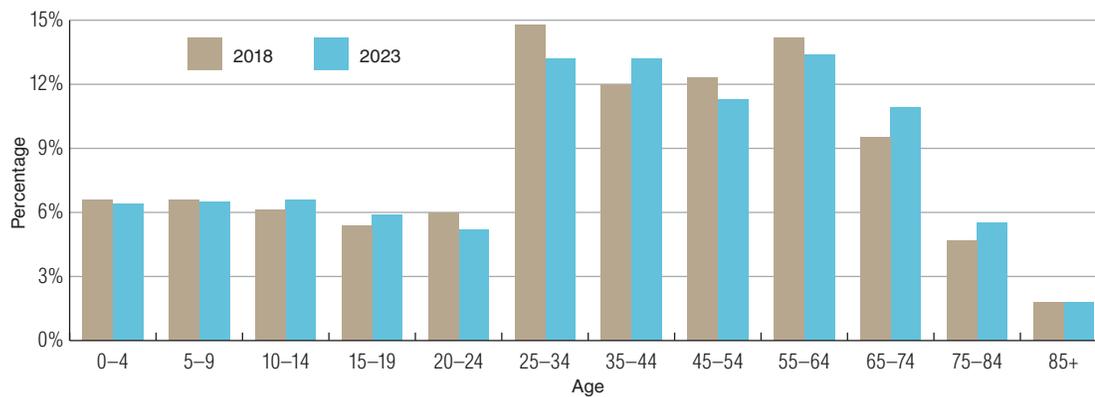
The population in the immediate area is decreasing at a slower rate while population in the wider area is growing at a faster rate on a larger base.

Housing and Employment

Employment in St. Mary Parish is concentrated in both the Tri-City region and Franklin. The clear majority of employment is in Morgan City, though this base of employment does not correlate to where the employees primarily live.

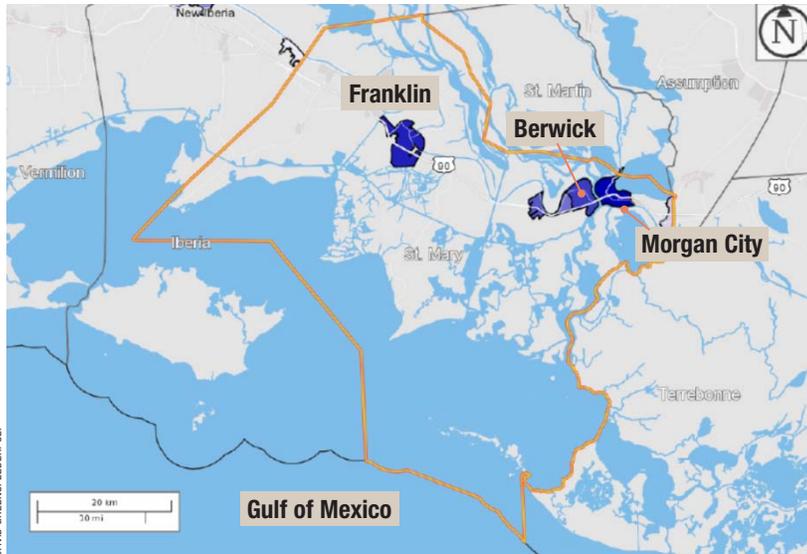
A recent Kendig Keast planning consultancy study of Morgan City noted that 75 percent of area homes are single family with a small percentage of complexes

Morgan City Population by Age, 2018 and 2023



By 2023, the study area's population ages 65 and older can be expected to have increased at a faster rate than other age groups.

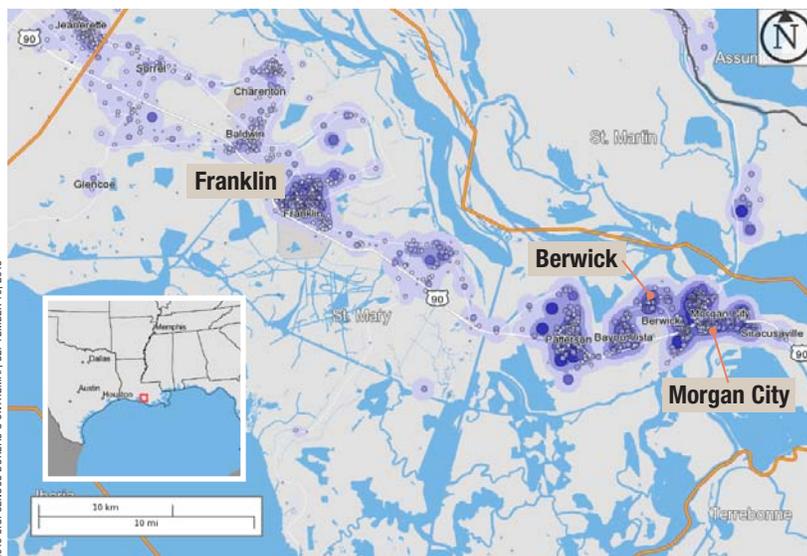
Source: Esri.



DAVID GREENSFELDER/ULI

Job concentration for the Tri-City region is shown in dark blue.

This map of St. Mary Parish illustrates work-to-home counts and density for primary jobs for all workers in 2015. The image depicts employment aligned near U.S. 90 in both the Tri-City region and Franklin.



2015 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU'S ONTHEMAP, SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

- Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]**
- 5 - 60
 - 61 - 225
 - 226 - 501
 - 502 - 888
 - 889 - 1,385

- Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]**
- 1 - 2
 - 3 - 9
 - 10 - 29
 - 30 - 68
 - 69 - 133

- Selection Areas**
- Analysis Selection

comprising mobile homes or two to four units. Apartment complexes larger than four units are almost nonexistent, except public housing developments built decades ago. The lack of apartment complexes limits the study area's ability to capture the market for young professionals and families who rent in neighboring jurisdictions. This is likely a major contributing factor in population loss to neighboring jurisdictions

Moreover, the overall study area's housing market is less competitive with the surrounding region. Morgan City is currently prevented from moving forward with residential property development until levee construction and pump station projects are complete sometime after early 2020. Although the town of Berwick benefits from the availability of developable land and is growing its single-family housing base, generally new housing, particularly rental housing, is a challenge within the study area since the supply does not match the rental housing demand. In terms of multifamily housing, the communities have not had new apartment construction in more than 30 years, nor has Morgan City or Berwick made any significant effort in housing revitalization. In view of the lack of rental housing, it is not uncommon on weekdays for workers to use area hotel rooms—some organized and supported by area employers—as an alternative, indicating the demand for multifamily construction. In addition, the desire for multifamily units was heard throughout the interview process.

Tourism

In addition to the resident and daytime population, the Tri-City region enjoys a significant visitor and transiting population. In 2014, the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau estimated that about 3 million people (including business travelers) visited the region (inclusive of Morgan City and Houma). Their primary reasons for visiting St. Mary Parish were family and friends, outdoor activities (includes hunting and fishing), historic homes in Franklin (an opportunity also exists in Morgan City), and casino gaming.



The inflow of workers to the study area demonstrates that more people are traveling into the area for work than leaving it. This points to the limited availability of new and rental housing product.

Hotel occupancy rates according to STR (formerly Smith Travel Research) are 48 percent for St. Mary Parish and up 11 percent from the same month last year. Newer hotels in Morgan City are over 85 percent capacity. A majority of this occupancy is during the week so availability exists on the weekends.

Tourism brings \$58 million in expenditure to St. Mary Parish annually, according to the Cajun Coast Visitors Center. By origin, 52 percent of visitors are from Louisiana, 10 percent from border states, with Dallas and Houston being major out-of-state markets, and the remaining 38 percent of visitors are mostly from the Midwest and Los Angeles. About 830 residents of St. Mary Parish are employed in tourism.

Transportation

A significant number of people transited through the area on local highways. On U.S. 90 alone, 11.6 million people transit through the center of Morgan City annually. Of course, many of these people are commuting or are residents; however, a significant component is from out of the area, and this component represents potential incremental sales that might be captured by Morgan City's businesses.

Framing the Bigger Picture: Population in Transition

	2017 ADT	2014 ADT
U.S. 90 at milepost 175.4	31,800	24,572
La 182 at milepost 52.4	10,522	10,676
La 70 at milepost 0.12	8,445	9,716

Source: Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development.

Both the destination tourism and the transiting populations represent a huge potential for the Tri-City region. Even a small capture rate could translate into a large increase in revenue for the immediate area.

Average daily traffic (ADT) data for 2014 and 2017 in the study area and for Louisiana demonstrate the high and growing amount of commuting on the highway. High counts are associated with U.S. 90, the major road connecting Morgan City and Berwick.



U.S. 90 crosses over the Atchafalaya River, making it the primary connecting road between Berwick and Morgan City.

Average Daily Population, Traffic Volumes

	5-minute drive	15-minute drive	35-minute drive
Daytime employees	7,290	19,623	40,801

Source: 2015 census.

Given the high transiting population along U.S. 90, attracting a percentage of this population could foster positive impacts for area retail.

Retail

Although the housing market is one measure of the area's economic troubles, the modest state of the study area's retail sector is also indicative of local ties to the declining oil industry. Despite Berwick's ability to attract single-family-home investment, the town's land use pattern does not lead to enough density to lure retail. Whereas Morgan City has several retail establishments, including the historic retail-oriented downtown, it similarly faces challenges that result in several underused business fronts. Ultimately, given the current state of employment, housing, and retail in the study area, current residents are left wanting more to improve quality of life.

Ultimately, retail is demand driven. In other words, the demand for goods and services precedes a retailer stepping up to meet that demand. There are four broad categories for demand: residential population, daytime population, visitor or tourist population, and transiting or passer-by population. Of the four, residential population is the cornerstone of proving retail demand; however, the other categories are not to be ignored. Together they represent important incremental demand. Another source of sales for a given retailer is that retailer's competitors. For example, a new hardware store will cannibalize sales at least to some extent from an existing hardware store.

Traffic patterns are also an important factor, and in particular where the "gravity side" of the area might be. The gravity side in simple terms is the direction in which people are already traveling to purchase goods and services. For example, one interviewee made clear that when locating its business, it decided to place it between the population and the established retail in Patterson. In other words, everyone in the community was regularly driving by the

Understanding Retail

In discussing retail, understanding how retail organizes itself in today's world is helpful.

Commodity and Specialty Retail. The United States enjoyed bustling downtown shopping districts from coast to coast. Morgan City was no exception and even was home to independent department stores. These districts have evolved over the past 60-plus years as the United States became more automobile dependent. Downtown shopping districts gave way to suburban shopping, including enclosed malls and strip shopping centers, and since have struggled to retain and attract retailers. To understand the impacts of these trends, distinguishing "commodity" retail uses and retail projects from "specialty" retail uses and retail projects is important.

Commodity retail goods and services are defined as those goods and services that are

- Consumed on a regular basis from "primary" household funds designated for clothing, food, shelter, and the like; and
- Purchased with primary emphasis by the consumer on selecting the combination of lowest price and highest level of convenience.

Commodity retailers include local convenience stores, grocery and drugstores, big-box discounters, and warehouse stores. Commodity retail projects are shopping venues whose primary purpose is the delivery of commodity goods and services to consumers. When



Rouses is one of the few food grocery markets in the study area. It is an example of commodity retail, since its primary purpose is the delivery of commodity goods and services to consumers.



Rita Mae's Kitchen is a beloved Cajun restaurant in the study area. It is an example of a specialty retailer in the study area because it delivers a combination of product and place that is unique to the study area.



Sweet & Simple is a coffee and sweet shop providing an example of an active retailer in the study area. It illustrates a situation in which shoppers or pedestrians can interact with the store through outside seating and signage, even if they are not there to shop.

evaluating commodity retail, particular attention to the study site's location and facility as compared to other competing commodity retailers with which a given location will compete is particularly important.

Other retail channels lend themselves to consuming commodity retail. For example, online shopping allows a consumer to compare prices and similar products easily.

Specialty retail goods and services, by contrast, are defined as those goods and services

- Consumed on an optional basis from discretionary income or funds;
- Involving the expenditure of discretionary time; and
- For which environment or place and an emotional connection are important points of reference for the consumer (think of having a nice dinner out or purchasing a handbag).

