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AUGUST 2015

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# GONZALES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN







A SPECIAL THANKS TO  
**Residents of Gonzales who gave  
their time and input to the plan**

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City of Gonzales Planning and Zoning Commission on August 3, 2015, and adopted by the Gonzales City Council on August 24, 2015.

This plan was prepared for the City of Gonzales, Louisiana by Center for Planning Excellence, with DRW Planning Studio and ECONorthwest.

All images are courtesy of Center for Planning Excellence unless otherwise noted.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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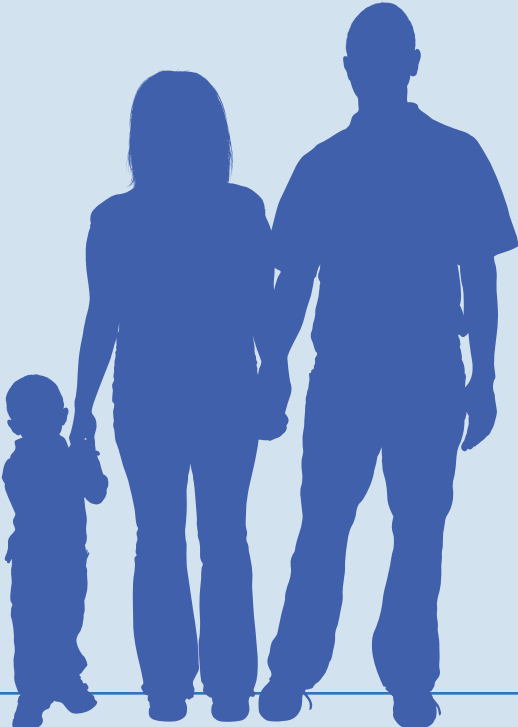
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**CHAPTER ONE**

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THE GONZALES VISION

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# Introduction and Purpose

City of Gonzales leaders and stakeholders pride themselves on providing quality city services and a high quality of life for all residents. Residents agree that Gonzales provides a safe, welcoming, and quality community to support all ages – from youth and young families to those at retirement age. As Gonzales grows, city leaders and stakeholders want to ensure that the city keeps its high quality of life and fiscal stability, while gaining more good jobs to retain the community’s young workers.

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan is intended to capture the vision of Gonzales’s citizens and translate that vision into reality through the adoption and implementation of actions that will guide future development. The successful implementation of the plan will take a concerted effort by city leaders, area businesses, community leaders, residents, and investors. This plan is strategic, addressing specific issues to guide Gonzales in growing sustainably, including land use and urban design, downtown development, transportation, housing and resiliency.

This comprehensive plan should be considered the city’s “blueprint” for long-term development. It includes goals and actions in map and text form to direct future decision-making. The plan expresses Gonzales citizens’ vision for the future and how the city will continue to provide a livable, resilient community for all residents.

This plan, in itself, is not a regulatory document. Instead, once adopted, the plan will be used to guide city development decisions. In addition, the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council shall consider the adopted plan before adopting or approving local laws, ordinances or regulations, as required by state law. The comprehensive plan is based on guiding principles that reflect citizens’ core values. These principles were created through citizen input that informed the actions recommended in this plan.



Image: The Creole

Dancers at a May 2015 Music in the Park concert, presented by the City of Gonzales and Mayor’s Council on the Arts at the Jambalaya Park Pavilion.



Construction along LA 44



New River just west of Airline Highway



# Guiding Principles

Guiding principles reflect Gonzales residents' and stakeholders' core values. Clearly understanding these values ensures that the recommendations and actions in this plan reflect and support residents' and stakeholders' desires for the future and provides assurance that, if implemented, the plan will move the city towards these collective goals.

The following guiding principles were established through citizen and stakeholder input. They are grouped into five topic areas: Land Use and Urban Design, Mobility, Housing, Economy, and Quality of Life/City Services.

## Land Use and Urban Design

- Ensure quality new development that is balanced to provide a healthy community
- Develop walkable neighborhoods and commercial centers
- Protect and enhance existing neighborhoods
- Provide clear direction on land use decisions
- Implement development standards to improve quality of development
- Reduce potential flood risks

## Mobility

- Improve traffic flow throughout the city
- Improve streets to include pedestrian facilities
- Make streets safe and friendly for all modes of transportation

## Housing

- Plan for additional residential growth
- Implement design standards to provide quality residential development
- Provide a range of housing types for people of all income levels from high-end to affordable



A runner on the Bayou Francois path.

## Economy

- Restore downtown's vitality
- Create and retain good quality jobs for people of all ages
- Increase the number of people living in Gonzales
- Foster cooperation among civic, business, and government stakeholders for continued economic success

## Quality of Life/City Services

- Have an excellent K-12 school system and training and community college facilities that make people want to live in Gonzales
- Maintain and enhance existing parks, recreation facilities, and trails
- Recognize quality of life, culture, diversity, and the friendly character of the city as important for future growth

# Gonzales in the Future

Throughout the planning process, Gonzales residents and stakeholders clearly expressed a shared vision for the future during workshops, meetings, interviews and other public input opportunities. The following vision statements describe how residents and stakeholders would like Gonzales to look, feel, and operate in the future. Gonzales residents will continue to enjoy life in the city by experiencing:

## ***A welcoming city full of friendly character, great schools, and recreational opportunities***

### **In the future...**

Gonzales continues to treasure and build upon its culture of friendly people, enjoyable events and festivals, and support of family life. Residents are involved in civic activities and are known for volunteering to improve the quality of life for all residents. As the city continues to grow, largely due to the regional industrial boom, Gonzales becomes home to people who work inside the city and nearby. Families continue to thrive in Gonzales, enjoying the high quality schools that prepare the city's youth for advanced education and well-paying jobs. The River Parishes Community College provides educational resources for the city's youth and provides qualified workers for new jobs, resulting in the city being able to grow, retain, and attract state of the art businesses.

In their free time, residents and visitors have many leisure opportunities, including access to an expanded network of walking and biking trails that link neighborhoods to downtown and natural areas both inside and adjacent to the city. The city is known for its premier parks, open space and recreational opportunities that residents enjoy year-round. Gonzales maintains its offering of facilities such as Gonzales Municipal Park and Jambalaya Park, and expands parks, public open space, and trails, especially along bayous and other natural and environmental areas. The city's park system provides a variety of sports, swimming pools and recreational centers for all ages.



Gonzales Primary School on Burnside Avenue



Looking north along Burnside Avenue from Roosevelt Street

## ***A robust downtown with expanded local and regional connections***

### **In the future...**

Gonzales builds on its city center, bringing it back to a thriving main street with shared parking, a marketplace, retail and restaurants. Reinvestment in the older parts of the city stabilizes neighborhoods and creates quality locations for younger residents seeking homeownership opportunities. As the downtown area becomes revitalized, the connections to adjacent neighborhoods are strengthened, and people can walk or bike to shop.

People have a number of options to move throughout the city – roads are well maintained and the city's path system is expanded, so residents are able to efficiently access local shopping and employment areas by walking, bicycling, or driving. A Gonzales station is located along the Baton Rouge to New Orleans passenger rail system, providing connections to the region and beyond. The station area has multifamily units and small-scale retail and is connected to the thriving nearby downtown.





Image: Gonzales Police Department

Gonzales Police Department staff



Image: Gonzales Fire Department

Gonzales Fire Department Engine 10



Image: City of Gonzales

Jambalaya Park



Image: The Creole

Gonzales Middle School students marching in the annual Christmas Parade

## ***A safe and well run city that continues its high level of services and support of its citizens***

### **In the future...**

Gonzales continues to be known for its safety and high quality city services. Residents feel confident that city leaders listen to and understand their concerns. City employees are active participants in regional planning for infrastructure and work to coordinate with parish, region and state planning agencies. Existing infrastructure is maintained, and plans are in place to upgrade and enhance services to accommodate future growth.

Regulations and financing mechanisms ensure that desired development occurs that will enhance the town's character, and that infrastructure is maintained for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

A large employment center located south of the hospital provides space for businesses looking to either expand or relocate, attracting light industrial or logistics businesses that capitalize on Gonzales's willing workforce, regional connectivity, and proximity to other services. New regional connections increase access to jobs, housing, and services.

## ***A community that attracts and retains people of all ages***

### **In the future...**

Gonzales is a place where residents can quickly access convenient services by a short walk down the street or through a nearby neighborhood. Residents who live in outlying neighborhoods can make short drives to downtown or other commercial centers, park once either on the street or in a shared lot, and easily conduct their errands. A new town center south of I-10 provides a lively mixed use neighborhood with many amenities appreciated by young and old. Residents and tourists enjoy shopping, jobs, public spaces, and restaurants offered in a variety of venues centered on the many outdoor amenities. In these centers people gather to enjoy common greens, plazas, outdoor markets and other public gathering places that serve as a backbone for community life. The diverse housing, activities, amenities and educational opportunities all serve to make Gonzales attractive to new and existing residents of all ages.

# The Gonzales Vision Map

The previous section, Gonzales in the Future, describes the vision for the city – how residents and stakeholders hope to see Gonzales look and operate in the future. The Gonzales Vision Map, shown here and on page 46, depicts this vision graphically, showing future land use that will be required to accommodate anticipated growth in the region.

The Gonzales Vision Map anticipates stabilizing existing residential neighborhoods by rehabilitating and infilling these neighborhoods with compatible residential development and appropriate neighborhood-serving retail uses.

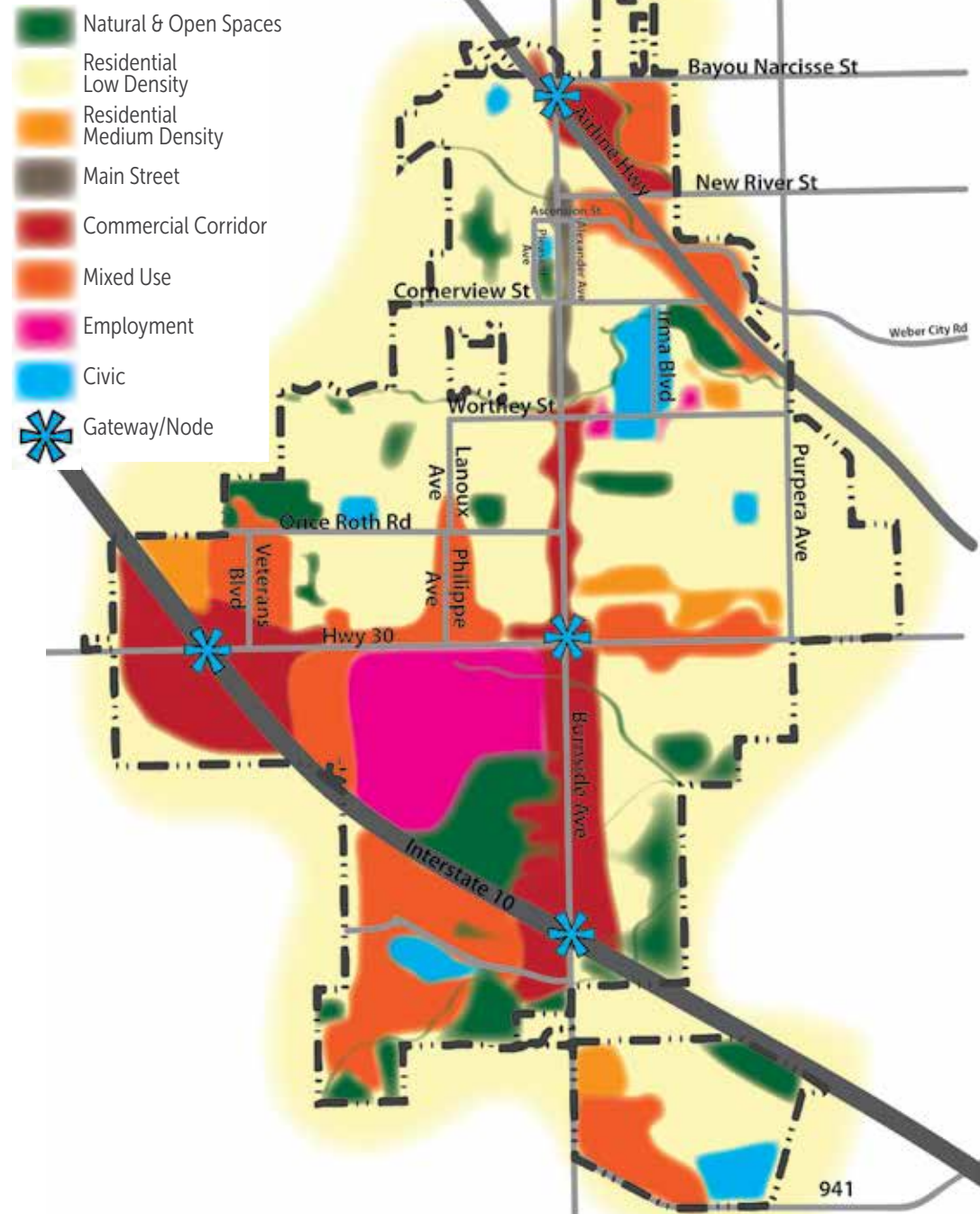
Commercial corridors are extended along Burnside Avenue and Airline Highway and in nodes along interstate access areas. These commercial corridors generally accommodate retail and services at major intersections and allow commercial and office warehouse in other parts of the corridor. These are one location where industrial support and service businesses may locate.

A major employment area is located around the hospital. Offices, retail and supporting businesses are envisioned in this area.

The Gonzales Vision Map identifies the old downtown area as a thriving main street, with mixed use development located in the vicinity of the potential commuter rail station.

Mixed use areas are also envisioned in southern portions of Gonzales, where they are planned to attract new industrial and service employees moving into the region. These areas will have amenities that attract and retain a young, vibrant workforce.

**FIGURE 1.1:  
GONZALES VISION MAP**



# Plan Summary

The intent of the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan is to provide direction for future growth so that the best of Gonzales’s culture, high quality services, and quality of life are protected and preserved, while also growing in a way that allows both existing and new residents to continue to experience this same high quality of life. This plan is divided into nine chapters.

**CHAPTER 1**, the Gonzales Vision, serves as an executive summary of the plan, and describes the purpose, guiding principles, and how residents and stakeholders envision the future to look and feel. In addition, top strategic actions that should be addressed immediately, or in the next one to two years, are described.

**CHAPTER 2**, About the Plan, describes how the plan was developed and the public engagement and input that is the backbone of the plan. A short description of how to use the plan is also included.

**CHAPTER 3**, Gonzales Past, Present, and Future provides a short history of Gonzales and summarizes demographics and economic trends. Population, housing and employment forecasts that drive the land use, transportation, housing and infrastructure recommendations are also included.

The fourth through eighth chapters contain the plan’s detailed actions and implementation measures. These chapters include background and recommendations for land use and urban design, downtown development, transportation, housing and neighborhoods, and economy. These five chapters have the same format; each begins with existing conditions, background information, and then lays out desired outcomes, goals, and actions needed to achieve the citizens’ shared vision.

**CHAPTER 4**, Land Use and Community Character, discusses the existing land use mix in Gonzales, and the changes that are needed to accommodate projected residents and jobs and ensure that high quality, balanced development occurs. The aim is to diversify Gonzales’s land uses to help the city remain fiscally stable if future downturns in specific industries occur.

**CHAPTER 5**, Downtown, the Heart of Gonzales, uses a small area plan format to show how downtown’s assets can be the base of a vibrant main street and civic focus area. This chapter also lays out plans to incorporate a future commuter rail station connected to the downtown area that will provide the catalyst for a lively, mixed use urban community.

**CHAPTER 6**, Transportation, discusses existing thoroughfares, establishes a Master Street Plan and introduces complete street concepts for street development.

**CHAPTER 7**, Housing and Neighborhoods, analyzes the shift in the housing market and shows that Gonzales must provide a wider range of housing types to attract and retain the changing workforce.

**CHAPTER 8**, Prosperous Economy, provides information on economic growth is provided in Chapter 8, Prosperous Economy, and recommendations are provided on how to grow and diversify the city’s economic position.

**CHAPTER 9**, the Strategic Implementation Plan, provides a matrix with outcomes, goals, and actions listed for each item. The responsible person or entity is identified, along with a prioritization of the action item.



# Top Strategic Initiatives

The following priority initiatives are taken from the Outcomes, Goals and Actions in the Land Use, Downtown, Housing, Transportation, and Prosperous Economy chapters in this plan. Based on input from citizens, stakeholders and community leaders, the following priority actions should be achieved or initiated within the first three years following adoption of this plan. Additional important Outcomes, Goals and Strategies can be found in each chapter.

## LAND USE PRIORITY INITIATIVES

- 1.** The Planning Commission and City Council should base land use decisions on this plan and the Vision Map. Land use decisions should achieve a balanced and diverse of nonresidential uses.
- 2.** Land use decisions should support expanding the types of housing available to provide for more choices in style and range of affordability.
- 3.** Update the zoning and subdivision ordinances to be aligned with the Comprehensive Plan. Incorporate clear and objective standards for making land use decisions. Provide for mixed use and main street districts to promote a more walkable environment.
- 4.** If growth continues at an increased pace, hire a city planner to support development review and plan implementation.

## DOWNTOWN PRIORITY INITIATIVES

- 1.** Increase the walkability of Burnside and develop as a Main Street in upcoming improvements.
- 2.** Continue to work with regional leaders to create a Gonzales station along the Baton Rouge-New Orleans rail line. Prepare a small area station plan to maximize development potential and connectivity throughout the downtown area.
- 3.** Identify open space and shared parking opportunities downtown and begin planning for these public amenities.
- 4.** Identify ordinance amendments that would address protecting transition zones and neighborhood stability in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

## TRANSPORTATION PRIORITY INITIATIVES

1. Use the Master Street Plan to reserve needed right of way and plan for connectivity.
2. Require connectivity in new subdivisions to reduce the number of dead end streets and provide opportunities for connections.
3. Adopt a complete streets policy and guidelines to promote all modes of transportation for all ages.

## HOUSING PRIORITY INITIATIVES

1. When making development decisions, consider the need to provide a range of housing types and affordability levels throughout the city.
2. Allow a wider range of housing in and increased densities with appropriate design standards, and locational guidelines, requiring higher densities to provide higher design standards and amenities.
3. Initiate a discussion or a small task force of neighborhood leaders on how to stabilize and revitalize existing older neighborhoods to maintain and enhance the quality of life of all residents.

## ECONOMIC PRIORITY INITIATIVES

1. Make changes to the zoning and development regulations to attract the city's desired types of businesses and actions.
2. Work with the Ascension Economic Development Corporation and other partners to develop a local economic development strategic plan that identifies the types of businesses that the city want to focus on growing and attracting.

## MONITORING

1. Prepare a short annual status report that shows the items that have been implemented the previous year and the priorities for the following year.
2. Update the implementation every 5 years, with overall updates to the vision and entire plan as needed, but at least every 10 years.





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**CHAPTER TWO**

ABOUT THE PLAN

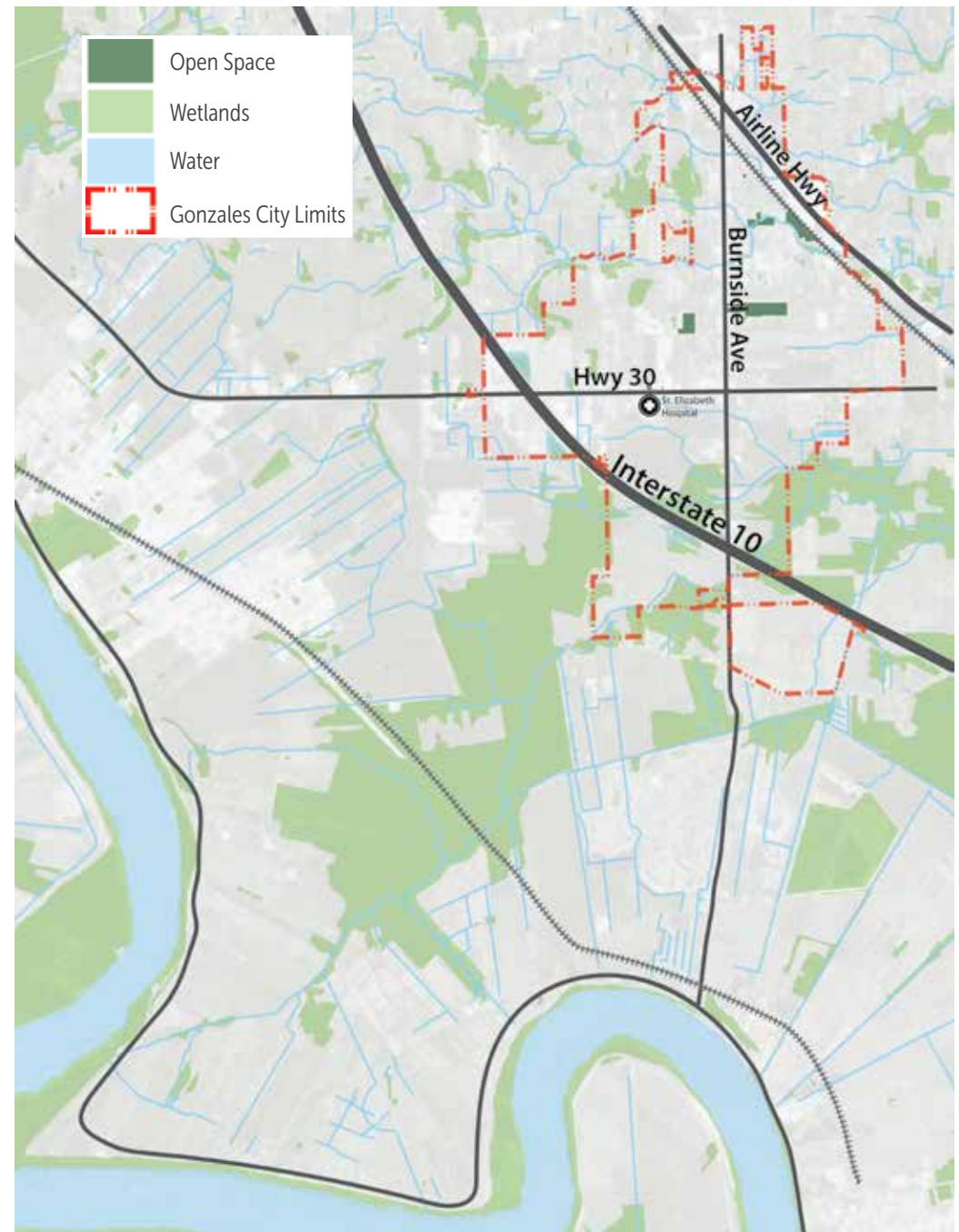
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## How the Plan Was Developed

In 2014 the City of Gonzales initiated a comprehensive planning process to analyze the potential impacts of future growth and to provide a strategic framework to guide development as new industrial growth occurs in the region. Gonzales's location in Ascension Parish, one of the fastest growing parishes in Louisiana, along with the rapid industrial growth occurring south along the Mississippi River, has created a high demand for retail and commercial developable land in the city. As the center of commercial and business activity in the parish and the only location north of the river in Ascension Parish that provides full urban services, Gonzales draws businesses ancillary to the industrial uses to the south. To address these issues, this comprehensive plan provides a road map for the city to use in making decisions about the city's growth, development, and services. Gonzales's last comprehensive plan was prepared in 1997 and is outdated, given the amount of development that has occurred since that time, and the changing conditions.

The City of Gonzales has many assets that make it an extremely desirable place in which to live and do business. Its location close to refineries makes it a natural draw for services to support that growing industry. Gonzales's location along Interstate 10 has created a thriving retail center. Its high quality parks and recreation system, services, and schools make it a highly desirable place to live. The northern portion of the city is predominantly built out, while the southern portion has build-out potential that should be explored and managed. With proper planning and implementation, the northern area can benefit from thoughtful redevelopment over time, while the southern area can exemplify quality design that will strengthen the character of the city.

FIG. 2.1: GONZALES BASE MAP



# Public Involvement During the Plan



A flyer inviting the public to the Visioning Workshop



The Stakeholder Committee helped publicize the workshop with yard signs

The foundation of any successful plan is a meaningful and robust public engagement process that involves a broad cross-section of stakeholders. This ensures that the plan is relevant to the community's specific issues and develops ownership among many so that the plan does not simply sit on a shelf. The process to develop the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan included many avenues of engagement to give the City of Gonzales a relevant and effective plan.

## Stakeholder Committee

The stakeholder committee was formed to help guide the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan process. The 19-member committee was comprised of Gonzales residents with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, representing multiple facets of the community. The stakeholder committee

met approximately every other month with the consultants throughout the planning process to review presentations and document drafts, offer comments, and ensure that the plan reflected public input. Members of the committee also attended and helped publicize all public meetings and acted as a conduit for information between their stakeholder groups and the consultants.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholders are people or organizations who have an interest in the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan or who will be affected by it. The consultant team conducted individual and small-group interviews with stakeholders including City department representatives, local elected officials, school board representatives, real estate agents, and economic development professionals. These interviews gave the team a more in-depth look at the opportunities and challenges Gonzales faces from the perspective of each stakeholder group. Common themes from the stakeholder interviews were identified and used, along with public input, to create the plan's guiding principles, discussed in the first chapter of this plan.

## Outreach for Public Workshops

Three public meetings were held during the Gonzales Comprehensive Plan process: a visioning workshop, a downtown workshop, and an open house. For all three meetings, the consultant team used the city's website, email blasts, flyers, yard signs, and stakeholder committee networks to invite the public. The team also tailored its outreach methods for each workshop to get the most participation. For example, a notice was sent out on every city utility bill for the visioning workshop, while for the downtown workshop, postcards were mailed to hundreds of businesses and residents in the downtown area. To publicize the open house, the draft plan was provided at City Hall, at the Gonzales branch of the Ascension Parish Library, via email blast, and on the city's website.



