

Our Voice. Our Plan. Our Future.

Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan

Vision and Strategies
for Recovery and Growth
in South Louisiana

May 2007



Louisiana Speaks is the long-term
community planning initiative of the LRA



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Lori Waselchuk



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UDA/La. Speaks Pattern Book



Executive

Summary

LOUISIANA SPEAKS A PLAN FOR ACTION

THE LOUISIANA SPEAKS REGIONAL PLAN IS SET TO GUIDE OUR STATE AND ITS PEOPLE ON A BOLD NEW COURSE, THROUGH OUR RECOVERY AND INTO A SAFER, STRONGER, SMARTER FUTURE.

This is a time of challenges, but we will become stronger because of them. We are a state and a people blessed with rich natural and cultural resources and opportunities. South Louisiana will continue to provide us with land for homes and jobs, water for food and industry, and wetlands for safety from storms and flooding. In exchange, we promise to be stewards of this treasured landscape, of our cities, our towns, and our people.

We will build better levees, and we will restore the barrier islands, wetlands, and seashores that provide our first line of defense against storms. We will reinvest in our communities and we will build sustainable, vibrant new neighborhoods. We will create a diverse, resilient economy and provide the education necessary to attract more and better jobs, and we will supply quality healthcare. We will work to ensure that everyone has a choice of where to live and how to get around—by car, on efficient modern transit systems, and by foot or bike.

We will work together as a region to realize this vision, combining our talents and resources to meet the challenges we face. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan embodies our commitment to three Vision Goals: **Recover Sustainably, Grow Smarter,** and **Think Regionally.**

Louisiana Speaks is the long-term community planning initiative of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. This Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan document lays out a clear plan based on Louisianians' aspirations for the future, and it provides specific actions to get us there.

LOUISIANIANS SPOKE. LOUISIANA SPEAKS IS WHAT THEY SAID.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is a living document. It establishes a dynamic, flexible framework that can accommodate contingency and change while remaining true to a unifying vision. As the plan is implemented—as levees are built, wetlands restored, communities enhanced, and economies strengthened—we will learn from reality as it plays out. This plan will be constantly updated, revised, and improved.

Vision Goal 1: Recover Sustainably

Strategies for Near-Term Recovery



CLEAR

A sustainable recovery means reinvesting in our communities, building key protection systems, stemming wetland loss, and meeting the immediate needs of our businesses and workers.

Our recovery from hurricanes Katrina and Rita is well under way, led by federal, state, and local efforts to meet short-term needs. We now have an opportunity to coordinate these recovery efforts with a vision for long-term sustainability to create a better future. Now is the time to rebuild smarter and stronger, combining the best of our communities and cultures with a forward-looking framework that coordinates our efforts to create a more resilient coast, stronger communities, and a more robust economy.

Rebuilding sustainably requires that we tackle immediate and approaching problems today. We must build levees that protect our communities and rich history without compromising natural systems. We need to restore lost wetlands and prevent future losses. We must engage in an aggressive strategy for reinvesting in our communities. We must meet the immediate needs of workers and businesses. We need to secure access to affordable insurance for businesses and homeowners. And we must extend successful recovery programs and support the recovery plans of cities and towns across South Louisiana.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY

- 1. Enable our Recovery** by adopting the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Master Plan to make us safer from storms, and by linking land use, transportation, and economic development policies to the CPRA's investments and strategies.
- 2. Insure our Recovery** by identifying obstacles to affordable insurance and acting to keep private insurance available to households and businesses.
- 3. Align Recovery and Growth Planning** by coordinating local, parish, state, and federal recovery efforts with implementation of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan.
- 4. Reinvest in our Communities** by focusing infrastructure and new development into existing communities and urbanized areas.
- 5. Bridge the Immediate Needs of Businesses and Workers** by providing financial assistance, housing, quality healthcare, and training programs.
- 6. Expand Recovery-Critical Industries** by building a robust local housing industry, supporting a coastal-sciences technology sector, and using existing infrastructure to capture growth opportunities.
- 7. Provide Reliable Social and Community Services** by expanding access to quality healthcare and K-12 educational opportunities.

