





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

### Project Purpose

Slidell, Louisiana, is fortunate to be anchored by its quaint and historic “Olde Towne” area, which remains a cherished focal point for the community. However, it also shares the same challenges faced by many downtowns and older mixed-use areas, including buildings needing rehabilitation, empty building spaces, parking demands, and similar issues. *The purpose of this master plan is to provide Slidell with a blueprint to further revitalize Olde Towne.* Because Olde Towne is a complex and multi-faceted place requiring an equally complex and multi-faceted solution, this plan is holistic by considering it in a comprehensive manner - physical, economic and social. In fact, Slidell is blessed to have a local Main Street program for revitalization, and this plan reflects the Main Street “four point” approach: organization, design, economic vitality, and promotion.

***“If our goal is to make Slidell the best it can be; this plan will provide a guide for Olde Towne that could be incredible for our city. We’re very excited about this.”***

Mayor Greg Cromer - April 11, 2022

### Project Study Area & Process

The study area for this plan features two areas:

- Primary Study Area - Main Street District
- Secondary Study Area - Cultural District

The four primary tasks for this project were as follows:

Task 1.0: Project Kick-Off & Research

Task 2.0: Charrette & Concept Plan

Task 3.0: Draft Master Plan Preparation

Task 4.0: Plan Presentation & Revisions

### Key Findings

This plan’s Background section contains 19 pages covering Olde Towne’s existing conditions, as well as a Retail Market Analysis Report in the Appendices. Key findings include:

#### Physical Features

- **Natural Features:** The two key features are the bayous, including Bayou Bonfouca as the study area’s west boundary, and floodplains, which entail all of Olde Towne.
- **Land Uses:** Olde Towne’s land areas are primarily a three-way split between commercial / mixed use (24%), institutional (24%), and residential (35%).
- **Development Patterns:** Olde Towne has walkable blocks (300 ft. X 350 ft.) with buildings fronting onto the streets.
- **Buildings:** The range of building types reflect the range of land uses, and there are opportunities for both historic building rehabilitations and new infill development.
- **Streets & Streetscapes:** The tight street-grid and relatively narrow streets with sidewalks are pedestrian-friendly.
- **Parking:** On-street parking is unregulated for turnover.
- **Public Spaces & Facilities:** Parks range in size and character, with Heritage Park being the largest and most used.

#### Economic Conditions

- Olde Towne has 145,000 sq. ft. of retail space (42% of Olde Towne’s total space)
- Eating and drinking businesses occupy 28% and personal services occupy 17% of Olde Towne’s retail space
- Vacant space comprises 9.3% of all retail space

#### Public Policies

- **Zoning:** The primary study area is zoned Central Business District (C-3), which permits many uses that are incompatible with Olde Towne, such as auto sales. Also, required lot sizes and widths for some of the residential zones are larger than historic development patterns.
- **Historic Zoning:** The City has a designated historic district extending well beyond Olde Towne’s boundaries.

### Public Engagement

Public engagement was a critical element in preparing this plan and it occurred in a range of ways throughout the life of the project, including:

#### Meetings

A series of meetings were conducted in May of 2022 that include four stakeholder focus group meetings and a public kick-off meeting to explain the project and to begin to solicit information and opinions relative to Olde Towne.

#### Public Opinion Survey

The online public opinion survey took approximately ten minutes to complete, it was anonymous, and it ran from June 22nd through August 12th of 2022. A total of 372 people participated.