## VISIONING WORKSHOP

The Visioning Workshop asked attendees to think big about what they wanted to see happen in Gonzales-- not what they expected to happen. At tables of approximately ten people, each with a facilitator, residents received table-sized maps of the city, markers, and "chips" (slips of colored paper) representing different kinds of development. First, participants recorded their goals for the city's land use, development, housing and transportation. They outlined areas for preservation and revitalization, drew in new transportation infrastructure, and used chips to show where future development was desired in the following categories: civic, employment, open space and parks, mixed use, commercial, and residential. Each table then presented their vision to the larger group. All notes, comments, drawings and chips on the maps were digitized after the meeting and the most common themes were identified. Digitized versions of each table map were combined to make an overall Vision Map, discussed in the first chapter of this plan.

Through the vision map exercise, participants worked with their neighbors to evaluate the tradeoffs, mix of uses, walkability, and design characteristics of the different types of development. Several key themes emerged from the workshop discussions.

### Key priorities and outcomes:

-  Passenger rail line stopping in Gonzales
-  Revitalizing the downtown area
-  Infill development
-  Streetscape improvements
-  Mixing uses
-  Adding north-south transportation alternatives to Burnside Avenue
-  Increasing travel connections in general
-  Improving existing parks and creating new parks
-  Adding bike and pedestrian connections

Attendees at the Visioning Workshop add their goals to the map.





## DOWNTOWN WORKSHOP

Addressing the desire to revitalize the downtown area, another workshop focused specifically on downtown issues. At tables of approximately eight people each, workshop attendees participated in a facilitated discussion about downtown Gonzales. Input was prompted by three discussion starters:

**“What if...?”**

**“But I worry about...”**

**“What must happen?”**

This format allowed key opportunities, significant challenges, and strategic actions to be identified. Participants used large maps of downtown Gonzales to illustrate their discussions. All notes, comments, and drawings on the maps were digitized after the meeting, and the most common themes were identified. Digitized versions of each table map were used to create the downtown portion of the Vision Map, and the feedback from this workshop became the foundation for the downtown plan in Chapter 5: Downtown, the Heart of Gonzales.



Workshop attendees listen to a presentation before beginning discussions at the downtown workshop.



A map from the downtown workshop is shown as an example of the issues discussed.



# How to Use the Plan

The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan records the shared vision of Gonzales residents and translates that vision into reality by serving as a framework for long-term future development. It gives the city guidelines for its future land use and urban design, downtown redevelopment, transportation, housing and neighborhoods, and prosperous economy. The Gonzales Comprehensive Plan, in itself, is not a regulatory document. Instead, once adopted, the plan will be used to guide city development decisions.

Gonzales's staff, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council will use the goals and actions to inform their evaluations of land use, transportation and capital improvement decisions. These goals and actions will be used to identify priority projects and improvements during the budgeting process.

In addition to being a guide for Gonzales's staff and elected and appointed officials, this plan is intended to be used by citizens, business owners, developers, real estate agents, and future residents. Business owners, developers and real estate agents can look toward the plan to see future land use patterns and to understand how and why land use, transportation and infrastructure decisions are made. The plan will provide an increased level of predictability to future development decisions. Residents can refer to the citizens' shared vision developed through this planning process and evaluate recommendations and changes based on consistency with the vision.

Though all of these groups should become familiar with the plan, elected and appointed officials should study the plan carefully. As development cases are brought forward and evaluated, it will be important to consider the goals and actions provided in chapters 4 through 8. The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council should provide findings when evaluating cases and clearly state the goals and actions from the plan that support or do not support these land use and capital improvement decisions.

And finally, this plan can be used to attract quality development. As the development community sees the stability and transparency provided through the city's planning process, more new developers may be interested in working in Gonzales.







JAMBALAYA PARK



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**CHAPTER THREE**

GONZALES PAST,  
PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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# History of Gonzales

Originally part of the Louisiana Purchase from France, the area that now contains Gonzales was subdivided by the U.S. Congress in 1804 into Acadia County in the Territory of Orleans. In 1812, Louisiana became the eighteenth state. A new Louisiana State Constitution was adopted in 1845 which changed the designation of counties to parishes. From the former Acadia County, the Parishes of Ascension and St. James were created.

Early European arrivals to the Gonzales area were, for the most part, squatters of Spanish and French ancestry, settling amidst the Houma Indians. The agricultural community was linked to other settlements by footpaths and waterways. By 1851, the confines of the settlement had only about ten residents. Homesteading was granted to these early settlers in the mid 1880's with tracts of land ranging from 40 to 160 acres.

In 1886, the growing settlement chose to elect "Big" Joseph Gonzales as sheriff. In 1887, Joseph's son, "Tee-Joe," opened a general store and post office in the small community. Years later, the Railroad Commission ordered the local railroad, the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company, to change its station name from Edenborn to the name of the settlement's post office. As a result the village became known as Gonzales. With the arrival of the railroad, the community grew. It was officially incorporated and declared a village on April 12, 1922, with Joseph "Tee-Joe" Gonzales serving as the first mayor.

Airline Highway was constructed through the village in the 1930s. On May 4, 1952, the village became known as the Town of Gonzales. During the 1950s, Gonzales experienced a major transition as industrial plants began to locate in the area along the Mississippi River, bringing hundreds of new residents to the town. On August 17, 1977, the City of Gonzales was created.

Today, Gonzales serves as the financial, commercial, industrial, social and political center of the eastern portion of Ascension parish. It is the parish's

most populous city, with more than 10,000 residents, and is governed by a mayor and a five-member council, all of whom are elected by the city at large.

The lifestyle, food and music of the area is a unique, lively mixture of Native American, French, Spanish, African, Acadian, German and Italian influences. Known as the "Jambalaya Capital of the World", Gonzales is famous for its annual Jambalaya Festival, which was first held in 1968.



The "Tee-Joe" Gonzales Museum on Main Street, formerly the home of Gonzales's first mayor.



The 2011 Gonzales Jambalaya Festival.

Image: www.redsticknow.com



# Demographics and Economic Forces

Understanding current demographics and economic forces, especially how local changes compare to regional, state, and national trends, can help predict how Gonzales might change in the future. These forces will affect Gonzales's land use, transportation, housing, and economy.

Demographic and economic data was compiled and analyzed from the Ascension Economic Development Corporation, Ascension Parish, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, City of Gonzales, Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, State of Louisiana, U.S. Census Bureau, and Zillow Real Estate Research.

This chapter includes information and descriptions of trends affecting the city, including population growth, age breakdown, education, income, poverty, employment, and transportation. More specific data and trend analysis can be found in the Land Use and Community Character, Transportation, Housing and Neighborhoods, and Prosperous Economy chapters.

# POPULATION

## Gonzales has a growing population.

10,301 people live in Gonzales, according to the State of Louisiana’s 2013 estimate. From 1990 to 2013, Gonzales’s population grew by more than 3,200 people, an average annual growth rate of 1.7 percent, culminating in a 47 percent total increase. Gonzales grew at a faster rate than the nation as a whole (1.0 percent) and Louisiana (0.4 percent) but slower than Ascension Parish (3.0 percent) over this period. See Figure 3.1 for details.

Figure 3.1: Population in the United States, Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 1990 to 2013

AREA	POPULATION			CHANGE 1990 TO 2013		
	1990	2000	2013	NUMBER	PERCENT	AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
United States	248,709,873	281,421,906	316,128,839	67,418,966	27%	1.0%
Louisiana	4,219,973	4,468,976	4,625,470	405,497	10%	0.4%
Ascension Parish	58,214	76,627	114,393	56,179	97%	3.0%
Gonzales	7,003	8,156	10,301	3,298	47%	1.7%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990-2010 Decennial Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey DP05, State of Louisiana.

## Gonzales’s population is slightly younger than the state’s.

Gonzales has a larger share of relatively young people than the state of Louisiana. In 2012, the median age in Gonzales was 35.2 years old, compared to the State median of 35.8. Both Gonzales and the state have higher median ages than Ascension Parish, which had a median age of 34.4 in 2012, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Median Age in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2000 to 2012

	MEDIAN AGE		PERCENT CHANGE
	2000	2012	
Louisiana	34.0	35.9	5%
Ascension Parish	32.0	34.4	7%
Gonzales	34.0	35.2	3%

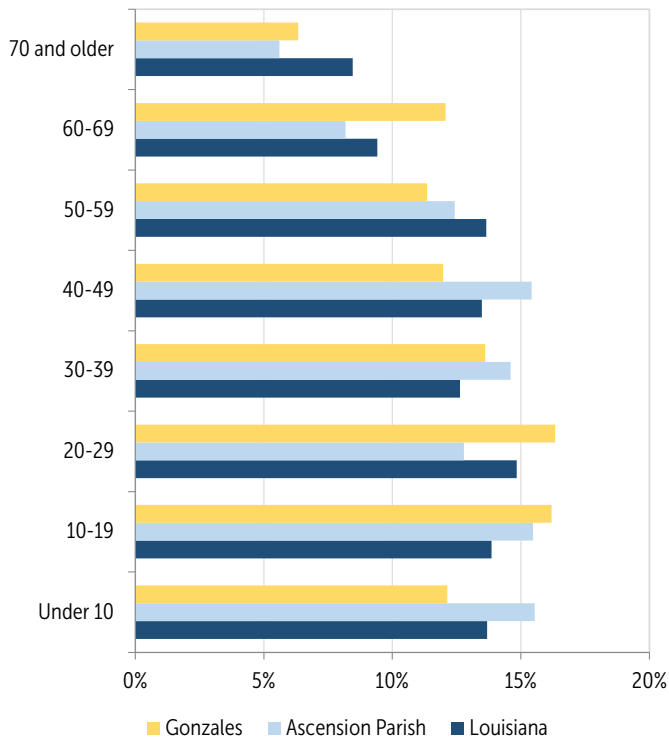
Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2012 5-year ACS from U.S. Census.

Figure 3.3 gives an age breakdown of the population of Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales. In 2012, about 45 percent of Gonzales’s population was younger than 30 years old, compared to Louisiana’s average of 42 percent. Thirty percent of Gonzales’s population was older than 50 years old, compared to the state average of 32 percent.

**However, Gonzales’s population is growing older.**

Although Gonzales has a smaller share of people over 50 years old than the state average, its population is aging, consistent with state and national trends. Baby Boomers, who in 2015 are about 51 to 69 years old, were the fastest growing age group in Gonzales between 2000 and 2012. Gonzales added people in all age groups in that period, but the fastest-growing age group was that of people aged 65 years and older, which grew by 44 percent, adding 363 people. In Gonzales, people aged 45 to 64 grew by nearly 433 people (a 24 percent increase) between 2000 and 2012.

Figure 3.3: Percent of Population by Age in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2012

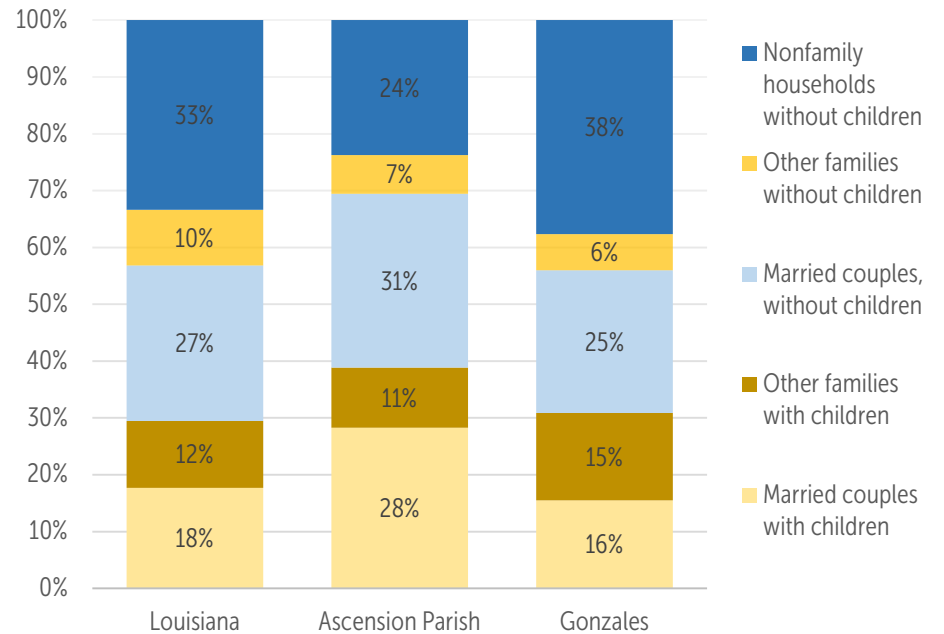


**Gonzales has more non-family households and a smaller average household size compared to the parish and state.**

Gonzales has a larger percentage of non-family households (38 percent) than the parish (24 percent) or state (33 percent), as shown in Figure 3.4. A family household has at least two people, and is defined by the U.S. Census as “a householder and one or more other people related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.” A non-family household may be either a single person or unrelated people living together.

The average household size in Gonzales is estimated at 2.57 people in 2012, slightly smaller than Louisiana (2.59 people) and smaller than Ascension Parish (2.86 people).

Figure 3.4: Household Type in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2012



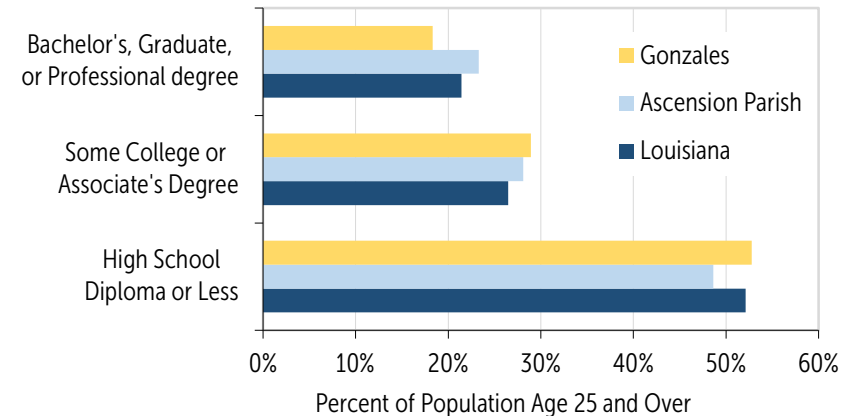


## EDUCATION

### **Gonzales has a smaller share of people with a college education or more, compared to the parish and state.**

A lower percentage (12 percent) of Gonzales and Ascension Parish residents over age 25 have no high school diploma, compared to 18 percent statewide. However, Gonzales has a lower proportion of the population with a Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree than the state or parish. Approximately 29 percent of Gonzales residents have completed some college or an Associate's Degree, compared to 28 percent in Ascension Parish and 26 percent in Louisiana. Figure 3.5 shows the comparison of educational attainment in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales.

Figure 3.5: Educational Attainment of Population Over Age 25



# INCOME

## Gonzales’s median household income is above the state’s, but far below Ascension Parish’s.

In 2012, Gonzales’s median household income was \$48,095, higher than the \$44,673 state median, but lower than the \$67,688 Ascension Parish median.

## Gonzales’s median household income has dropped, while the parish’s has risen.

When converted to 2012 dollars, Gonzales’s median household income has dropped from \$52,114 in 2000 to \$48,095 in 2012, an 8 percent decrease. Ascension Parish’s median household income has increased 13% from 2000 to 2012.

## Poverty rates increased in Gonzales from 17 percent of the population living at or below the poverty line in 2000 to over 23 percent in 2010.

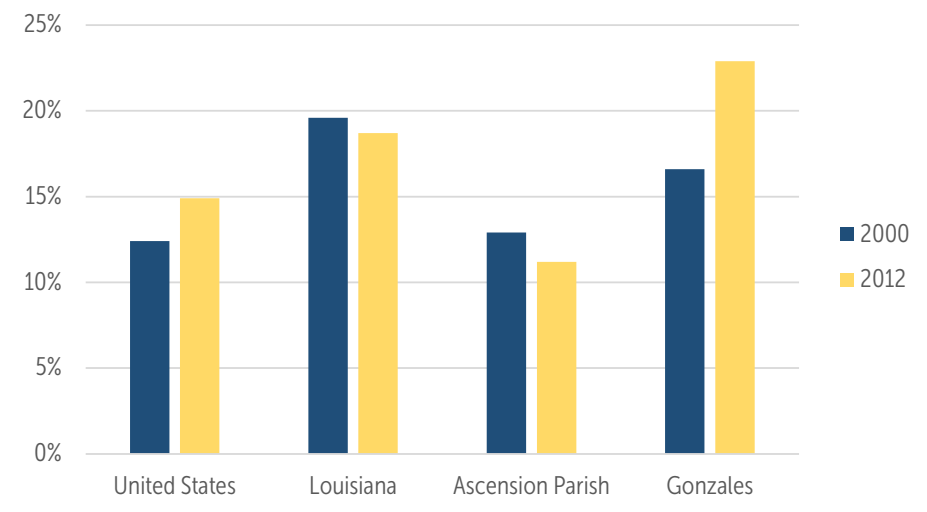
This increase contrasts with the statewide decline in the percentage of people living below the poverty line from 20 percent to 19 percent, and in Ascension Parish from 13 percent to 11 percent.

Figure 3.6: Median Household Income in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2000 and 2012 (all in 2012 dollars)

	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME		PERCENT CHANGE
	2000	2012	
Louisiana	\$44,749	\$44,673	0%
Ascension Parish	\$60,138	\$67,688	+13%
Gonzales	\$52,114	\$48,095	-8%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2012 5-year ACS from U.S. Census.

Figure 3.7: Percent of People Living At or Below the Poverty Line in the United States, Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2000 and 2012

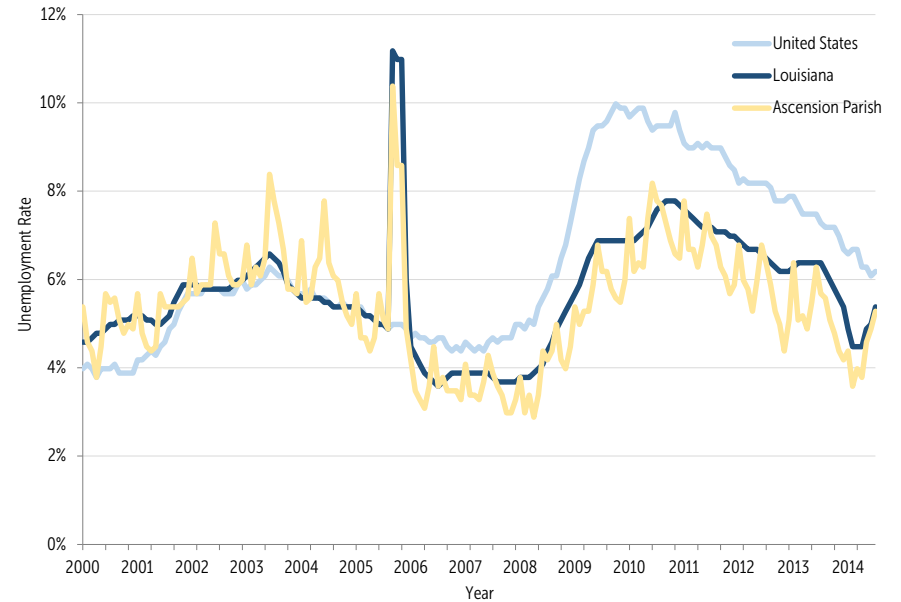


# EMPLOYMENT

## Unemployment rates in Louisiana and Ascension Parish have tended to remain lower than national averages.

Louisiana and Ascension Parish were not impacted as severely by the “Great Recession” compared to the rest of the nation. For example in 2009, in the midst of the recession, while the national unemployment rate peaked at ten percent, the rates for the state and the parish stood at seven percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. In 2014, unemployment rates in Louisiana and Ascension Parish were both at roughly five percent compared to six percent for the nation as a whole. Unemployment data for the City of Gonzales alone is not available.

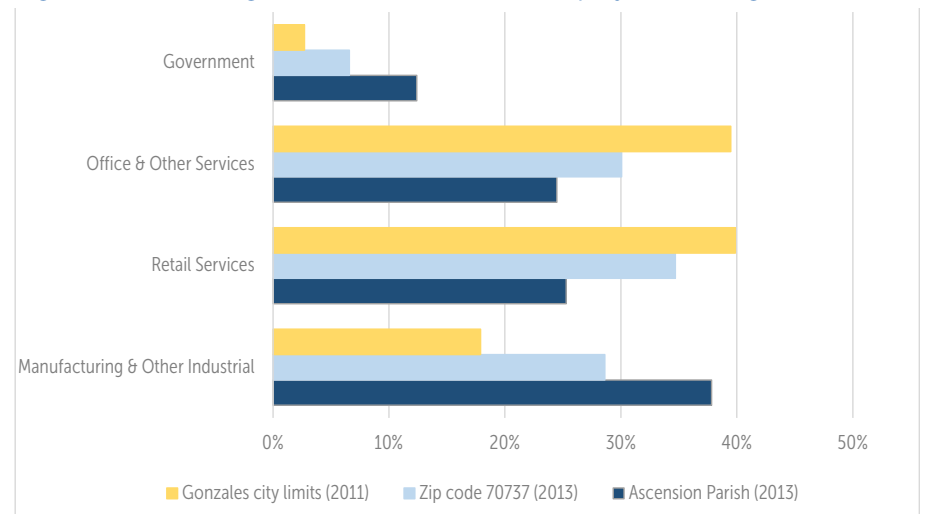
Figure 3.8: Unemployment in the United States, Louisiana, and Ascension Parish, 2000-2014



## The City of Gonzales has a larger share of office and retail employment than the greater Gonzales area (ZIP Code 70737) or Ascension Parish.

Comparing employment in these three geographies shows that Gonzales has a higher percentage of workers in the “office & other services” and “retail services” categories and a lower percentage in the “government” and “manufacturing & other industrial” categories.

Figure 3.9: Percentage of Workers in Covered Employment Categories





**Gonzales has a greater share of employment in sectors which have lower average wages.**

The largest percentage of jobs in Gonzales are in the sectors Retail Trade (25 percent of jobs), Health Care and Social Assistance (18 percent), Accommodations and Food Service (13 percent), Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation (8 percent), and Wholesale Trade (7 percent). Of these, Wholesale Trade had higher-than-average wages at the parish level and the rest have lower-than-average pay at the parish level.

**Lower-wage industries are projected to grow in Ascension Parish, but Gonzales is well-positioned to attract higher paying industries.**

Ascension Parish’s economy is forecast to grow by 13,400 jobs between 2013 and 2024, at an average annual rate of 2.5 percent. The sectors that are forecast to add the largest number of jobs are: Construction (2,090 jobs), Retail (1,715 jobs), Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation (1,650 jobs), Health Care and Social Assistance (1,340 jobs), and Manufacturing (1,280 jobs). Of the sectors forecast to grow the fastest in Ascension Parish, Construction and Manufacturing have above average wages.

Gonzales’s well-established urban infrastructure and services, such as water, wastewater, transportation, police, and fire department, mean that the city is well positioned to attract the higher-paying service and light manufacturing industries. For example, the cost of fire insurance is lower inside the Gonzales city limits than outside. Urban infrastructure and services, as well as Gonzales’s other competitive advantages, are discussed in the Prosperous Economy chapter of this plan.

Figure 3.10: Percent of Employment by Selected NAICS Sector in Gonzales, 2011

NAICS SECTOR	PERCENT OF EMPLOYMENT
Retail Trade	25%
Health Care and Social Assistance	18%
Accommodations and Food Service	13%
Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation	8%
Wholesale Trade	7%
All Other Sectors	29%

Source: 2012 5-year ACS from U.S. Census and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2011.

Figure 3.11: Average Yearly Pay in Selected NAICS Sector in Ascension Parish, 2013

NAICS SECTOR	NUMBER OF JOBS FORECASTED TO BE ADDED BY 2024	AVERAGE YEARLY PAY IN 2013
Construction	2,090	\$57,149
Retail	1,715	\$24,767
Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1,650	\$45,289
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,340	\$32,907
Manufacturing	1,280	\$98,298
Ascension Parish Average	13,400	\$47,885

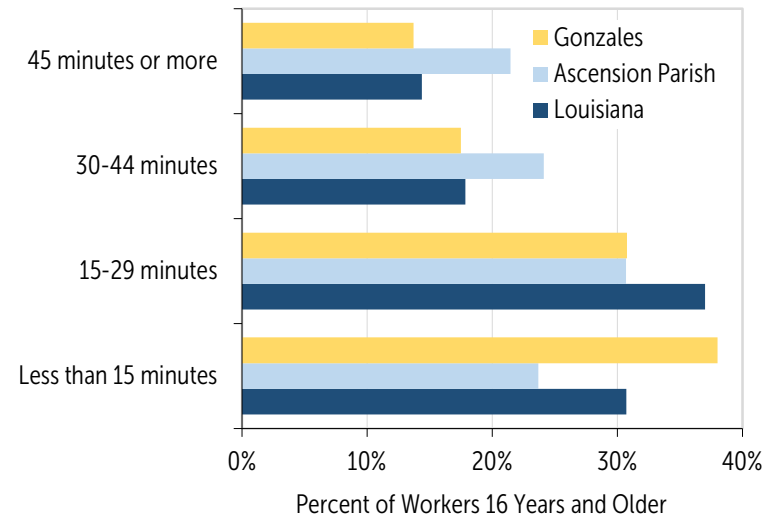
Source: 2012 5-year ACS from U.S. Census and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2011.

# COMMUTING

## Workers living in Gonzales have a shorter average commute than those in the parish or state.

Almost 40 percent of Gonzales workers have commute times less than 15 minutes, compared to 24 percent in Ascension Parish and 31 percent in Louisiana. Only 14 percent of Gonzales residents commute for 45 minutes or longer, equal to the state average but below Ascension Parish's average of 21 percent.