Successful specialty shopping venues, regardless of format, deliver a unique combination of product (i.e., shops and restaurants, local offerings) and place (i.e., physical and conceptual environment) that are unique and inspiring.

Active and Inactive Uses. Another important way to think about retail is in terms of active and inactive uses. *Active uses* refer to situations where shoppers or pedestrians interact with built spaces even if they do not go inside to buy a good or service. Examples would include retailers,

restaurants, and even a karate studio, art gallery, or real estate agency where the storefront is designed so that activity inside and outside relate to each other.

By contrast, *inactive uses* refer to situations where the flow of a retail district is broken so there is a significant gap or in some other manner so that pedestrians do not interact with the built environment. Even active uses with limited hours may become inactive uses when they close and become "dark" during nonbusiness hours. Examples include offices, medical facilities, auto repair, big-box stores without outward-facing interactive displays (e.g., Costco, some supermarkets and drugstores, some big-box retailers). Inactive uses can also be created through poor design.

This storefront on Front Street in Morgan City serves as an example of an inactive use retailer. Heavy curtains that block the inside use from the outside viewer discourage any kind of interaction or visual connection.



location already as part of their established moving-around patterns . . . they are on the “gravity side” of the trade area. In some cases, traffic patterns, if they are strong enough, can be as or more important than some of the populations described previously.

Many retail tenants have struggled in recent years, a highly visible reminder of today’s changing retail environment and the overall population decline in the study area. Although sales at some stores remain strong, there are high levels of retailer closures. These impacts reflect consumers’ shift toward consuming “commodity” goods differently from “specialty” goods. This shift affects both bricks-and-mortar, online, and other retail channels (a channel being a place such as a bricks-and-mortar store, the internet, or a catalog, where a purchase can be made).

Much of retail is market driven, but cities, developers, retailers, and owners can set the stage to take advantage of this changing environment in a number of ways, including the following:

- Retailers repositioning and rebranding their stores;
- Property renovations such as improved signage, lighting, wayfinding, and aesthetic improvements;
- Focused recruitment of new tenants and mix of uses, including non- and quasi-retail uses such as office, learning centers, fitness, sports, and health care that draw traffic to and thereby complement a commercial district;
- Redeveloping vacated storefronts and anchor tenant locations;
- Cities tailoring planning efforts and zoning code to focus development in desired areas; and
- Building infrastructure and public realm improvements such as streetscape, wayfinding signage, and parks.

The Tri-City region should think in terms of reestablishing itself as central to the Cajun Coast. Retail in the Tri-City region has organized itself in three primary areas: primarily commodity and daily needs retail located along Brashear



This map highlights areas of Berwick and Morgan City identified by the panel as prime areas for concentrated investment, particularly infill and renovation strategies.

Avenue and between Brashear Avenue and the Inglewood Mall Shopping Center in Morgan City, primarily commodity retail in Bayou Vista, and primarily specialty retail between Lawrence Park and Front Street in Morgan City.

The commodity retail areas reflect demand in the immediate area, so this discussion focuses on specialty retail opportunities. Attention overall should be on encouraging specialty retail to open in the downtown Morgan City area. Front Street has formerly been the focus for specialty retail; however, the panel’s evaluation of the area leads to the conclusion that Lawrence Park is the better focus for a downtown retail district.

One size does not fit all. Each community’s response must be calibrated for a variety of local conditions, including the perspective and capabilities of property owners and tenants, real estate market conditions and demographics, changes in consumption patterns, community vision and resources, and other factors. Any strategy should be deliberate. For example, focus on a single priority area may be more effective than trying to address multiple areas simultaneously, and near-term strategies should be viewed through the lens of opening up larger, long-term opportunities.

Building Resilience

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE, in partnership with numerous other organizations active in the built environment, such as the American Planning Association, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the American Institute of Architects, defines resilience as “the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events.” Central to this definition is the ability to “bounce back” from these events, solving problems and preventing hardship in the future.

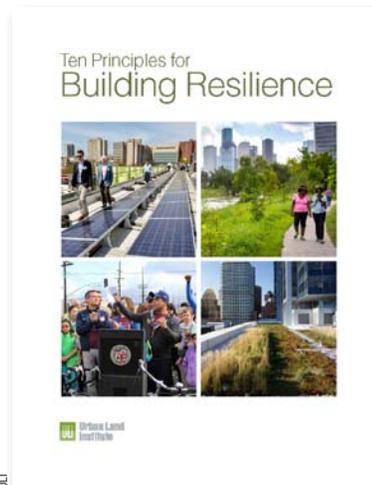
As weather events become more frequent and intense due to climate change, disruptions and stressors become a common concern among city officials and residents alike. From sea-level rise to heat waves, from storm surge to drought, the impacts of climate change threaten the built environment in ways that have serious consequences for the health, viability, and economic vitality of our future. Addressing these issues requires projects and programs that both enhance preparedness and offer other economic, environmental, and social co-benefits. In short, real estate projects, land use strategies, and infrastructure investments should not only make communities less vulnerable, but also strengthen cities overall, enhancing environmental performance, economic opportunity, and social cohesion.

Based on feedback received through site investigation and the stakeholder engagement process, the panel has considered many of the following topics throughout the study. As a result, this section focuses most specifically on the potential shocks and cascading disruptions attributable to natural disasters and flooding. The panel commends Morgan City and Berwick for being forward-thinking in building a 20-foot seawall along the Atchafalaya River and a 10-foot levee as backwater protection.

Understanding Vulnerabilities

Building resilience requires a deep understanding of how shocks and stresses increase a community’s vulnerability to disruption. As defined by the 100 Resilient Cities initiative, pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation, shocks are sudden and extreme events or disasters, while stresses are long-term social, economic, and environmental issues that undermine system responses to hazards. These include shocks like riverine flooding, infrastructure failure, or hurricanes and stresses like aging or declining population, poverty and inequality, or lack of social cohesion.

Relative to the communities of Morgan City and Berwick, one of the primary environmental vulnerabilities is attributable to sea-level change and riverine flooding. To begin understanding vulnerabilities specific to the study area, relative sea-level change scenarios were evaluated using guidance published in 2017 by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the tidal gauge at Eugene Island. Seven scenarios represent the broad



ULI's 2018 report Ten Principles for Building Resilience describes how the concept of resilience translates to the private sector, municipal decision-makers, and communities.

Defining Relative Sea-Level Change

Relative sea-level change is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in its *Report on Environment/Sea Level* as a measurement of

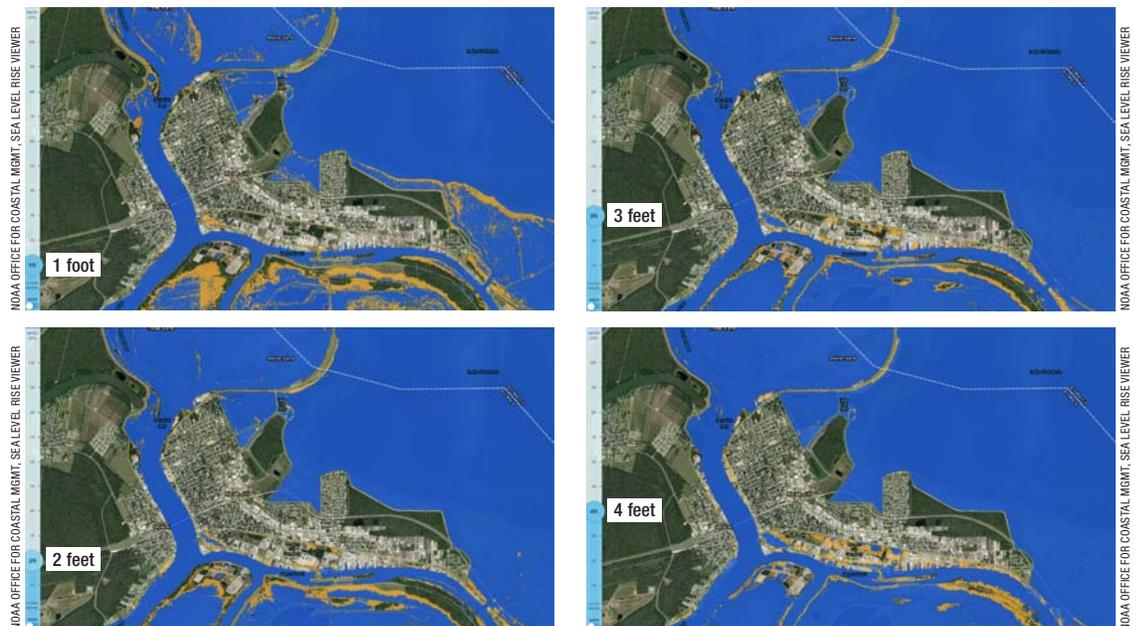
how the ocean rises or falls relative to the land at a particular location. In contrast, absolute sea level change refers to the height of the ocean surface above the center of the earth, without regard to whether nearby land is rising or falling. This indicator presents trends in sea level based on measurements from tide gauges and from satellites that orbit the Earth. Tide gauges measure relative sea level change at points along the coast, while satellite instruments measure absolute sea level change over nearly the entire ocean surface. Many tide gauges have collected data for more than 100 years, while satellites have collected data since the early 1990s.

Relative sea-level change was chosen by the panel because of its particular relevance to the Morgan City and Berwick region's simultaneous accretion and subsidence patterns. More information can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/roe>.

spectrum of possibilities, but for the purposes of this discussion, “Intermediate Low” and “Intermediate High” have been used to evaluate potential risk on scenario tracks that are both slightly below and slightly above average anticipated change.

To further contextualize the potential risk to the region, the panel has chosen to focus on the next 30 years in 10-year increments. These time frames clearly illustrate the potential risk and need for continued planning and implementation of adaptation strategies as relative sea level is predicted to change between one and three feet in that time frame specifically for Morgan City and Berwick. The panel has also chosen this time frame for its timeliness, as the time to begin is now. In addition, the time frame correlates with standard 15- to 30-year mortgage and other longer-term investment strategies illustrated throughout the report.

Under all three scenarios, closure of the existing levee system and long-range adaptation planning are essential to continued environmental and economic resilience. This closure of the existing levee system will enable relative



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Sea Level Rise Viewer is a web mapping tool that allows the user to see the projected impact of sea-level rise by looking at coastal flooding by number of feet of rise. Sea levels are expected to rise by one foot by 2028. These four maps show the incremental impact of sea-level rise.

sea-level change to affect only commercial land use outside the flood protection system.

10 Years (2030)

Anticipated changes in water levels range from 1.25 to 1.6 feet. Under this scenario, Morgan City and Berwick remain well protected; however, Lake End Park and lands surrounding Lake Palourde would begin experiencing varied degrees of inundation unless further flood control and beneficial reuse actions are continued. Similarly, tailwater conditions, or the water level at a particular drainage outfall, relied upon for functional gravity drainage and pump station discharge would begin demanding attention.

20 Years (2040)

Anticipated changes in water levels range from 1.6 to 2.3 feet. Under this scenario, the cores of Morgan City and

Berwick remain well protected; however, inundation of Lake End Park and land surrounding Lake Palourde would become inaccessible without further intervention. Tailwater conditions relied upon for functional gravity drainage systems and pump stations would require continued attention.

30 Years (2050)

Anticipated changes in water levels range from 2.1 to 3.8 feet. Without continuing the adaptation work already undertaken by Drainage District 2 and the Levee District, land on the unprotected side of the levees surrounding Lake Palourde would be fully inundated to the base of the levee system; Lake End Park and adjacent property would no longer be accessible public assets, and tailwater conditions at gravity drainage outfalls and pump stations would continue to pose challenges.

Atchafalaya Basin

The Atchafalaya River, flowing between Morgan City and Berwick, is part of a complex system that begins at the Old River Control Complex, located on the west bank of the Mississippi River about 50 miles northwest of Baton Rouge, where 30 percent of the Mississippi River and the Red River are diverted into the Atchafalaya River.