#### Planning Charrette

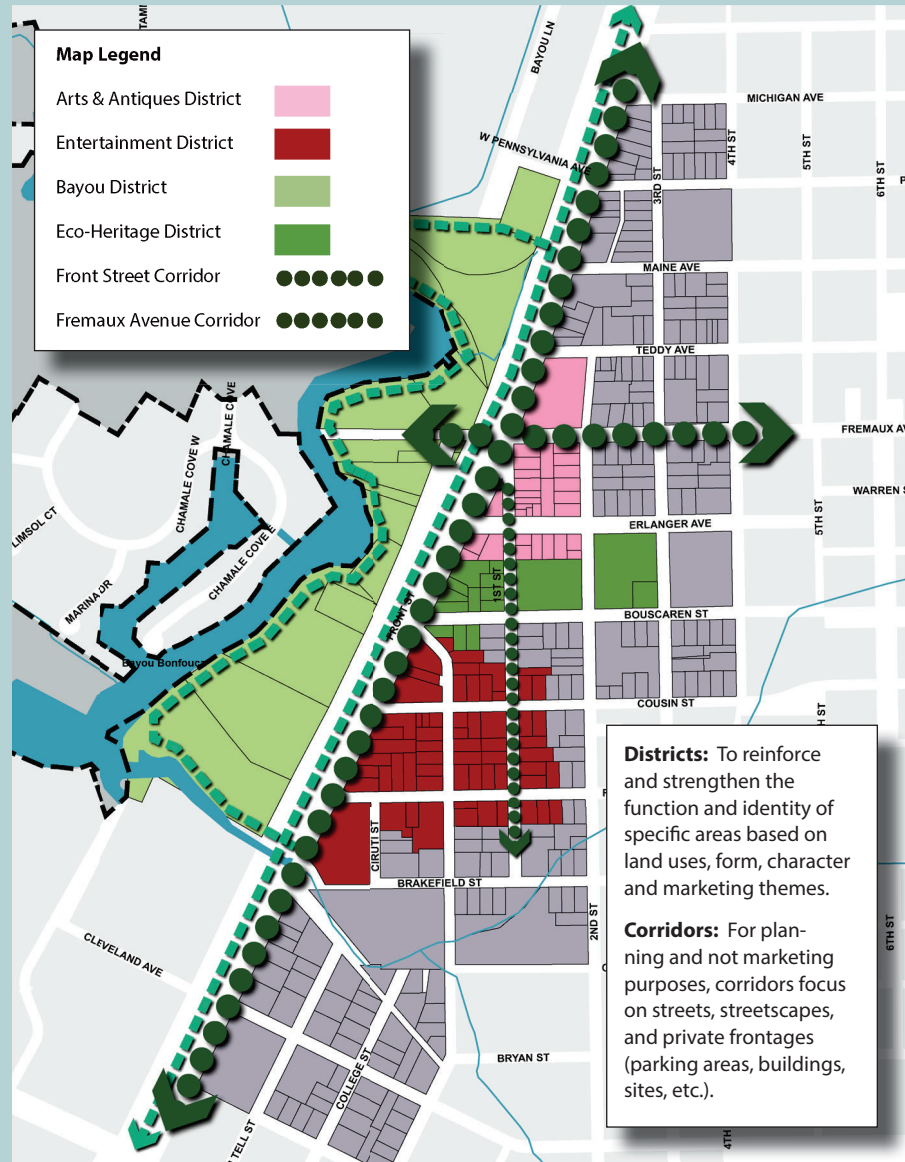
The five-day charrette held in August of 2022 started with an evening public workshop in which participants were “deputized” to be planners for the evening to generate their own plans for Olde Towne. The charrette culminated with the consultant team’s Concept Plan presentation on the final evening for public feedback and discussion.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## FRAMEWORK PLAN

The map below illustrates a system of Districts and Corridors. While they may reflect existing conditions in many respects, they are aspirational. Some areas are not included within a particular District or Corridor (shaded in gray), but they are still addressed by this plan.



## URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Urban design refers to the arrangement of the key physical features of an urbanized area, including streets, existing buildings, proposed new buildings, parking areas, and public spaces. The spatial relationship of features can determine the form and character of a place.





## DESIGN STRATEGY

## General

- ## Flooding Issues

- ## Existing Conditions



## Proposed Conditions



## General

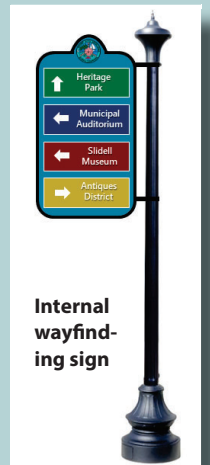
- 
- Diagram illustrating the proposed street layout for the intersection of Highway 104 and Highway 124. The layout includes a multi-purpose path, travel lanes (southbound), a planter, an access drive, angled parking (including a gutter), and a sidewalk. Trees are shown planted along the travel lanes and in the planter area.

## Dimensioned Plans & Cross-Sections

## Parking

## Wayfinding

- Standard brown signs for cultural sites located peripheral to Olde Towne to attract visitors
- Attractive “branding” signage to guide visitors internally once they are within/near Olde Towne



## Public Spaces

An aerial photograph of a park area. A large green rectangular field is outlined with a black border and a row of green circular markers. In the center of the field is a large blue star-shaped structure. To the left of the field is a paved area with a yellow school bus and a black car. To the right of the field is a paved area with a black car and a yellow school bus. The background shows a parking lot with several cars and a road with a yellow school bus.