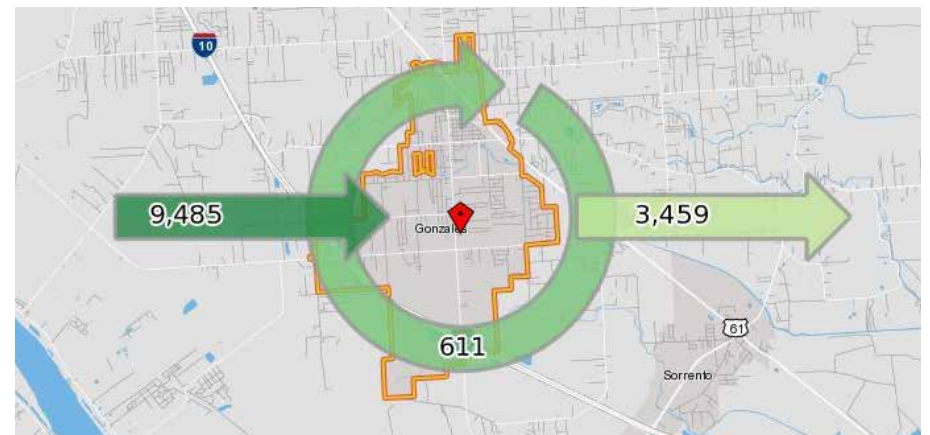
Figure 3.12: Average Commute Times for Gonzales, 2011



## Gonzales has a net inflow of workers, meaning that more people commute to Gonzales to work than leave to work elsewhere.

Figure 3.13, from the U.S. Census's OnTheMap tool, shows commuting patterns into and out of Gonzales. 9,485 people commute to Gonzales for work, 611 live and work in Gonzales, and 3,459 live in Gonzales but work elsewhere.

Figure 3.13: Commuting Patterns for Gonzales, 2011



**Gonzales residents mainly work in Ascension and East Baton Rouge Parish.**

As shown in Figure 3.14, 39 percent of Gonzales residents who work do so in Ascension Parish and 32 percent work in East Baton Rouge Parish. More specifically, 17 percent of workers who live in Gonzales work in the City of Baton Rouge and 15 percent remain in Gonzales for work.

Figure 3.14: Work Destinations by Parish and City for Gonzales Residents, 2011

PARISH	NUMBER	PERCENT
Ascension Parish	1,594	39%
East Baton Rouge Parish	1,304	32%
Jefferson Parish	205	5%
St James Parish	125	3%
Iberville Parish	119	3%
St John the Baptist Parish	96	2%
Orleans Parish	94	2%
St Charles Parish	65	2%
Lafayette Parish	60	1%
Livingston Parish	59	1%
All other counties	349	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,070</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Census Bureau, OnTheMap.

CITY	NUMBER	PERCENT
Baton Rouge	710	17%
<b>Gonzales</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>15%</b>
Donaldsonville	403	10%
Prairieville CDP	127	3%
New Orleans	94	2%
Metairie CDP	84	2%
St Gabriel	66	2%
Westminster	62	2%
Lafayette	49	1%
Laplace CDP	40	1%
All other cities	1,824	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,070</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Census Bureau, OnTheMap.

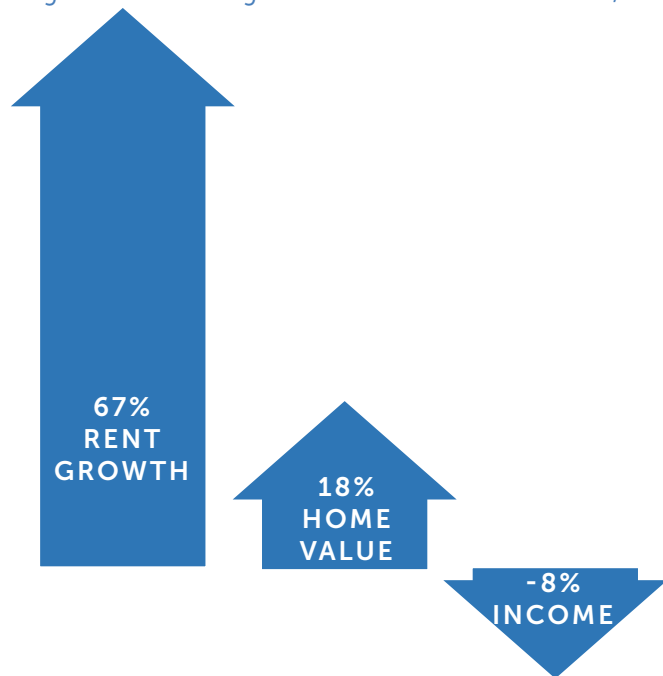


# HOUSING

## Housing affordability is declining in Gonzales.

Rental costs grew by about 67 percent between 2000 and 2008-2012, compared with an average increase in housing values of 18 percent over the same period. Over the same period, income declined by about eight percent.

Figure 3.15: Housing Costs and Income in Gonzales, 2000 to 2012



## More than two-thirds of Gonzales residents own their homes.

As shown in Figure 3.17, 69% of Gonzales’s 3,758 housing units were owner occupied in 2012. Single family detached units were much more likely to be owner occupied than rented. Single family attached and multifamily units were much more likely to be renter occupied.

## Gonzales has relatively high rental costs.

Almost 30 percent of renters in Gonzales pay \$1,000 to \$1,250 on monthly rent, and over ten percent pay more than \$1,250, higher than the respective percentages for both the parish and the state, as shown in Figure 3.16.

Figure 3.16: Monthly Rent in Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, 2012

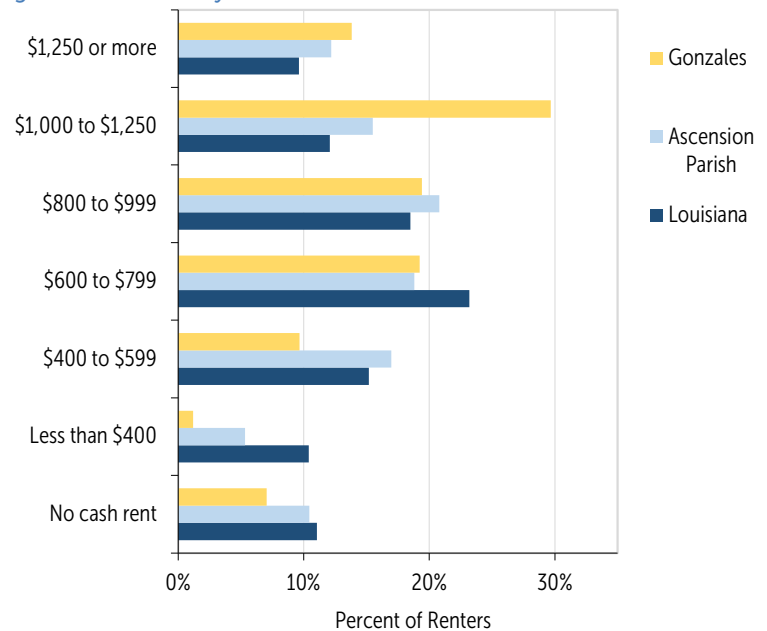


Figure 3.17: Homeownership Status in Gonzales, 2012

	NUMBER	OWNER OCCUPIED	RENTER OCCUPIED
All Housing Units	3,758	69%	31%
Single Family Detached Housing Units	2,797	85%	15%
Single Family Attached and Multifamily Housing Units	961	11%	89%

Source: 2012 5-year ACS from U.S. Census.

**Single-family detached housing continues to make up the largest percentage of Gonzales’s housing stock, but its share has decreased.**

Gonzales had 3,343 housing units in 2000, and 4,118 housing units in 2012, according to the U.S. Census estimate. Total housing units increased 15 percent over the twelve year period. Single-family detached housing accounted for 81 percent of Gonzales’s housing in 2000, but that share dropped to 77 percent in 2012. The share of multifamily housing with 2 to 4 units, such as duplexes, remained the same between 2000 and 2012. The share of multifamily housing with 5 or more units increased from 9 percent in 2000 to 14 percent in 2012. Single family attached housing, such as townhouses, continues to be the smallest category, going from 2 percent of housing units in 2000 to only 1 percent in 2012. Figure 3.18 shows a graph of the percentage of each housing type in Gonzales in the years 2000 and 2012.

More complete descriptions of each housing type can be found on page 94 in the Housing chapter of this plan.

**The median list price for a home in Gonzales in October 2014 was \$198,900.**

The median list price of a Gonzales home has ranged from slightly above \$160,000 to near \$200,000 over the past six years. List price data is used because sales price data, though preferable, was not available for Gonzales.

Figure 3.18: Percentage of Housing Types in Gonzales, 2000 and 2012

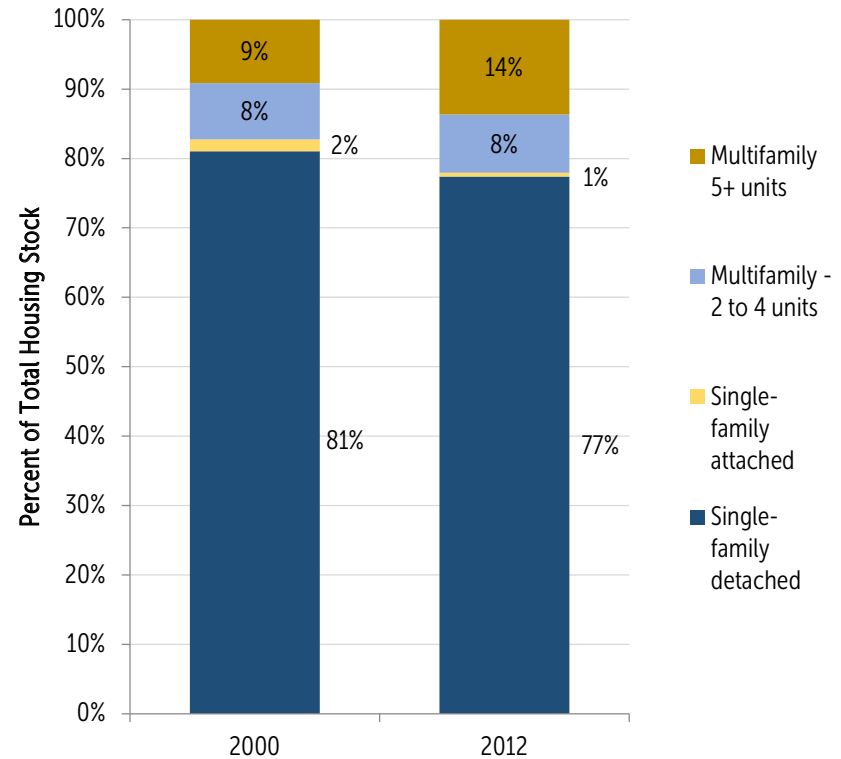
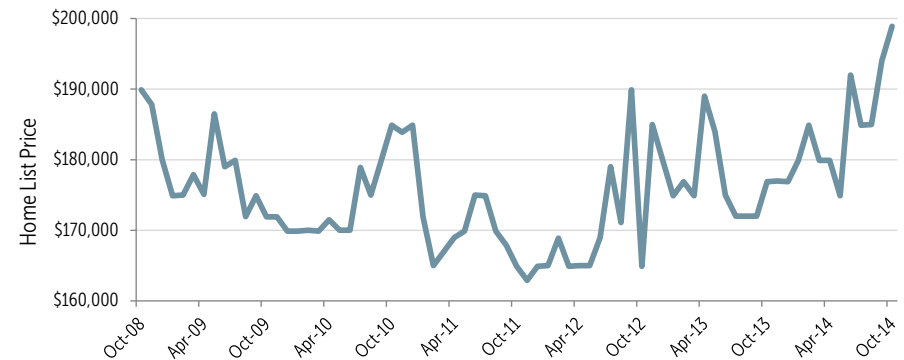


Figure 3.19: Median List Price for a Home in Gonzales, 2008 to 2014



# Population, Housing, and Employment Forecasts

To estimate the amount of growth that Gonzales will experience over the next 20 years, the consultant team analyzed existing demographics and trends at the local, parish, and regional levels as well as the State of Louisiana’s forecasts for Ascension Parish. This information helps in determining the type and amount of available land that will be needed in Gonzales for future housing and employment land.

## POPULATION FORECAST

Two forecasts were completed – one based on the historic growth rate, which assumes that Gonzales continues to grow at about the same rate it has grown over the last two decades. The second forecast uses an increased growth rate and assumes that Gonzales’s growth rate increases to 3.0% per year. This increased growth rate is based on the relatively fast employment growth in Ascension Parish (2.3% average annual growth between 2001 and 2013). The availability of urban infrastructure and services in Gonzales, especially water, wastewater, and public safety, make it an attractive place to build housing, when compared to other parts of Ascension Parish.

The following forecasts assist in estimating the number and type of new dwelling units needed. Figure 3.20 presents two forecasts of population growth from 2015 to 2035 in Gonzales, based on:

- **Base population:** 10,301 people in Gonzales in 2013 (according to the State of Louisiana’s forecast).
- **Forecasts of growth in Ascension Parish.** The State of Louisiana creates low, medium, and high estimates for population growth for each parish. The state’s estimates for Ascension Parish’s growth per year between 2010 and 2030 are 1.8 percent (low), 3.0 percent (medium), and 4.1 percent (high).
- **Historical growth in Gonzales.** Between 1990 and 2013, Gonzales grew at an average annual growth rate of 1.7%, adding about 3,300 new residents. Between 2000 and 2013, Gonzales grew at an average annual growth rate of 1.8%. Over the 1990 to 2013 period, Ascension Parish grew at nearly twice Gonzales’s growth rate, with 3.0% average annual growth.

The resulting forecasts range from a low of 4,665 new people by 2034 (annual growth rate of 1.8 percent) to a more realistic moderate annual average growth rate of 3 percent, resulting in 8,728 new residents by 2035. Based on this forecast, approximately 3,583 new households will be needed by 2035. This is an increase of approximately 180 households per year.

Figure 3.20: Forecast of Population Growth, Gonzales City Limits, 2015-2035

GONZALES FORECAST	STATE PROJECTION FOR ASCENSION PARISH	POPULATION		CHANGE 2015 TO 2035		
		2015	2035	NUMBER	PERCENT	AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Historical Growth Rate	Low Estimate	10,681	15,346	4,665	44%	1.8%
Increased Growth Rate	Middle Estimate	10,924	19,652	8,728	80%	3.0%

Source: ECONorthwest, State of Louisiana



# HOUSING FORECAST

## Housing Mix

Housing mix is the percentage of different types of housing. For the purposes of this section, housing in Gonzales is divided into three groups: single-family detached (including manufactured and mobile housing), single-family attached housing (i.e., townhouses), and multifamily housing, which ranges from duplexes and triplexes to multistory apartment buildings.

Based on the forecast of 3,583 housing units needed, Figure 3.21 shows a potential mix that would meet the changing demands.

Figure 3.21: Forecast of Housing Growth by Housing Type, 2015-2035

HOUSING TYPE	NUMBER OF NEW UNITS FORECASTED 2015-2035	PERCENT OF MIX
Single Family Detached	2,150	60%
Single Family Attached	179	5%
Multifamily	1,254	35%

Source: ECONorthwest

These housing growth forecasts are used in the land use and housing chapters to determine whether the zoning allows needed housing types and whether land is zoned to permit the anticipated growth.

The increase in multifamily and single-family attached housing is based on local and national housing trends such as:

- **Growth in people over 60 years old.** Households over 60 typically have lower income than younger households. Those without accumulated wealth (e.g., housing equity or investments) may choose lower-cost multifamily housing.
- **Growth in Millennials.** Also known as Generation Y or Echo Boomers, Millennials are currently age 15 to 35. Millennial households typically have lower income, especially in their younger years. Millennials are more likely to be renters than older households either by choice or by economic necessity. The growth in households in this age group will lead to an increase in demand for housing affordable for workers with lower pay. Some Millennials will choose and be able to afford single-family detached housing, especially as they age and their income increases.
- **Lack of affordable rental housing.** About 70% of Gonzales rental households are cost burdened, meaning that they are paying 30% or more of their income for housing. This is a strong indicator that Gonzales lacks affordable housing. About one-quarter of Gonzales’s households earn less than \$25,000 and are unable to afford the Fair Market Rent (according to HUD’s standards) of \$752 for a two-bedroom dwelling.
- **Growth in lower-wage jobs.** Several of the largest employment sectors in Gonzales had lower-than-average wages, including Retail, Health Care, and Accommodations and Food Services. These sectors are forecast to have relatively high growth in Ascension Parish, increasing demand for housing affordable to the workforce.

## DEMAND FOR COMMERCIAL LAND/EMPLOYMENT FORECAST

Demand for industrial and non-retail commercial land will be driven by the expansion and relocation of existing businesses and new businesses locating in Gonzales. This demand is driven by local growth independent of broader economic opportunities, including growth of target industries.

The employment projections in this section build off of Gonzales’s existing employment base, assuming future growth similar to Ascension Parish’s past employment growth rate. The employment forecast does not take into account a major change in employment that could result from the location (or relocation) of one or more large employers in the community during the planning period. Such a major change in the community’s employment would essentially be over and above the growth anticipated by the City’s employment forecast and the implied land needs (for employment, but also for housing, parks, and other uses). Major economic events, such as the successful recruitment of a very large employer, are very difficult to include in a study of this nature. The implications, however, are relatively predictable: more demand for land (of all types) and public services.

Table 3.22 shows employment growth in Gonzales between 2015 and 2035, based on the assumption that Gonzales’s employment will grow at an average annual growth rate of 2.6%. Based on this forecast, Gonzales will have 27,204 employees by 2035, an increase of 10,934 employees (67%) between 2015 and 2035.

Figure 3.22: Forecast of Employment Growth in Gonzales, 2015-2035

YEAR	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT
2015	16,720
2035	27,204
<b>Change 2015 to 2035</b>	
Employees	10,934
Percent	67%
Average Annual Growth Rate	2.6%

Source: ECONorthwest

Allocating this future employment to broad categories of land use can be estimated by grouping employment into four broad land use designations based on North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS): industrial, commercial, retail, and government. Firms wanting to expand or locate in Gonzales will look for a variety of site characteristics, depending on the industry and specific circumstances.

Table 3.23 shows the expected share of employment by land use type in 2015 and the forecast of employment growth by land use type in 2035 in Gonzales. The forecast in Table 6 does not anticipate a substantial change in the mix of employment between 2015 and 2035.

Figure 3.23: Forecast of Employment Growth by Land Use Type in Gonzales, 2015-2035

LAND USE TYPE	2015		2035		CHANGE 2015 TO 2035
	EMPLOYMENT	% OF TOTAL	EMPLOYMENT	% OF TOTAL	
Light Industrial	2,693	17%	4,503	17%	1,810
Retail Commercial	5,795	36%	9,689	36%	3,894
Office Commercial	7,396	45%	12,367	45%	4,971
Government	386	2%	645	2%	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,270</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>27,204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10,934</b>

Source: ECONorthwest

Note: Orange shading denotes an assumption about the future change in the share of employment (as a percent of total) by land use type. Estimate of Commercial and Industrial Research/Employment Land Demand

An estimate of the general employment land demand for the 20-year period can be made by estimating the employment land need based on employment density. Table 3.24 shows a preliminary estimate of employment land need by land use type based on assumed employment densities. Employees per acre (EPA) is a measure of employment density, based on the ratio of the number of employees per acre of employment land that is developed for employment uses. Table 7 shows that Gonzales will need between 519 and 808 gross acres of land for employment uses between 2015 and 2035. The Land Use and Urban Design chapter of this plan uses this data to compare the land availability and whether there is land zoned for the type of development anticipated in the future.

Figure 3.24: Estimate of General Employment Land Demand in Gonzales, 2015-2035

LAND USE TYPE	NEW EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYEES PER ACRE AVERAGES		LAND DEMAND (NET ACRES)		LAND DEMAND (GROSS ACRES)	
		LOWER DENSITY	HIGHER DENSITY	LOWER DENSITY	HIGHER DENSITY	LOWER DENSITY	HIGHER DENSITY
Light Industrial	1,810	10	15	181	121	208	139
Retail Commercial	3,894	15	25	260	156	299	179
Office Commercial	4,971	20	30	249	166	286	191
Government	259	20	30	13	9	15	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,934</b>			<b>703</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>519</b>

Source: ECONorthwest





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**CHAPTER FOUR**

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LAND USE AND  
COMMUNITY CHARACTER

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## Where We Are Now

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**Cities are made up of many built and natural features.** The physical assets of a place include the buildings we build, the roads we drive on, the natural amenities and open spaces that we enjoy, and all of the space in between. The arrangement of all of these ingredients, and how we decide to grow as a community, define the character of the cities and towns in which we live.

**Today, Gonzales can be characterized by neighborhoods that enjoy access to high performing parks and open space, vibrant commercial nodes that serve the Baton Rouge region, and an abundant supply of vacant land to provide for the city's future growth needs.** Gonzales's development pattern is largely driven by its road network, which provides easy access to Interstate 10, as well as a system of bayous and wetlands that make up much of the city's natural character. Taken together, both of these systems form the skeleton upon which the city is built.



# EXISTING CONDITIONS



Single family residence on E. Ascension Street in the historic downtown area.

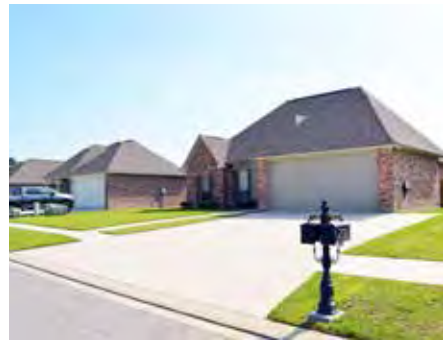


Commercial development on Airline Highway/US 61 at the corner of Burnside Avenue.



Tanger Outlet Center, at the corner of LA 30 and I-10.

Image: www.tangeroutlet.com



Houses in Grand View subdivision, built in the late 2000s and early 2010s.



Light industrial development on S. Commerce Avenue.

## Pattern of Development

Gonzales has 2,157 acres of land that is currently developed, of which approximately 53 percent is devoted to residential uses while the remaining 47 percent is used for commercial and industrial purposes. The vast majority of growth and development has occurred north of Highway 30, with commercial activity being clustered along the Airline, Burnside, and Highway 30 corridors, as well as a large node of activity along Interstate 10. Approximately 20 percent of the city's developed land is currently used for retail. This represents the largest portion of commercial development. Retail uses are concentrated along Interstate 10 and the Airline Highway corridor. The next largest non-residential use is institutional, comprising nearly 300 acres of the city's land.

## Residential

Residential development is predominantly single family, comprising nearly 20 percent of the city's total land and over half its developed land. Multifamily has been increasing its proportionate share of the city's housing stock since 2000, and now accounts for about 2 percent of the city's land. How the city decides to direct residential growth over the next several years could reshape the spectrum of housing choices available to current and prospective residents.

Figure 4.2: Existing Land Use Acreage in Gonzales

LAND USE	ACRES
Residential	1,136
Commercial	1,020
Vacant and Open Space	2,916
Right-of-way, Utility, and Other	816
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,888</b>

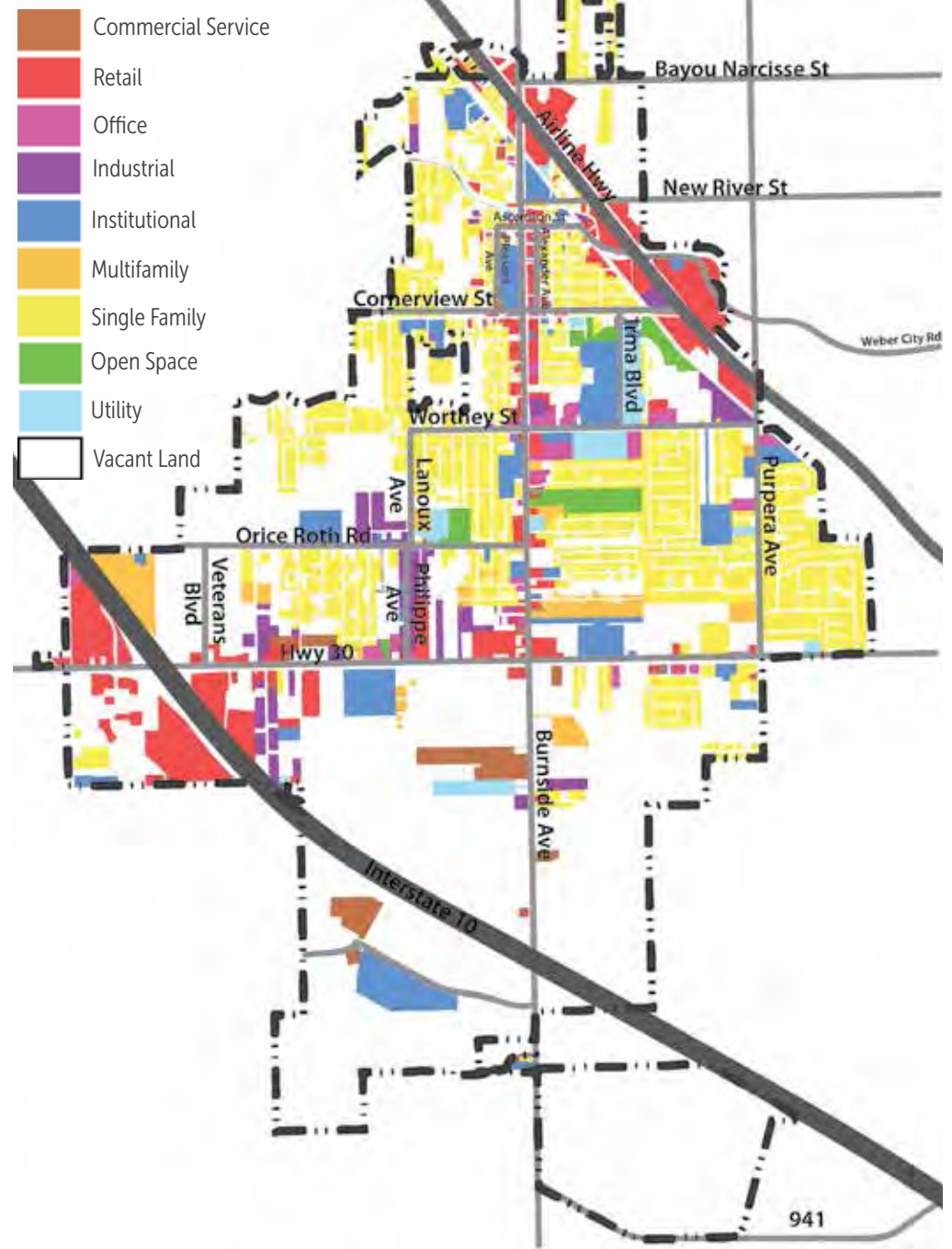
Source: CPEX

FIGURE 4.1:  
PATTERN OF  
DEVELOPMENT





**FIGURE 4.3:  
EXISTING LAND USE MAP**



**Interstate 10**

Recent development near Interstate 10 and LA 30 has brought regional retail opportunities and associated development along this portion of the interstate. To many passing through on I-10, this area provides their primary impression of Gonzales. There is additional opportunity on the horizon as this area continues to build out and other developments take shape at I-10 and LA 44.

