Lori Waselchuk

Lori Waselchuk

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Louisiana Speaks. Now is the Time.

Background, Context, and Process

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast less than four weeks apart, damaging more than 200,000 homes, 81,000 businesses and 870 schools. More than 1,500 lives were lost and more than 1.3 million Louisianians were displaced. Areas along the southwestern Louisiana coast were decimated by winds and water, and nearly 80% of New Orleans was flooded when the federal levees failed.

The storms left a legacy that will be felt for generations. But they did not diminish the spirit and determination of Louisiana's people. Since the storms, millions of tons of debris have been removed from devastated areas. Homes and businesses have been gutted or demolished, and rebuilding is under way.

Communities are recovering. From Cameron to St. Bernard, residents are making tough choices about their futures and taking steps to rebuild better than before. And local, state, and federal governments are working together to move the recovery forward.

Louisiana Speaks

Louisiana Speaks is the long-term planning initiative of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), supported with private funds through the LRA Support Foundation. It works toward the development of a sustainable, long-term vision for South Louisiana. It combines local, state, and federal efforts with the work of experts, stakeholders, and citizens into a comprehensive approach that will guide recovery and growth over the next 50 years.

Lori Waselchuk

Guiding Principles

The vision and strategies embodied by the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan grow out of an extensive process of consensus-building and public outreach. The very first statement of guiding principles was drawn up in December 2005 at the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference, and soon after adopted by the Louisiana Recovery Authority:

- Create infrastructure that supports recovery by restoring confidence, enhancing quality of life, and withstanding future disasters.
- Promote economic growth that benefits everyone.
- Provide public services that enhance quality of life for everyone.
- Pursue policies that promote a healthy environment and healthy people.
- Plan and design communities that advance livability.

Go to www.lrrc-prod.aia.org for more information

FROM RECOVERY TO REBUILDING

Despite the progress we've made, much remains to be done. In the coming years, our construction economy will take root and tens of thousands of homes will be rebuilt. Billions of dollars will be invested to restore bridges, roads, and sewer and water systems. Families will continue moving back. More tourists will come to experience our rich culture, and private business will reinvest.

But these advances will not come without challenges and obstacles. We face rising housing costs and traffic congestion. Insurance is costly and hard to obtain. And we remain vulnerable to storms. As we face these challenges and move from short-term recovery to long-term growth, it is more important than ever that we share a unified vision for the future.

A CRITICAL MOMENT IN HISTORY

The 2005 hurricanes left behind the most complex rebuilding effort in United States history. But they also created new opportunities. With billions of dollars in federal recovery funds and unprecedented private-sector investments that will infuse the state over the next decade, Louisiana has a once-in-a-generation chance to rebuild safer, stronger, and smarter than ever before.

The hurricanes created opportunities. Louisiana is now uniquely positioned to become a worldwide leader in new housing technologies, coastal sciences, and restoration techniques. Louisiana also has a historic opportunity to capitalize on its existing strengths—its natural resources and distinctive cultures—to build a more diverse and resilient economy.

To take advantage of these emerging opportunities, we need a realistic plan that moves us in a new direction, together. We need a plan that identifies near-term strategies for rebuilding our communities, but also provides a vision for long-term growth. This road map for our future is the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan.

Lori Waselchuk

THE BROADER LOUISIANA SPEAKS INITIATIVE

Working to turn tragedy into opportunity in the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes, the LRA has embarked on one of the most ambitious planning efforts in history: Louisiana Speaks. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is one track of the broader Louisiana Speaks initiative, which is planning for Louisiana's recovery and its future. Like pieces of a puzzle, these tracks are overlapping and interconnected.

Building Planning

Through planning for buildings and urban design, Louisiana Speaks is changing the way we plan for emergency housing and showing homeowners and developers how to build safe, environmentally sustainable houses that look at home in Louisiana.

- The *Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book* and *Planning Toolkit* provide practical tools and resources to help Louisiana rebuild its homes and communities. For more information, visit www.louisianaspeaks.org.
- Louisiana's Alternative Housing Pilot Program—the "Katrina Cottage" program—provides affordable, easy-to-assemble, hurricane-proof housing for displaced citizens. Visit www.lra.louisiana.gov.

Neighborhood Planning

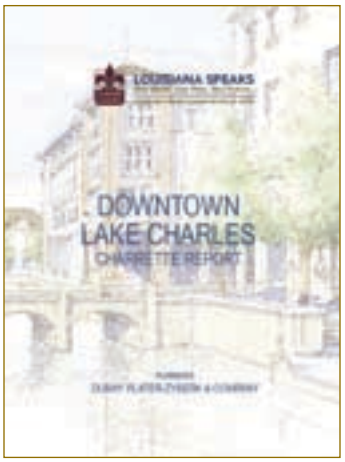
Through local design workshops—called "charrettes"—Louisiana Speaks developed model plans for recovery and redevelopment in Lake Charles, Vermilion Parish, and St. Bernard Parish. These plans are among the building blocks of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan. They demonstrate how big ideas can be implemented at the local level, one neighborhood at a time. These charrettes have since been developed into full-blown redevelopment plans for downtown Lake Charles, St. Bernard Parish, and at the National Guard's Jackson Barracks. Louisiana Speaks also supported a design workshop in Cameron. Visit www.louisianaspeaks.org.