Strategies for a Sustainable Recovery and the recommended actions that will help us achieve them are explained in full in the chapter **Vision Goal 1: Recover Sustainably** on page 29.



Lori Waselchuk



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Mid City Redevelopment Alliance



Vision Goal 2: Grow Smarter

Strategies for Long-Term Reinvestment and Growth



UDA/La. Speaks Pattern Book

Now is our opportunity to build a sustainable recovery and pursue a safer, stronger, smarter future. We need a comprehensive approach that addresses the varied and complex challenges on the horizon: growing threats to our coastal environment, rising transportation and housing costs, traffic congestion, healthcare shortages, and competitive national and global economies.

Growing smarter requires that we begin now to lay the groundwork for a safer and more resilient future. We must manage risk from future storms, working to protect and preserve our communities and cultures. Future development must revitalize our communities, and it must be coordinated with strategies for managing risk through levees and coastal restoration. We need to build diverse, vibrant communities with a range of housing options and robust economies. And we must create transportation networks that will serve and connect all Louisianians well into the future and get us all out of harm's way when storms threaten.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR GROWING SMARTER

- 1. Comprehensively Manage Future Risk** by coordinating protection and restoration with public investment, private development, and state and local policies.
- 2. Develop and Invest Smarter** by focusing investment in existing cities and towns and by building new mixed-use, walkable communities coordinated with transportation and protection infrastructure.
- 3. Move Louisiana Forward** by building efficient, cutting-edge passenger and freight transportation networks over road, rail, air, and water.
- 4. Build a Robust and Resilient Economy** by taking advantage of traditional strengths, educating the workforce of tomorrow, and pursuing emerging opportunities.
- 5. Meet our Future Housing Needs** by ensuring an adequate supply of housing to meet a wide range of future needs throughout the region.
- 6. Preserve our Communities and Protect Our Unique Cultures** by sustaining the places we treasure and the things that make us Louisianian.
- 7. Provide Quality Social and Community Services**, including healthcare and education.



The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan integrates our land-use decisions, transportation investments, building regulations, and insurance strategies with protection and restoration projects and plans.

Strategies for Growing Smarter and the recommended actions that will help us achieve them, are explained in full in the chapter **Vision Goal 2: Grow Smarter** on page 47.



Vision Goal 3: Think Regionally

Planning and Implementation



The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan builds a framework in which planning at the state, regional, and local governments are coordinated to create stronger communities supported by a restored coast and a resilient economy. A top priority is extending this framework to Central and North Louisiana.

More than ever before, we live our lives within the context of a larger region. Our economic opportunities, cultural assets, social lives, and recreational destinations extend beyond neighborhood, city, or parish boundaries. In tackling recovery and opportunities for future growth, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan embodies a regional, coastwide approach to planning for our future, and we will extend this vision to encompass the entire state of Louisiana.

There is much that we already share, and we all depend on common resources. Major infrastructure investments should be seen as assets to the many communities that they connect. Preservation and stewardship of our coast should be understood as a regionwide responsibility. The decisions each of us make about the location and type of new construction should be seen for their effects on our region's economy through our insurance rates and other shared costs. Providing workforce housing should be treated as fundamental to sustaining our region's economic vitality. Educational excellence and accessible, quality healthcare at all levels should be understood as the foundation of a healthy society and economy. And preserving the complex cultural fabric that makes South Louisiana unique is at the heart of our common identity and future. In short, the things we share at a regional level—the strengths as well as the risks—will define our shared future and our individual opportunities.

Thinking regionally means working together to achieve sustainable recovery and smarter growth. It involves important decisions about how we invest public dollars. It will mean devoting legislation, policy changes, and resources to increase capacity for planning, coordination, and implementation at the state, regional, and local levels. It will require cooperation among the private, nonprofit, and public sectors. It will not be easy and it will not happen overnight. That is why the unifying vision in the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is necessary to help guide the way.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR REGIONAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Extend the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan** to include areas that were not directly affected by Katrina and Rita, including Central and North Louisiana.
2. **Achieve Effective Statewide Planning** by providing resources and legislation to enable state, regional, and local governments to integrate and coordinate planning and implementation.