**Downtown**

The historic core of the city is built along the northern stretches of Burnside Avenue, with New River and the railroad providing a high density of opportunity to this area. Addressed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this plan, downtown is a mix of civic, institutional, recreational, commercial and residential uses with a tightly knit grid of streets. Recent investment in institutional buildings along Burnside Avenue, combined with the potential for commuter rail serving this area, highlights the potential for this area of the city.

**Airline Highway**

Airline Highway is a major commercial corridor comprised mostly of retail uses. While some properties are nearing the end of their life cycles and may be candidates for redevelopment, adaptive reuse and reinvestment in key properties have brought new energy to this corridor. This investment has shown how, over the next generation, this corridor could continue to contribute to the vitality of Gonzales and serve its residents. Its potential proximity to commuter rail could further catalyze reinvestment and provide a vibrant transit destination.



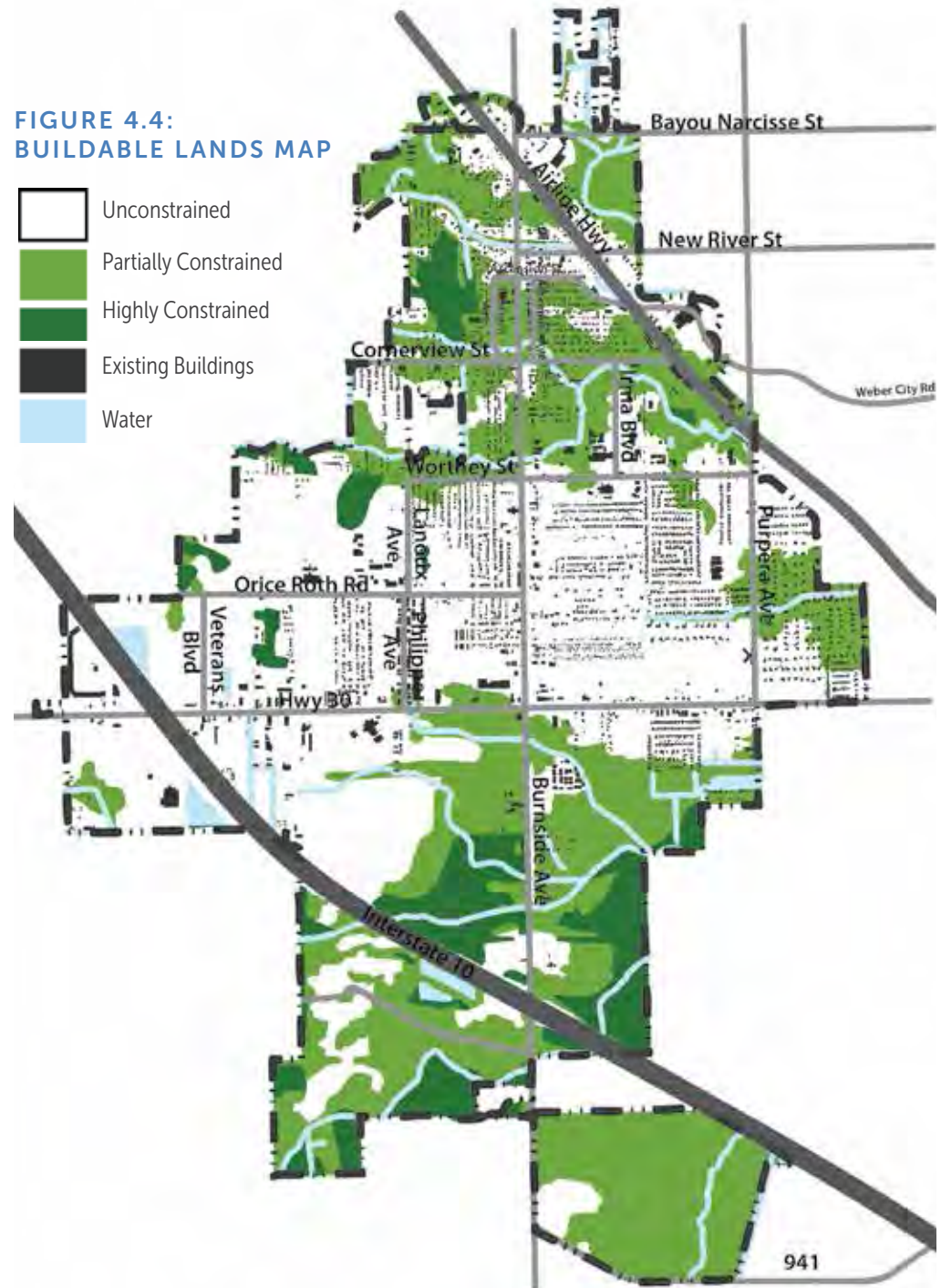
### Current Land Availability (Buildable Lands)

Equally as important to the character of a city as its established development pattern is the city's resource of open land. Even with the amount of growth that Gonzales has experienced recently, the city still has over half of its land open and undeveloped. In fact, Gonzales has over 2,800 acres of vacant land located within its city limits. The vast majority of greenfield development opportunities lie south of LA 30.

Categorizing vacant lands as unconstrained, partially constrained, or highly constrained helps to identify those areas that will be most easily developed. Buildable lands are described as unconstrained when they are not within a wetland or floodplain. They are partially constrained when located in a floodplain area. This means that while some development can occur, floodplain mitigation is required by Gonzales's floodplain management ordinances. Lands are highly constrained when they are in wetlands; these areas should contain little or no development. Less than one-fifth of the city's vacant lands are considered to be highly constrained. These highly constrained lands could play a significant role in providing open space, natural amenities, flood protection, and environmental benefits to serve developing areas.

Additionally, while the vast majority of Gonzales's opportunities for new growth will be located in the southern portions of the city, infill opportunities exist throughout the community. There are numerous sites totaling 137 acres, which could be available for potential redevelopment, located primarily in the northern half of the city. These sites will be very important in defining desired transitions in character for existing developed areas, and can encourage future reinvestment in the established parts of Gonzales.

**FIGURE 4.4:  
BUILDABLE LANDS MAP**





Known as the M.P. Evans property, this tract on LA 44 south of I-10 is slated to be developed into an upscale mixed use community of retail, apartments, and homes called Conway Plantation.



# Planning for the Future

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## THE VISION MAP

**The Gonzales Vision Map describes the general shape and location of growth and development that should occur in the future to accommodate projected growth.**

The Vision Map is not a regulatory document, but provides a long-term reference for decision makers and citizens to provide guidance in development decisions. The Vision Map includes eight vision categories that make up the city: Residential Low Density, Residential Medium Density, Mixed Use, Main Street, Civic, Commercial Corridor, Employment, and Natural & Open Spaces.



**FIGURE 4.5:  
GONZALES VISION MAP**

-  Natural & Open Spaces
-  Residential Low Density
-  Residential Medium Density
-  Main Street
-  Commercial Corridor
-  Mixed Use
-  Employment
-  Civic
-  Gateway/Node

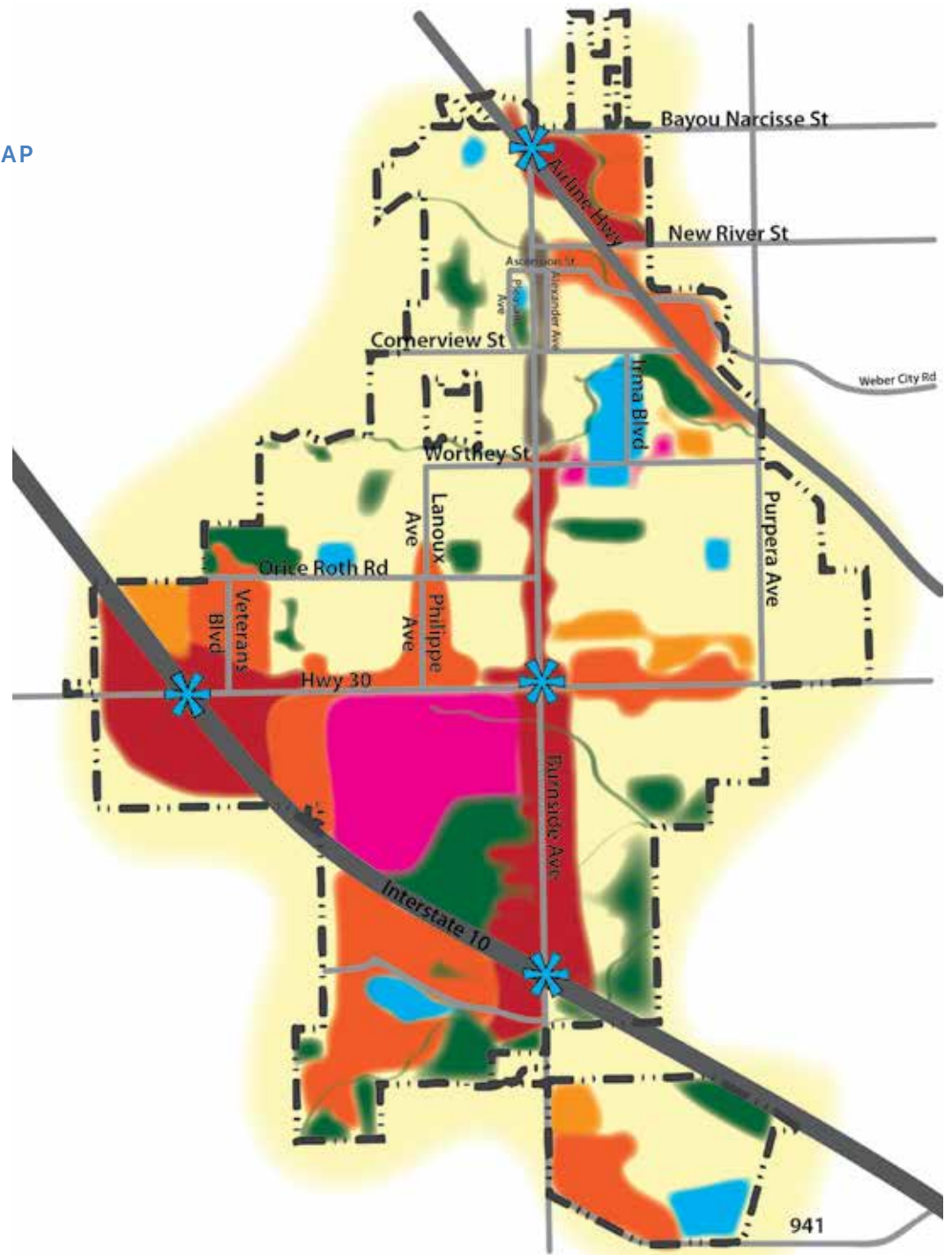




Figure 4.6 describes each vision category and shows the acres of buildable land in each category. For the purposes of this plan, buildable land is defined as currently vacant and not in a wetland. See the Current Land Availability section on page 44 for further description of buildable lands.

Figure 4.6: Vision Category Analysis

VISION CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	DEVELOPMENT TYPE	NUMBER OF BUILDABLE ACRES
Residential Low Density	Single family residential on large or medium sized lots, including retail and school uses that serve neighborhoods.	Residential	893
Residential Medium Density	Single family residential on small lots, townhomes, or low to medium density multifamily development. Can serve as a transition between Residential Low Density areas and higher activity areas like Mixed Use, Employment, and Commercial.	Residential	110
Mixed Use	Retail, office, civic, and a variety of residential uses, mixed horizontally (buildings next to each other) or vertically (in the same building).	Office/commercial, office/retail, civic, and residential	558
Main Street	The corridor along Burnside Avenue in the historic core of Gonzales, with one to two story commercial or mixed use buildings developed close to the street. The area is characterized by new infill development and adaptive reuse of existing structures, with a focus on creating a compact, walkable pedestrian area.	Office/commercial, office/retail, civic, and residential	6
Civic	Public and quasi-public uses, such as city facilities, libraries, or universities. May be arranged in a campus-style format or integrated into the surrounding commercial or residential context.	Civic	64
Commercial	Retail and commercial uses that serve the community or region, primarily located at major intersections or corridors along main roads. May also contain office and other commercial buildings generally in a horizontal mixed use development pattern.	Office/commercial	263
Employment	Commercial uses such as office, medical, warehouse, or light manufacturing as primary opportunities for job centers in the area. May be arranged in campus-style format or along major corridors, benefiting from access to the regional transportation network.	Office/commercial, office/retail, industrial research/showroom	296
Natural	Open space, such as parks and recreational areas. Also includes natural assets such as bayous and waterfronts that might be used as either passive or active recreation.	No development	165
<b>Total</b>			<b>2,355</b>

Source: CPEX

Figure 4.7 shows the approximate acres of land needed in each category based on the employment forecasts detailed in Chapter 3.

Figure 4.7: Needed Acreage for Each Vision Category

VISION CATEGORY	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF ACRES REQUIRED FOR GROWTH
Residential (both Low and Medium Density)	500 - 600 ACRES
Civic	10 - 15 ACRES
Office/Commercial	190 - 290 ACRES
Office/Retail	180 - 300 ACRES
Industrial Research/Showroom	140 - 210 ACRES
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,020 - 1,415 ACRES</b>

Source: ECONorthwest

## HOW SHOULD GONZALES LOOK AND FEEL IN THE FUTURE?

There are many different factors that contribute to how a city looks and feels. During the workshops, interviews and stakeholder discussions, residents and stakeholders painted a picture of how they want Gonzales to be in the future. From downtown and main streets to existing and new neighborhoods to employment centers, citizens identified the following areas as important to creating and maintaining Gonzales's unique culture.

### DOWNTOWN AND MAIN STREETS

The heart of Gonzales will continue to center on *Burnside Avenue*, the historic downtown main street, and will connect to surrounding neighborhoods as well as to a rail station to the east. Residents will be able to walk to old Gonzales from nearby houses to have a meal, go to work, get groceries, or use services located in the central area. A new main street with multifamily housing, offices and services will connect old downtown to the new rail station along Airline Highway.

*Main streets will serve surrounding neighborhoods, and also attract visitors to cafes, shops and services.* Traffic will travel slower and in fewer lanes on main streets than on other arterials. It will be easy to park once on the street or in a shared parking lot, then walk to destinations. The walking environment will be pleasant, with wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, and other pedestrian amenities.

In older parts of the city, main streets will serve as linear neighborhood centers, where grocery stores, restaurants, and other local-serving businesses are located. Because they also tend to specialize in different types of businesses, such as dining, galleries, or apparel, they will continue to attract visitors from around the parish. Buildings along main streets will typically be built up to the sidewalk and generally range from one to three stories high.

## NEW NEIGHBORHOODS

With the amount of vacant land and anticipated new households, Gonzales will see new neighborhoods develop in all parts of the city. **These new neighborhoods will be designed with sustainability in mind – with good street connections, sidewalks, bike facilities, and other transportation options.** While traditional neighborhoods will continue to flourish, well-built compact communities will also be built and will be more fiscally sustainable by reducing maintenance costs and waste over the long term.

## EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

Gonzales’s original single-family neighborhoods will continue to be among its most vital assets. **They will be preserved in the future, and revitalized where needed.** New infill development will be comprised of development that is in harmony with the character of the neighborhoods and is appropriate to the context of the location in form, rhythm, scale and proportion to existing residential areas. In older neighborhoods, there will be reinvestment and improvements. City programs will help homeowners improve houses and apartment buildings by identifying programs or assistance to upgrade windows, install additional insulation and make other repairs.

**Main streets and arterial streets near neighborhoods will be enhanced with sidewalks, bike lanes and better transit service.** These corridors will also provide shops, restaurants and other amenities within walking distance of homes. With walking and biking investments and robust neighborhoods and schools, school-aged children will be able to walk to and from school.

Parks, schools and churches will continue to be important community assets and will be protected and maintained.

## EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Employment areas will contain office, warehousing, light industrial research and high tech uses such as information technology and logistics facilities. These areas will be distinguished from mixed use areas in that they will have few residences and typically have more extensive commercial activity. These employment areas will require access to major arterials or interstates.



## INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, SCHOOLS, AND PARKS

In addition to all of the land uses and areas that make up a city – downtowns, neighborhoods, and employment centers – other factors that are closely related to land use also must be integrated and addressed to achieve the desired vision. These elements can be integrated by including them in the city’s zoning and subdivision codes.

## LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Future development will maintain a strong connection between land use and transportation infrastructure, with the design of the transportation systems being closely coordinated with the use of the land. While the automobile will continue to be the primary way to travel through the city and around the region, Gonzales will offer transportation options, such as sidewalks, pathways and transit. The relationship between the design of a transportation facility (how often it accommodates driveways, how wide its lanes are, whether it has on-street parking, whether it has street trees) and the land uses it serves will be an increasingly important concept in creating sustainable attractive neighborhoods.

## LAND USE AND HOUSING CHOICE

Housing is considered affordable when it consumes 30% or less of a household’s income. Gonzales will provide a wider range of housing types in Gonzales to accommodate people making lower incomes, and attract businesses to the city that pay higher wages.

From a land use perspective, Gonzales will expand the range of housing options to meet future demand with additional condominiums, townhouses, compact single family housing, apartments and live-work units. While these additional housing options will accommodate existing and future residents, single family homes will still represent a majority of new housing.

Retaining and reinvesting in the existing housing stock is another important outcome that will be supported by land use policies. Planning and zoning decisions will ensure that infill development complements and enhances existing neighborhoods.

## LAND USE, SCHOOLS, AND THE COMMUNITY

Schools and neighborhoods will be a priority. Improving walking and biking routes to schools, as well as integrating parks, open space, and community centers with schools will be important strategies for maximizing the benefits to neighborhood residents. Robust coordination between educational institutions and the city will continue to ensure that new school planning and design uses best practices to minimize conflicts between vehicles and students on and around campuses. When improving schools and residential uses in existing neighborhoods, the focus will be on identifying barriers to walking and biking and designing strategies to improve safety.

## LAND USE, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

Gonzales will have a rich offering of parks and trails and will increase the number of parks and open space areas as the city develops. Existing and future facilities will include active and passive recreational spaces, trails in neighborhoods, large parks and wildlife areas around the city. Land use planning will promote access to these spaces by ensuring that parks and open spaces are preserved and improved in existing neighborhoods and planned for new communities.

Land use planning will also play a role in avoiding or mitigating development in hazardous or environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands and floodplains. By identifying these areas early in the planning process, development will be designed to avoid conflicts and provide access to natural features.

Performance measures will include household access to parks and open space, the ratio of parks and open space to homes in new communities, and the mix of recreational amenities available throughout the city (i.e.

playgrounds, aquatic parks, dog runs, etc.). Common benchmarks are one acre of open space per 100 people (for a city of Gonzales's size) or open space making up approximately one-tenth of a city's land area. For Gonzales, these benchmarks mean it will need about 540 acres of open space based on land area, or 103 acres of open space based on population. Gonzales currently has 66 acres of open space.

## ZONING THAT SUPPORTS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Zoning and subdivision regulations will be the primary tools needed to achieve Gonzales's vision. At this time, the city does not have the tools needed to achieve the types of development desired by the market and Gonzales's residents. Since the time that the zoning and subdivision ordinances were created, the planning and building patterns have changed – moving to more innovative products and ideas. Many of these, such as mixed use development, provide more variety in housing choices, modes of transportation, and design standards. Amendments to the development codes will encourage higher quality development consistent with national trends.

# Land Use Outcomes, Goals, and Actions

This section is organized into Outcomes that reflect the vision and Goals and Actions that, if followed, will move Gonzales towards the community's vision.

**Outcomes** are the big ideas that support the citizens' vision. They capture big picture changes that must occur to implement the plan.

**Goals** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic objectives that guide plan implementation by ensuring that stakeholders are clear about what must happen to move Gonzales toward the vision.

**Actions** delineate the steps needed to achieve the goals.

## OUTCOME 1

Land use decisions contribute to Gonzales's fiscal stability and move the city towards the citizens' vision.

### Goal 1.1

Make land use decisions consistent with the Vision Map.

#### Action 1.1.1:

Mix land uses to create a balanced and sustainable economy.

- Support a variety of nonresidential uses, including office, office warehouse, commercial, industrial research and retail uses.
- Obtain a wider variety of jobs in the city, with the potential for jobs with higher wages, by diversifying types of businesses in Gonzales.
- Provide more housing choices, such as townhomes, smaller units, and affordable housing for youth, retail workers, and the aging population.

#### Action 1.1.2:

Use the Vision Map to guide land use decisions. The Vision Map:

- Serves as a guide for long-term growth
- Serves as a guide when evaluating zoning, platting, and other development-related requests
- Allows flexibility of implementation by guiding zoning decisions in conjunction with a locational analysis

#### Action 1.1.3:

Use the Vision Map to guide infrastructure improvements. The Vision Map:

- Reflects the type and location of development anticipated
- Provides guidance in evaluating the transportation, water, sewer and drainage improvement required

#### Action 1.1.4:

Revisit and update the Vision Map every five years to ensure that it reflects desired development.

## Goal 1.2

Align the zoning and subdivision ordinances with the comprehensive plan to achieve desired development.

### Action 1.2.1:

Develop clear and objective standards for making land use planning decisions.

- Standards are clear when they are easily understood and use language that has unambiguous meaning.
- Standards are objective when they can be measured and evaluated using data that is reliable and can be replicated.

### Action 1.2.2:

Review and update the zoning and subdivision regulations to promote desired development. At a minimum:

- In the short term, update multifamily districts to allow a broader range of housing products.
- Develop design standards for multifamily development.
- Increase densities allowed in some multifamily districts.
- Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in the development code.
- Review and update the entire ordinance, including district regulations, uses, and definitions, and ensure consistency in standards.
- Allow a wider range of housing in some single family zones.
- Incorporate landscape and buffer standards to ensure compatibility between uses.
- Revise off-street parking standards to reflect actual market demand.
- Implement design standards to facilitate the development of more pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environments, to promote a sense of identity and safety, to encourage walking and to promote cultural and civic pride.
- Review the subdivision regulations to ensure that desired types of mixed use and single-family attached housing are permitted and encouraged.

### Action 1.2.3:

Review zoning change and other development requests for consistency with the vision and the plan's goals and policies. Development should:

- Maintain a healthy balance of jobs and households
- Protect and stabilize existing neighborhoods
- Establish healthy new neighborhoods
- Emphasize mixed use development in the city center, around the future rail station, and in designated mixed use areas
- Maintain a connected transportation and circulation system
- Protect existing employment centers

## Goal 1.3

Hire planning and code enforcement staff as development activity increases.

## OUTCOME 2

Gonzales is a walkable city with a balance of land uses within walking distance of each other.

## Goal 2.1

Create a built environment that supports and encourages walkability.

### Action 2.1.1:

Integrate and balance land uses that complement their surroundings.



#### Action 2.1.2:

Make downtown Gonzales a thriving area with employment, retail, services, public areas, and arts and culture amenities.

- Create a main street district that requires buildings be built to the street.
- Prepare a parking management plan for main streets to allow shared parking and other parking practices.
- Proactively provide infrastructure that will support a mix of uses.
- Encourage property owners to form a downtown district to promote appropriate development.

#### Action 2.1.3:

Create higher density mixed use areas.

- Transform selected aging commercial strips into mixed use main streets.
- Create pedestrian-oriented, mixed use employment areas that will provide high quality working environments for businesses seeking to locate in Gonzales.

#### Action 2.1.4:

Create places and cultural events for people to walk to, such as food fairs, parades, and farmers markets.

#### Action 2.1.5:

Zone adequate land to accommodate desired development through city initiated zoning cases following the adoption of small area plans.

#### Action 2.1.6:

Create urban design standards, including:

- Place buildings adjacent to the street with sidewalks, outdoor areas, attractive landscaping and pedestrian areas.
- Require buildings to share parking lots where possible
- Orient building entrances and windows to provide “eyes on the street,” improving security and pedestrian access.

- Size sidewalks in main street areas to accommodate seating and other amenities.
- Place parking lots, garage doors, loading zones, and mechanical equipment away from streets.

### OUTCOME 3

Existing neighborhoods are maintained, stabilized and strengthened, making them attractive to new residents.

#### Goal 3.1

Provide access for residents in established neighborhoods to multiple modes of transportation.

##### Action 3.1.1:

Collaborate with the school district to:

- Improve accessibility and provide safe, direct routes (sidewalks, pathways, adequate signage) for schoolchildren and their parents.
- Minimize walking distances and conflicts with traffic by providing sidewalks and crosswalks and adopting measures to reduce traffic speed.

##### Action 3.1.2:

Create walking and biking options in neighborhoods.

- Require sidewalks in new residential subdivisions and commercial areas.
- Develop a program to replace older, non-functional sidewalks.
- Create a sidewalk improvement program to allow residents and neighborhoods to participate in installing sidewalks in existing residential areas.

#### Goal 3.2

Stabilize existing neighborhoods with infill development that revitalizes, preserves and enhances these areas.

#### Action 3.2.1:

Promote the unique characteristics of existing neighborhoods as key to the city's long-term health and vitality.

#### Action 3.2.2:

Encourage applicants for zoning changes to meet with neighborhood organizations and resident groups prior to the zoning review process.

#### Action 3.2.3:

Locate services, educational facilities, parks and trails in appropriate areas so they are accessible and enhance neighborhood stability.