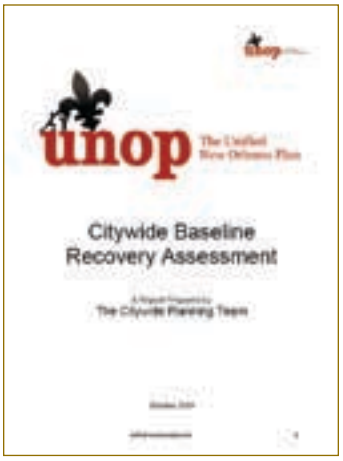
Parish Planning

Through Louisiana Speaks, the LRA also worked with FEMA's ESF-14 division to establish long-term community recovery teams to help prioritize parish recovery needs in the most heavily impacted parishes. The parishes' identified priority recovery projects underpin the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan. Visit www.louisianaspeaks-parishplans.org.

Regional Planning

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is the final piece of the puzzle. It brings everything together and coordinates it with other state and local planning initiatives.





ALLIED PLANNING EFFORTS

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan was developed in close cooperation with several independent, parallel planning efforts.

The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) is charged by the state with creating a long-range Master Plan that integrates enhanced levee protection with a new emphasis on coastal restoration. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan and CPRA have exchanged data, mapping, modeling, and public input throughout their processes. The planning efforts have also worked closely on the development of risk-management policies and strategies.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Planning process also worked with the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), which the LRA supported and which involved a massive public involvement effort and real-time preference voting. Thousands of people were linked by satellite in multiple cities for three "congresses." UNOP's work is directly informing the City of New Orleans' Recovery Plan, and Louisiana Speaks and the LRA have continued to work with the city to support the development and implementation of its recovery plans. The Louisiana Speaks planning team has also worked with recovery plans and planners from other parishes across the coast.

Additionally, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan has taken into account years of existing planning in Louisiana, including state and regional transportation plans, state and regional economic development plans, and numerous other existing studies and strategic documents. And the planning team has worked closely with local, regional, and state agencies to keep up-to-date on new projects, plans, and strategies as they are developed.

Anthony Patton

Anthony Patton

George Rodrigue, www.georgerodrigue.com

A STRONG FOUNDATION

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan takes as its starting point years of solid planning in Louisiana. Significant elements of the plan rest upon this work, including:

- The State Transportation Plan—the Department of Transportation and Development's comprehensive transportation plan—as well as the updates and plans of the regional planning entities that inform the state plan
- Vision 2020, a forward-looking economic development plan by the Louisiana Economic Development Commission
- The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Master Plan
- The PriceWaterhouseCoopers Report on Healthcare and other healthcare studies
- Paragon's analysis of a Louisiana Hurricane Catastrophe Fund
- And more

For a full bibliography and list of additional resources on planning in Louisiana, see Appendix G. For related plans, see Appendix H.

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan also draws heavily from data created and provided by numerous state agencies and regional planning entities. For a full discussion of data sources and modeling, see Appendix B.

Lori Waselchuk

Support for a Regional Approach

Louisiana Speaks citizen and stakeholder polling indicated strong support for a large-scale, regional approach to planning for recovery and growth. This reflects an understanding, heightened by the 2005 storms, that some issues—such as coastal restoration, levee protection, transportation, evacuation, and economic development—cross jurisdictional boundaries and thus must be dealt with in a comprehensive and coordinated way.

LOUISIANA SPEAKS REGIONAL PLANNING

A COMPREHENSIVE VISION FOR RECOVERY, GROWTH, AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The Louisiana Speaks regional planning effort represents the most extensive project of its kind ever undertaken. Covering more than 25,000 square miles and 35 parishes across South Louisiana, the project addresses the full spectrum of challenges associated with our state's recovery and long-term growth. It represents a comprehensive approach to managing risk and growing smarter, and it is at its core a plan of concrete actions and policies.

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST AND PRESENT TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan cast a wide net in developing background and data resources to inform the planning process. This included detailed reviews of pre- and post-hurricane local and parish planning efforts, broad public surveys, and regular coordination meetings with the five South Louisiana regional planning commissions and with key state agencies. In addition, data resources were compiled from numerous government and private sources, and, in some cases, entirely new data sets were created.