The Atchafalaya Basin is located in south-central Louisiana and is bounded by the Mississippi River and Tributaries system levees. The Old River Control Complex and the Atchafalaya Basin floodway system define the flow and sediment resources entering the Atchafalaya Basin. The basin contains the largest contiguous tract of fresh marsh in the state, a valuable national resource. The Atchafalaya River is the dominant feature within the basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is unique among Louisiana basins because it has a growing delta system caused by accretion of sediments with nearly stable wetlands. The flood control features of the Mississippi River and Tributaries project define the quantity and entry location of flow and sediment into the Atchafalaya Basin. The Corps of Engineers monitors the flow through the Old River Control Structure and makes daily adjustments to maintain flood control, navigation, and ecological conditions.

Much emphasis has been placed on the Mississippi River in Louisiana. However, much is at stake within the Atchafalaya River system that will affect Morgan City and Berwick. Increased sedimentation occurring in the Atchafalaya Basin and the Atchafalaya River is cause for concern. More sediment and decreased water flow through the basin are beginning to cause dramatic changes in habitats, and rising waters on levees create stress on the levees and a greater potential for flooding. This increased sediment also creates shoaling and is detrimental to navigation.

Connecting the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, the Atchafalaya River is a dominant feature in the Atchafalaya Basin. This connection makes Morgan City and Berwick a key harbor for ships seeking a shortcut to the Mississippi River around New Orleans.





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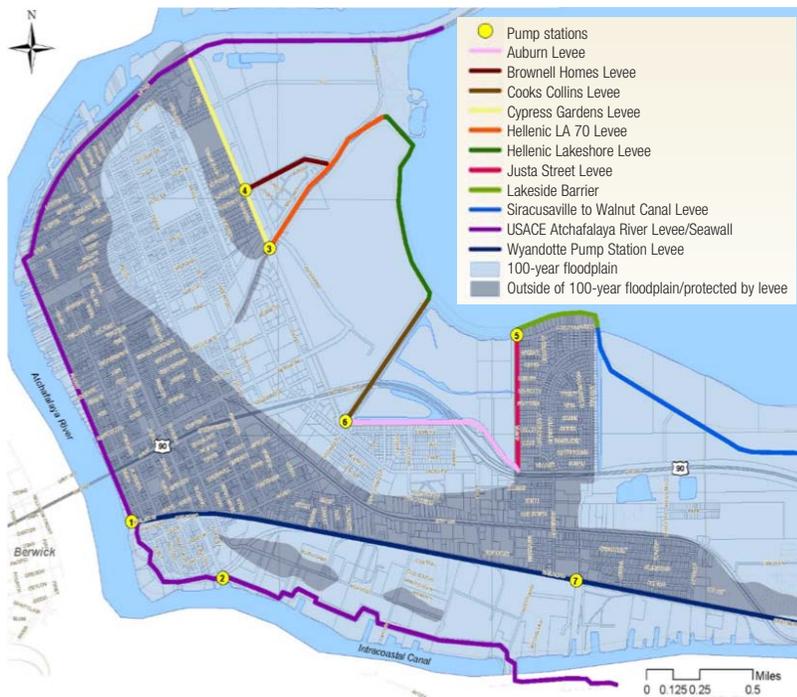
According to its website, "Rebuild's core belief is that through collaboration our communities can grow stronger and better prepared to stand up to whatever challenges tomorrow brings." The Meadowlands, New Jersey, design was developed by MIT CAU + ZUS + URBANISTEN with Deltares, 75B, and Volker Infra Design. The design focuses on three different flood risk-reduction projects: Protect, Connect, and Grow. To read more about the New Meadowlands proposal, see www.rebuildbydesign.org/our-work/all-proposals/winning-projects/hj-meadowlands.

Improve Long-Term Resilience and Sustainability

Solutions that identify and implement infrastructural investments to simultaneously improve flood resilience and revitalize community character or promote improved public health would have multiple benefits.

For example, following Hurricane Sandy, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development partnered with

An illustration of the current system of levee district and drainage district levees in Morgan City. An opportunity exists to continue adding to this system to achieve FEMA levee certification.



Rebuild by Design to launch a design competition to rapidly develop solutions to mitigate future climatic events while improving social, environmental, and economic resilience. As a result of this approach, the region received \$920 million to further develop and implement the chosen concepts. In addition, about \$1 billion in unused funds from Hurricane Sandy were also extended to the National Disaster Resilience Competition in which St. Tammany Parish and the city of New Orleans were finalists. New Orleans was awarded \$141.2 million to enhance resilience efforts, and the state of Louisiana was awarded \$92.6 million. Morgan City and Berwick should be prepared in the event of unanticipated federal spending like another National Disaster Resilience Competition or Rebuild by Design.

These likely scenarios reinforce why it is essential that Morgan City achieve and maintain Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) levee certification without shortcuts and follow FEMA's suggestions to achieve this certification.

Insurance

Property owners and users from the public and private sectors rely on insurance coverage for general liability and property and casualty exposures. In recent years, the insurance industry has started to look carefully at flood and storm exposures. At the same time, FEMA continues to redraw flood risk maps to take new information into ac-

count and to more accurately portray risk characteristics, which often change dramatically on the new maps. The private insurance market has raised premiums in some areas and completely withdrawn from others, reflecting its business assessment of probability of loss.

At a minimum, these changes are an annoyance for private and public property owners because they are forced to (a) pay higher premiums for the same coverage; (b) accept reduced coverage; (c) spend money on capital improvements to strengthen structures; or, in extreme situations, (d) abandon parcels or sell them at reduced prices that reflect a new perception of value. At worst, the cost or unavailability of insurance can prevent development or redevelopment of properties.

Reputation

Beyond the immediate impacts to property, services, and infrastructure following a natural or human-made disaster, communities remain vulnerable to the unseen, yet profoundly damaging impacts to civic trust, pride, and sense of long-term well-being should that community be viewed—rightly or wrongly—as unprepared or unable to recover from unanticipated events. Worse still is the potential resultant damage to civic reputation should a community be viewed as failing or as having failed to proactively identify adaptation strategies in response to reasonably foreseeable environmental change. These unseen damages have potential to negatively affect economic development opportunities, including attracting and retaining industry, young families, and future public investment. A major component of Morgan City and Berwick branding should highlight FEMA-certified flood protection, which should encourage residential, business, and commercial investment.

Develop and Implement Adaptation Strategies

St. Mary Parish and the Tri-Cities region need to be forward thinking about environmental, economic, and social impacts to their communities. Planning and investments

should begin now to mitigate against potential shocks and stressors.

Plan to Design

Provided historical data and forward-looking modeling tools such as NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer, Social Vulnerability Index, and Hazards U.S. Multi-Hazard (HAZUS-MH), communities such as Morgan City and Berwick are increasingly able to access in near real-time or statistical data sets at little or no cost. These tools could be used to inform potential long-term planning efforts and to align priority projects with potential funding sources. Regardless of each individual outcome, Morgan City and Berwick must plan to design integrated infrastructure improvements.

Preserve Existing Natural Area

Whether absorbing wave energy during a storm surge or dampening wind effects, existing natural areas—particularly those adjacent to bodies of water—often serve as the first line of defense during a natural disaster. Beyond contribution to environmental resilience, preserved natural area reliably contributes to social and economic resilience by producing benefits across sectors, including among others, tourism and recreation, public health and wellness, and educational resources.

Preserving these existing multibenefit resources is reliably more economically efficient than re-creating what once existed; however, where natural or human-made disasters have intervened, support for ecosystem restoration in the form of direct construction, mitigation banking instruments, or environmental settlement funds should be sought to improve regional resilience.

Restore the Ecosystem

Enhance or reconnect existing aquatic and wetland resources across geographical scales (i.e., within the study area, parish, and across parish boundaries as natural systems dictate). Beyond the benefits inherent to ecosystem restoration, including habitat creation, stormwater management, and erosion control, a broad-based ecosystem restoration program could create a consistent and reliable

case for beneficial reuse of dredged material—reducing, if not ending, the current preference for in-water disposal.

Getting Started

As discussed throughout the report, many resilience-building community assets are present and working well in Morgan City and Berwick.

Coordinated Action

Underpinning all resilient communities is the unwavering commitment to coordinated action. Building systemic resilience in a meaningful way necessitates coordination and in turn demands an authentically integrated approach to problem solving. Though able to take many forms, recent experience, beginning with Hurricane Katrina, illustrates this integrated approach requires active and informed decision-makers and community stakeholders, integrated professional service teams, and diversified funding resources.

As the scale, speed, and rate at which these challenges reoccur has increased, the more traditional segmented approach has become increasingly unable to deliver improved outcomes within time and available funding constraints. Addressing environmental resilience—through targeted repositioning or redevelopment of vulnerable areas in Morgan City and Berwick—is an opportunity to address social and economic resilience issues within the community.

As part of any coordinated action, potentially affected stakeholders must be engaged in the project process, to the extent practicable, such that decision-makers, local residents, and the community at large complete the project having been engaged and empowered to move toward implementation benefitting the whole. These types of actions need to be inclusive and diverse, and acknowledge past wrongs that may have disadvantaged community members—particularly those of color—to build a more equitable and resilient future.

Exploring and Testing New Tools

Two tools that could be used by Morgan City and Berwick include land swaps and transfer of development rights.

Land Swaps. Land swaps, perhaps in the form of tax-advantaged exchanges (if available by Louisiana law), may be needed to consolidate smaller parcels into sites that can be developed or to transfer value in an equitable manner. This tool could be used to incentivize redevelopment in protected areas while making available land determined to be more valuable as an undeveloped or restored natural area.

Transfer of Development Rights. Owners of vulnerable, undeveloped waterfront property may possibly be compensated by establishing transferable development rights. Either through direct sale or through banking, these development rights help steer development away from threatened areas and toward more desirable locations, while spurring opportunities for design and restoration of natural systems for improved environmental resilience.

Louisiana Watershed Initiative. Louisiana Senate Resolution 172 (SR 172), passed during the 2017 Regular Legislative Session, directed Louisiana state agencies to “provide recommendations to establish, implement, and enforce floodplain management plans for each watershed in Louisiana.” The Louisiana Watershed Initiative is intended to be a long-term vision for statewide sustainability and resilience. The Port of Morgan City now has an opportunity to be involved in this process to bring more attention to the Atchafalaya River and support regional efforts with Terrebonne Parish to transport sediment from the Atchafalaya River to Eastern Terrebonne to create marsh, which will protect Terrebonne Parish and East St. Mary from storm surge as well as provide benefits to navigation within Morgan City and Berwick.

Creating a New Economy

ST. MARY PARISH, MORGAN CITY, AND BERWICK

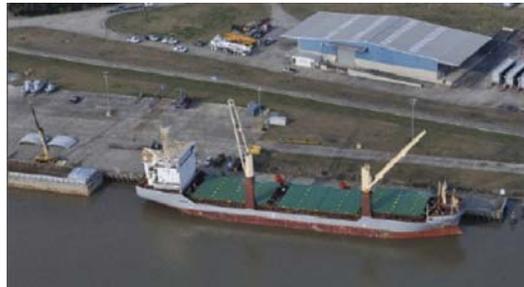
have relied on the development of natural resources to sustain the life and culture of the region for more than 200 years. Trapping, fishing, and sugarcane came first, and commercial fishing followed. The economy of the area was transformed by the development of oil and gas resources in the Gulf of Mexico in the late 1940s. The first offshore drilling platform was built in Morgan City. Serving the Gulf oil field has defined Morgan City and Berwick for generations.

A series of downturns in the Gulf oil industry over decades past offered the clear realization that the local economy is vulnerable to the longer-term trend of a global and finite commodity. Recoveries and recessions have come and gone through the succeeding years, with each recovery seemingly a little less robust than the last. As the 21st century proceeds, the exploration of new sources of oil located well beyond the Gulf and alternative energy development have combined to challenge Morgan City and Berwick's vitality in a manner that is likely to be permanent.

Times have changed! The challenges associated with shifting away from a bedrock industry are very real for Morgan City and Berwick. The unique advantage the cities have because of their location on navigable waterways and in an area largely protected from flooding will continue to provide economic opportunities into the future. However, the region must come together to identify and implement new approaches to secure a more diverse and sustainable local economy for the long term.

Adapt to a New Role for Oil Services and Marine-Based Business

The business of providing services to the oil industry is not likely to completely evaporate in the coming years, but



ST. MARY PARISH, THE MORGAN CITY HARBOR AND TERMINAL DISTRICT (PORT OF MORGAN CITY)

The Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District, the dock and warehouse facilities.