- Encourage neighborhood-serving office, retail, or other non-residential uses to be located in residential community areas, primarily on significant roadways or at key intersections.
- Plan for neighborhoods to be served by and accessible to neighborhood commercial areas, parks, cultural areas, open space, libraries and schools.
- Provide appropriate transitions between nonresidential uses and neighborhoods to protect stability and quality of life.

#### Action 3.2.4:

Maintain the desirability of existing neighborhoods through public and private investment.

- Continue and expand implementation of capital improvements projects and programming for home improvements, traffic calming, connectivity and bike/ pedestrian improvements.
- Provide residents in older neighborhoods access to programs and partners with capacity to improve and stabilize their neighborhood.
- Identify and implement programs to encourage affordable home ownership and owner occupancy in areas with high concentrations of rental single-family housing.

## OUTCOME 4

Natural assets are protected and enhanced by the built environment.

### Goal 4.1

Sensitive areas such as wetlands are protected and best practices are used when developing in floodplain areas.

#### Action 4.1.1:

Use undeveloped floodplain areas strategically for storm water conveyance and retention.

#### Action 4.1.2:

Continue to use best management practices for development within floodplain areas by minimizing the impact of development within these areas where possible.

- Continue to update floodplain regulations to reflect coastal best practices.

#### Action 4.1.3:

Use cluster development techniques or higher densities on developed parcels to maintain open floodplain areas.

### Goal 4.2

Capture stormwater through landscape design, green infrastructure practices, and other environmentally-friendly techniques.

#### Action 4.2.1:

Partner with businesses and property owners to implement innovative stormwater solutions as demonstration projects. These projects can:

- Demonstrate creative approaches to stormwater management
- Showcase creative design
- Provide additional capacity for the city's sewer system

#### Action 4.2.2:

Develop stormwater management standards that address stormwater quality treatment and stormwater conveyance/detention.

- Standards should encourage retaining natural site drainage and reducing impervious pavement coverage.
- Implement a green infrastructure improvements program to reduce runoff in areas with drainage issues.
- Develop landscaping standards to appropriately manage runoff created by impervious surfaces.
- Promote low impact development strategies and designs as a way to manage stormwater runoff, including techniques such as vegetated swales, biofilters, eco-roofs, green streets, pervious pavement and other methods that mimic natural processes.
- Develop alternative street designs and standards that allow for greater filtration and more appropriate stormwater conveyance.

### Goal 4.3

Protect open space and natural and sensitive areas.

#### Action 4.3.1:

Identify open space and sensitive areas that should be preserved for natural recreation areas such as fishing, hiking and birdwatching.

#### Action 4.3.2:

Develop a plan to retain a variety of natural areas for use by Gonzales's citizens.

#### Action 4.3.3:

Work with the private sector to maintain open space and natural areas throughout the city through passive parks, trails and natural areas.

## OUTCOME 5

Gonzales is known for its park and trail system.

### Goal 5.1

Provide easily accessible parks and open space in neighborhoods.

#### Action 5.1.1:

Make parks desirable destinations for walking.

- Provide comfort and convenience facilities, especially restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Provide trails and loop walks within existing parks.

#### Action 5.1.2:

Provide additional parks and recreation facilities in areas with relatively low levels of service. Look for opportunities to add or expand trails in areas that currently have few or none and connect these areas to existing trails.

#### Action 5.1.3:

Partner with utility companies to make trail corridors.

#### Action 5.1.4:

Provide trail links to specific destinations such as schools, parks, and retail centers.

#### Action 5.1.5:

Add and improve sidewalks through a sidewalk improvement program; prioritize areas based on proximity to schools and community centers.

#### Action 5.1.6:

As new parks and open space areas are established, incorporate plans to connect these areas with existing parks.

#### Action 5.1.7:

Maintain existing and provide new facilities as warranted by population.

## Goal 5.2

Continue to provide high quality sports venues for citizens of all ages.

### Action 5.2.1:

Maintain existing and provide new sports venues as warranted by population.

### Action 5.2.2:

Provide facilities in all parts of the city.

### Action 5.2.3:

Increase indoor recreational basketball facilities for youth and adults.

### Action 5.2.4:

Identify parks in need of upgrades and develop an action plan to accomplish upgrades.

## Goal 5.3

Develop public-private partnerships to maintain and expand parks and recreational facilities throughout Gonzales.

### Action 5.3.1:

Launch partnerships and collaborations with the private sector.

### Action 5.3.2:

Initiate partnerships with medical and health organizations.

### Action 5.3.3:

Maintain and expand on intergovernmental agreements with schools.

### Action 5.3.4:

Create an "adopt-a-park" program to enlist civic organizations and school groups to help with park maintenance, beautification and cultivation of civic pride.

### Action 5.3.5:

Hold neighborhood work days to promote community caretaking of city parks.





Gonzales Primary School  
DR. JAVIERE

GONZALES PRIM

ONE WAY

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

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DOWNTOWN,  
THE HEART OF GONZALES

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## **Where We Are Now**

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**Conversations with stakeholders throughout the planning process identified downtown Gonzales as a great opportunity with the potential for catalytic change.** Assets such as a main thoroughfare, strong institutional anchors, a residential neighborhood within close proximity, natural assets such as New River, and the potential for commuter rail made downtown Gonzales ideally suited for the closer study of a small area plan.

## WHY DO A SMALL AREA PLAN?

Given the complex interrelationship of redeveloping areas with the neighborhoods surrounding them, change and redevelopment in areas like downtown Gonzales must achieve a delicate balance of various interests. For this reason, a small area plan that develops specific targeted actions and implementation measures is necessary. Focused conversations let stakeholders engage in a deeper dialogue to identify and address the complex issues surrounding downtown. The outcome of this effort provides clear direction and guides development to ensure that the community's broader goals and vision are advanced.

Design and problem solving developed through the downtown small area plan can also yield ideas that can be applied to other areas of the city facing similar constraints and issues. Areas facing redevelopment pressures and challenges; thoroughfares needing capital investment to balance the needs of motorists and other modes of transportation; as well as efforts to stabilize existing neighborhoods can all benefit from thoughts and ideas generated from a conversation about downtown.

The boundaries of the downtown study area are shown in Figure 5.1. The boundaries are generally Cornerview Street to the south, Pleasant Avenue to the west, Alexander Avenue and Airline Highway to the east, and the New River corridor to the north.

**FIGURE 5.1:  
DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA MAP**





# EXISTING CONDITIONS

The boundaries of the downtown study area are shown in more detail in Figure 5.2. The boundaries are generally Cornerview Street to the south, Pleasant Avenue to the west, Alexander Avenue and Airline Highway to the east, and the New River corridor to the north.

FIGURE 5.2: DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA AERIAL VIEW



Aerial photo of downtown Gonzales with study area boundary shown in red



# EXISTING CONDITIONS



Existing pedestrian facilities



Existing bike facilities on W. Main Street



Existing commercial development on Burnside Avenue



Gonzales Primary School recently underwent significant renovations, and serves as one of the main anchors for the Burnside Avenue corridor.



Looking north on Burnside Avenue from Cornerview Street



Looking east on New River from Burnside Avenue



St. Theresa of Avila anchors the northern end of downtown on Burnside Avenue.



## Planning for the Future

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**The purpose of this downtown small area plan is to outline a scenario for meaningful downtown improvement, and articulate a road map to achieve this vision.** There are a number of illustrations, design studies, and character images that are intended to paint a general picture of what the future could look like in downtown.

**Property owners and other stakeholders will determine how the vision will actually unfold as the market presents opportunities for improvement and development.** This document will serve as a guide to capitalizing on those opportunities, and should help to determine the direction and shape of development.

Input from the Downtown Workshop, described on page 17 of this plan, yielded a variety of approaches to renewing energy in downtown that ranged from focusing on improving curb appeal to general redevelopment of the area.

The workshop input was consolidated into recommendations concerning three elements of a downtown district:

- open space
- mobility and the public realm
- development

Each of these elements has specific objectives defined through synthesis of the workshop input, as well as additional conversations with stakeholders and research regarding development plans such as the planned expansion of St. Theresa's at the northern end of Burnside Avenue.

Opportunities surrounding the passenger rail station located on the eastern end of downtown also warranted further study. The objective was to better define the full potential that the rail station could have to unify downtown with the Airline corridor, as well as explore development types and amenities that would serve riders of a commuter train between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.



Existing recreational fields on Burnside Avenue at Cornerview Street



Mural on Marchand's Interiors and Hardware on S. Alexander Avenue in downtown Gonzales



# OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

## Potential to maximize existing open space opportunities

- 1 Create an open space/market opportunity at Burnside and New River.
- 2 Enhance New River corridor as an amenity to encourage redevelopment and improve connectivity.
- 3 Provide additional on-street and off-street parking to support recreation fields at Burnside and LA30.



FIGURE 5.3



# OPEN SPACE CHARACTER



Image: David Whitley

Open spaces can provide opportunities for community gatherings and events.



Photograph courtesy of Sandy Sorlien

Passages between buildings can provide access to parking and outdoor activities.

Open space, in 'Main Street' areas like downtown Gonzales, should take on a variety of forms. All of the space between buildings contributes to the district's character, and should be designed to give depth, texture, and interest to the urban environment. Open space opportunities range from formal public parks and gathering spaces for recreation, markets, and festivals, to the streets themselves. Semi-private and private passages and courtyards can also serve as connections between streets and buildings. The images on this page are examples of open space appropriate for downtown Gonzales.



Photograph courtesy of Sandy Sorlien

Sidewalks in Main Street areas become an important part of the open space network and provide opportunities for outdoor dining or additional retail activity.



Photograph courtesy of Sandy Sorlien

Community gardens can also function as productive open space.



Photograph courtesy of Sandy Sorlien

Small courtyards can extend retail frontage to connect the street to parking.



# MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

## Bike and pedestrian connectivity

- 1 Focus north-south bike access along Alexander and Pleasant Avenues.
- 2 Provide bike and pedestrian connections to potential rail stop.
- 3 Connect to bike and pedestrian networks along Irma Blvd. to civic and recreational uses to the south.
- 4 Extend existing trail along New River.

## Burnside public realm

- 5 Key intersection improvements build downtown character and improve pedestrian safety.
- 6 Adding landscaping and streetscape amenities such as pedestrian lighting, street trees, or other cost-effective changes creates unique character.

## On-street and off-street parking

- 7 Evaluate road diet for Burnside Avenue to provide additional adjacent and angled parking for the corridor.
- 8 Provide off-street parking to support retail and recreational uses.



FIGURE 5.4

## MOBILITY CHARACTER



Image: Dallas Complete Streets Manual

Parallel parking



Image: David Whitley

Improved trail connections



Image: Dallas Complete Streets Manual

Reverse angled parking



Image: Dallas Complete Streets Manual

Improved intersection

As a general rule, most of the shared public space in the built environment is road right-of-way. Street designers are increasingly recognizing the need to design streets that accommodate a variety of other modes of transportation, particularly bicycles and pedestrians, in addition to vehicular traffic. This multi-modal approach is changing the character of streets in communities across the country.

Many roads can be designed with an enhanced public space element to create a comfortable and safe pedestrian environment. Other streetscape enhancement tools, such as the integration of on-street

parking and bicycle facilities as well as improved intersections for pedestrian safety, can calm traffic and create more vibrant and safer streets.

Similarly, well-designed parking lots can also contribute to the landscaped environment, provide flexibility of use as plazas for gathering when not in use for parking, and offer innovative storm water treatment options.

The images on this page are examples of mobility improvements appropriate for downtown Gonzales.



# DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

## **Infill and incremental development approach**

- 1 Encourage reuse of existing buildings and façade improvements to activate downtown.
- 2 Encourage development of bayou frontage to provide active recreational river edge.

## **New development opportunities**

- 3 Encourage redevelopment to connect potential rail stop to Burnside Avenue corridor.
- 4 Ensure sensitive transition to adjacent neighborhoods.

## **Design guidance to improve 'curb appeal'**

- 5 Improve streetscape along Burnside Avenue to improve the corridor's character.
- 6 Ensure quality infill and redevelopment.

## **Redevelopment scenario**

- 7 A scenario was developed to demonstrate one of many potential redevelopment possibilities that could occur to achieve these objectives.

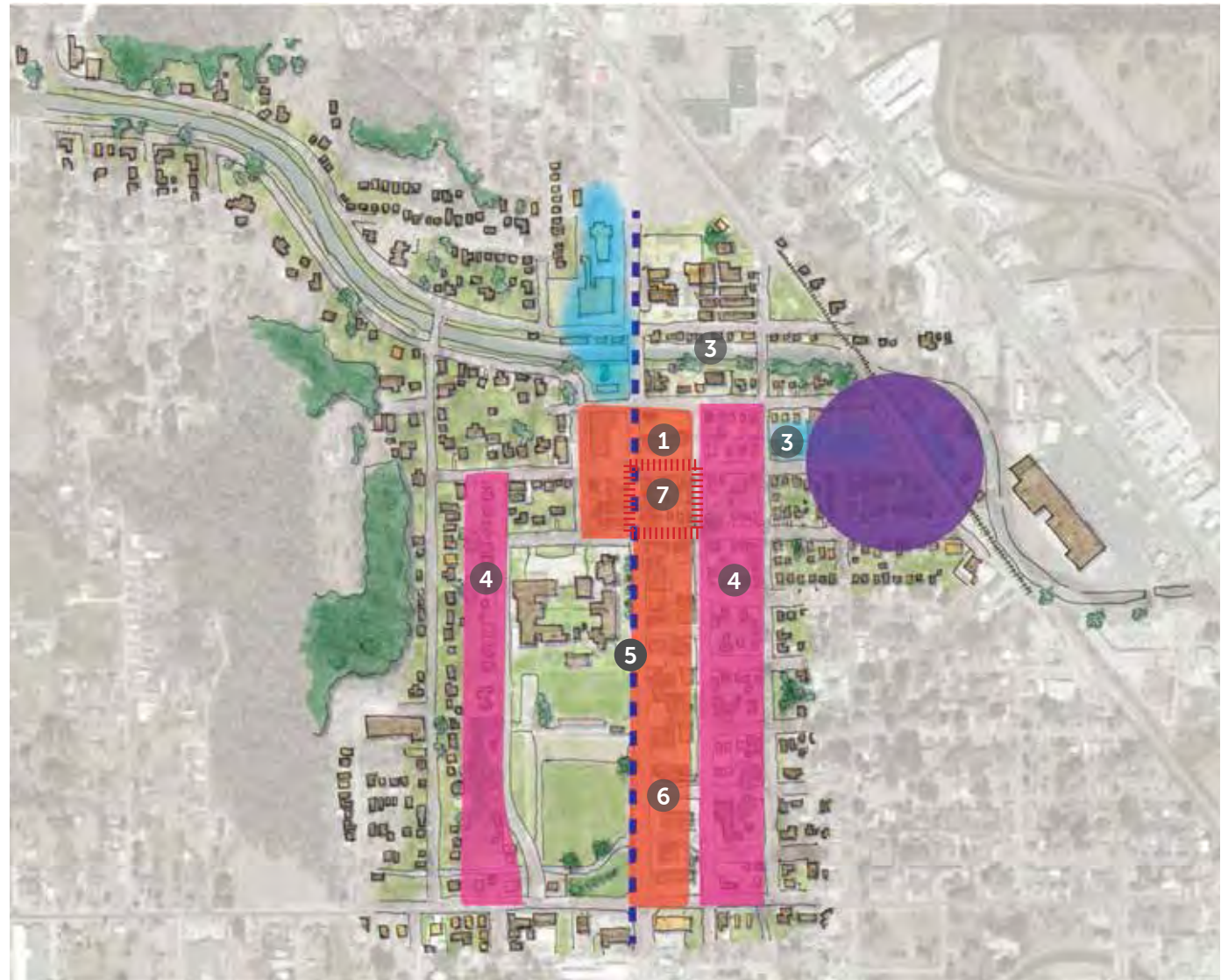


FIGURE 5.5

## REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO



- 1 Reuse of existing buildings and incremental redevelopment can creatively use existing structures while activating the street.
- 2 Outdoor seating can enliven the streetscape and create destinations.
- 3 New construction should maintain street wall for 'Main Street' character on Burnside Avenue, and respect setbacks consistent with the more residential character on Alexander Avenue.
- 4 Provide on- and off-street parking to support new and existing uses.
- 5 Improve intersections to mark important locations and define character.
- 6 Enhance façades to improve curb appeal of the corridor.
- 7 Use landscape as a screen to improve transition to Alexander Avenue and to better define the street along Burnside Avenue.
- 8 Provide wide sidewalks for pedestrian comfort.

The images on this page are examples of appropriate redevelopment for downtown Gonzales.



Figure 5.7: Potential redevelopment of downtown block, looking southeast on Burnside Avenue from E. Roosevelt Street. *For illustrative purposes only.*

Figure 5.6: Potential redevelopment of downtown block. *For illustrative purposes only.*



## PROPOSED RAIL STATION AREA

Momentum is underway to connect the Baton Rouge to New Orleans super region with passenger rail service that would utilize the existing Kansas City Southern freight corridor. The project would yield many long-term benefits by connecting the growing industrial job corridor and providing residents and commuters a reliable and efficient alternative to traveling on the congested interstate. A rail station is proposed for the Gonzales area and the 2014 Baton Rouge – New Orleans Intercity Rail Feasibility Study<sup>1</sup> identified criteria for locating potential stations along the route in order “to maximize the benefits of passenger rail service.”

Priorities for station placement included proximity to diverse land uses, access to amenities, improved connectivity with existing street networks, connections to existing greenways, land development potential, and opportunities for placemaking and community building. A rail station inside the Gonzales city limits, adjacent to downtown and the Airline Highway corridor, would meet these criteria.

The City of Gonzales, as of May 2015, has a purchase agreement on property on N. Bullion Avenue between E. Railroad Street and E. Ascension Street to be used for the proposed rail station. Redevelopment of this site as a passenger rail station would provide economic opportunity and serve as a catalyst for investment and improvement for downtown Gonzales and the Airline Highway corridor. Gonzales will continue to work with stakeholders of the Baton Rouge - New Orleans intercity rail line to further develop station area plans and maximize benefits for the city and the region.

<sup>1</sup> *Baton Rouge - New Orleans Intercity Rail Feasibility Study Strategic Business Plan*, February 2014. Prepared by HNTB Corporation. [http://www.norpc.org/assets/pdf-documents/studies-and-plans/BR-NOLA%20Rail\\_Strategic%20Business%20Plan\\_FINAL\\_February%202014.pdf](http://www.norpc.org/assets/pdf-documents/studies-and-plans/BR-NOLA%20Rail_Strategic%20Business%20Plan_FINAL_February%202014.pdf)

FIGURE 5.8: STATION AREA MAP



FIGURE 5.9: STATION AREA OPPORTUNITIES



In order to meet the priorities established by the Intercity Rail Feasibility Study and realize the full potential of the passenger rail line, Gonzales should strive to achieve the following benchmarks:

### Maximize opportunities for commuter rail and support ridership

- 1 Utilize station site to better link downtown with Airline Highway through transit-oriented development.
- 2 Provide visual anchor when station is viewed from both Burnside Avenue and Airline Highway.
- 3 Provide ample parking on site and nearby to serve 'park and ride' opportunities.
- 4 Connect station site across New River to open up transit-oriented development opportunities along Airline Highway.
- 5 Create river-edge amenities to provide increased access to station and further encourage transit-oriented development along Airline Highway.

### Connect station site to downtown

- 6 Provide pedestrian and bike access to retail, entertainment and open space amenities in downtown Gonzales and beyond.
- 7 Create corridor of appropriately scaled development and adaptive reuse along E. Ascension and E. Railroad Streets to connect the station to Burnside Avenue.



## EXISTING RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE



Figure 5.10

Existing rail infrastructure.



**PHASE 1**

**RAIL STATION AREA  
REDEVELOPMENT  
SCENARIO**



Figure 5.11

Possible first phase of commuter rail station development, including a platform and plaza.

*For illustrative purposes only.*



# RAIL STATION AREA CHARACTER



Low scale mixed use can provide a development spine that is sensitive to the adjacent residential uses.



Nearby development should be designed to accommodate ground-floor retail and other uses with doors and windows facing the street.



Improved connectivity between the rail stop and Airline Highway can provide additional opportunities for medium density mixed use projects as transit-oriented development.

All photographs on this page courtesy of Sandy Sorlien



Platform design can provide simple protection from the elements, while providing convenient access to adjacent development.



Multimodal access to transit can address challenges of filling the gap of the "last mile" to expand ridership.



Bike and pedestrian access along New River can improve connectivity to development along Airline Highway and downtown.



## PHASE 2

# RAIL STATION AREA REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIO



Figure 5.12:

Possible second phase of commuter rail station development, including mixed use development and a sidewalk connecting to downtown via E. Ascension Street.

*For illustrative purposes only.*

# Downtown Outcomes, Goals, and Actions

This section is organized into Outcomes that reflect the vision and Goals and Actions that, if followed, will move Gonzales towards the community's vision.

**Outcomes** are the big ideas that support the citizens' vision. They capture big picture changes that must occur to implement the plan.

**Goals** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic objectives that guide plan implementation by ensuring that stakeholders are clear about what must happen to move Gonzales toward the vision.

**Actions** delineate the steps needed to achieve the goals.

## OUTCOME 6

Mobility, connectivity, and the public realm are improved.

### Goal 6.1

Develop a design plan for Burnside Avenue that includes an evaluation of a road diet to accommodate a mix of transportation modes.

#### Action 6.1.1:

The City of Gonzales should take over responsibility and maintenance of Burnside Avenue using the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's Road Transfer Program to provide greater flexibility and control over its design and function.

#### Action 6.1.2:

Develop a menu of streetscape amenities to improve pedestrian comfort that can be incorporated into capital improvement or redevelopment projects.

#### Action 6.1.3:

Develop guidelines for improved intersections that increase pedestrian safety and add to a unique character.

#### Action 6.1.4:

Provide on-street parking to support retail.

#### Action 6.1.5:

Work with Ascension Parish Schools to provide on-street parking adjacent to recreational fields to meet additional parking needs.

### Goal 6.2

Improve access to the area via other transit modes.

#### Action 6.2.1:

Utilize Alexander and Pleasant Avenues as primary north-south bike corridors, and stripe accordingly.



#### Action 6.2.2:

Locate a commuter rail stop in Gonzales for Baton Rouge-New Orleans rail.

#### Action 6.2.3:

Improve bike and pedestrian facilities along Railroad and Ascension Streets to provide access to future rail stop.

#### Action 6.2.4:

Connect bike and pedestrian networks from downtown to the civic complex along Irma Boulevard.

### Goal 6.3

Enhance gateways into downtown.

#### Action 6.3.1:

Improve key entryways to the Burnside Avenue corridor at Highway 30 and Airline Highway to mark entrances into downtown in accordance with design guidelines.

#### Action 6.3.2:

Improve intersection of Burnside Avenue and Roosevelt Street to establish as Gonzales's primary "Main Street" intersection.

### Goal 6.4

Develop prioritized capital improvement plan.

#### Action 6.4.1:

Establish capital improvement needs inventory for downtown and station area.

#### Action 6.4.2:

Develop phasing and funding schedule.

#### Action 6.4.3:

Identify funding sources.

#### Action 6.4.4:

Consider using a TIF for infrastructure and public improvements in the rail station area.

## OUTCOME 7:

An open space network becomes a unifying element of the downtown area.

### Goal 7.1

Enhance New River corridor as an amenity to encourage redevelopment.

#### Action 7.1.1:

Extend existing trail along New River to provide river edge amenity to support redevelopment.

#### Action 7.1.2:

Provide programming and events that draw visitors to the New River corridor.

#### Action 7.1.3:

Develop a capital improvement needs inventory to create the entire New River waterfront as a public amenity.

### Goal 7.2

Provide open space opportunities that activate downtown.

#### Action 7.2.1:

Add an outdoor market at the corner of Burnside Avenue and New River.

- Implement as a "pop-up" market at first.
- Plan permanent structure and improvements based upon success.

#### Action 7.2.2:

Recognize the street right-of-way as an important open space opportunity and provide improvements including outdoor seating and pedestrian access.



#### Action 7.2.3:

Temporarily reprogram some parking areas along Burnside Avenue.

- Provide outdoor seating, sidewalk café, play areas, etc. to introduce more spaces for people to linger.

#### Action 7.2.4:

Create plazas and gathering spaces as part of the redevelopment plan for the transit station.

- Provide open space for residents of new development.
- Create an attractive gateway to Gonzales for transit users.

### Goal 7.3

Continue successful utilization of Ascension Parish Schools' recreational fields on Burnside Avenue.

#### Action 7.3.1:

Improve parking surface between the football field and the soccer fields.

#### Action 7.3.2:

Create permanent on-street parking adjacent to the fields.

#### Action 7.3.3:

Provide additional equipment and amenities to support programming.

#### Action 7.3.4:

Provide pedestrian and bike access to the fields from adjacent neighborhoods along Bayou Francois.

## OUTCOME 8

Development opportunities are maximized and parking needs are addressed.

### Goal 8.1

Create an organization such as a downtown chamber of commerce or similar that is charged with advocating for downtown and station area improvements.

#### Action 8.1.1:

Evaluate types of organizations and implement an organizational framework appropriate for Gonzales.

#### Action 8.1.2:

Develop work program and strategic priorities to guide organization.

### Goal 8.2

Enhance curb appeal of Burnside Avenue and define a unique character for downtown.

#### Action 8.2.1:

Develop design standards to advance objectives outlined in this plan.

#### Action 8.2.2:

Create a façade improvement program to provide incentives, either monetary or regulatory, that encourage investment to improve exterior facades or create site improvements that support goals identified in this plan.

#### Action 8.2.3:

Create a program to proactively fill vacant retail frontage along Burnside Avenue through temporary uses or other incubator uses.

### Goal 8.3

Evaluate and address parking needs.

#### Action 8.3.1:

Complete an inventory and assessment of location, amount, condition, and use of existing on- and off-street parking to identify areas of need and opportunities for sharing.