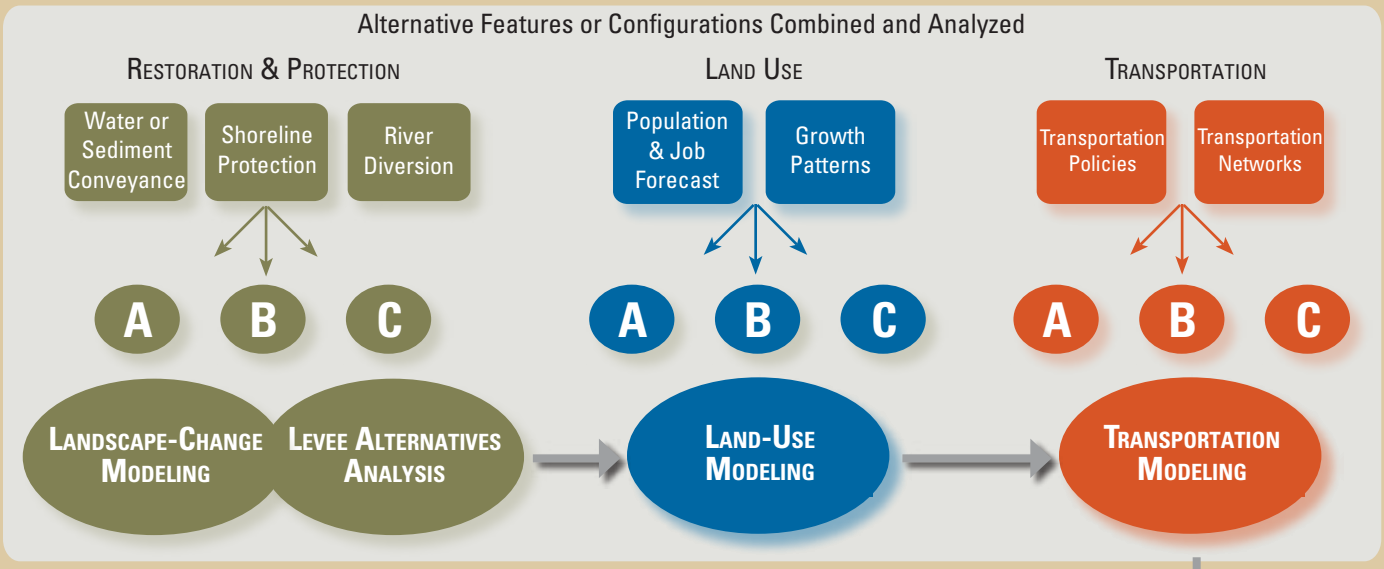
Louisiana Speaks Planning Area

Baseline data collection began immediately following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Wherever possible, the planning team evaluated all post-storm data for consistency and completeness against multiple sources, and new data sources were incorporated as they became available from ongoing research and surveys. Key data sources and layers included: US Census data; post-hurricane population and economic data; environmental land cover data; flood zone data; elevation and bathymetry; and a comprehensive land-use coverage map of the entire study area compiled for the project (the first-ever regionwide map of its kind for Louisiana).

The resulting rich library of plans, data, and other resources provided an essential base on which to explore future alternatives, and still serves as an excellent collection of local and regional data for governments and agencies to utilize in their own future planning and decision making.

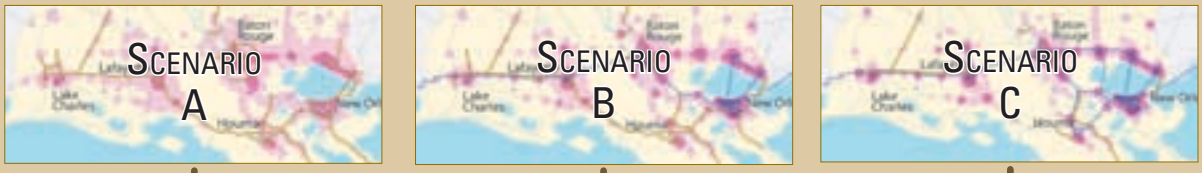
Modeling Options for the Future

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Planning process utilized computer modeling to test the effects of different land-use, transportation, storm protection, and restoration scenarios for a variety of safety, livability, and transportation indicators. A series of scenarios represent possible futures based on historic patterns, emerging trends, and different policy directions. The following diagram shows some of the key variables and technical models used to develop the scenarios and their modeled consequences. Please see Appendix B for more information on the modeling process.



Modeling of Restoration/Protection, Land Use, and Transportation Informs Composite Scenarios

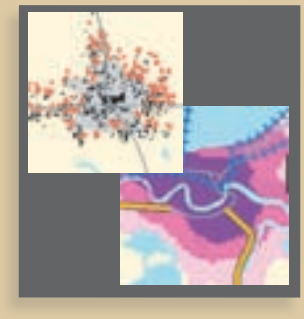
See Community Growth and Transportation Options inset on page 19 for more on the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan scenarios.



Modeling of Composite Scenarios

Indicators

Indicators measure the impacts or consequences of an option. Examples include area of wetland gain or loss, mix of new housing types, commute times, open land developed, new development in floodplains, or the cost of building a new transportation system. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan utilized these indicators to compare future options, querying the preferences of Louisiana residents in the 2007 Regional Vision Poll. Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan options and trade-offs are described in further detail in this section.



Sample Indicators			
	Commute Time	*Highway Congestion*	*Wetland Gain & Loss*
Open Land Developed	*Housing Mix*	*Transit Ridership*	*Infrastructure Costs*
New Development in Floodplain	*Annual Household Expenses*	*Automobile Emissions*	*Housing Density*

Projections

National and regional economic forecasts were used to estimate population and economic growth throughout South Louisiana. Assumptions were developed based on consultation with the Brookings Institution, Moody's Economy.com, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, and economists and demographers in Louisiana. The forecasting makes two assumptions: that the growth rate will approximate the national average, and that population and jobs loss due to the 2005 hurricanes will be recovered by the end of the planning horizon.

Such projections will surely be modified as new information about population and economic recovery and growth emerges. However, notwithstanding the precision of projections, the patterns of development and choice of transportation systems depicted in the various growth options—whether they emerge in 30, 50, or even 70 years—are instrumental in conveying the consequences of how and where we develop in South Louisiana.

SCENARIO PLANNING AND CUTTING-EDGE TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan process is based upon scenario-planning techniques. Rather than simply projecting trends into the future and then accommodating them, scenario planning models the differing impacts of policy decisions and investments. By comparing the costs and benefits of future scenarios, the process allows policymakers and the public to make educated decisions about the future.

The planning team used sophisticated computer modeling to test the impacts of different protection and restoration strategies combined with different land-use and transportation options for South Louisiana. Landscape-change modeling, run by coastal scientists at Louisiana State University, measured the impacts of coastal restoration projects and levee alignments, enriching the discussion of the costs and benefits of different strategies.