Strategies for Regional Planning and Implementation, and the recommended actions that will help us achieve them, are explained in full in the chapter **Vision Goal 3: Think Regionally** on page 79.



LDOTD



What Will Louisiana Speaks Do?

Building Smarter and Safer for the Next Generation



Lori Waselchuk

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is a concrete, coastwide vision and action plan that builds upon existing recovery efforts to create a sustainable recovery and a safer, stronger, smarter future. It is part of an unprecedented planning effort that combines parish recovery plans, environmentally sustainable architectural and urban design guidelines, and neighborhood demonstration plans.

Louisiana Speaks has been working with local and regional officials, business leaders, and world-renowned economists, urban planners, and coastal scientists to create an integrated set of strategies and actions for a stronger Louisiana. The planning process included an unprecedented public campaign that involved workshops, newspaper inserts, television broadcasts, and online and telephone surveys. Nearly 27,000 Louisianians from across the planning region and in the diaspora participated in outreach activities, providing essential guidance for the vision and strategies included in this document.

A PLAN WITH ACTION

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan arises out of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. Katrina and Rita exposed system failures—from coastal land-loss and unprotected communities to poverty, poor education, crime, and substandard healthcare. This plan brings hope, through action, by bringing together the collective wisdom of Louisiana into a blueprint for short-term recovery and long-term growth.

The plan is organized around three goals: Recover Sustainably, Grow Smarter, and Think Regionally. Each goal is supported by a set of strategies—broad directions for realizing the goal—and actions—specific steps required to achieve the strategies. Timelines and funding characteristics are contained in Appendix B. A more detailed Louisiana Speaks Strategic Implementation Plan, including benchmarks and responsible parties, will be available in July 2007.

Through Louisiana Speaks, the people of Louisiana have set forth a mandate for change. We are ready to invest in the long-term viability of our communities, and we understand that to do so, we must invest in our coast and our economies. We know these things will require working together and pursuing long-term, comprehensive solutions. But Louisianians do not want change for change's sake. We want to preserve and reinforce those things that make us and our home uniquely Louisianian.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Vision Goals



This plan is organized into chapters addressing each of the Vision Goals: **Recover Sustainably**, **Grow Smarter** and **Think Regionally**. A set of strategies is presented to accomplish each vision goal. Each strategy is reinforced by a suite of concrete implementation actions.

A more detailed **Louisiana Speaks Strategic Implementation Plan** document will be available in July 2007.



Lori Waselchuk

Tens of thousands of Louisianians participated in the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan process, providing essential guidance for the strategies and actions included in this document.

LOUISIANA SPEAKS REGIONAL VISION MAP

This map illustrates a future for South Louisiana based on the input of tens of thousands of citizens and stakeholders. It also includes elements of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's Master Plan.

The vision builds on a sustainable recovery that restores coastal wetlands, constructs strategic levees, and reinvests in historic communities. New growth is focused in and around existing communities, linked to investments in protection infrastructure, regional transportation, and economic zones.



George Armstrong/FEMA

Recover Sustainably
 We must face immediate and approaching problems today by building levees that protect our communities and rich history, by restoring wetlands, by reinvesting in communities and supporting their recovery, and by meeting the immediate needs of workers and businesses.

Reinvestment Areas*

- **Urban Center:** The largest national/regional centers—major offices, shops, civic, and cultural facilities and multifamily housing. Accessible by major national and regional transit and roadways.
- **City Center:** Major subregional centers—offices, shops, civic, and cultural facilities, and a mix of multifamily housing, townhomes, and single family homes. Accessible by regional transit and roadways.
- **Town Center:** Local residential and commercial centers—local shops and offices, and single family homes, townhomes and multifamily housing. Accessible by local transit and roadways.
- **Existing Urbanized Areas:** Development within existing communities—single-family homes, townhomes, multifamily housing, and local retail. Accessible by transit and roadways.
- **Special Economic Zones:** Key economic centers that do not have levee protection, but do have storm risk mitigation through hazard planning and limits on new development. Includes commercial fishing facilities, industrial plants, ports, and recreational sites.