#### Action 8.3.2:

Identify potential locations for off-street parking.

#### Action 8.3.3:

Develop guidelines for placement and design of parking lots to ensure that they contribute to downtown's character and are sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods.

- Incentivize shared parking lots consolidated in the center of development blocks.

#### Action 8.3.4:

Evaluate code requirements for parking and make necessary adjustments.

#### Action 8.3.5:

Maximize on-street parking opportunities.

### Goal 8.4

Adapt and reuse existing buildings to transition between commercial uses and adjacent neighborhoods.

#### Action 8.4.1:

Evaluate existing zoning and identify changes to encourage adaptive reuse of buildings downtown.

#### Action 8.4.2:

Protect neighborhoods from impacts of adjacent non-residential uses through site control, design criteria, and use or performance restrictions.

### Goal 8.5

Stabilize and improve neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

#### Action 8.5.1:

Continue adaptive reuse of Alexander and Pleasant Avenues as transitions.

## OUTCOME 9

A commuter rail station unifies Airline Highway with the downtown core.

### Goal 9.1

Support rail station area redevelopment to encourage rail ridership and promote economic opportunity.

#### Action 9.1.1:

Create a detailed redevelopment plan for station area, including a public realm plan that provides additional connections over New River to improve access to the rail station site.

#### Action 9.1.2:

Develop a request for proposals to seek partnership opportunities for redevelopment of city-owned property.

#### Action 9.1.3:

Work with property owners of large tracts near the station area along Airline Highway to evaluate redevelopment options.

#### Action 9.1.4:

Incentivize quality transit-supportive redevelopment near the rail station.

- Continue development and redevelopment in downtown and along Airline Highway.
- Support complete street, park and trail improvements.
- Plan and zone for high density mixed use and residential development.

#### Action 9.1.5:

Build adequate, well-designed parking to support rail ridership.

#### Action 9.1.6:

Use New River as open space corridor that connects rail station to adjacent areas and provides an attractive gateway to Gonzales. Incorporate plazas and other open space opportunities as well.



**BIKE  
XING**





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**CHAPTER SIX**

TRANSPORTATION

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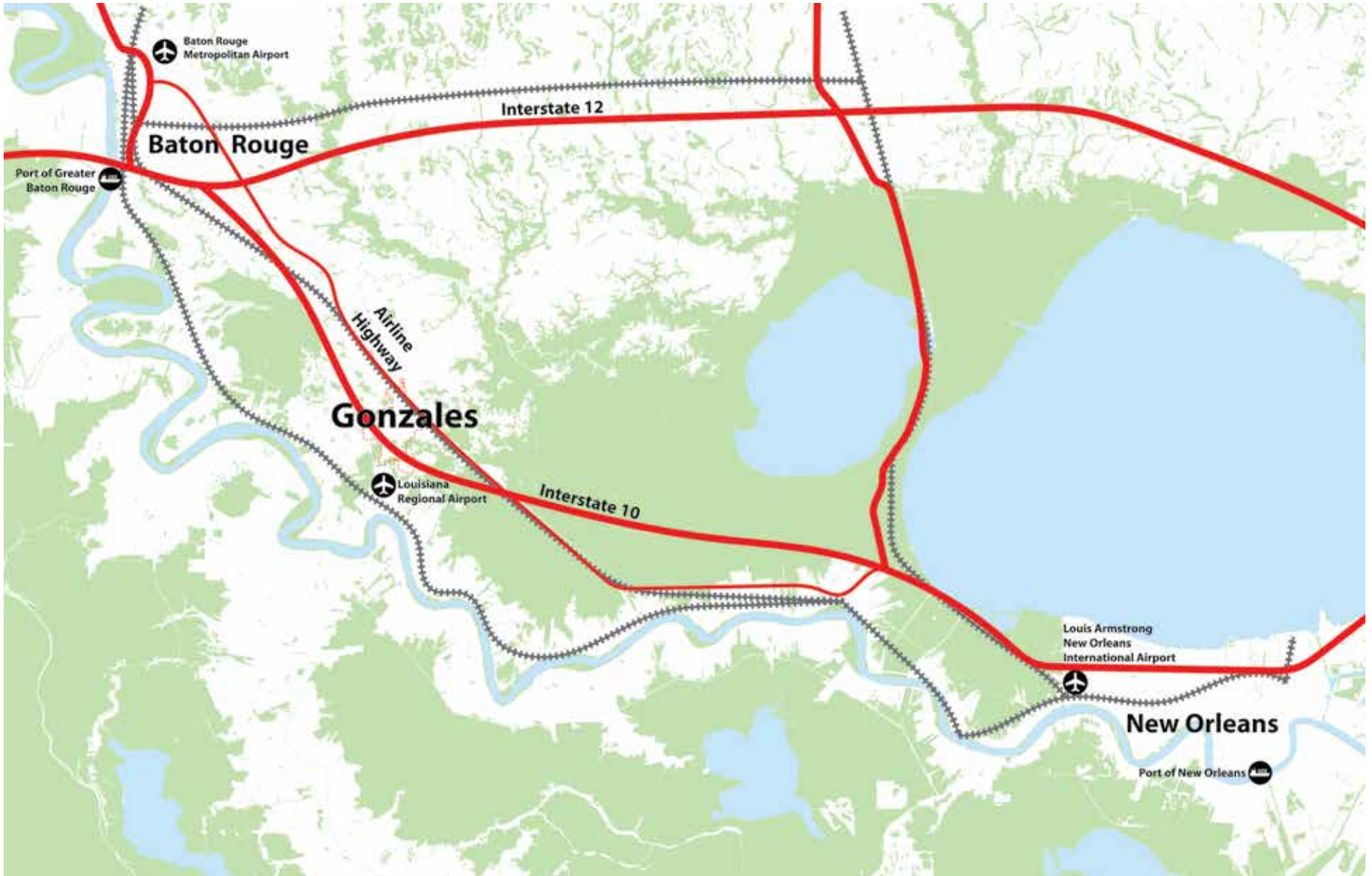
## Where We Are Now

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**Access to transportation for businesses is one of Gonzales’s competitive advantages from an economic development standpoint, serving both as a location incentive for businesses and a determinant of productivity.** The Prosperous Economy chapter of this plan will discuss Gonzales’s comparative advantages linked to transportation and the city’s opportunities to capitalize on those. From a quality of life perspective, safe and efficient transportation can positively impact personal and household finance, environmental quality, productivity, and health.

This chapter will discuss the transportation options Gonzales residents and businesses have now, the city’s current traffic patterns, and the congestion the region experiences. It will also outline transportation plans for the future: Gonzales’s Master Street Plan, planned regional transportation improvements to enhance travel throughout the city, and desired local improvements including complete streets, access management, and green infrastructure.

FIGURE 6.1: TRANSPORTATION LOCATION MAP





# GONZALES TRANSPORTATION

## Roads

Louisiana's primary transportation corridor is Interstate 10, which passes through both major metropolitan areas of Baton Rouge and New Orleans as well as Gonzales. I-10 provides a link to U.S. markets and international markets doing business through Gulf Coast ports. Airline Highway (U.S. 61), the state highway system, and local roads also connect Gonzales to other cities.

## Rail

The Kansas City Southern railroad runs through the northeastern part of the city adjacent to Airline Highway and provides freight service to Gonzales. Kansas City Southern is a Class I railroad. It provides the shortest route from the Gulf of Mexico to Kansas City, the country's second largest rail hub.

There is currently no passenger rail service to Gonzales. However, the 2014 Baton Rouge – New Orleans Intercity Rail Feasibility Study explored providing commuter rail service on the existing Kansas City Southern Railway. The study identified Gonzales as a potential station location on the line from Baton Rouge to New Orleans, and further studies continue.

## Water

Gonzales has nearby access to three deep-water ports along the Mississippi River, including the Port of Greater Baton Rouge (approximately 26 miles away), the Port of New Orleans (approximately 60 miles away), and the Port of South Louisiana, which includes sites along the Mississippi in St. James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Charles parishes.

## Air

Gonzales is about 25 miles from Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, with passenger service to cities in the southern US, and 50 miles from Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, which provides passenger and freight air service both nationally and internationally.

The Louisiana Regional Airport is just to the south of Gonzales's city limits and primarily provides general aviation services, as opposed to passenger and freight services. The airport extended its runway to 5,000 feet in 2014.

## Transit

No fixed-route public transit system, such as city bus service, currently serves Gonzales. On weekdays, on-demand transit is provided by the Ascension Council on Aging for seniors and people with disabilities to get to senior centers, local doctors, drug and grocery stores, and other social service agencies.

There is an opportunity to provide new transit options linking the industrial areas south of the city with the housing to the north in Gonzales and Ascension Parish. Industry representatives are exploring options, such as vanpools and shuttles, to provide more efficient transportation to these jobs.

## Walking

Gonzales has intermittent sidewalk development, making it difficult to walk in many areas of the city. Open roadside ditches throughout the city make it costly and difficult to install continuous sidewalks and walking paths. Bayou Francois and New River have walking or biking paths along parts of the waterways which could be extended to the east and west.

## Bicycling

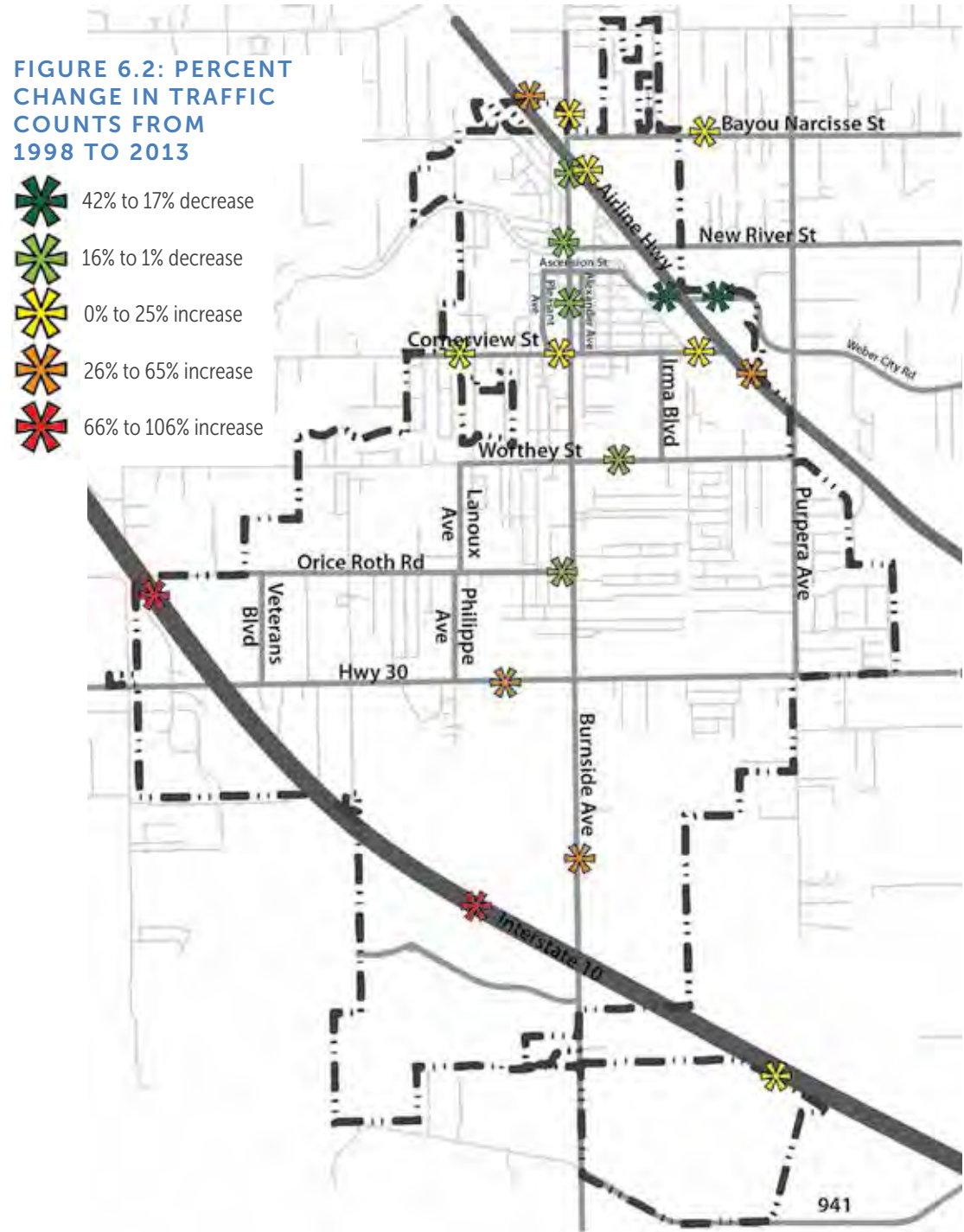
Gonzales's few bike lanes include those on Irma Boulevard and along Bayou Francois and New River. Lower volume collectors and neighborhood streets are also appropriate for bicycling. While there is not a great deal of bicycling in Gonzales today, residents expressed a need for additional bike options. These would improve mobility for those without access to cars, for short commutes within Gonzales, and for those seeking more active modes of transportation.

# TRAFFIC PATTERNS

One issue consistently mentioned by workshop participants was traffic congestion, especially along LA 30 and Burnside Avenue. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) performs vehicle traffic counts, which can help explain the reported congestion.

LaDOTD’s traffic counts are taken at 20 locations on state and federal routes in Gonzales, shown in Figure 6.2. Most of the locations have counts for the years 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, and 2013. The locations marked in red have increased traffic counts from 1998 to 2013 and the locations in green have decreased traffic counts for the same period. City staff explain the decrease in traffic counts in general as an adaptation by local drivers to avoid congestion. Although there are more drivers within the city limits, they are using different routes to avoid long queues.

Gonzales’s most highly trafficked roads, according to anecdotal information from residents, are state highways LA 30, Burnside Avenue (LA 44), Airline Highway (US Highway 61), and Interstate 10. Large traffic generators in and near Gonzales include industries along the Mississippi River, whose workers use LA 30 to travel between the plants and I-10; Tanger Outlet Center at LA 30 and I-10; and businesses along LA 30, LA 44, and US 61. In the future, Edenborne and the M.P. Evans property, the two large undeveloped properties south of I-10, will likely generate a substantial amount of traffic as they are developed.



## CONGESTION

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University tracks mobility for urban areas across the country, most recently in its 2012 Urban Mobility Report. Most of the City of Gonzales is included in the Baton Rouge, LA Urbanized Area, one of the medium size urban areas studied. The report ranks the Baton Rouge area second highest in congestion among medium urban areas in the United States, and says that every year, this congestion causes a delay of 42 hours per auto commuter, 26 extra gallons of fuel consumed per auto commuter, and a “congestion cost” of \$1,052 per commuter. The report also measures freeway travel reliability, additional carbon dioxide production, truck delays, commuter stress index, and other indicators of mobility performance.

The report stresses that congestion wastes time, money, and resources of individuals and businesses, and the authors conclude that solutions must be pursued aggressively by all parties: government, businesses, manufacturers, commuters, and travelers. Relieving congestion can improve Gonzales’s quality of life and spur economic growth.



Image: Texas A&M Transportation Institute

The 2012 Urban Mobility Report from Texas A&M Transportation Institute



## Road Connectivity Can Relieve Congestion

An interconnected grid of streets, similar to the pattern found in Gonzales's historic downtown, provides the connections needed to make Gonzales a walkable, less congested community. Research has shown that having more intersections—and thus connections—is one of the most important predictors of walking in a community, along with access to various destinations and the quality of sidewalks.



Image: City of Gonzales

The historic downtown neighborhood between Burnside Avenue and the railroad has an interconnected grid of streets.

Neighborhoods with many types of transportation connections are an important element of a community's livability and quality of life. Increasing the use of transportation modes like walking, rather than driving alone, can help to improve a community's air quality, reduce traffic on the roads and contribute to a healthy lifestyle for residents.

In the example in Figure 6.3, the left side shows a driving-only transportation pattern, while the right side shows an interconnected grid of streets that increases walking and biking options. The red line in each picture represents the length of the trip necessary to travel between two locations. In the interconnected grid, there are many different possible paths to reach the destination, and a traveler is not required to use main thoroughfares.

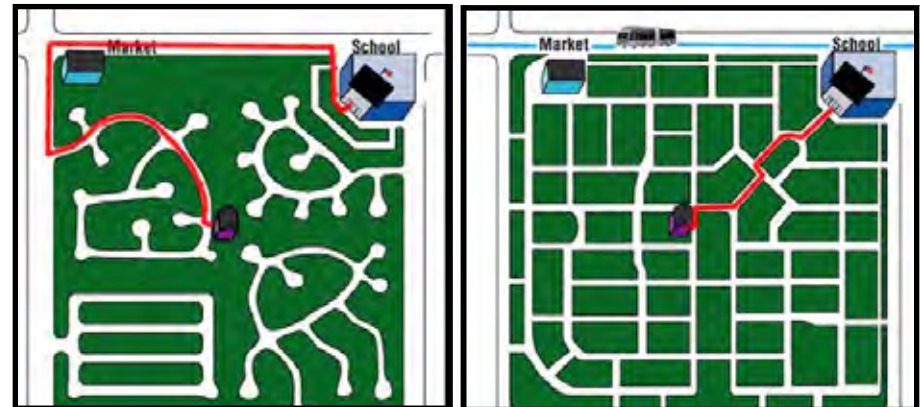


Image: Congress for the New Urbanism

Figure 6.3: Unconnected development on the left side and connected transportation grid on the right



## **Planning for the Future**

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**Coordinating land use and long range transportation planning is an important consideration in ensuring orderly growth and development in the community.** Understanding this relationship helps to promote orderly growth and stewardship of Gonzales's resources, while providing the ability to plan for infrastructure maintenance.

**The transportation system impacts how land is used, affecting neighborhood quality and integrity, pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety, community aesthetics and corridor quality, accessibility of shopping and entertainment districts as well as major public facilities, and linear park and trail opportunities.**

To prepare for Gonzales's future transportation needs, different scales of planning are undertaken. The Capital Region Planning Commission performs regional improvements at a large scale. The CRPC plans for over two decades into the future, and covers the nine-parish area of which Gonzales is a part.

At a citywide scale, a Master Street Plan, created by the City of Gonzales, identifies the location and type of roads that currently exist and that are likely to be needed in the future. This allows for right-of-way preservation and ensures that future roads can handle future transportation needs.

Local improvements, also planned by the city, address other important aspects of transportation in Gonzales, such as complete streets, connectivity, access management and green infrastructure.

## REGIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

According to the CRPC's Baton Rouge Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2037, there are deficiencies projected to occur in the roadway system in the Gonzales area over the next 22 years because of an inability to carry projected traffic levels based on estimated population growth. In layman's terms, if the roads stay as they are today, they won't be able to handle the amount of traffic there will be in the year 2037. There are several strategies available to address the projected deficiencies, including "traffic operational improvements," which are ways to increase efficiency in the roadway system. These include intersection improvements, signal improvements, sign improvements, and access management.

The Baton Rouge MTP 2037 also includes three phases of funded projects that will increase capacity on Gonzales area roads:

- Phase I improvements are planned for the period from 2013 to 2017 and include intersection improvements on at Cornerview Road at Burnside and Airline Highway at Weber City Road.
- Phase II covers 2018 to 2027 and includes road widening on Interstate 10, LA 30, and Orice Roth Road.
- Phase III covers 2028 to 2037 and includes road widening along Airline Highway.



## MASTER STREET PLAN

A Master Street Plan identifies the location and type of roadway facilities that will likely be needed to meet projected growth and ensure mobility and access for the public. Over time, roadway design requirements change based on surrounding land uses and the overall demand placed on the corridors. Therefore, the primary objective of the Master Street Plan is to ensure adequate right-of-way is preserved to allow for orderly and efficient roadway expansion if needed.

The purpose of Gonzales's Master Street Plan is to:

- Preserve existing roadway alignments and adequate rights-of-way for future long range transportation improvements.
- Minimize the amount of land required for street and highway purposes.
- Identify the functional role that each street should be designed to serve to promote and maintain the stability of traffic and land use patterns.
- Ensure continuity and connectivity for east-west and north-south traffic.
- Maximize mobility while minimizing the negative impacts of street widening and construction on neighborhoods and the overall community by recognizing where future improvements may be needed and incorporating thoroughfare needs.
- Make efficient use of resources by designating and recognizing corridors that will likely require improvements.
- Inform the public of the streets that are intended to become arterial and collector streets, so that private land use decisions can anticipate which streets will become major traffic facilities in the future.
- Provide information on thoroughfare improvement needs to determine priorities and schedules in the city's capital improvement program.

As growth and development continues to occur, roadway traffic patterns and function may change over time. Therefore, Gonzales's classification system should be updated at least every five years to ensure it accurately reflects current and projected conditions.

The city of Gonzales's road classifications are consistent with LaDOTD's functional classifications. The Master Street Plan, provided in Figure 6.4, classifies each road section as one of the following:

**Interstates** are officially designated by the Secretary of Transportation. They are the highest road classification, designed and constructed for mobility and long-distance travel. I-10 is the only interstate that runs through Gonzales.

**Major Arterials** serve major centers of metropolitan areas, provide a high degree of mobility and can also provide mobility through rural areas. Unlike their access-controlled counterparts, abutting land uses can be served directly. Forms of access include driveways to specific parcels and at-grade intersections with other roadways. Airline Highway, LA 30 and Burnside Avenue are major arterials in Gonzales.

**Major and Minor Collectors** serve a critical role in the roadway network by gathering traffic from local roads and funneling them to the arterial network. Within the context of functional classification, collectors are broken down into major collectors and minor collectors.

**Local Roads** are not intended for use in long distance travel, except at the origin or destination end of the trip, due to their provision of direct access to abutting land. Bus routes generally do not run on local roads. Local roads are often designed to discourage through traffic. As public roads, they should be accessible for public use throughout the year.



## LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS

There are a number of ways that Gonzales can improve how roads operate. This section discusses connectivity, access management, green infrastructure, and complete streets.

### Connectivity

Studies have shown that an interconnected street network has wide reaching benefits that affect transportation, the environment, and overall quality of life. These benefits include:

- Accommodating short “local trips” on local streets, thereby reducing congestion on collectors and arterials
- Reducing the local traffic demand on major roadways (freeways and thoroughfares)
- Providing direct travel routes
- Providing a framework of streets that supports development patterns
- Encouraging and providing infrastructure for non-vehicular travel modes such as walking and bicycling
- Providing a framework for transit services

An integrated street network is not possible if neighborhoods (subdivisions) continue to develop without being required to connect to one another. In new subdivisions, the number of dead end streets should be limited and provisions should be made for the creation of an interconnected street network.

### Access Management

The needs of roadway users must be balanced with the need to access property, and “access management” is the term given to the balance between those. Access management is identified in the Baton Rouge MTP 2037 plan as a strategy to increase efficiency, reduce traffic, and maximize safety for all roadway users. An example of access management is limiting the number of driveways onto a road to reduce the number of conflict points between vehicles as well as people on foot or bike.

Gonzales has adopted access management ordinances in Chapter 17, Subdivision of Land, of the Code of Ordinances. In general, the ordinances require properties that are part of a larger development to share roadway access or space driveways as far apart as possible. Driveways are prohibited from going directly from subdivision lots onto existing or proposed collector roadways, which are shown on the Master Street Plan in Figure 6.4.

Access management standards should be reviewed every 3 to 5 years to ensure that they are up to date and adequate for the road conditions.

### Green Infrastructure

Roads and other paved surfaces collect pollutants such as oil, toxic chemicals, and heavy metals, and increase the volume and speed of stormwater runoff. In addition to the harmful effects these pollutants can have on natural systems, storm water entering the city’s drainage system must be handled at taxpayer expense. However, using best practices for green infrastructure along roads and in parking lots not only reduces runoff into storm sewers by allowing storm water to percolate into soil, but also filters pollutants to improve the quality of runoff entering streams and rivers.



In this example of green infrastructure, a conventional approach to a parking lot design is shown at left, next to an “enhanced stormwater” design at right. The enhanced design has a similar planted area, but its curb has gaps to allow stormwater into the planted area. This means that stormwater is captured, filtered, and held by the soil and plants instead of piped to containment or treatment areas.



## Complete Streets

Over the past several decades, U.S. cities have been built to be heavily auto-oriented, with roads moving people through a place from one destination to the next. Street design has only considered the travel lanes. Gonzales, like other communities around the country, wants to expand the range of transportation options to provide multiple ways of getting around the city and to increase its quality of life.

This way of thinking about roads is called “complete streets.” Complete streets are designed with consideration for users of all ages and physical abilities, and allow for multiple modes of transportation. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transportation users are all able to safely move along and across a complete street. This slight shift of how we think of our roads can have a much larger impact on a community’s livability. When all possible users are considered, streets are safe for children to walk to school, parents can bike and walk to neighborhood parks, and neighbors of any age and physical ability can safely navigate sidewalks, public transit, bike lanes, and roadways as they make their way around the community.

Complete streets programs can help a city:

- Improve travel times by increasing transportation options and increasing road connectivity.
- Improve mobility for all users, including drivers and bicyclists, with special attention paid to the needs of non-drivers, youth, older citizens and the mobility challenged.
- Improve safety for drivers as well as people walking and bicycling to their destinations, thereby providing alternative options to safely get around.
- Improve access to public transportation by making it safer, easier, and more attractive for all users, including older people and those with disabilities.

- Improve and provide additional safe routes for children heading to school and learning institutions.
- Improve access to employment and educational opportunities in all neighborhoods.

## Context Sensitive Design

Existing roads in Gonzales typically have wide lanes, large intersections, and relatively few pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, medians with trees, parallel parking, and short intersection crossings. This makes roads not conducive to walking, biking, or transit. While wide lanes may be desirable in an industrial or heavy commercial area, they may not be preferable in a residential or mixed use area. Cities are now taking land uses and the surrounding context into consideration when they design roadways. Context sensitive design acknowledges that roads next to residential neighborhoods look and operate differently than do roads along a main street or an industrial area. Using complete streets concepts does not mean “all modes for all roads.” Rather, each street design is unique and responds to the needs of the community and destinations surrounding it.