The scenarios were analyzed according to a number of measures, including a variety of safety, livability, and transportation indicators. The page at right illustrates three distinct growth and transportation scenarios for South Louisiana. Each one accommodates the same projection of approximately 1.7 million additional people and 1.25 million jobs between December 2005 and 2050 (see sidebar on projections).

Through the scenario-planning process, the people of Louisiana were given clear choices about their future, including comparisons between the costs and benefits of different futures. Armed with this concrete information, they made the meaningful choices that drive the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan.

Modeling Coastal Landscape Change: This sample map shows projected change in wetland area over 50 years with no increased action. This model tested the consequences of different approaches to restoration and protection, and served as key information for the CPRA in developing its Master Plan.

Modeling Transportation Impacts: Using the State Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD)'s traffic model, this map shows projected congestion levels in the year 2050 if current development patterns continue and if all planned and proposed state roadway improvements are built. This trend-driven future became Scenario A (see page at right for more about the scenarios).

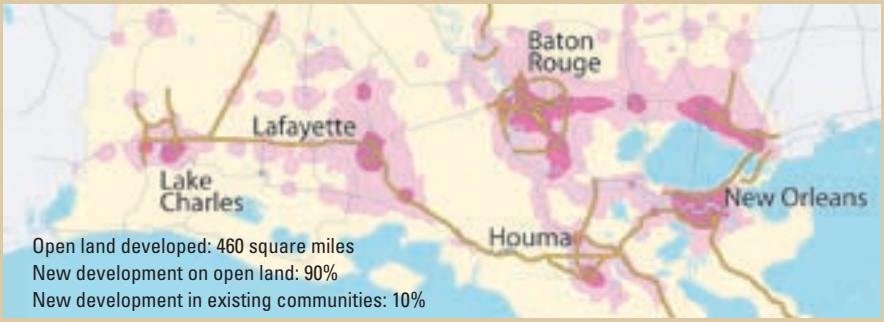
Community Growth and Transportation Options for South Louisiana

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision Poll asked citizens to choose one of the following as the best future for the next generation. Each option accommodates the same number of projected people and jobs from December 2005 to the year 2050 (1.7 million new people and 1.3 million jobs). Option A develops the most new land, while Options B and C develop less by placing some development within existing communities, often at higher densities.

Legend Low Density | Medium Density | High Density | Regional Road Improvements | Regional Transit

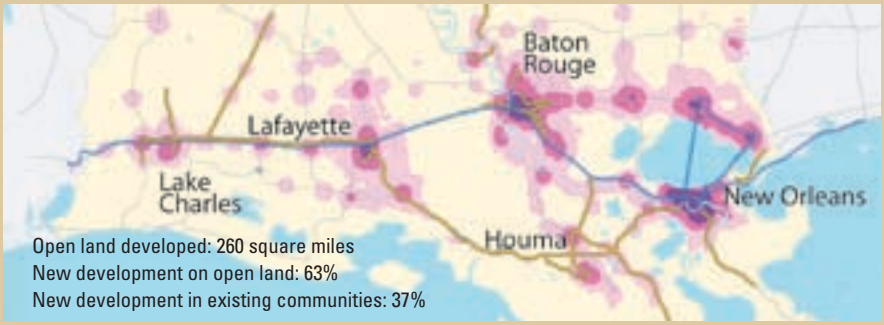
A. KEEP BUILDING AND DEVELOPING AS WE ARE

Currently we build mostly single-family homes, mainly at the edge of metropolitan areas, connected by roadways.



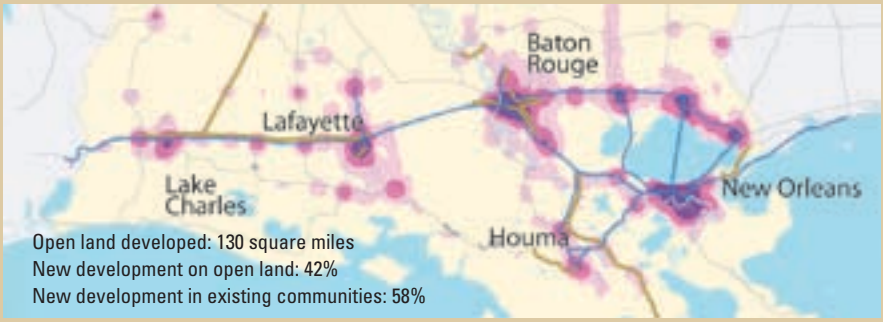
B. MODIFY DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Build more in-town condos, apartments, and townhouses, as well as single-family homes. Balance new public transit with road improvements.



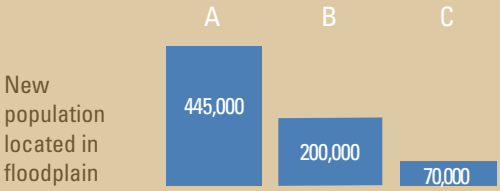
C. FOCUS DEVELOPMENT IN EXISTING CITIES AND TOWNS

Build mainly in-town condos, apartments, and townhouses, connected by public transit such as modern buses or commuter and intercity trains.