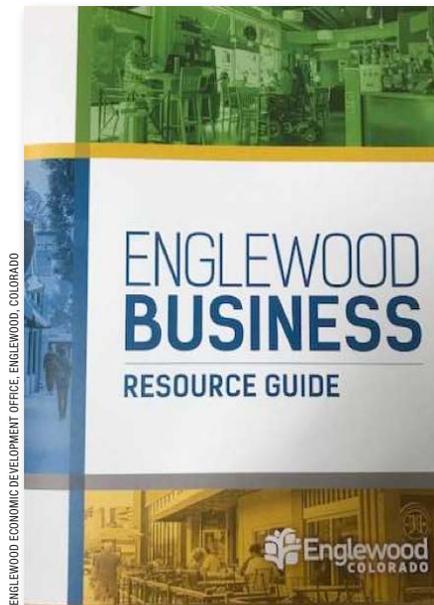
the reduction in the demand for this activity will require oil service operators to continue to develop alternative products and markets. The panel admired the entrepreneurial approach that several maritime businesses in the area have taken to diversify their operations. Given the strategic location of the study area to ship and receive cargo throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, the panel offers the following recommendations:

- Under the leadership of the Port of Morgan City, the governments of Berwick, Morgan City, and St. Mary Parish should develop a unified and cooperative approach to ensure that a consistent waterway channel depth is maintained into the future. The port engages the services of a professional lobbyist in Washington, D.C., to lead the strategy for communicating with elected and appointed officials with the goal of creating public-sector project champions for a 20-foot deep by 400-foot wide congressionally authorized channel from Morgan City south to the Gulf of Mexico.
- Emphasize the need for local and regional funding along with federal funds to maintain a consistent channel depth.

- Continue to identify and develop alternative markets for the manufacturing and shipyard infrastructure that is in place.
- Target renewable energy companies, such as wind and solar companies, to locate in Morgan City and Berwick.
- Focus on repair and refurbishment of marine equipment, a natural opportunity to establish the area as a maritime support hub, given the region's central location and accessibility by water, rail, and road.
- Develop a comprehensive database of ship and barge assets that are due for required repair, and contact owners well in advance to market the capabilities of the port and the shipyards in the area. The information is publicly available. This action should be a shared focus of the port and the St. Mary Parish Office of Economic Development in partnership with the shipyard owners.
- Specifically, explore options for barge and tow-boat repair at available properties along the riverfront to service marine traffic that is transiting along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.
- Explore the reestablishment of a seafood co-op in Morgan City/Berwick. The co-op could partner on ice provisioning, sales, and marketing. The cost of docking shrimping boats should be similar on both sides of the river.
- Support and develop smaller-scale, local, unique, and independent businesses. One of the truly special characteristics of the communities is that large portions of their commercial districts have retained their historical and image-defining character. They have not been transformed by the corporate brands that have infiltrated other areas of the parish.
- The local business community indicated that interacting with the local and Parish governments is confusing and intimidating. The process to develop a site, lease a building, and operate a business should be customer-friendly. Create an online "one-stop shop" for persons who are interested in developing a property or opening a business to learn the steps and get prepared for working with the municipalities.
- Draft and distribute a St. Mary Parish business resource guide to provide consolidated business resource information. The guide should serve as a marketing opportunity for the region, can be replicated online, and should be updated annually.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of property and building development regulations in each community, and identify ways to streamline them and make them consistent throughout the parish.
- Work with the regional Small Business Development Center at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux to provide training and business development advice on site in Morgan City and Berwick to ensure that businesses have access to resources to ensure their ongoing viability.
- Offer initiation grants to small businesses that open in Morgan City and Berwick. The only requirements should be that they occupy a publicly accessible commercial space and that the owner completes a business training class. For established businesses, offer a business acceleration grant when they are ready to make their next commitment to staying in their location by completing a renovation or investing in new, permanent equipment.
- Develop and regularly update an online database of available property and commercial/industrial space or

Shift the Attitude from "I've Got Mine" to "We're All in It Together"

The communities currently operate independently of one another, and resentment exists toward the developments and services that larger communities outside St. Mary Parish, such as Houma and Thibodaux, have to offer. Morgan City and Berwick should embrace the fact that those services will continue to influence the entire region and similar development is not feasible for Morgan City and Berwick. However, the cities and the parish can embrace their core assets to sustain their economy well into the future by embracing the following recommendations:



The Englewood Business Resource Guide is a publication used for streamlining business resources and retention in Englewood, Colorado. The panel recommends that a similar guide be created for the Tri-City region to help streamline local policies and procedures related to businesses.

subscribe to a commercial listing service to provide small business prospects with timely and accurate information.

- Include the Young Memorial Campus of South Louisiana Community College in strategy development to ensure that the school will continue to provide the programs that will enable graduates to go to work and grow their lives in the Morgan City/Berwick area.
- Explore expanding the capabilities of the Harry P. Williams Memorial Airport (PTN) in partnership with the fixed-base operator. Market the airport and adjacent helipad broadly in the region and the southeast portion of the country.
- Sustain a commitment to the maintenance and refurbishment of the area's infrastructure. Seek ways to partner on large projects, rather than having each city chart its own course.

Focus Attention on Retention

The primary focus of economic development activities in the Morgan City and Berwick area for the next three years should be on retaining established businesses.

The vast majority of new jobs in the area are created by existing businesses. Traditional approaches to economic development have centered on recruiting new business to a region. The value provided by the established business community is often underappreciated. Retaining businesses in Morgan City and Berwick can be enhanced by the following:

- Using St. Mary Excel as the organizer, establishing a new business retention group made up of the economic development agencies in the area, staff, and elected leaders to conduct business retention visits (as a team) with the 10 largest private employers (more if resources allow) in Morgan City/Berwick on an annual basis. Ask about their level of satisfaction with their location, challenges they may have, and issues the local governments can help solve. A business is far less likely to leave if it knows it has local advocates who want to ensure continued success.
- Developing a strict "no poaching" policy that states that cities and parishes in the region will not actively recruit or incentivize existing businesses from their neighbors. The current economic development focus seems to be on moving businesses within the region, which is not creating new growth or investment and is draining resources that could be targeted to outside firms.
- Considering regional revenue sharing within the parish to lessen the impact of poaching, and the picking of winners and losers as it relates to activities such as shopping.
- Convening the leaders and staff of the cities, parish, and economic development organizations in the region monthly or quarterly to discuss opportunities, challenges, and shared approaches to success in business development efforts. The virtual fences around each community need to be lowered to present the region's

best case to future businesses from proactive voices at the table. This group should become a regional economic development board or authority.

Make Resilience a Regional Export

To increase economic resilience, Morgan City should continue to consider economic development approaches, such as support for field-tested technological innovation and entrepreneurialism. Given the celebrated history of ground-breaking innovation and first-of-a-kind fabrication successes, Morgan City possesses the unique opportunity to develop and pilot projects in the emerging resilience technology space in the form of a coastal resilience laboratory.

The Morgan City and Berwick region have a relatively high risk of sea-level rise. However, because of levee upgrades, the overall risk is much lower than that of the surrounding communities. This public knowledge would serve as an asset to the region's image, marketing, and attractiveness for future investment. Using the study area as a way to address economic development and grow the safe harbor status, a coastal resilience laboratory should be created. This venture could build on the excellent work underway around the region and by other institutions and organizations but would focus on implementation, commercialization, and demonstration.

First, the proximity to other relevant organizations will be important. The Adaptation Studio at Louisiana State University and Tulane's ByWater Institute are obvious partners, but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, and the U.S. Coast Guard are all potential collaborators. The University of Arizona also does research in the Tri-City region because of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Second, the study area has portions of higher, safer ground and levee or floodwall-protected area alongside lower, more vulnerable areas. This variety would allow for location while providing access to potential testing grounds for strategies and technologies developed there.

Because surplus office and industrial laydown space exists in the Morgan City area, value could be created by leveraging local entrepreneurs and fabricators located close

enough to share equipment and to exchange ideas and by creating opportunities for partnerships and collaborations. These collaborations have potential to launch opportunities to develop supporting enterprises such as offices, training areas, research labs, and community space.

Expand the Health Care Services Sector

Health care is a steadily growing segment of the national economy, and the Tri-City region is no exception. The Teche Regional Medical Center has the potential to create a vibrant health care and wellness cluster even with the likely consolidation to a new provider. As part of the negotiation process, the panel recommends that the new agreement provide for expanded on-site medical services, increased community outreach, and wellness opportunities. This will help attract ancillary health-related product and service business to the Tri-City region, such as a research component and mental health services.

South Louisiana Community College already has training programs for medical and maritime health technicians. This opportunity should grow to better serve the community as well as grow maritime operations, especially those related to resilience. The Wrangell Alaska Medical Center—a town of 2,300 residents 200 miles to the south of Juneau—followed this strategy. Recognizing the need for qualified nursing assistants, the medical center partnered with the local educational system to provide clinical education and training to students interested in becoming certified. One hundred percent of the cost is covered for the medical center employees, and more than 200 students have participated with a majority being employed in the local health system.

Enhance the Visitor Experience

Morgan City and Berwick are at the center of one of the nation's most unique natural environments. Enhancing tourism facilities is another key component that will ensure a diversified regional economy into the future. The Cajun



GARRETT AVERY/ULLI

Reopened in 2018, the Cajun Coast Visitors Center is a gateway to tourism throughout the Cajun Coast. The visitors center could be better leveraged through wayfinding signs, a focus on an interactive and multimedia experience, and better connection to the swamp experience surrounding the site.

Coast Visitors Center and Lake End Park are two investments that can serve as anchors for visitor activities.

Morgan City has ample hotel rooms, particularly on weekends, to accommodate significantly more visitors. The goal should be to make the Morgan City area the overnight destination hub and unique visitor experience in Cajun Coast Louisiana that is truly genuine. Visitors should be introduced to the variety of experiences that justify spending several days or even a week sampling the culture, food, riverfront, shopping, and eco and swamp tours while learning more about the history of the area. The panel's recommendations for maximizing the area's attractiveness to visitors include the following:

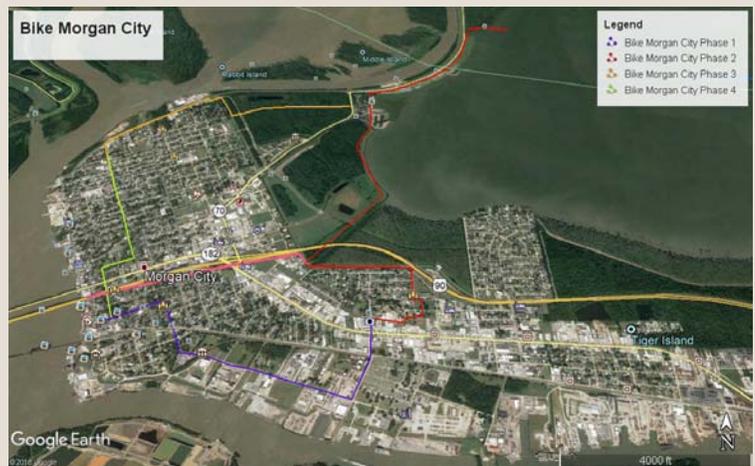
- Develop wayfinding signs along U.S. 90, within the cities, and around the Cajun Coast region to direct visitors to area attractions.
- Upgrade the visitors center to an interpretive experience with interactive and video presentations that offer a sampling of the varied experiences in the Cajun Coast region.
- Act on the goal of providing access to the swamp via an interpretive boardwalk adjacent to the Visitors Center.

Morgan City Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan

The Morgan City Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan is a recreational trails master plan that has been developed for the following segments:

- Young Memorial Campus (South Louisiana Community College) pathway from downtown to campus;
- Connect Lakeside subdivision with Lake End Park on levee through Hellenic property;
- Lake End Park to Brownell Tower;
- Lake End Park to downtown; and
- Morgan City to Berwick.

The panel recommends completing these segments to enhance the visitor and resident experience, enhance local mobility options, and bridge the divides between Morgan City, Berwick, and Patterson.