## Improving Streets Improves the City

Adoption of a complete streets policy is an acknowledgment that the role of streets is also to build communities, not simply to move cars. In this manner, transportation policies become another tool for cities to use to create place and destination—and to make a community more livable. Complete street categories guide future design, development and improvement programs and help determine the types of improvements required for all users of the street.

## Types of Complete Streets

The complete streets approach considers the context and functional classification of the street and assumes that different priorities apply for designing and building streets, depending on this classification.

Five complete street types that are applicable in Gonzales include mixed use, commercial, residential, industrial, and parkways. These complete street types are described below, and Figure 6.5 shows their proposed locations.



**Mixed use Streets** encompass a variety of types of streets and land use contexts, from downtown to other small main street locations. Buildings are usually close to the street and offer a vibrant blend of opportunities to live, work, shop, and play. In some locations, they carry heavy traffic. On mixed use streets, the desire is for slower traffic speeds and a greater emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle choices. On-street parking is common.

**Commercial Streets** serve mostly commercial or institutional areas with low densities. Buildings are likely set back from the road and streets do not feature on-street parking. These streets are often multi-lane and serve faster moving traffic and provide regional connections. However, there are many opportunities for improving walkability between destinations.

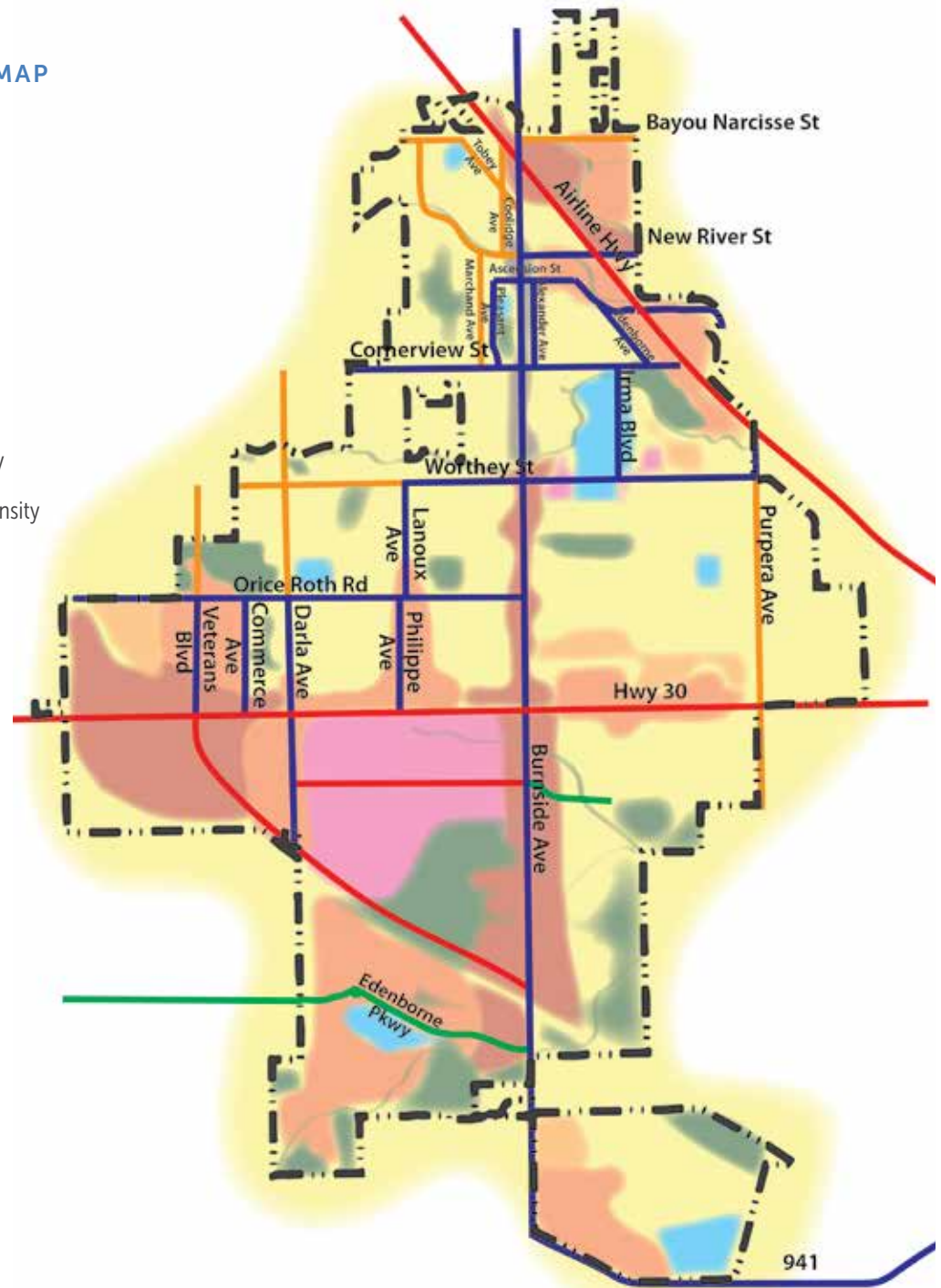
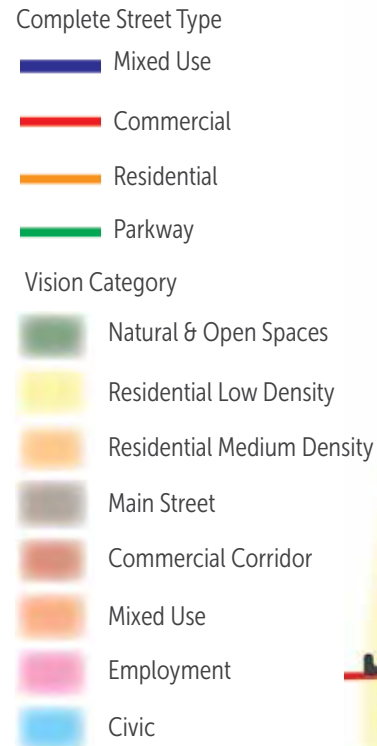
**Residential Streets** serve residential land uses as well as schools, churches, and businesses within residential neighborhoods. Residential streets can vary from serving high volumes and fast moving traffic to serving moderate traffic volumes and lower speeds, depending on the surrounding neighborhood context. The dominant land use is single family. Residential streets have walking and biking opportunities.

**Industrial Streets** serve industrial and heavy commercial corridors. They are built with wide lanes and intersections to accommodate trucks and other large vehicles. Industrial streets are located within large areas of land with a mix of low- and medium density industrial and warehouse buildings. They often have large surface parking lots for cars and trucks, and should have quality access. No industrial streets are identified on the Gonzales complete streets map.



**Parkways** extend through natural areas (such as lakes, rivers, flood-plains, streams, and parks) where there is a desire to maintain or create a park-like feel to the roadway. Parkways also may be located in traditional neighborhood developments such as Edenborne, where they serve as an entranceway to a planned development. Design elements may include wide landscaped medians, structures with natural materials, and shared use paths alongside the roadway in lieu of sidewalks.

**FIGURE 6.5:  
COMPLETE STREETS MAP**





# Transportation Outcomes, Goals, and Actions

This section is organized into Outcomes that reflect the vision and Goals and Actions that, if followed, will move Gonzales towards the community's vision.

**Outcomes** are the big ideas that support the citizen's vision. They capture big picture changes that must occur to implement the plan.

**Goals** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic objectives that guide plan implementation by ensuring that stakeholders are clear about what must happen to move Gonzales toward the vision.

**Actions** delineate the steps needed to achieve the goals.

## OUTCOME 10

Transportation improvements accommodate projected growth.

### Goal 10.1

Plan and build a well maintained network of roadway and trail infrastructure.

#### Action 10.1.1:

Adopt the Master Street Plan and complete streets maps in this plan.

#### Action 10.1.2:

Based on the Master Street Plan, reserve right-of-way for future improvements.

#### Action 10.1.3:

Develop an interconnected street pattern that:

- Eases congestion
- More evenly distributes traffic
- Offers route flexibility
- Connects people to jobs, shopping, and services

## Goal 10.2

Continue to address traffic, access and safety issues.

### Action 10.2.1:

Continue to aggressively enforce the city's access management policy and review and update every 3 to 5 years.

### Action 10.2.2:

Coordinate access management with the parish and nearby communities.

### Action 10.2.3:

Identify accident-prone areas to study for improvements.

### Action 10.2.4:

Continue to pursue funding for maintaining and reconstructing infrastructure.

### Action 10.2.5:

Continue program providing curb ramps and other accommodations for persons with disabilities. In conjunction, review roads, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossing areas to make sure they provide access to disabled people.

## Goal 10.3

Continue to work with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to coordinate expansion and improvement plans within Gonzales and the region.

## OUTCOME 11

Transportation improvements are planned, designed, and constructed to accommodate all anticipated users.

## Goal 11.1

Endorse a complete streets policy with the intent to plan, design, improve, and maintain streets so they are safe for all users.

### Action 11.1.1:

Direct planners and engineers to design and construct the right-of-way to accommodate all anticipated users.

### Action 11.1.2:

When planning transportation improvements, consider the complete street category of the street and prioritize improvements based on that designation.

### Action 11.1.3:

Provide sidewalks or other walkways on appropriate streets, with a priority placed on mixed use streets.

## Goal 11.2

Provide a wide range of transportation options for getting around the city.

### Action 11.2.1:

Design and plan road projects, to the greatest extent possible, to accommodate all users of the transportation system, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, truckers, and emergency responders, while respecting the access needs of adjacent land uses.

### Action 11.2.2:

Pay special attention to the needs of older people and people with disabilities when designing and planning a project.

### Action 11.2.3:

Make use of best practice design standards, policies, and guidelines while respecting the character of the area.

### Action 11.2.4:

Incorporate sustainable stormwater management techniques in road development.

### Action 11.2.5:

Establish a dedicated funding source and program to partner with residents in funding maintenance and enhancements to sidewalks.

### Action 11.2.6:

Create a bicycle and trails master plan to focus on connecting neighborhoods with destinations, such as employment, shopping and recreation.

### Action 11.2.7:

As development increases, plan for bus, shuttles and other transit options to connect the proposed rail station with employment and commercial centers.

### Action 11.2.8:

Initiate a “shopper shuttle” in the form of a single bus line to provide transportation between employment and retail centers.

## Goal 11.3

Plan for transportation investments that enhance the land uses they serve.

### Action 11.3.1:

Add light fixtures, signs, and sidewalks to make the city’s roads unique, and to help residents and visitors recognize that they are in Gonzales.

### Action 11.3.2:

Provide comfortable and attractive pedestrian and bicycle facilities on streets.

### Action 11.3.3:

Connect off-street trails to neighborhoods and regional destinations.

### Action 11.3.4:

Prioritize sidewalk, curb ramp and crosswalk rehabilitation and construction projects according to ranking that takes into account concentrations of persons with disabilities, public facilities, and mixed use development.

### Action 11.3.5:

Recognize that flexibility in project development and design is necessary to balance safety, mobility, economic development, and environmental issues for new and redesigned urban transportation facilities.

### Action 11.3.6:

Adopt the most recent Institute of Transportation Engineers’ document *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*.



#### Action 11.3.7:

Require connectivity in new subdivisions so the number of dead end streets is limited and opportunities are provided for the creation of an interconnected street network:

- Require all subdivisions smaller than 100 dwelling units to include at least one stub-out street to extend and connect with future streets.
- Require all subdivisions larger than 100 dwelling units to include at least two stub-out streets to extend and connect with future streets; more stubout streets may be required based on the size of the development.
- Require new subdivisions to connect to or continue all collector and local streets stubbed to the boundary of an adjacent previously approved but unbuilt subdivision or existing development.

### Goal 11.4

Continue to update access management regulations to reflect national best practices.

#### Action 11.4.1:

Monitor the effectiveness of existing access management practices and update as needed.







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**CHAPTER SEVEN**

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HOUSING AND  
NEIGHBORHOODS

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## **Where We Are Now**

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This chapter will describe the housing types available to Gonzales residents now, development trends in Gonzales, and factors that affect housing choice. It will also outline the number and types of housing needed in the future, based on forecasted population, demographics, and wages. Finally, considerations necessary when developing new housing types in Gonzales will also be discussed.

# HOUSING TYPES

Gonzales has a variety of housing types, which are grouped using the following conditions:

- Whether the structure is stand-alone or attached to another structure
- The number of dwelling units in each structure.

Gonzales's housing types include four categories that group housing types with similar development forms and densities together:

- **Single family detached** includes single-family detached units and mobile and manufactured housing.
- **Single family attached** includes all structures with a common wall where each dwelling unit occupies a separate lot, such as row houses or townhouses.
- **Multifamily – 2 to 4 units** includes attached housing with between 2 and 4 units per structure, such as duplexes or triplexes.
- **Multifamily – 5 or more units** includes all attached structures with at least five units in the structure, such as multistory apartment buildings.



Image: The Village at Fountain Lake Luxury Apartment Homes

Multifamily - 5 or more units housing in Gonzales



Single family detached house in Gonzales



Image: Google Maps

Multifamily - 2 to 4 units housing in Gonzales



Single family attached housing in Gonzales

## CURRENT HOUSING ANALYSIS

This section summarizes development trends in Gonzales, focusing on the current conditions in Gonzales's housing market and historical changes since about 2000 through 2012.

Single-family detached housing continues to make up the largest share of Gonzales's housing stock, but its share has decreased. Single family detached housing makes up 77 percent of Gonzales housing. Single-family attached housing accounts for about 1 percent of Gonzales's housing stock. Multifamily housing accounts for about 22 percent of Gonzales's housing stock, with 8 percent of housing in multifamily - 2 to 4 units and 14 percent in multifamily - 5 or more units. The share of multifamily housing increased from 17 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2012.

From 1999 to 2014, Gonzales issued permits for 893 single family units (which includes single family detached, single family attached, and manufactured housing types), with about 60 units permitted each year.



### More than two-thirds of Gonzales households own their homes.

Homeownership rates remained stable over the last decade. Roughly 69 percent of housing in Gonzales was owner-occupied in 2000 and 2012. Nearly all (96 percent) of owner-occupied housing is single family detached. Renter-occupied housing is a mixture of multifamily (59 percent) and single family detached (41 percent).

### Housing affordability is declining in Gonzales.

Both house prices and rents increased faster than income since 2000. More than one third of all Gonzales households are cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. The HUD standard for housing affordability is that households pay 30 percent or less of their gross income on housing costs per month.

### Renters are far more likely to be cost-burdened than homeowners.

About 70 percent of Gonzales rental households are cost-burdened. About 48 percent of renters are severely cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than half of their income on rent. This is a strong indicator that Gonzales lacks affordable housing.

About one-quarter of Gonzales's households earn less than \$25,000 and are unable to afford the Fair Market Rent (according to HUD's standards) of \$752 for a two-bedroom dwelling.

### There is a lack of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

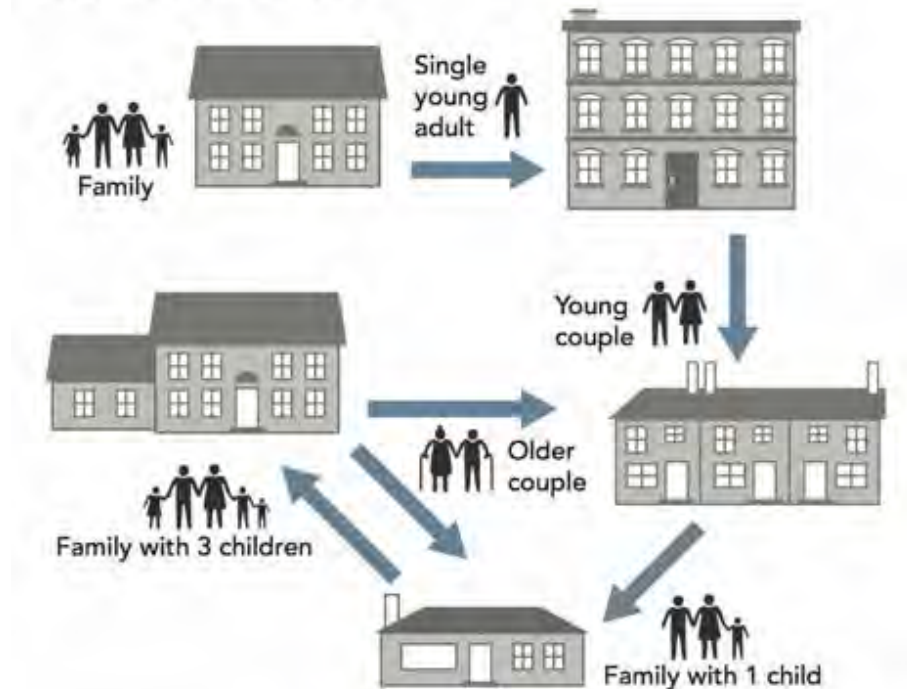
Gonzales has a deficit of housing that is affordable to households earning \$25,000 or less, which accounts for more than one-quarter of Gonzales's households. The majority of these households are among Gonzales's most cost-burdened households.

# HOUSING CHOICE

Housing choice is the type of housing in which a person or family chooses to live. Housing choice can change as one cycles through different life phases, as shown in Figure 7.1.

Many demographic and socioeconomic variables affect housing choice. These include: age of householder, household composition (e.g., married couple with children or single-person household), size of household, ethnicity, race, household income, and accumulated wealth (e.g., real estate or stocks). Age, size of the household, and income most strongly affect housing choice, with income probably ranking as the most important determinant.

**FIGURE 7.1: TYPICAL HOUSING LIFE CYCLE**



## AGE

The Demographics and Economic Forces section of this plan shows that Gonzales’s population is currently slightly younger than the state’s but is growing relatively older. In general, as population ages, income and homeownership rates increase, plateauing around age 60 to 70 in most areas. This trend is present in Gonzales’s housing market.

## Baby Boomers and Millennials

The national demographic trends that will affect housing demand across the United States, as well as Louisiana, Ascension Parish, and Gonzales, are aging of Baby Boomers and Millennials entering the housing market.

- **Baby Boomers**, or those people who are currently age 51 to 69, will be 71 to 89 years old by 2035, the end of the period covered by this comprehensive plan. As Baby Boomers make up a larger proportion of the population, their housing needs and preferences will become increasingly important.
- **Millennials**, also known as Generation Y or Echo Boomers, are currently age 15 to 35, and will be 35 to 55 years old in 2035. Millennials will form households and enter their prime earning years during the 20-year planning period.

As Gonzales’s population ages, there may be more demand for smaller owner-occupied dwellings, rental housing, and housing for seniors. More than half of householders aged 35 and older were homeowners in Gonzales. Homeownership generally increases with age until 85 years old, but after age 85, homeownership decreases in Gonzales. Householders younger than 35 years were more likely to be renters in Gonzales.

## SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD

Gonzales also has more non-family households, compared to Ascension Parish and Louisiana. More than one-third of households of people 65 years and older were single-person households in the 2008-2012 period, increasing to nearly half of households for those 75 years and older. Growth in households with householders 65 years and older will result in growth in single-person households.

This trend of increasing single-person households will result in an increased demand for housing types other than single family homes on large lots. Single-person households, whether elderly or younger, have indicated strong housing preferences for more compact homes such as town homes, condominiums and mixed use areas.

## INCOME

The Demographics and Economic Forces section of this plan shows that Gonzales's income is above the state median, but below Ascension Parish's. However, when adjusting for inflation since 2000, incomes in Gonzales and Louisiana actually decreased. Poverty rates increased in Gonzales between 2000 and 2012, from 17 percent of the population below poverty in 2000 to over 23 percent in 2010. In 2012, poverty in Gonzales is much higher than in the nation (15 percent), state (19 percent), or Ascension Parish (11 percent).





## **Planning for the Future**

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**Looking to the future, housing needs in Gonzales will be dictated by population, demographics, and, in large part, by wages of jobs in and around Gonzales.**

Growth in lower-paying jobs will drive demand for rental and low-cost owner-occupied housing. Growth in higher-wage jobs will drive demand for higher-cost ownership housing.

Gonzales has an existing deficit of affordable and rental housing, both for low income households and moderate income households. Gonzales does not have enough land zoned appropriately to accommodate future multifamily housing growth. In addition, Gonzales does not provide enough opportunities for development of attached housing types and does not provide opportunity for development of a balance of different housing types. **To meet demand for housing in the future, Gonzales will need to add more housing units and provide additional types of housing.**

# HOUSING NEEDS

## NUMBER OF UNITS NEEDED

Using the forecasted increase in population, assuming an average household size and vacancy rate, Gonzales will have demand for 3,583 new dwelling units over the 20-year planning period, with an annual average of 179 new dwelling units needed per year.

## TYPE OF UNITS NEEDED

More affordable dwelling units of all types are already needed in Gonzales, and this need will likely increase as Gonzales's population grows and the demographics of the city change consistent with national demographic changes. Demand for affordable rental housing will increase as some Baby Boomer households downsize and Millennials form new households.

### Affordable and workforce housing

Growth in lower-wage jobs (i.e., jobs in retail, accommodations and food services, and some health care jobs) will increase demand for affordable housing. People working lower-wage jobs would be able to afford \$350 to \$825 in housing costs per month. For a household with a single wage-earner in the lowest wage jobs, Gonzales has little or no housing affordable for the amounts they can afford to pay. Even with two wage-earners in lower-wage jobs, finding housing, especially for a family, for about \$700 per month in Gonzales is challenging.

### Market-rate housing

Much of Ascension Parish's growth in higher-wage jobs, such as manufacturing, is occurring outside of Gonzales. People working these jobs can afford to pay about \$2,500 per month in rent or a house costing \$250,000. Some people working these higher-wage jobs outside of Gonzales may choose to locate within the city. Workers in higher-wage jobs in growing industries that are more likely to locate inside of Gonzales, such as wholesale trade or information, can generally afford \$1,350 per month in rent or a house costing about \$140,000.

### Rental housing

Increased development of rental housing, especially rental housing that is typically more affordable such as duplexes, townhouses, or apartments, should loosen the rental market by increasing the supply of rental housing. New rental housing is unlikely to be less expensive than the existing rental housing stock, unless it is subsidized. However, development of new rental housing may decrease the growth in rental costs, especially over the long run.

### Multifamily housing

Multifamily units tend to be smaller and more affordable than single family homes, which is an asset for people who are scaling back or who have less income to spend on housing. Multifamily units are also primarily rented rather than owned. Following the six-year national drop in home prices, renting is now a more desirable option than when housing values rose every year.

# LIFESTYLE OPTIONS, DENSITY, AND HOUSING TYPES

Accommodating different phases of life means providing different housing types, lifestyle options, and densities.

Housing density or residential density refers to the number of homes per unit of land. It is typically reported in dwelling units per acre). Typical single family neighborhoods are often about 6-8 houses per acre.

Figure 7.2 shows a selection of typical densities, but density can look very different, depending on the type of building, the parking configuration and the type of construction. In addition, the amenities provided can change the perception of a property.

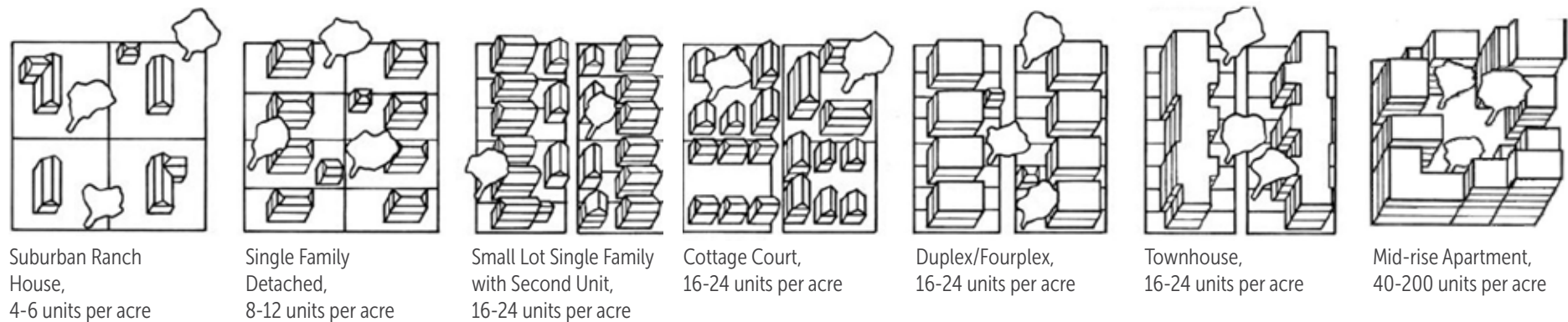


Figure 7.2: Typical densities of building types

Images: Smart Infill: Creating More Livable Communities in the Bay Area, 2002, by Stephen M. Wheeler for Greenbelt Alliance



Gonzales’s existing land plans focus on development of single family detached housing.

Based on a housing market analysis conducted as part of this study, approximately 60 percent of the housing needed in the future will be single family detached, 5 percent will be single family attached, and 35 percent will be multifamily housing, from duplexes and triplexes to multistory apartment buildings. Under this assumption and based on potential growth projections, Gonzales has a deficit of land zoned for multifamily housing of 350 to almost 1000 units.

Trends across the state and country show communities addressing changing housing needs by increasing density in appropriate areas. Housing types such as cottage homes, duplexes that look like single family units and attached housing can be built in transition areas between established neighborhoods and commercial areas. In addition, more and more walkable areas, such as the Edenborne development planned for Gonzales, are developing where a mix of uses provide a variety of housing options.

The Vision Map, shown in Chapter 4, shows the location of future development types, called Vision Map Categories, in Gonzales. The Residential Low Density, Residential Medium Density, and Mixed Use categories include housing. Figure 7.3 shows the housing types included in each Vision Map Category. These housing types were described earlier in this chapter.