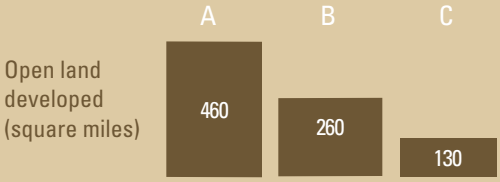


MEASURING CONSEQUENCES

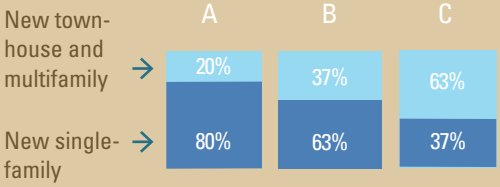
Development in Floodplain



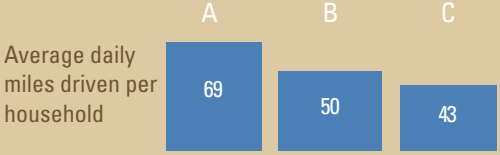
Open Land Developed



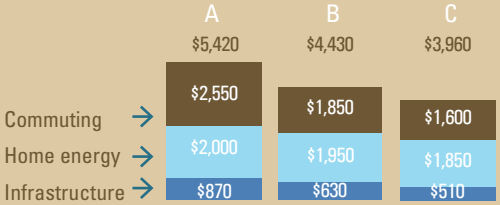
Housing Mix



Commute Times



Household Expenses



Land-Use Map (2005)

Louisiana Speaks compiled the first ever coastwide land-use database for the 35-parish planning area. Four parishes had pre-existing land use inventories: East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Lafayette, and Orleans. For areas outside these parishes, the planning team interpreted and digitized data from 2004 USGS aerial photographs, hand-coding land uses based on the interpretation of these photographs.

This comprehensive land-use database will be available to government agencies and the public. A more detailed description about these data can be found in **Appendix B**.

Land Use Map: Existing Conditions (2005)

Land Use or Land Classification

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Civic or Institutional
- Single-Family Residential
- Multifamily Residential
- Other Urbanized Area
- Park or Open Space
- Agriculture, Cropland or Grassland
- Marsh or Wetland
- Upland Forest or Scrub Vegetation
- Open Water

Jurisdictional Boundaries

- State Boundary
- Parish Boundary

Protection Features

- Levee

Transportation Systems

- Rail Corridor
- Interstate
- US or State Highway

Clinton
St. Francisville
New Roads
Zachary
Baton Rouge
Port Allen
Denham Springs
Brusly
Plaquemine
Gonzales
Breaux Bridge
Donaldsonville
Gretna
La Place
Metairie
New Orleans
New Iberia
Franklin
Morgan City
Thibodaux
Raceland
Houma
Larose
Dulac
Golden Meadow
Franklinton
Bogalusa
Amite
Folsom
MISSISSIPPI
Hammond
Covington
Ponchatoula
Mandeville
Slidell
N
88.5°
1 inch equals approximately 20 miles

Lori Waselchuk

Environmental Features Map (2005)

This environmental features map depicts the rich variety of public ownership and landscape data compiled as part of the Louisiana Speaks process. It includes park and open space data, as well as landscape features such as wetlands, marsh, upland forest, agricultural lands, and water bodies.

The map also depicts historic coastal land loss, indicating wetland or marsh lost from 1932 to 2000 in red. Louisiana Speaks aims to stop and reverse this trend of coastal loss to both protect important fisheries and habitat and provide an essential first line of defense from hurricanes and storm-related flooding.

Environmental Features Map: Existing Conditions (2005)

Restoration or Protection Features

- River Diversion Structure
- Shoreline, Barrier Island or Navigable Waterway Restoration/Stabilization
- Levee

Protected Land

- National Wildlife Refuge, Wildlife Management Areas, National Park, or State Park