Page iii



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ECONOMIC STRATEGY

### Branding & Marketing

#### Family Orientation

To attract a more diverse market, destinations will include:

- *Cultural Center* as a component of the recommended interpretation center
- *Cameillia Festival* building on the city's existing brand and the desire for more special events

#### Bayou Heritage & Outdoor Recreation

Leveraging area swamp tours and Bayou Bonfouca, associated retail might include an outfitters store

#### Special Districts

These districts are delineated in the Framework Plan and include both existing and new areas:

- *Art & Antiques District* - strengthening this existing area in the northern portion of Olde Towne
- *Entertainment District* - focused around the existing concentration of restaurants and bars in the south area
- *Eco-Heritage District* - located between the two districts listed above, this new area will be a family destination

Table 2. RECOMMENDED RETAIL TENANT MIX, OLDE TOWNE SLIDELL		
Type of Business		Square Feet
Family Entertainment & Music Venue(s)		55,000
Specialty Grocery/Pharmacy		21,000
Florist		1,000
Boutique Apparel		3,500
General Merchandise		12,000
Books		2,000
Gifts		1,800
Toy/Game/Hobby		4,000
Sporting Goods-Outdoor Recreation		3,500
Theme Restaurant(s)		3,000
Coffee/Donuts/Snack		3,500
<b>Total</b>		<b>110,300</b>
<b>Source:</b> Randall Gross / Development Economics.		

### Business Mix & Concepts

#### Family-Friendly Anchor Concepts

To leverage the existing demand for 110,000 square feet of additional retail space (see table below), concepts include:

- *Louisiana Bayou Education & Interpretive Center* - a major anchor for the proposed new Eco-Heritage District
- *Heritage Park* - implementation of the City's new Waterfront Plan will create a stronger draw to Bayou Bonfouca
- *Griffith Park* - to be expanded and enhance, including one or more water features
- *Eco-Heritage Related Businesses* - such as an outfitter
- *Other Target Business Concepts*
  - Small grocery/deli (market support for 21,000 sq. ft.)
  - Boutique hotel (requires a feasibility study)

### Business & Developer Recruitment

#### General Retail & Dining Businesses

Recruitment efforts should focus on working with landlords and property owners to identify potential buildings and sites. Findings from the Retail Market Analysis should be packaged for direct outreach to potential tenants and emerging entrepreneurs. An emphasis should be placed on local and regional businesses.

#### Specific Uses

Different approaches have been proposed for different uses. For example, housing tools include an acquisition and land banking strategy, a fast-track approval process, federal and state investment tax credits, low-interest loans, and an insurance cooperative.



#### Model Business:

*Fantasy Island Toys in Downtown Fairhope, AL.*

## PUBLIC POLICY STRATEGY

### Zoning

The City would benefit from an entirely new zoning and development code, but just a few examples of specific recommended changes for Olde Towne include:

**Land Uses:** Allow more compatible uses in the C-3 district, such as multi-family, and prohibit uses such as auto sales.

**Building Heights:** Change the permitted height in the C-3 district from 65 ft. to 40 ft.

**Residential Lot Sizes & Setbacks:** Revise the standards to be more consistent with historic development patterns, which entail slightly smaller lots and shallower setbacks.

### Historic Zoning

Recommendations include clarifying the relationship between zoning and historic zoning, reconsidering the regulation of paint colors, and pursuing new design guidelines.

### Other Policies

Other suggested policies include: 1) the jurisdictional transfer of Front St. and Fremaux Ave. from the State to the City; 2) placing time limits on on-street parking (if a voluntary approach fails); and 3) adopting financial incentives.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to addressing costs and funding sources (to the extent they can be within this project's scope), the Implementation Matrix addresses responsible parties and sequencing for the plan's key recommendations. Examples of other implementation issues include:

- Expanding funding for the Main Street program
- Appointment of a Plan Implementation Committee
- Initiating implementation with a "Quick Victory" project



### Rendering of a Redeveloped Front Street Corridor and Beyond



*This rendering illustrates a redeveloped Front Street corridor in the foreground as viewed looking east from Bayou Bonfouca. Among the many physical enhancements are a greenway/trail between the railroad and Front Street, new infill development on the east side of Front Street, and redevelopment of the street and streetscape itself. Improvements to the street include wider sidewalks, a segment of landscaped median and adjacent angled on-street parking, more street trees, and small plazas at key intersections for public art.*