This map illustrates Bike Morgan City's trail plan, which shows the desired investment for cycling infrastructure to support local residents and regional bike connectivity.

- Complete the Morgan City Bike and Pedestrian Plan to connect the lake and riverfronts to Berwick trails. Permanent wellness benefits will also enhance the quality of life for the residents of the area. The trails will also enable alternative transportation options for existing residents.
- Pursue a public/private partnership to expand services at Lake Palourde, including a restaurant, marina, houseboat rentals, recreational boat rentals, and a protected beach.

- Add more RV camping facilities for snowbirds from the north in winter months and add adventure camping in wildlife refuge areas to further grow this potential.
- Encourage local outfitters to offer guided fishing, birding, canoe, and kayak adventures.
- Coordinate scheduling with fishing and shrimp boats to offer fresh seafood for purchase at the riverfronts.
- Fully develop the International Petroleum Museum to serve as a genuine interpretive experience for visitors. This will require business and marketing plans, better access, and parking.

Development Opportunities

THIS SECTION PROVIDES RECOMMENDATIONS on development opportunities for housing as well as downtown Morgan City and Berwick. The first section related to housing development covers a range of housing types and focuses on several potential development locations plus some infill opportunity. The second section relates directly to development in downtown Morgan City and Berwick. It includes some recommendations to better connect the two as well as how they should specialize to support each other.

However, the importance of obtaining the required FEMA certification must be pointed out. Beyond the Tri-City region's rich culture, growing businesses, and need for new housing construction, a lack of certification increases the risk for investment in the community. This certification—obtainable because of the levee construction—will create a region that is protected from a changing climate and differentiate it from other areas of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast that are less protected.

Housing Development

Morgan City has several potential areas for housing development, including infill development and renovation of housing in existing neighborhoods as well as development of the Hellenic Inc. property and the Morgan City Housing Authority's Brownell Homes—the last remaining developable sites within city limits. The town of Berwick has additional locations for new development, but constructing housing in existing neighborhoods should be prioritized.

The panel recommends that Morgan City focus on providing a wide range of housing types affordable to different income levels within existing neighborhoods. These include affordable units, entry and mid-level homes, and some mid- to upper-level homes.



Highlighted in red are several areas identified for potential housing development, including infill development and renovation of housing in existing neighborhoods within study area.

- **Affordable housing:** Currently a total of 288 affordable housing units are available, serving 3 percent of the population. Additional units are required for the Morgan City and Berwick area. Affordable housing should be built as mixed income and not segregated from the rest of the community.
- **Entry to mid-level housing:** Multifamily homes would serve transient population such as U.S. Coast Guard employees who rotate every two years, or others who want to rent rather than buy in the area (e.g., oil field workers or shipbuilders). The community has numerous vacant lots that could be used to develop multifamily housing developments or new single-family houses. On non-city-owned properties, the city should assist developers to rezone abandoned or vacant land so it can be developed. On city-owned property (empty schools or public buildings with limited value), public/private partnerships could be used. The city would provide the land in exchange for development by the private sector. As an element of the

Taxing Empty and Vacant Homes and Commercial Sites to Fund Renovation

Absentee landlords uninterested in investing in upgrades have resulted in a run-down appearance in various Morgan City neighborhoods. Introduction of a “vacancy tax” could encourage absentee owners to either sell or upgrade their homes and commercial sites and release additional properties to the market or prompt them to rent out the homes and sites, thereby providing additional rental stock.

Having empty homes occupied improves the quality of the neighborhood, and a larger presence of “eyes on the street” ultimately creates safer neighborhoods. To address the problem of empty homes in Vancouver, Canada, the city introduced this tax in response to the opposite problem—extremely low vacancy in rental stock and rapidly escalating house prices. Although circumstances differ in Vancouver and the Tri-Cities region, home vacancy is a problem.

Small-value grants could be provided using partial proceeds from the empty-home tax to incentivize the rehabilitation of older homes, whose costs are typically fully borne by individual homeowners. In addition, education should be provided to homeowners—and those wishing to purchase a home—about available tax incentives or funding sources to offset the cost burden to purchasers. For example, Morgan City Main Street, the Morgan City Housing Authority, or another nonprofit could partner with a regional bank or Louisiana-based community development financial institution to provide financing for residents undertaking home renovations.

partnership, the city can require the developer to provide a percentage of units at below-market rates (reserved for tenants below specific income thresholds). This strategy would increase the amount of affordable housing in the area. The city should work with the Morgan City Housing Authority (MCHA) to provide rental assistance programs and certify income-restricted units are occupied by residents who meet the income requirements.

- *Mid- to upper-level housing:* Infill and rehab of existing homes in downtown neighborhoods, particularly in the Morgan City cultural area district and downtown Berwick, should be pursued. The majority of these areas are at high elevations because of the new levee construction and therefore eligible for flood insurance. These neighborhoods also have infrastructure in place (water, sewer, power, sidewalks). Morgan City, Berwick, and St. Mary Parish should focus investment on beautification of these areas—making sure roads, lighting, signage, and trees are maintained to attract homeowners to the area and preserving the rich housing stock within the area.

The Hellenic Property

Located near Lake Palourde, the Hellenic Property has attracted interest from community members for development into upper-income housing. According to FEMA’s existing maps, the majority of the property is protected against 100-year floods—including wave action—by the levee system, but land along the lakeshore is outside the levee protection. The property has existing wetlands. Wetland remediation is cost-prohibitive, and the process to obtain permits could take at least two years.

The panel conducted a financial analysis of two development scenarios for the property. Both options would

The Hellenic Property (highlighted in red) was identified by the sponsor as a potential residential development site that is adjacent to Lake End Park.



require remediation, site servicing, and lot subdivision. The full buildout option would require preselling homes, construction of the homes, and then selling to individual homeowners. The other option is to sell most, if not all, improved lots to a homebuilder who would then assume the construction and sales risk.

Within St. Mary Parish, median property value for single-family residential averages about \$95,500, with the largest share of a household's property value ranging from \$100,000 to \$125,000. In both scenarios, the sales prices required of homes to cover costs, with a zero land value, were higher than comparable lots and homes currently for sale in Berwick and Morgan City. Developing property with homes selling for more than \$350,000 would not match the current needs of the community. Current employment trends and income levels in the study area do not support a need for homes costing more than \$300,000, demonstrating a current gap in the market for homebuyers in a low- to mid-entry range for this market.

Residential property on both areas of the Hellenic property would require targeting buyers outside the current market. Toward this end, higher-end and second-home ownership were discussed during the study week. Further market analysis for elevated-waterfront Morgan City Hellenic property is warranted though similar waterfront developments have occurred within a 10-mile radius of the Hellenic property.

Because of the complexities of developing this property and the pressing needs for revitalization in older areas, the development of the Hellenic property should be a low priority for public-sector investment. Public support should be proffered only if public benefits can clearly be proven. Financing and development costs associated with any development should be borne instead by the private sector.

A near-term and medium-term avenue to generate some income from landholdings for Hellenic Inc. would be to work with parks and conservation boards to investigate alternate uses for the land. In the longer term, Hellenic Inc. could issue a request for proposals to obtain private-sector bids to develop the land along the lakeshore, that is, the



AECOM REBUILD IN DESIGN, MEADOWLANDS PROJECT

unprotected side of the levee where space is available, for seasonal, second home, and recreational single-family residential housing with waterfront access and elevated construction on pilings. Any conservation easements should be incorporated into the overall Master Plan as a value add to the property and may help wetland mitigation costs.

Public realm investment options such as new recreation trails, green streets, and new or improved parks can add to the pedestrian experience, increase the value of new and existing development, and improve an area's sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

However, any request for proposals for lakeshore development should include a disclosure of longer-term relative sea-level change between 2.1 to 3.8 feet within the exposed area if additional ongoing work by Drainage District 2 and the Levee District is not undertaken as planned and properly maintained.

Morgan City Housing Authority Sites

The panel believes that using existing assets in ways that have not been traditionally leveraged in the past will allow the MCHA to capitalize on highly underused assets. In addition, the panel believes that such a demonstration site will provide evidence that the demand for good-quality housing is not being met and that people are willing to live in the same community where they work if the right mix of quality and affordable housing is provided.

Use existing public housing authority assets to provide some greatly needed affordable and market-rate units as a demonstration site. The existing Brownell Homes property located at 312 Wren Street is an ideal location for such a

Financing Mixed-Income Housing Projects

Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) was created to provide public housing agencies access to more stable funding (private capital) and make needed improvements to existing properties. Under the program, existing public housing is converted to long-term, project-based Section 8 contracts. This enables agencies like the MCHA to modernize existing housing and participate in the development of new, mixed-income properties.

More information about RAD can be found at <https://www.hud.gov/rad>.

demonstration site. The undeveloped sections of Brownell Homes have the following attributes:

- The land is already owned by the MCHA.
- It is located between an established commercial district and existing recreation and undeveloped land.
- Recreational and commuter trails are in place.
- It is along a major route to the moderately used Lake End Park.
- Existing grades can be used as is (awaiting FEMA map modifications since levee protection work).
- Major utilities already run to the site and even to potential pad locations for redevelopment.
- Most important, a tremendous market exists for high-quality, affordable rental units.

In light of the preceding, the panel recommends that MCHA issue a request for proposals to qualified mixed-income multifamily developers with the following assumptions and requirements:

- The MCHA will provide a ground lease to the selected developer at a cost of one dollar per year for an agreed number of acres at the Brownell Homes site (restricted to land with no current vertical improvements).

- The MCHA will provide up to 10 percent of its annual capital funds budget to the developer to subsidize operating costs of newly created affordable units by the developer. The panel's research indicates that up to 20 percent of the annual capital funds provided from HUD are at the discretion of the MCHA, thus 10 percent would seem to be an acceptable amount to dedicate to such a demonstration project that may lead to other creative deal structures in the future and allow the MCHA to modernize its portfolio in a measured way.

In exchange for these incentives and in furtherance of developing a demonstration project that includes mixed-income units with a minimum of 20 percent of the units being designated as public housing agency units as typically found in HUD-approved mixed-income communities, the selected developer will undertake the following services and activities:

- Due diligence activities on the selected site;
- Preliminary design and construction budgeting;
- Design specifications to meet minimum standards as governed by the Louisiana Housing Corporation, the state authority that administers low-income housing tax credits within the state;
- Sourcing and securing financing of the capital stack associated with a mixed-income community, including developer/sponsor equity, loans, and grants as anticipated capital sources;

Columbia Park at Bayou District is a 683-unit mixed-income master-planned development spanning 17 city blocks in New Orleans. This project was a 2016 finalist for the ULI Americas Jack Kemp Excellence in Affordable and Workforce Housing Awards.



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- Construction of the facility; and
- Third-party management of the facility.

Because of the MCHA's previous history and to provide transparency, the panel recommends that the selected developer be vetted by a third-party evaluation committee such as the Louisiana Housing Corporation. The selected developer also should have experience with completing mixed-income projects and not have any ties to existing officials in St. Mary Parish.

Downtown Development Opportunities

Morgan City and Berwick need to work together to successfully develop their downtowns. They have a symbiotic relationship and should be thought of as one entity with differing specialties: Morgan City as the retail and commercial hub of the Cajun Coast and Berwick as a regional hub for recreation and festivals.

The region has a reputation for being welcoming and service oriented. Having Morgan City merchants focus on what makes this region and their offerings unique and communicating that to the consumer may well result in increased consumer patronage from both in and out of the area—and increased sales. By extension, similar strategies on the part of local merchants will create a buzz about a specialty Tri-City shopping district located in downtown Morgan City. Conversely, Berwick has a strong reputation for housing, recreation, and growing festivals.

Berwick should build on the success of the Morgan City Main Street organization and establish its own Main Street program to work in close collaboration—not competition. Potentially this could turn into a unified operating entity, or Morgan City and Berwick should explore establishing a redevelopment authority or corporation geographically targeting both communities' downtowns, including the Riverwalk areas.

One of the first steps would be to work to physically improve the connection between both downtowns through

wayfinding, lighting, biking, and sidewalk connections—especially on the Long–Allen Bridge. Once established, this entity should coordinate closely with and implement existing land use and transportation plans, such as the applications for funding that have been submitted to the Louisiana Department of Transportation for a Safe Routes for Public Places grant and to Louisiana State Parks for a Recreational Trails Grant.