Landscape Features

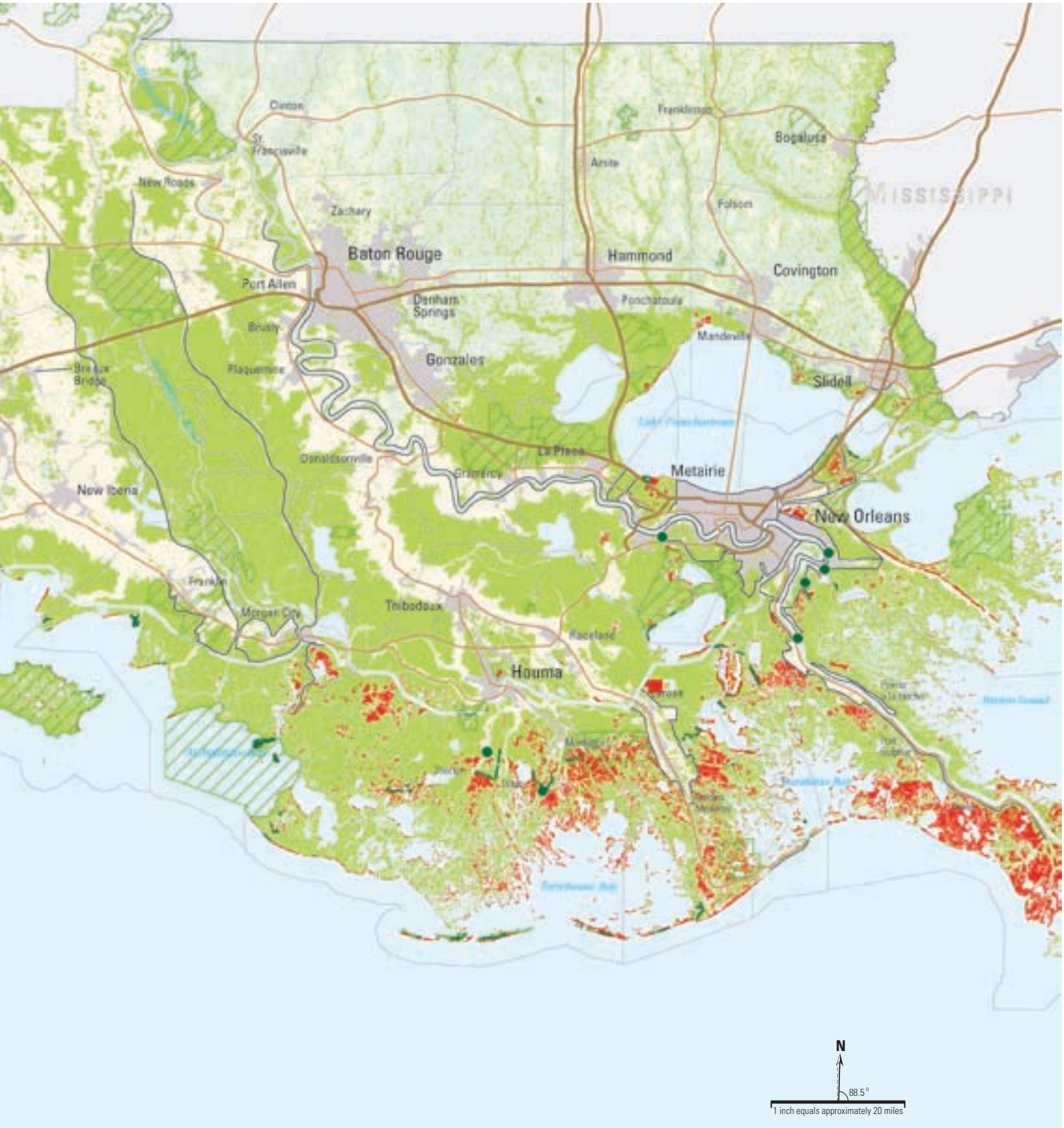
- Wetland
- Historic Wetland Loss (1932-2000)
- Upland Forest or Scrub Vegetation
- Agriculture, Cropland, or Grassland
- Open Water
- Urbanized Area

Jurisdictional Boundaries

- State Boundary
- Parish Boundary

Transportation Systems

- Interstate
- US or State Highway


Clinton
St. Francisville
New Roads
Zachary
Baton Rouge
Port Allen
Brusly
Plaquemine
Brelux Bridge
Gonzales
Donaldsonville
New Iberia
Franklin
Morgan City
Thibodaux
Houma
Raceland
Gramercy
La Place
Metairie
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Covington
Hammond
Folsom
Amite
Franklinton
Bogalusa
MISSISSIPPI
N
88.5°
1 inch equals approximately 20 miles