New Growth Areas

- **Town:** Centers serving new communities—regional offices, shops, and civic and cultural facilities, as well as a mix of multifamily housing, townhomes, and single family homes. Accessible by regional and local transit and regional roadways.
- **Neighborhood:** A mix of single family homes, townhomes, multifamily housing and local shops. Accessible by transit service and roads.
- **Industrial Expansion:** New or expanded industrial districts.

Transportation Systems

- ▬ **New Primary Transit Corridor** (Intercity high-speed and/or regional commuter rail)
- ▬ **New or Existing Secondary Transit Corridor** (fixed-route public transit, such as light rail or street car)
- ▬ **New or Improved Roadway**
- ▬ **Existing Interstate**
- ▬ **Existing US or State Highway**
- **Major Port Facility**
- ⋯ **Existing Rail Corridor**

* Reinvestment centers highlight communities that already serve as anchors for surrounding areas, or would serve as anchors in the future. This was determined based upon a combination of land use density and functional characteristics such as regional location and links to major transportation corridors. Example centers serve to illustrate reinvestment opportunity areas derived through discussions with local officials as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis, but are not an exhaustive list. Many rural communities do not appear on the map.



Grow Smarter
 We must pursue strategies for a safer and more resilient future by integrating coastal restoration and levee protection with land use and investment policy, and by building diverse communities with a range of housing and transportation options.



Think Regionally
 We must work to achieve sustainable recovery and smarter growth by linking state and regional investments in transportation, levees, and coastal restoration to land use and risk management priorities, and by providing resources to enhance local and regional planning capacity.

Landscape Features

- Existing Wetland
- New or Restored Wetland 50-year projection
- Agricultural, Upland Forest or Open Land
- Open Water

Jurisdictional Boundaries

- State Boundary
- Parish Boundary

CPRA Master Plan Features**

- New Levee
- Upgraded Levee
- Existing Levee
- Increased Protection for Major Urban Areas Using Hurricane Protection Systems (Other hurricane protection systems envisioned; see CPRA Master Plan**)
- Shoreline, Barrier Island or Navigable Waterway Restoration/Stabilization
- River Diversion
- Water or Sediment Conveyance

** For more information on the CPRA Master Plan, visit www.louisianacoastalplanning.org

RECOVER SUSTAINABLY

Reinvest in Our Communities

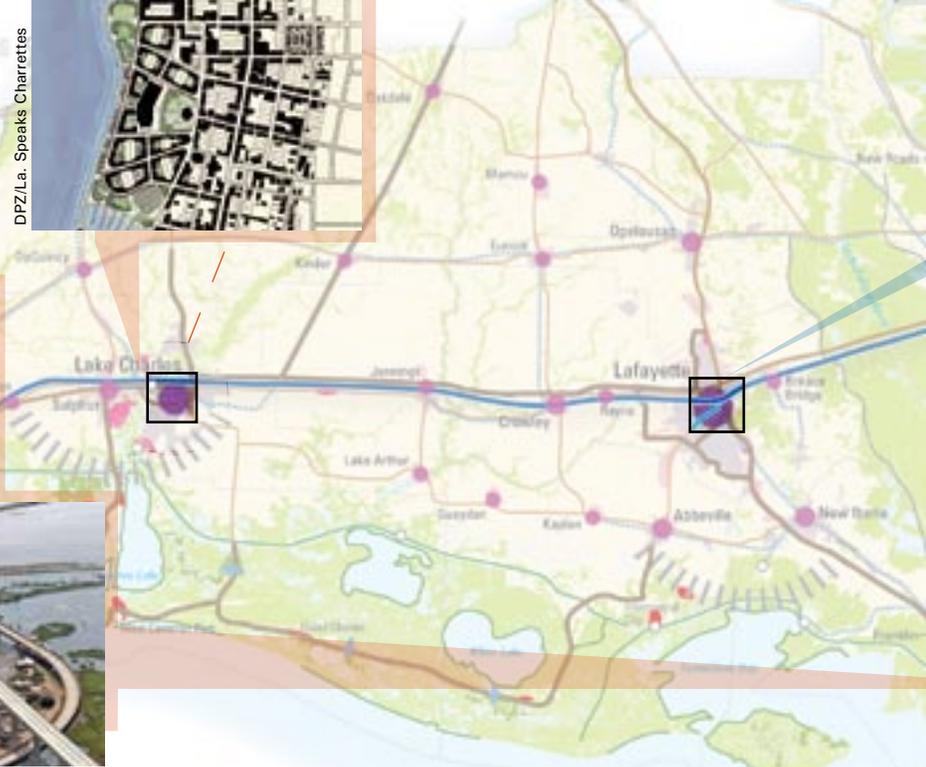
Many of our communities have seen decades of declining populations and employment, and now face an urgent need for reinvestment. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan proposes to immediately focus infrastructure and development in existing communities, reduce financial and regulatory barriers to infill development, and create local capacity for spurring reinvestment.