Concentrating community investment across the bridge together would create and enhance a center of activity. Concentrated reinvestment would support an experience for residents and visitors alike, affecting equitable community recreation opportunities, strengthening walkability, bike-ability, and water access. The following sections describe specific recommendations for Morgan City and Berwick as well as sources for spurring investment to transform their downtowns into vibrant and active places.

Some near-term actions should be the following:

- Replace faded street signs.
- Conduct a streetscape plan including period street lights, replace glaring LCD lamps with warmer lower-wattage LCD lamps; improved sidewalks and street surfaces, cutting back overgrown foliage; and create “parklets” for outdoor dining for restaurants when weather permits.
- Adopt a “Downtown,” “Historic District,” or “Shopping District” identity for the area.
- Create new banner signage for street lamp poles, wayfinding signage, and the like.

Morgan City

Building on the idea that Morgan City should be the commercial hub of the Cajun Coast, the center should be Lawrence Park with strong connections established to Front Street and the Atchafalaya River. The area, already identified as the city's historic district, currently serves as a de facto community gathering place with “gravity side” characteristics and is a lovely environment in which to linger.

University Partnerships for Design Excellence

The Tri-City region could benefit from design partnerships with state, national, and international universities. A great example of a partnership that attracts international participation is the Rural Studio. Founded in 1993 by D.K. Ruth and Samuel Mockbee, Rural Studio is a program operated by Auburn University with the philosophy that everyone, both rich and poor, deserves good design.

Rural Studio brings undergraduate and fifth-year students to Newbern, Alabama, where they immerse themselves in rural Alabamian life for a year and work on projects serving the counties surrounding the town. In the past 23 years of operating, Rural Studio students have built more than 200 site-specific community projects, including nearly 30 pro bono single-family houses, libraries, community centers, stores, pavilions, and more. In 2015, the studio launched its 20K Initiative, which challenges its fifth-year students to create sustainable, affordable home designs that cost under \$20,000, \$12,000 allocated for building materials and \$8,000 for labor and profit.

The program is currently putting out a 20K home product line, the goal of which is to make its designs implementable in other rural communities with attention to delivery and sociocultural context. The program is collaborating with Fannie Mae to look at systemic issues around access to homeownership and to expand the impact of the 20K program across the country.

Other university and rural area partnerships include the following:

- *Design Build Bluff, University of Utah working in Bluff, Utah:* This program creates designs for pro bono single-family houses for a specific benefi-



FORREST/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



CAROL-HIGHSMITH/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Two projects, one housing and one public infrastructure, designed and built by Rural Studio in Newbern, Alabama.



PAUL ANGELO/ULI

Morgan City students drew images for the panel after being prompted about their desires and perspective as young people in their communities.

ciary of the Navajo Nation in collaboration with the Navajo people. The designs focus on using natural materials and creating designs specific for Navajo life and culture, dealing with specific issues related to living on an Indian reservation.

- *Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design, Tulane University working in New Orleans, Louisiana:* Focused on community design, this program works with communities across New Orleans. The program aims to work as the catalyst for creating sustainable communities, and its projects run the gamut of pop-up performance venues, skate parks, classrooms, housing design, and parks. The program so far has only worked on projects in New Orleans, but it has supported research by fellows throughout Louisiana.
- *Studio 804, University of Kansas working across Kansas:* From the design to the construction of a building, Studio 804 works with a group of students over nine months to create projects that are innovative, sustainable, and affordable. The program has run since 1995 and its portfolio includes single-family houses, community centers, and school buildings.
- *Howard S. Wright Neighborhood Design/Build Studio, University of Washington working with Seattle-based nonprofits:* During the spring semester, students work with a nonprofit chosen by the instructor to design and build small community projects. The students work in groups and are responsible for the site analysis and planning, project design, production of working drawings, materials procurement, fabrication, and scheduling. Projects are primarily outdoor structures and have included greenhouses, sheds, gardens, and play and picnic areas.

Another specialty university program is the Wood Program, Aalto University working with wood as a discipline in Finland. This year-long program immerses international graduate students in a world of wood and wooden architecture. The program spends the entire year focused on the practice of using wood, teaching students to work within a specific and unique medium. Students create housing and larger building prototypes as well as outdoor structures for commissioned work.



GARRETT AVERVULLI AND NITASHA RAJORA/ULI



GARRETT AVERVULLI

The panel recommends that investment in downtown Morgan City focus on enhancements surrounding Lawrence Park and the Front Street commercial areas. The investment should concentrate on economic development, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and enhanced visibility between Morgan City, Berwick, and the river.

Lawrence Park serves as Morgan City's downtown park, surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Lawrence Park occupies a full city block and is characterized by a centrally located fountain surrounded by heritage oaks offering a shady place to linger. Benches, a children's play structure, and other amenities are also present. Located two short blocks from Front Street and the river, the park is surrounded by generally well-maintained homes and businesses, including a sweets and coffee shop, professional offices, a bed and breakfast, the town library, and places of worship. Vacant and underused space could easily be renovated and occupied by a variety of "active" uses.

Front Street, in contrast, is home to a variety of businesses ranging from restaurants to light-industrial and distribution uses. Although effort has been made to articulate its seawall, and a well-constructed and maintained boardwalk has been provided to the riverside, Front Street is unfortunately burdened by the wall, which makes for a less inviting environment than Lawrence Park.

By day, Front Street's retail businesses range from gift shops to restaurants to Shannon Hardware. Front Street is also home to G&J Land and Marine Food Distributors, which operates a loading dock and brings full-size semi

traffic to an otherwise quiet environment. Oddly, many open and operating storefronts have windows obscured, poor window displays, or no windows at all. At night when Front Street is virtually deserted, the seawall becomes particularly burdensome to creating an appealing specialty retail environment.

To mitigate this effect, over time residential units should be built above the storefronts where appropriate. For example, 215 and 300 Everett Street each could be adapted to have downstairs commercial uses and upstairs residential uses. Such a strategy further establishes the area as a center of the Tri-City region. Users near the Front Street retail area should consider relocating and consolidate within the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District over time and organically consolidate as space requirements may change.

The park easily connects to Front Street and the river via Freret and Everett streets, but Everett Street is more commercial with a number of existing businesses, the Town Hall, and the renovated post office, whereas Freret is more residential in nature. Encouraging active uses to locate on Freret Street between Lawrence Park and Front

Morgan City's Front Street adjacent to the seawall is home to many local business storefronts. The street has a unique historic character that can be better amplified to attract people back to the downtown.



GARRETT AVERVULLI



BING MAPS 2015



ANGELO CARUSI 2015

ULI's 2015 Advisory Services panel report for Seattle focused on the Duwamish River and proposed consolidation of industrial areas. Left: The land use pattern of the industrial area. Right: A conceptual consolidation of industrial properties as proposed by the panel.

Street should also be a focus. An increasing critical mass of retail in this concentrated area will become a draw in and of itself, activate streets, and in addition to drawing Tri-City residents looking for an appealing lifestyle amenity, will come to have the potential to be a destination draw for tourists and transient populations. In time, such a retail district will replace some weekend specialty shopping trips to Houma and will create a top-of-mind alternative to Thibodaux as a food and beverage destination.

Berwick

Downtown Berwick is well positioned to grow into a recreational hub with some opportunities for multifamily housing in several of its underused structures. Other than the industrial uses, opportunity for retail and commercial development opportunities is limited. Given the proximity of the two communities, connected by the landmark bridge

and access to water, the area could support walkable, more dense development. A potential role exists for a private-sector partnership that could build affordable and market-rate housing—with Atchafalaya views.

Berwick is currently seen as a festival city with many small, well-attended events each year. While not as large as Morgan City's Shrimp and Petroleum Festival, Berwick's Lighthouse Festival shows how it can be a hub for multiple events. Because of the location of Berwick's waterfront, more of Berwick's downtown is accessible to the Atchafalaya River and available for festivals and other small events. Fields and other recreational uses that would be okay with occasional flooding could be built in this area, though some hardscape should remain to allow for events such as car shows.

The Southwest Reef Lighthouse was relocated to Berwick's riverfront in 1987 after 130 years on the Atchafalaya River. The lighthouse is a local landmark and home to the annual Berwick Lighthouse Festival.



ULI



GARRETT AVERY/ULI AND INTASHIA RAJORA/ULI

The panel recommends that investment in Berwick focus along its riverfront, increasing the connectivity between water and open space. The panel believes that this area would be prime for increased housing, including multifamily and a limited amount of residential space built over retail.

Getting It Right

A KEY FIRST STEP IN IMPLEMENTING the panel's report is to embrace, celebrate, and sell the Morgan City and Berwick story. This is something starting to emerge, but it still needs work. The panel strongly recommends the continued role of St. Mary Excel leadership as conveners of all stakeholders within the community and to work with public officials to craft this vision. This is a tall task and to professionalize St. Mary Excel, the panel recommends the organization hire an executive director who can dedicate full attention to making the Tri-City region a better place to live, work, and play.

The next step is evaluating the establishment of a redevelopment authority or corporation. In many cities, a redevelopment plan area is determined and approved by the local authority and jurisdiction. Then, a redevelopment authority is created that can establish guidelines and attract resources for a defined geographic area. Some benefits include tax abatement and other incentives to encourage development. The panel suggests that Morgan City and Berwick explore establishing a redevelopment authority or corporation that would focus on connecting, integrating, and redeveloping a shared strategy for the two downtowns. This entity could also manage the day-to-day operations of the variety of development and financing options for redevelopment.

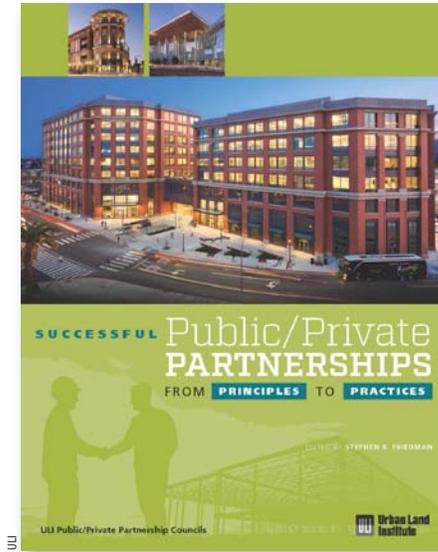
The authority could be either a public or nonprofit entity, but board membership should embrace both communities and include the executive director of St. Mary Excel. The panel recognizes the exceptional organizational skills of St. Mary Excel and strongly recommends that St. Mary Excel provide continuing guidance for follow through on this report's recommendations.

Redevelopment Entities

Public Example (Authority). In Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Redevelopment Commission promotes and implements economic development projects, acting as a catalyst to redevelop blighted and other areas that have ceased growing and lack development, especially in the downtown area. This is done through techniques including real estate acquisition, site preparation, and infrastructure development. Financing resources generally used are tax increment financing and redevelopment general obligation bonds. Formed in September 1959, the Redevelopment Commission consists of five voting members appointed by the Mayor and the Common Council of the city of Fort Wayne and a nonvoting member appointed by the Fort Wayne Community School's Board of School Trustees. The commissioners serve on an annual basis and are supported by an executive director, whom they appoint, and a staff that is housed in the city's Community Development Division.

Nonprofit Example (Corporation). In Chattanooga, Tennessee, the River City Company nonprofit was launched in 1986 with the mission to implement the 20-year Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan. The nonprofit serves as a public purpose development company and has been integral in the development of the Tennessee Riverwalk and the Tennessee Aquarium, the redevelopment of the Kirkman High School site, fulfillment of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan, the Majestic Theater, and the Block. River City Company has also supported the private and public sectors in development and redevelopment of other properties as part of the original Master Plan. The nonprofit has a president/chief executive officer who reports to a board of directors and supporting staff.

ULI's Successful Public/Private Partnerships report is a helpful resource on the fundamentals of public/private partnerships, with resources including case studies demonstrating an array of useful financial tools.



Spurring Investment

A unified organization to coordinate development for Morgan City and Berwick would allow economies of scale in promotion and the development of public/private partnerships. Public/private partnerships are a way to combine the strengths and resources of both the public and private sectors most effectively. These partnerships are used in economic development, infrastructure development, social services delivery, and other applications.