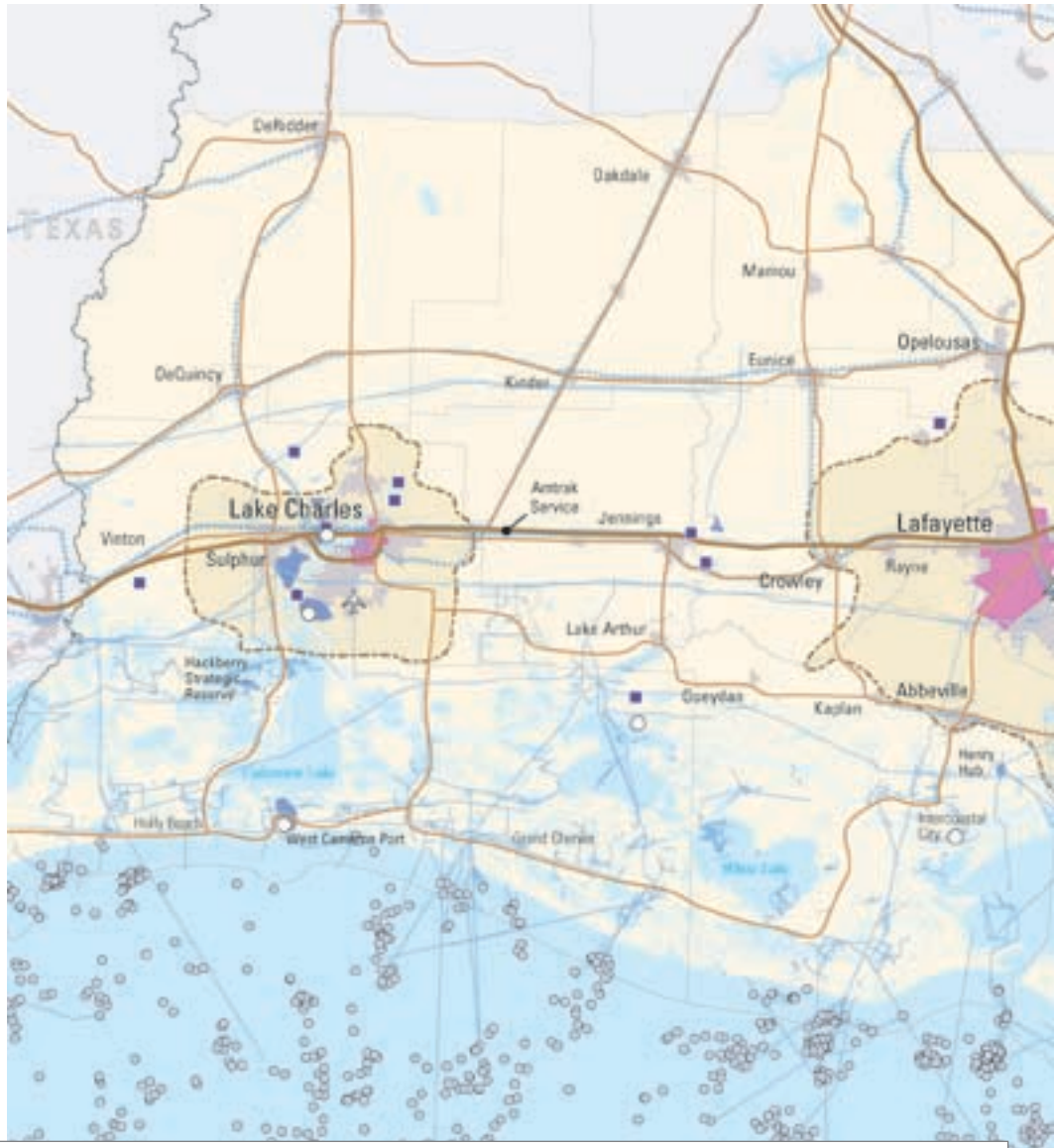
Lori Waselchuk

Infrastructure Features Map (2005)

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is built around existing and planned transportation and other regional infrastructure. This map illustrates current state and regional transportation, protection, port, and industrial infrastructure.

The map also shows the primary commute areas (2005) for the five major metropolitan areas in South Louisiana. These shaded areas represent the extent of the majority of typical trips in and around each of the metro areas.

Of special note is the extensive network of offshore oil platforms and pipelines that contribute considerably to the nation's energy supply.



Infrastructure Features Map: Existing Conditions (2005)

Industrial and Port Features

- Major Industrial or Port Area
- Major Port Facility
- Offshore Oil or Gas Platform
- Petroleum Refinery
- Pipeline

Protection Features

- Levee

Transportation Systems

- Local Transit Service Area
- Primary Commute Areas for the Five Metropolitan Statistical Areas*
- Overlapping Commute Areas
- Major Airport
- Rail Corridor
- Interstate
- US or State Highway
- New Orleans Streetcar

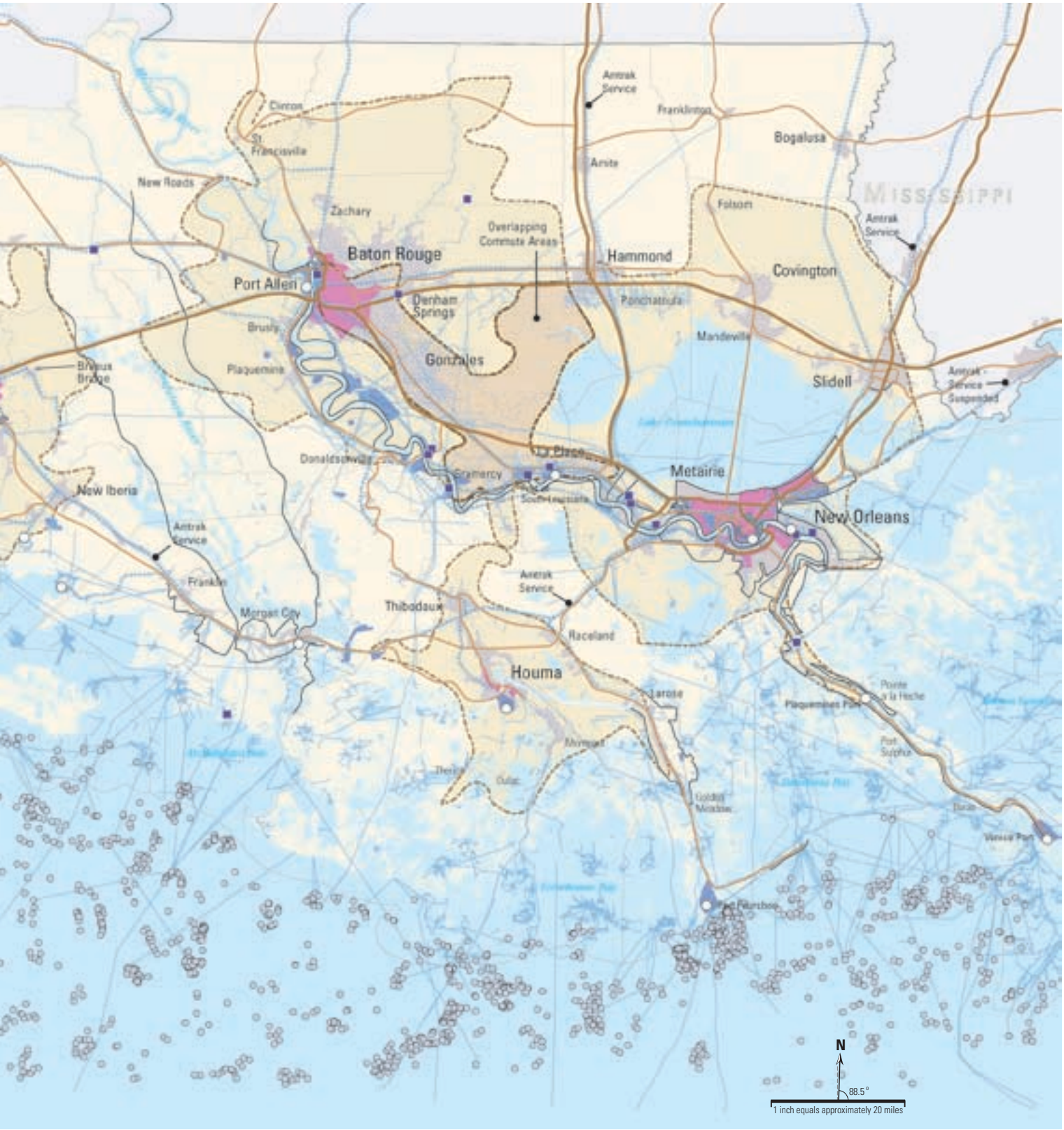
Landscape Features

- Urbanized Area
- Agriculture, Wetland, Upland Forest, or Open Land
- Open Water