DPZ/La. Speaks Charrettes

Immediately Fund Strategic Recovery Projects

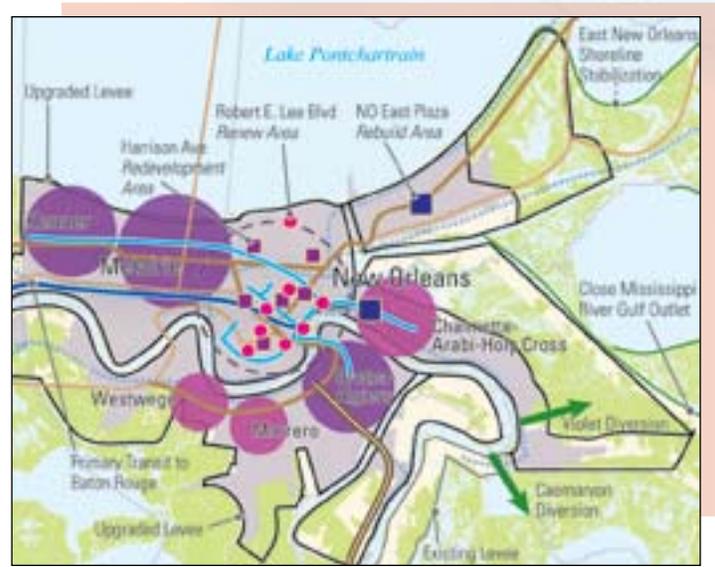
Rather than separating short- and long-term planning, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan will leverage short-term recovery projects to create momentum for a stronger future. Near-term projects include building key recovery-related transportation lines, extending successful economic recovery initiatives, and implementing local and parish recovery plans.



DPZ/La. Speaks Charrettes

Restore Our Coast and Build Stronger Levees

Achieving greater storm protection, restoring our wetlands, and reducing risk begins now by adopting the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Master Plan and Annual Plans. Short-term priorities of these plans include accelerating hurricane protection around key population centers and river diversion projects to rebuild our coastal wetlands. These projects will support community reinvestment efforts such as the New Orleans Rebuild, Redevelop and Renew Areas.



City of New Orleans Targeted Recovery Areas
■ Rebuild Area ● Renew Area ■ Redevelopment Area

GROW SMARTER

Invest and Develop Smarter

Many long-term priorities—sustained reinvestment in our communities, efficient use of public investments, preservation of sensitive land, and effective risk management—are closely linked to the location of development and state investments.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan coordinates future development and infrastructure with these priorities to sustain and strengthen our communities while making us safer from storms.



CMTA, Austin, TX



James Mohler

Build the Transportation Network of the Future

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan focuses on cutting-edge passenger transportation to support our communities and robust goods movement to support our economy. The plan aims to create a seamless network of regional and local transportation service. Land development and public investments will be focused along these corridors.

Manage Storm and Flood Risk

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan proposes a multi-pronged risk management strategy: continue restoring our wetlands, build strategic levees, invest in systems of secondary defense, enforce building codes, implement coastal zoning ordinances, focus new development in low-risk locations, educate homeowners living in high-risk areas, manage our watersheds, and purchase high-risk and environmentally sensitive land.

DPZ/La. Speaks Charrettes