This would enable the use of Morgan City's and Berwick's designated opportunity zones to attract new investment and leverage other sources of capital—such as local investors, the state of Louisiana, or the federal government.

Opportunity Zones

An issue the panel identified is that local capital—created through generational wealth or business ownership—is not being invested in the local Tri-City economy. Investment is going to other areas. In addition, the cost of capital tied up in landholding that is not providing a return (in actuality, providing a negative return) is a drain on the economy. Opportunity zones are one well-known way to encourage investment of local wealth in an area. The zones provide investors with tax advantages if they offer

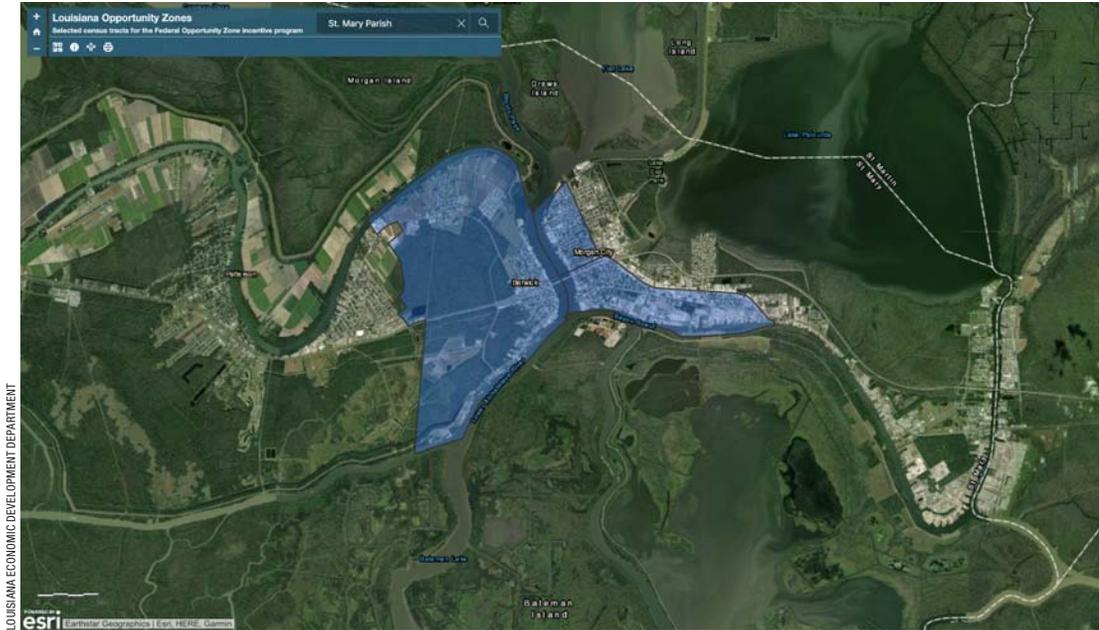
capital for projects, businesses, or both that will revitalize areas that have been affected by disinvestment in the past.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 included the opportunity zones legislation (Internal Revenue Code sections 1400Z-1 and 1400Z-2), which endeavors to incentivize investment in low-income communities via tax deferral and avoidance. Large banks, pension funds, family wealth activities, and individual investors that have large potential capital gains (from their own activities or from activities on behalf of their clients) are looking for opportunities to invest these capital gains. Even local banks, such as Hancock Whitney's Private Wealth Management division, may find the opportunity zones in Morgan City and Berwick an attractive investment, and they may be able to use Community Reinvestment Act credits at the same time.

As designed, the opportunity zone legislation is intended to encourage investment in areas previously disinvested or where investment has not been attracted for various reasons. Specifically, opportunity zone funds may be invested two ways: opportunity zone property and opportunity zone businesses. Because the earliest investments in opportunity zones will most likely be in property rather than businesses located in an opportunity zone, the marketing of both areas should be undertaken. Marketing should be not only for potential local investors that may have unrealized capital gains, but also for regional investors. In addition, local lending institutions should be made fully aware of and be a part of the team promoting the areas because they may be aware of local businesses looking to expand, move, or add locations. In addition, investors or developers may look to leverage their opportunity zone investment with construction loans.

In short, the opportunity zone legislation provides the following:

- If capital gains are invested within 180 days of being realized, the original capital gains tax will be deferred.
- If the original capital gains are invested for a minimum of five years, the basis that would be subject to capital gains tax will be decreased by 10 percent and the tax



This map illustrates areas in Morgan City and Berwick that qualify for the federal opportunity zone incentive program.

liability will be deferred until the investor receives funds back from the opportunity fund.

- If the original capital gains are invested for a minimum of seven years, the basis that would be subject to capital gains tax will be decreased by 15 percent and the tax liability will be deferred until the investor receives funds back from the opportunity fund.
- If the original capital gains are invested in 2019 for a minimum of 10 years, the basis that would be subject to capital gains tax will be decreased by 15 percent and the tax liability will be deferred until the 2029 tax year. In addition, any capital gains once realized by the original investment held for 10 years or longer in an opportunity fund will not be subject to capital gains taxes. Thus, an investor's sale of its interest in the opportunity fund should be equal to the fair market value of the investment, and as a result the sale of its interests should be tax free.

The focus should be on business retention within the opportunity zones as a way (a) to invest in the existing fabric of downtown Morgan City and Berwick; (b) to encourage startup and entrepreneurial businesses; and (c) to grow

Encouraging Patient Investment

Patient investment—a longer-term investment with no expectation of realizing a quick profit—is a rare and highly sought-after investment for small businesses as well as properties that do not traditionally provide quick market returns. Many retail store opportunities, especially ones with lower foot traffic based on traditional metrics, are not able to provide the required returns in the time frame that many nonpatient or nonimpact investors require.

existing and new businesses in Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District. The opportunity zone investment may provide an avenue to tap patient investment dollars that will not be looking for a return any earlier than five years and most likely after 10 years to maximize the tax benefits. This time frame should allow successful businesses enough time to gain their footing, attract and stabilize their customer base, and structure a capital event that will allow them at the appropriate time to repay the opportunity fund back its investment. Specifically, investment should be encouraged surrounding Lawrence Park in Morgan City.

Because of the complexity of the pending regulations, Morgan City and Berwick should look to professional fund managers that are steeped in the new and fluid regulations. The panel believes that a transparent and unified message is warranted. Counsel on structuring, the proper messaging, understanding fund structures, and needs are all critical items that need to be addressed to help lure potential funds and investors. The panel recommends that an adviser, a marketer, or both be selected whose fee structure is based on successes to help align their compensation to the goals and objectives of both Morgan City and Berwick.

Additional Sources of Investment and Funding

Beyond opportunity zones, other avenues for funding development and infrastructure are available from the private and public sectors. Some opportunities—like the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Trust, or federal disaster assistance—require a quick response, and communities need to be ready if future stimulus occurs. Other potential sources of funding could come from the local community (e.g., selling bricks in Lawrence Park) as well as philanthropic dollars (e.g., funding this panel). Some of the following funding sources can be leveraged for downtown development as well as areas beyond downtown (e.g., Lake End Park or the Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District).

Tax Increment Financing. An Economic Development District (EDD) is a financing mechanism that uses tax increment financing to create new development that operates within a specifically defined area that is otherwise too difficult or too expensive for developers to build independently. With this mechanism, government captures the incremental increases in tax revenue in the district over a set time period and reinvests this money through bonds into private development in the same district.

EDD's are a tool of optimism because they function with the expectation that new development will succeed in spurring transactions that will increase tax revenue. The revenue is not generated from specific existing taxes but based upon the incremental growth in values and the re-

lated taxes that are generated on top of what was received in the base tax year (the year preceding the implementation of the EDD). The tax revenue generated by the EDD is not based on an increased millage rate but represents the taxes generated by the investments in the district and the underlying increases in value that generally occur when economic activity improves.

In Louisiana, EDDs can be established by the state or a city. Typically, the EDD must be created in areas that are subject to distress, in need of conservation, with significant amounts of deterioration or dilapidation, or a broken community engagement system that prevents development. This is something that could be implemented by Morgan City within the city's historic district and, with state support, could be extended into downtown Berwick.

Environmental Impact Bonds. Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Agency has partnered with Quantified Ventures to pilot \$40 million in bonds to support the construction of wetlands to provide flood protection. These bonds are intended to assist asset owners like ports, intercoastal waterway users, oil and gas companies, and utilities. Cities such as Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; and Washington, D.C., have used these longer-term investments to pay for green infrastructure improvements.

Historic Preservation. Historic preservation income tax credits could be used for redevelopment of Morgan City's and Berwick's oldest structures. Specifically, the Louisiana

This map illustrates the area of Morgan City certified as a cultural district within the study area.



Division of Historic Preservation has designated the downtown Morgan City area as a Cultural District, which makes historic income-producing properties eligible for certain federal and state tax credits. A property must be listed on the National Register Historic Districts (federal) or be within a cultural district (state).

Federal Rural Development. Morgan City and Berwick qualify as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s rural development opportunities programs. These include Business and Industry Loan Guarantees, Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, Strategic Economic and Community Development, Rural Community Development Initiative Grants, Housing Preservation and Revitalization Demonstration Loans and Grants, Rural Housing Site Loans, Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants, and Rural Energy Saving Programs, among others.

Industrial Revenue Bonds. Industrial revenue bonds could be used as a tool to encourage and provide funding for industrial development in the industrial areas of the Tri-

City region. The Louisiana Public Facilities Authority can be helpful in facilitating these bonds.

Immigrant Investor Program. The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program could be used as a potential funding source for projects located throughout Tri-City region that meet the minimum required threshold. Participants would have to work with the Gulf Coast Regional Investment Center.

New Markets Tax Credits. New markets tax credits could be used to incentivize job creation and retail development.

Implementation Strategies

Through the leadership of St. Mary Excel and a proposed redevelopment authority or corporation—and in close collaboration with the governments of Morgan City, Berwick, and St. Mary Parish—the panel recommends a series of near-, medium-, and longer-term goals and steps in the areas of new economy, opportunity zones, and resilience. These goals are outlined in the following tables.

New Economy: Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Goals and Implementation

	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Goal	Improve economic development communication	Repurpose the riverfront	Expand the visitor experience
Description	Convene leadership, improve coordination and communication of economic development programs and priorities	Coordinated marketing of marine equipment repair and refurbishment capabilities as a means of lessening the impact from the reduction in demand for oil services in this area	Develop recommended physical improvements at Lake Palourde and the Cajun Coast Visitors Center to offer visitors an enhanced variety of experiences in the area
Lead	St. Mary Excel	Port of Morgan City	Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau
Support	St. Mary Parish, Chamber of Commerce, Port of Morgan City, Town of Berwick, and Morgan City	St. Mary Parish, Chamber of Commerce, Port of Morgan City, Town of Berwick, and Morgan City	Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau, Morgan City, Town of Berwick, St. Mary Parish, Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, private service providers and operators

Source: ULI.

Opportunity Zone: Short- and Medium-Term Goals and Implementation

	Short Term	Short Term	Medium Term
Goal	Jointly determine priorities	Form joint committee for promotion and marketing	Select pool of professional fund managers
Description	<p>Determine various priorities to push to the forefront for promotion to potential funds/developers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic investment strategy ■ Align state and local incentives ■ Equitable development 	<p>Given the priorities and strategies, develop professional promotion and marketing of the two designated opportunity zones with the audience being fund managers and developers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small business retention ■ Product diversity in same geography 	<p>Select shortlist of fund managers that will be able to attract qualified, experienced, developers of incremental and small town improvements based on the assets the region has to offer. May need the assistance of a multidisciplinary law firm to vet the various fund manager formats and strategies</p>
Cost	\$0 / Volunteer time	\$8,000	\$10,000
Funding source	Not applicable	Economic development dollars from parish, state, or both	Opportunity Fund (success fee structure?) or grant from foundation
Lead	St. Mary Excel	St. Mary Parish Economic Development	St. Mary Parish Community Foundation
Support	St. Mary Parish Community Foundation Chamber of Commerce	St. Mary One St. Mary Excel	Hancock/Whitney Bank

Source: ULI.