Jurisdictional Boundaries

- State Boundary
- Parish Boundary

*Primary commute areas are derived from post-Katrina/Rita Louisiana statewide transportation model.


Amtrak Service
Clinton
St. Francisville
Franklinton
Bogalusa
Amite
New Roads
Zachary
Folsom
MISSISSIPPI
Amtrak Service
Overlapping Commute Areas
Baton Rouge
Hammond
Covington
Port Allen
Denham Springs
Ponchatoula
Brusly
Mandeville
Gonzales
Plaquemine
Slidell
Amtrak Service Suspended
Donaldsonville
Gramercy
Metairie
New Iberia
New Orleans
Amtrak Service
Franklin
Amtrak Service
Morgan City
Thibodaux
Raceland
Houma
Larose
Plaquemines Port
Port Sulphur
Golden Meadow
Venice Port
Grand Isle
N
88.5°
1 inch equals approximately 20 miles

Outreach
In total, nearly 27,000 Louisianians gave their input to the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan in 2006 and 2007. See **Appendix A** for more information on survey research, workshops, and polling.

Survey Research
In spring 2006, a survey of 2,500 residents and evacuees provided input on regional planning priorities and preferences on issues critical to recovery and growth. This research was augmented with in-depth interviews with community leaders of all types.

Stakeholder Workshops
More than 1,000 stakeholders participated in six hands-on workshops in summer 2006. This input, and more than 100 in-depth phone interviews, provided direction on coastal restoration and protection, growth and transportation, and economic development. The results fed the recovery and development scenarios that helped create the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan.

(continued on p. 27 sidebar)

UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan is derived from the input of nearly 27,000 Louisianians and stakeholders participating in three distinct phases of public input during 2006 and 2007. People from all walks of life were engaged throughout the process with surveys and hands-on workshops, as well as an outreach effort in which people across the state and in diaspora communities learned about choices for the future via radio, TV, newspaper, the Internet, and community meetings. Louisianians weighed in using paper polling forms, the Internet, a toll-free number, and a statistically valid outbound survey. This input reflects a truly representative cross-section of the people that call South Louisiana home. For more information see sidebar and Appendix A.

The public input paints a clear and consistent picture of what Louisianians envision for their future. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan reflects this input in its vision for recovery and growth and the strategies and actions it lays out to move Louisiana forward.

MAKING CHOICES
To arrive at a plan of action, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Planning process evaluated the economic, environmental, and social forces that shape South Louisiana and explored alternatives for how the region can recover and develop over time. The stakeholder workshops and public polling asked citizens to weigh in on how South Louisiana should approach economic development, which coastal protection and restoration strategies to prioritize, which pattern of future growth and development the region should pursue, and how to balance individual rights with community risk.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PUBLIC INPUT
Overall, Louisianians expressed a strong desire for a comprehensive approach to planning that addresses risk management, infrastructure planning, economic and land development, and transportation. The results of workshops, surveys, and polling indicate support for a plan that:

- Accelerates funding and implementation of coastal recovery
- Integrates coastal recovery and protection with economic recovery and development plans
- Advances policies that minimize community risk while balancing property rights
- Creates a wider range of housing choices and new public transit options
- Focuses on strengthening Louisiana's existing economy with renewed emphasis on higher education and job training

Protection and Restoration: There is wide support for a combination of aggressive coastal restoration and strategic levee protection for existing communities. Poll results underscore the importance of accelerated funding for and implementation of protection and restoration plans.

Managing Risk: There is a common understanding, highlighted by the 2005 hurricanes, that when people build in unprotected areas with high risk of storm damage, we all share the risk they assume, in the form of rising insurance premiums and the shared public cost of disaster recovery. Nearly 90% of citizens polled favor managing our shared risk through a combination of development incentives and regulations and smart investments in protection, restoration, and transportation infrastructure.

Growth and Transportation: Workshop participants and fully 80% of poll respondents expressed a preference for shifting development patterns toward reinvesting in existing cities and towns, building communities that are more compact and walkable, and creating places with more transit options and a broader mix of housing types. Louisianians also expressed a clear understanding that our patterns of growth directly influence the resilience of our communities.

Economic Development Priorities: Louisianians' top economic priorities included a focus on keeping and recruiting companies, greater investment in higher education and job training, and support for small business. There was also support for broad housing choice in all communities and near-term housing to support recovery and support workers and economic activity.

Polling

In early 2007, more than 23,000 Louisianians, in-state and in the diaspora, engaged in a Regional Vision Poll. They were reached through direct community outreach, a Louisiana Public Broadcasting television program, and a multi-media ad campaign. Citizens responded through newspaper inserts, online polling, a toll-free number, and a statistically representative telephone survey. Their responses provided clear guidance on South Louisiana's preferences for the future.