Resilience: Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Goals and Implementation

	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Goal	Initiate town/citywide vulnerability assessment	Achieve FEMA certification/map revision	Pilot coastal resilience laboratory
Description	Develop comprehensive understanding of local vulnerability to shocks (extreme events/disasters) and stresses (long-term social, economic, environmental issues)	Identify a local technology and/or fabrication partner to join the city and a state, regional, or national academic institution to pilot the development and testing of a resilience and adaptation technology	Identify a local technology and/or fabrication partner to join the city and a state, regional, or national academic institution to pilot the development and testing of a resilience/adaptation technology
Funding source	Federal (HUD Planning Grant) / state of Louisiana / St. Mary Parish EDC	Various federal, state, local sponsors including private foundations, business sponsors	
Lead	St. Mary Parish	St. Mary Levee District	City of Morgan City, Port of Morgan City, St. Mary Parish Economic Development
Support	City of Morgan City, Town of Berwick, Port of Morgan City, St. Mary Levee District, St. Mary Parish Consolidated Gravity Drainage District 2, St. Mary Excel	St. Mary Levee District, St. Mary Parish Consolidated Gravity Drainage District 2, city of Morgan City	City of Morgan City, Port of Morgan City, St. Mary Parish Economic Development

Source: ULI.

Conclusion

THE COMMUNITIES OF MORGAN CITY and Berwick have the potential to emerge from years of oil industry decline and become proactive in building success. Change requires a new approach to reinvigorating the existing community and encouraging local investment. This report outlines a series of recommendations whose implementation requires strong community buy-in and leadership. The panel was impressed by the number of local voices who participated during its visit and encouraged that they share similar perspectives on how to improve the community. Above all, the panel engagement sessions left a strong impression of community awareness and advocacy for the need for change. The contributions of young people during the process demonstrate their acute awareness of their surrounding community and desire to improve it.

Younger residents are leaving because they see a lack of opportunity; however, strong ties to the community remain. This is something to build on and work to engage those young people now to bring new ideas and new leadership to the community. In addition, individuals who feel disaffected from existing community leadership need to be brought in. Morgan City and Berwick are diverse communities, which should be reflected in community engagement, councils, and political office.

The sendoff sentiment is stakeholders are acutely aware of the area's challenges and prepared to back an implementation approach. The community is poised to be effective champions of the key economic, resilience, and land use themes laid out in this report. Moving forward requires

an entrepreneurial approach to building and leveraging current resources. With the leadership of St. Mary Excel to promote greater communication and collaboration among the existing entities, seeking the voices and input of diverse and extensive stakeholders will increase favorable economic and social outcomes. As stressed in the panel presentation, inaction also has significant costs.

Achieving the vision laid out by the community to return to a thriving, unique, and prosperous region will require time, dedication, and hard work. It will not be easy. It will not be quick. But ultimately, the people who live and work in Morgan City and Berwick are the greatest assets of the community. The setting in a beautiful, quintessentially Louisiana community can only help. It is worth the struggle and hard work ahead. In the weeks, months, and years following this panel report, the sponsors should be discussing next steps based on the recommendations. Project leaders should be identified. Forums should be conducted to involve key decision-makers and interested citizens. The panel looks forward to returning to the Tri-City region in the years to come and celebrating its successes.

About the Panel

Alrich Lynch

*Panel Chair
Atlanta, Georgia*

Lynch has over 20 years' experience in numerous aspects of real estate, development, construction management, and asset management. His varied background has afforded him the ability to smoothly transition between various positions, complex assignments, and uniquely different organizations. His proven track record throughout diverse roles involved more than \$936 million of projects, including over \$385 million in public/private ventures. Having been involved with all aspects of the development life cycle for over 6,000 units, including condominiums, market-rate apartments, mixed-income apartments, and mixed-use developments, brings a wealth of knowledge rarely found in the industry.

Lynch's career began in earnest at H.J. Russell and Company, where he worked as both an estimator and an assistant project manager. He later transitioned to the Integral Group, doing a one-year stint in construction management before joining the development group, focusing on mixed-income communities. After spending two years at Julian LeCraw & Company, Lynch was hired away by Trammell Crow Residential (TCR) to run the project that he helped LeCraw and its partners sell to TCR. In addition to the \$170 million development, Lynch eventually became the lead development manager for three simultaneous new market-rate apartment deals totaling over \$244 million. In 2010, Lynch took the helm of LDG Consulting, an advisory services firm focused on the design, construction, and real estate industries.

A native of West Palm Beach, Florida, Lynch graduated from the University of Florida, earning a bachelor of design in architecture with a minor in business as well as a mas-

ter's of building construction. He also obtained an MBA, concentration in real estate, from Georgia State University.

Garrett Avery

New York, New York

Avery is a landscape architect and project manager with more than a decade of experience leading the multi-disciplinary teams creating sustainable and resilient landscapes, water-sensitive urban environments, coastal saltmarsh and riverine restorations, and nature-based science education facilities. As a whole-systems advocate and leader in AECOM's NYC Metro Resilience Practice, Avery is currently focused on integrating the natural and urban systems driving social, ecological, and economic resilience in the region.

Before AECOM, Avery served as a project manager for EDAW in San Diego and as a landscape designer with Dargan Landscape Architects Inc. of Atlanta.

He received a professional degree in landscape architecture with emphasis in sustainable design and development from Clemson University, School of Architecture, Arts, and Humanities. He is currently an executive committee member of the Ocean Discovery Institute and a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Urban Land Institute, and U.S. Green Building Council.

John Goss

Indianapolis, Indiana

In 40 years of government service, Goss has diverse experience at the local, state, and federal levels in economic development, tourism development, and natural resources management. As deputy mayor of Bloomington,

Indiana, he helped inspire a downtown revitalization that continues to thrive today. He later led the state of Indiana tourism development strategy, finding hidden treasures and unique and genuine local attractions that increased visitor traffic. As staff for the Indiana Main Street Council, Goss encouraged business and government partnerships to reinvigorate main street economic corridors in small towns. As a member of the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority, he assisted with a community reuse strategy including an urban state park, historic preservation–friendly reuse of dozens of buildings, and new housing diversity in the wake of a base closing.

As director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Goss developed cooperative relationships with fish and wildlife constituent groups to facilitate hunting and fishing policies. In 2010, he joined the White House Council for Environmental Quality staff to help resolve a federal lawsuit filed by five state attorneys general to close the locks in Chicago to prevent Asian carp from moving into the Great Lakes. A regional coordination council including state, federal and local participants collectively developed an alternative strategy that has kept the invasive fish out of the Great Lakes. He currently continues as staff for that regional council as a contractor with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Goss earned a master's degree from Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

Clifford Graves

Culver City, California

Graves brings more than 40 years' experience in planning, urban development, and finance to his engagements. His career includes executive roles with federal, regional, local, and special-purpose agencies, and professional services in finance, urban development, and environmental management. He is an expert in public/private partnership management.

His experience includes the planning and development of the University of California campuses at Merced and San Francisco's Mission Bay, and senior positions at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C.

At the local level, Graves was general manager, community development, for the cities of Los Angeles and Carson, chief administrative officer for the county of San Diego, executive director of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, and senior planner for the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. He was town planner and civic designer for the East Sussex County Council in the U.K. In addition, Graves was an appointed commissioner of the San Diego Unified Port District and chaired the California Oil Spill Technical Advisory Committee.

As an investment banker, Graves served as financial adviser or underwriter on more than \$800 million in housing and infrastructure bond issues. He was also director of planning for a NYSE-listed environmental management company, managing the permitting of its own and client facilities.

Graves is a fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners, a full member of the Urban Land Institute, and a member of the Lambda Alpha land economics fraternity. He was a founding board member of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators.

An adjunct professor at the University of Southern California, he has also taught planning and public policy at the University of Maryland, Howard University, the University of California, Berkeley, and San Diego State University. He has advised the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the Public Policy Institute of California on their research programs. Graves holds master of city planning and BA degrees from the University of California at Berkeley.

David Greensfelder

Albany, California

As a developer, a consultant, and an experienced corporate real estate executive, Greensfelder has driven more than 325 projects spanning 6.3 million square feet with an aggregate acquisition and construction value exceeding \$700 million (finish market value estimated at well over \$1.25 billion). During the Great Recession, he built a \$100 million development pipeline (development cost) with a finished market value of nearly double that amount, helped a client acquire a publicly traded competitor, and developed plans to reposition over 1 million square feet of retail and mixed-use projects valued at over \$115 million.

Greensfelder Commercial Real Estate develops retail and mixed-use projects, provides inception to completion fee-based project management services, and consults on market strategy, economics, and land use for institutional and private clients across the United States and on retail real estate for financial institutions. Before forming his own firm, Greensfelder was director/vice president and principal of LandMark/NewMark's Northern California office, managed relationships with Fortune 25 companies such as CVS, oversaw acquisition and development of retail/residential mixed-use projects, led acquisition and development programs for programmatic joint ventures with publicly traded REITs, and successfully oversaw real estate strategy and implementation for national promotional and daily needs retailers.

He is the author of ULI/PwC's *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*® 2019 Retail and Last Mile sections, is a sought-after speaker at national and regional conferences, and lectures at UC Berkeley's Fisher Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics and Haas Graduate School of Business, USC's Lusk Center for Real Estate Development, and ULI and ICSC education programs. He serves on Bay Area-based Satellite Affordable Housing Associates' (former chair of the Real Estate Development Committee, and member of the Executive Committee) and the Center for Creative Land

Recycling's (Finance Committee) boards of directors, is an active ULI member, is an active UrbanPlan volunteer where he works with high school students in their senior year economics and civics curriculum and acts as an UrbanPlan for Public Officials instructor. He is on ICSC's P3 National Steering Committee, a former ICSC state officer, and is a founding member of the Oakland Retail Advisory Group. He graduated from Pitzer College (Claremont Colleges) with a degree in business economics.

Brad Power

City of Englewood, Colorado

Power has over 25 years of experience in redevelopment, public/private real estate development partnerships, economic development, and public agency leadership. He serves as the director of the Community Development Department for the city of Englewood, Colorado. Englewood is adjacent to Denver, and the department coordinates the city's planning, building services, economic development, redevelopment, housing, and environmental programs. A significant portion of his career included serving as executive director of the Boulder Urban Renewal Authority and as redevelopment director for the city of Boulder, Colorado. He also served as the director of the Economic Development Department for the city of Longmont, Colorado. Power has facilitated over \$600 million of private capital investment through projects that have included major retail center redevelopments as well as hotel, residential, and mixed-use developments.

Power is an active member and leader of the Urban Land Institute. He is a trustee of the 40,000-person organization and served as a governing trustee from 2013 to 2017. He is an original member of the Public/Private Partnership Council and he served as chairman of the council from 2008 to 2011. Power also served as a ULI Council Counselor and a member of several ULI committees and task forces, including the group that developed the UrbanPlan for Public Officials program.

He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Colorado. His graduate degree is in urban and regional planning. He was awarded the Fannie Mae Fellowship and completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program at Harvard University.

Nitasha Rajora

Vancouver, Canada

Rajora is an architect and real estate professional with 20 years of experience. She started her career in architecture after completing her bachelor of architecture degree at McGill University. Her architectural background and global-mindedness led her to South Africa, the U.K., the United States, and Canada, where she had the opportunity to work on a diverse set of projects including affordable housing, health care, and high-rise office buildings.

Following 10 years in architecture, Rajora completed her MBA at the Schulich School of Business with a focus in real estate and infrastructure. Immediately after graduation, the next five years were spent working intensively as a project director on public/private partnership (P3) projects that included a correctional center, university, hospitals and athletic stadiums/velodrome for the PanAm Games in 2015.

Since leaving the P3 world, Rajora's career has been focused on real estate development. She is currently the general manager for real estate development and investments at Atelier Capital Partners, a diversified real estate business with a portfolio of investment holdings and development projects across the United States and Canada.

Current projects include multifamily residential tower projects in Vancouver, Calgary, and Seattle and creative office developments in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

She stays active within the architectural community by serving as a committee member at the Architectural Institute of BC, and she maintains her global network through her role as a consul for InterNations, a community for expats and global minds.

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report



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