Figure 7.3: Housing Types Shown in the Vision Map

VISION MAP CATEGORY	HOUSING TYPES INCLUDED
Residential Low Density	single family detached, single family attached, multifamily - 2 to 4 units
Residential Medium Density	single family attached, multifamily - 2 to 4 units, multifamily - 5 or more units
Mixed Use	multifamily - 2 to 4 units, multifamily - 5 or more units

Source: CPEX

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Integrating new types of housing into Gonzales will require sensitivity to existing residential uses and creative design considerations. The following are some of the considerations necessary when developing new housing types in Gonzales.



Image: Lafayette Real Estate News

Single family homes on small lots in River Ranch, Lafayette, Louisiana



Image: David Whitley

New single family house in the Dallas, Texas area

## Using compact design to use land more efficiently

Designing new housing at higher densities allows more homes and apartments at a lower cost to taxpayers. Dense, compact development spreads out the cost of land among more homes and also helps to create more affordable places to live.

Examples of more compact development include:

- Walkup and courtyard apartments
- Mid-rise apartments
- Town homes and row houses
- Single family homes on small lots
- High-rise apartments

## Designing new buildings to fit community character

New buildings can be designed so that the scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources of a community are preserved. Design standards can take these issues into consideration, resulting in new development minimally impacting a community. Examples include incorporating the architectural style of a community into the design of a new building – or using local building materials to better integrate the building into the surrounding environment.



Image: Reich Associates

Mixed use development in Perkins Rowe, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### Mixed use development

Mixed use development combines housing with shops, offices, community facilities, etc. by stacking homes, apartments or offices above neighborhood-serving retail—or simply by putting commercial and residential buildings in close proximity. Benefits include:

- Street level activity adds liveliness and interest and contributes to an energetic, safe ambiance.
- With jobs and stores close to residences, people need to use their cars less, reducing traffic.
- Walking or biking instead of driving increases people’s level of daily physical activity.
- Nearby merchants offering routine goods and services improves neighborhoods for children, seniors, and others who choose not to drive.



Image: Treppendaht Landscape

Sustainable stormwater management at Woman’s Hospital, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### “Green” building and sustainable design

By designing energy-efficient buildings and using environmentally friendly building materials and construction practices, more homes and apartments can be built without imposing additional impacts on the environment. Innovative stormwater management can provide environmental benefits and reduce demand on infrastructure. Examples of green building include:

- Managing stormwater runoff
- Reusing existing buildings
- Recycling construction waste and building with sustainable materials
- Using energy efficient windows, equipment, HVAC systems, and appliances
- Insulating properly
- Installing solar panels
- Conserving water with fixtures like low-flow faucets and rainwater harvesting
- Landscaping to aid energy efficiency, such as planting trees on the southern and western side of buildings



# Housing Outcomes, Goals, and Actions

This section is organized into Outcomes that reflect the vision and Goals and Actions that, if followed, will move Gonzales towards the community's vision.

**Outcomes** are the big ideas that support the citizen's vision. They capture big picture changes that must occur to implement the plan.

**Goals** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic objectives that guide plan implementation by ensuring that stakeholders are clear about what must happen to move Gonzales toward the vision.

**Actions** delineate the steps needed to achieve the goals.

## OUTCOME 12

Gonzales citizens have a wide range of housing options.

### Goal 12.1

Provide a range of housing types and affordability levels throughout the city.

#### Action 12.1.1:

Preserve and strengthen existing single-family areas through proactive code enforcement and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

#### Action 12.1.2:

Build new housing that will retain current and attract future residents, including young people, area workers, entrepreneurs and older people.

#### Action 12.1.3:

Allow a wider range of housing in some single-family districts through ordinance changes such as:

- Allow duplexes or townhouses on corner lots.
- Allow small-scale multifamily buildings in key areas, such as along transportation corridors or near commercial areas.
- Allow cluster housing.
- Allow secondary living units under certain conditions.

#### Action 12.1.4:

Create moderate density attached and multifamily housing districts.

- Establish a variety of allowable densities with increased design standards.
- Amend ordinance to allow small lot single family detached houses, cottage or courtyard homes, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and small-scale apartment buildings.

#### Action 12.1.5:

Revise multifamily densities and establish a variety of districts to accommodate a range of housing types.

- Allow increased densities with additional design standards.
- Require mixed use components for higher densities.

### Goal 12.2

Zone more land for multifamily use to encourage development in areas consistent with the Gonzales Vision Map.

#### Action 12.2.1:

Develop a plan to phase in more multifamily zoning.

### Goal 12.3

Identify opportunities for mixed use development.

#### Action 12.3.1:

Zone for both vertical and horizontal mixed use development.

- Vertical mixed use is where one building has two or more uses.
- Horizontal mixed use is where two or more uses are located in buildings adjacent to each other, such as allowing multifamily housing in some commercial districts or allowing a limited amount of neighborhood serving commercial in a residential neighborhood.

#### Action 12.3.2:

Zone for higher density mixed use development in the downtown and the future rail station area.

### Goal 12.4

Adopt multifamily design standards to promote compatibility and ensure that new multifamily housing is consistent with Gonzales's design and character.

#### Action 12.4.1:

Establish multifamily housing design standards that fit with the community and neighborhood character.

#### Action 12.4.2:

Develop a menu of pre-approved design standards for multifamily housing that allows developers to select preferred design elements and meet requirements without a public hearing.

#### Action 12.4.3:

Explore a tiered approach in which higher densities require higher standards and amenities. The menu of amenities and standards could include:

- Access to public areas, plazas, play yards, open areas
- Amenities such as recreation areas, pools, gyms, club houses
- Specified design elements such as exterior finishes, windows, building materials, building orientation, and internal entrance halls
- Interconnected street networks and pedestrian connections
- Green infrastructure
- Street trees, landscaped boulevards, bayou corridors, wetlands, or wooded areas
- Variety in architectural forms and building types
- Placement and design of buildings, accessory structures, and private outdoor spaces

## Goal 12.5

Establish single family design guidelines to ensure that new single family development is consistent with the community and neighborhood character.

### Action 12.5.1:

Include a list of design features required for new subdivisions, from which developers could choose a required number of options to incorporate into the development. This would provide flexibility while also breaking up monotony of housing all designed in one style. The list of features could include:

- Dormers or gables
- Recessed entries or covered front porches
- Architectural pillars or posts
- Window or transparency requirements
- Varied facades to reduce monotony
- Duplexes appearing as a single unit
- Exterior finishes
- Open space requirements
- Attached front garage standards

## OUTCOME 13

Gonzales's existing neighborhoods are revitalized, preserved and maintained.

### Goal 13.1

Create partnerships and incentives for revitalization and rehabilitation of existing housing into good condition in targeted areas.

#### Action 13.1.1:

Create a set of sample revitalization and renovation plans, available to homeowners who want to improve their homes.

#### Action 13.1.2:

Partner with lending institutions to provide low-cost loans and modest subsidies for housing rehabilitation.

#### Action 13.1.3:

Encourage services to locate close to and within neighborhoods. Potential service providers could include:

- Recreational centers
- Health clinics
- Educational support
- Banking facilities

### Goal 13.2

Proactively enforce codes to ensure residential units are complying with health and safety requirements.

#### Action 13.2.1:

Ensure nuisance codes are enforceable.

#### Action 13.2.2:

Support neighborhood groups in self-enforcement and partner with them to publicize code compliance issues.

### Goal 13.3

Protect the character and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods when evaluating zoning changes.

#### Action 13.3.1:

Analyze zoning change requests for compatibility with requested uses.

#### Action 13.3.2:

Amend the zoning ordinance to require buffer areas between high intensity uses and neighborhoods.



## **OUTCOME 14**

Provide opportunities for affordable and mixed-income housing development.

### **Goal 14.1**

Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

#### **Action 14.1.1:**

Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in Gonzales's development code.

- Review building height limits, high parking requirements and other potential barriers.
- Eliminate or reduce barriers to make multifamily development more feasible.

#### **Action 14.1.2:**

Explore partnerships and programs to encourage mixed income housing in appropriate areas of Gonzales.

### **Goal 14.2**

Work with for-profit and non-profit developers to encourage new mixed-income developments across the city.

#### **Action 14.2.1:**

Encourage the development of unit types and sizes, including multifamily units and townhomes, which have lower energy use per unit than single family homes.

## **OUTCOME 15**

Housing growth is consistent with the Gonzales vision and comprehensive plan and is sufficient to accommodate desired growth.

### **Goal 15.1**

Monitor residential development to ensure a continued short-term and long-term supply of residential land for single family and multifamily uses.

### **Goal 15.2**

Publicize information about the supply of residential land that is development-ready (i.e., the land has the major urban services and is ready for development within three to six months).

### **Goal 15.3**

Coordinate with the city's capital improvements planning process to ensure that urban services are planned for areas that are important to support housing growth and economic development efforts.



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**CHAPTER EIGHT**

PROSPEROUS  
ECONOMY

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## **Where We Are Now**

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**This chapter discusses Gonzales’s current economic conditions and how the city can prepare to survive and thrive during future economic changes or downturns.**

This includes a discussion of how to weather potential economic impacts by diversifying the city’s economy, encouraging high quality/high paying jobs, building on regional industrial expansion, as well as taking advantage of Gonzales’s cultural, environmental, and municipal assets.

Gonzales has a larger share of employment in office and retail categories than zip code 70737 or Ascension Parish. Comparing employment in these three geographies shows that Gonzales has a higher percentage of workers in the “office & other services” and “retail services” categories and a lower percentage in the “government” and “manufacturing & other industrial” categories.

**Gonzales has a greater share of employment in categories which have lower average wages.**

The largest percentage of jobs in Gonzales are in the sectors Retail Trade (25 percent of jobs), Health Care and Social Assistance (18 percent), Accommodations and Food Service (13 percent), Administration and Support, Waste Management and Remediation (8 percent), and Wholesale Trade (7 percent). Of these, Wholesale Trade had higher-than-average wages at the parish level and the rest have lower-than-average pay at the parish level.

Lower-wage industries are projected to grow in Ascension Parish, but Gonzales is well positioned to attract higher paying industries.

Ascension Parish’s economy is forecast to grow by 13,400 jobs between 2013 and 2024, at an average annual rate of 2.5 percent. The sectors that are forecast to add the largest number of jobs are: Construction (adding 2,090 jobs), Retail (1,715 jobs), Administrative Support and Waste Remediation (1,650 jobs), Health Care and Social Assistance (1,340 jobs), and Manufacturing (1,280 jobs). Of the sectors forecast to grow the fastest in Ascension Parish, Construction and Manufacturing have above average wages.

Gonzales’s urban infrastructure and services, such as water, wastewater, transportation, police, and fire department, position the city to attract the higher-paying service and light manufacturing industries. For example, the cost of fire insurance is lower inside the Gonzales city limits than outside.



## Planning for the Future

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Gonzales has a range of employment opportunities and key competitive advantages that make it an attractive location for business growth and expansion.

**To have a balanced, more resilient economy in the future, Gonzales should provide opportunities for all types of employment, from office, industrial research and warehousing, and related business services to retail and its services.**

## Economic Diversification

Gonzales is well positioned to attract a variety of businesses. The types of businesses that may locate in Gonzales include:

- Manufacturing and services for existing petrochemical businesses
- Other manufacturing such as fabricated metals, advanced manufacturing, or food products manufacturing
- Distribution and logistics
- Shared services such as customer support operations
- Human resources
- Financial processing
- Services for businesses, residents, and visitors to the region, such as health care, financial services, or hotels

Gonzales will need to grow and attract a range of businesses to have a well-balanced economy. These businesses are categorized into three areas:

1. Traded-sector businesses, (i.e. manufacturing, construction, or distribution, and related support businesses)
2. Services for businesses (i.e. financial services or real estate)
3. Services for residents and visitors (i.e. retail or health care services)

It is important for Gonzales to grow businesses in all of these categories to ensure a range of employment opportunities, from higher-paying jobs that require specialized skills or training to entry-level jobs that require fewer skills. In addition, ensuring that there are opportunities for growth in this range of industries is a necessary condition for healthy economic growth and improvements in prosperity throughout the community.

## High Quality/High Paying Jobs

Many of the jobs in Gonzales are in retail, which brings in a substantial amount of sales tax revenue to the city. However, retail jobs typically have lower pay than many service, office, or manufacturing jobs. The last recession demonstrated the weakness of the retail sector, which was more negatively affected than many other sectors by the recession. Increasing the diversity of businesses in Gonzales will make the city's economy more resilient when the next recession occurs.

Education is a major determinant of wages. The majority of the fastest growing occupations will require an academic degree, and on average they will yield higher incomes than occupations that do not require an academic degree. Occupations that do not require an academic degree (e.g. retail sales person, food preparation workers, and home care aides) will grow, accounting for about half of all jobs by 2018. These occupations typically have lower pay than occupations requiring an academic degree.

While the average household income in Gonzales is higher than that of the state as a whole, it remains lower than the national average and that of Ascension Parish. This is largely a result of the composition of the regional economy, rather than the availability of workers with an academic degree. Increasing the relatively low wages in the region is dependent on changing the composition of the regional economy, through growing or attracting businesses with higher paying occupations.



## BEST BETS FOR GONZALES

### BUILDING ON REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

To take advantage of the industrial expansion occurring in southeast Louisiana, especially along the Mississippi River in Ascension Parish, Gonzales can seek to attract the types of businesses listed below.

#### Manufacturing and Services for Existing Manufacturers of Petrochemicals and Related Businesses

These businesses are already located in Ascension Parish (and more broadly in Southeastern Louisiana) and in Gonzales. These businesses will generally be light manufacturing or providers of services to petrochemical manufacturers. Examples of businesses existing in Gonzales include: specialty trade contractors for building and maintenance of manufacturing facilities or heavy civil engineering; manufacturing of inputs to petrochemical manufacturing such as specialized electrical equipment, metals manufacturing, machinery manufacturing, or chemical manufacturing; wholesalers of machinery or other equipment; and scientific and professional services such as laboratory testing or accounting services.

The businesses that choose to locate in Gonzales will be ones that prefer the city's available sites, often because the business needs access to urban infrastructure such as water and wastewater. These businesses may locate in Gonzales for other reasons, such as proximity to existing businesses, access to labor force, or preference for the amenities and quality of life in Gonzales.

#### Manufacturing

This includes a wide range of manufacturing, such as fabricated metals manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, and a range of advanced manufacturing. Examples of the products produced could include (but are not limited to): pharmaceutical drugs, paint, fertilizer, gasoline, soap, bulk shipping containers for ports, furniture, electronics, alternative energy products, or recreation equipment. The Ascension Economic Development Corporation is targeting growth in chemical manufacturing and fabricated metals manufacturing as industries with potential to grow and diversify the regional economy. To the extent that the Ascension Economic Development Corporation is successful in attracting these businesses, these industries may have the greatest growth potential in Gonzales.

The businesses that choose to locate in Gonzales will be ones that prefer the city's urban infrastructure, such as water and wastewater, as well as transportation access for freight movement via highway or rail. The average annual wage for employees in manufacturing in Ascension Parish is over \$98,000 compared to roughly \$61,000 for the nation as a whole.



Methanex's plant was relocated from Chile and began producing methanol in 2015 at Geismar, on the Mississippi River west of Gonzales.

Image: Methanex

### Food Products Manufacturing.

Businesses that process food and beverage products that use agricultural inputs produced in southeastern Louisiana may choose to locate in Gonzales. These businesses generally need access to substantial amounts of water and wastewater capacity, as well as access to transportation infrastructure to move freight, such as an interstate highway, railroad, or deep-water ports.

### Distribution and Logistics

Businesses that locate in Gonzales will do so because of Gonzales's available land supply, access to rail, access to I-10, proximity to three deep-water ports, and existing businesses in the Gonzales area that require distribution and logistics assistance. Gonzales's location between Baton Rouge and New Orleans makes it attractive to regional distributors or other distribution firms that need access to the markets or transportation infrastructure in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. Wages for transportation and warehousing pay especially well in Ascension Parish, where the average industry wage stands near \$60,000 compared to about \$47,000 in the nation.



The Blue Runner factory on Burnside Avenue in Gonzales processes beans and other food products.

### Shared Services

This includes businesses that provide specialized services such as customer support, human resources, and financial processing like accounting. The Ascension Economic Development Corporation has targeted this as an industry to develop in the parish. Shared services businesses that locate in Ascension Parish are likely to choose to locate in Gonzales rather than unincorporated Ascension Parish because of urban infrastructure and services available in Gonzales and lower cost of business resulting from these services.

### Services for Residents and Visitors

As Gonzales's population and employment base grows, service businesses will grow. Health care services will grow both in response to population growth and to provide more services to the aging population. Retail and food service will grow to serve Gonzales's residents, businesses, and visitors. Overnight accommodations will grow in response to tourism growth and increased need to provide business traveler lodging. Other services, such as financial services and real estate services, will grow with population and business growth.

### Training and Educational Facilities

Gonzales has a number of training facilities that, as they grow, will make the city known as a high quality technical training center. Existing and planned training facilities include the technical college, Alliance Safety Council, the public safety training center, and Emerson's new training center. These combined facilities are a tremendous asset for training new workers for employment in the region, and will make Gonzales an attractive place for new businesses to locate.

### Airport Expansion

The Louisiana Regional Airport, just south of Gonzales's city limits, added 1000 feet to its runway in 2014, making it able to accommodate corporate aircraft as well as offshore service operations.

## BEST BETS FOR GONZALES, CONTINUED

### RETAINING AND BUILDING ON CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AMENITIES

In addition to Gonzales's infrastructure advantages, the city offers residents high quality neighborhoods, services, parks, open space, and schools. Residents enjoy their quality of life, and while there are improvements that can be made, they are generally very happy with the family-friendly opportunities offered by the city. Known as the jambalaya capital of the world, Gonzales celebrates its diverse heritage through arts, festivals, and other events.

Gonzales is committed to retaining its cultural identity and supporting evolving issues as they arise. An example of the flexibility of city leadership is their recent appointment of a Diversity Committee to address city hiring practices, in response to concerns expressed by residents that Gonzales's workforce does not reflect the racial composition of the city.

Environmentally, the city has a large amount of natural and open space land, and continues to seek opportunities to provide passive and active recreational opportunities to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and ensuring that residents have the opportunity to enjoy the city's natural amenities.



New River

### BUILDING ON ASSETS SUCH AS INFRASTRUCTURE, BUSINESS EXPANSIONS, AND THE LABOR MARKET

#### Locational Advantages

Gonzales is located in Ascension Parish on Interstate 10, roughly an hour northwest of New Orleans, and 20 minutes southeast of Baton Rouge. Gonzales lies in the southern portion of the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Statistical Area, which has more than 820,000 people or roughly 18% of the state's population. Businesses in Gonzales have access to natural resources from surrounding rural areas, including the Mississippi River and Gulf Coast.

#### Transportation

Businesses and residents in Gonzales have access to a variety of transportation modes and systems, but the most important is Interstate 10. Airline Highway also runs through the northern portion of the city, along with the Kansas City Southern Railway. The Louisiana Regional Airport is just outside the city limits of Gonzales to the south, and businesses in city also have relatively easy access to the expanded passenger and freight services provided by larger airports (less than an hour's drive away) in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Businesses that depend on easy access to I-10, air transportation, or rail or port transportation may be attracted to Gonzales. In addition, the short distance from some industrial areas and larger metropolitan areas along I-10 may encourage some types of firms, such as warehousing and distribution, to locate in Gonzales.

Gonzales provides access to three deep-water ports along the Mississippi, including the Port of South Louisiana, the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, and the Port of New Orleans, which provides an opportunity for Gonzales businesses to provide storage and logistical services to ships that use the river.



## Existing Employment Base

The businesses and other employers currently located in the Gonzales area create opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses and growth of new, related businesses. Ascension Parish as a whole had nearly 2,500 employers with a total of nearly 40,000 workers in 2013.

Employment clusters with substantial employment in Ascension Parish include:

- Upstream Chemical Products (about 3,000 employees)
- Distribution and Electronic Commerce (about 2,300 employees)
- Construction Products and Services (about 1,300 employees)
- Business Services (845 employees)
- Oil and Gas Production and Transportation (725 employees)
- Hospitality and Tourism (650 employees)
- Agricultural Inputs and Services (565 employees)
- Transportation and Logistics (545 employees)

Ascension Parish has unique access to petrochemical resources and many businesses have located there to manufacture petrochemical-based products. Average wages for employees in the chemical manufacturing industry range from \$60,300 for cosmetic product manufacturing to \$74,500 for plastic and resin manufacturing.

Recent business expansions and locations in Ascension Parish have come largely from businesses that utilize the parish's access to the Mississippi River. Businesses that provide cargo storage for ships have recently located in Gonzales. In Ascension Parish, average wages for jobs in the transportation and warehousing sector are around \$59,900, compared to the \$47,400 national average for the sector. Similarly, manufacturing companies have provided hundreds of area jobs with their recent expansions. Average wages for these jobs in the parish exceed \$98,200 compared to \$61,102 nationally.

## Industries Forecasted to Grow

Industry sectors that are projected to grow represent employment opportunities for Gonzales area workers.

The industries that have been projected to grow the most from 2013 to 2024 in Ascension Parish include:

- Construction (expected to add 2,094 jobs)
- Retail (expected to add 1,715 jobs)
- Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services (expected to add 1,652 jobs)

In the Baton Rouge MSA the sectors with the largest amount of growth forecasted are:

- Construction (expected to add 14,855 jobs)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (expected to add 10,406 jobs)
- Accommodations and Food Services (expected to add 5,827 jobs)



St. Elizabeth Hospital on LA Highway 30 is a major employer in Gonzales.

Image: Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System



## BEST BETS FOR GONZALES, CONTINUED

### Labor Market

The availability of labor is critical for economic development. Availability of labor depends not only on the number of workers, but their quality, skills, wages, and experience as well.

Businesses in Gonzales have access to highly educated skilled workers, nearby college students from River Parishes Community College and other regional schools, and unskilled workers. Commuting is common in the region, and roughly 70% of Gonzales's workers commute from outside the city. The commuting patterns show that businesses in Gonzales are able to attract skilled and unskilled workers living within the city as well as from the surrounding region. Ascension Parish's population is forecast to grow by between about 45,000 and 141,000 people from 2010 to 2030, at an average annual growth rate of between 1.8% and 4.1%.



River Parishes Community College's new campus at the Edenborne development was constructed in 2013 and 2014.

Image: Terry Richey

### Public Policy

Public policy can impact the amount and type of economic growth in a community, and Gonzales can impact economic growth through its land and redevelopment policies. Success at attracting or retaining firms may depend on availability of attractive sites for development and public support for redevelopment. Businesses may also choose to locate in Gonzales, rather than elsewhere in the region, based on development charges, public infrastructure, and attitudes towards businesses.

The City of Gonzales levies a 2% sales tax. Along with taxes from the school board (2%), the East Ascension Drainage District (0.5%), and the State of Louisiana (4%), consumers pay a total sales tax of 8.5% on purchases within the city. This equals the 8.5% total rate applied to sales in unincorporated Ascension Parish, but is less than the 9% total tax rates in the nearby cities of Baton Rouge and Donaldsonville. This slight tax advantage could provide additional incentive for retail businesses to locate within the city limits, by effectively lowering consumer prices.

### Quality of Life

Gonzales's relatively high quality of life and urban amenities are a competitive advantage for attracting businesses to the city. The metropolitan area's quality of life attributes include: cultural amenities, shopping opportunities, and access to outdoor recreation. Gonzales's high quality of life is likely to attract businesses and entrepreneurs that want to locate in a high-amenity area.

### Urban Infrastructure Planning

The City of Gonzales is extremely proactive in identifying future infrastructure needs and planning to accommodate and attract growth ahead of demand. This makes it very attractive to businesses looking to relocate in the region. Business owners and residents indicate that city services are of high quality. The city continues to anticipate future needs by planning a new water tower and water

extensions, working with property owners to secure land for fire and park sites, and long term planning for future sewer needs.

### Buildable Lands

Gonzales has more than 1,000 acres of developable vacant commercial and industrial land. Gonzales has three large employment sites that are available for development, shown in Figure 8.1:

- 1 340-acre site owned by Edenborne Development. The site is planned to include retail development (more than 650,000 square feet of built space), 453 single family dwellings, and 384 multifamily dwellings. The master plan includes amenities such as a small neighborhood commercial center and recreational facilities.
- 2 400-acre site known as the MP Evans property, south of I-10 on Highway 44. The site is zoned for commercial, residential and Traditional Neighborhood Development and has access to water, natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications services. Southern Lifestyle Development, a company which has created other mixed use communities in Louisiana, plans to purchase the property and create an upscale mixed use community of retail, apartments, and homes called Conway Plantation.
- 3 90-acre site located along I-10 and Highway 44, zoned for industrial uses. The site has direct access to Highway 44 and is about 0.3 miles from I-10.

These sites provide key opportunities for a wide range of economic development. The Edenborne and MP Evans sites provide opportunities for a substantial amount of retail development, including stores, restaurants, and entertainment. They may also provide opportunities for other commercial development, such as banking or office uses. The 90-acre site provides opportunity for light manufacturing, such as businesses that provide goods and services to the petrochemical manufacturers in the parish and broader region.

**FIGURE 8.1:  
BUILDABLE LANDS**



# Economic Outcomes, Goals, and Actions

This section is organized into Outcomes that reflect the vision and Goals and Actions that, if followed, will move Gonzales towards the community's vision.

**Outcomes** are the big ideas that support the citizen's vision. They capture big picture changes that must occur to implement the plan.

**Goals** establish specific, measurable, attainable and realistic objectives that guide plan implementation by ensuring that stakeholders are clear about what must happen to move Gonzales toward the vision.

**Actions** delineate the steps needed to achieve the goals.

## OUTCOME 16

Gonzales's employment base is diversified.

### Goal 16.1

Develop a local economic development strategic plan.

#### Action 16.1.1:

Work with the Ascension Economic Development Corporation to prepare an economic development strategic plan for Gonzales.

#### Action 16.1.2:

Identify the types of businesses that the city wants to focus on growing and attracting, and the resources available to support this effort.

#### Action 16.1.3:

Focus Gonzales's economic development strategy on a limited number of recommendations:

- Limit the number of recommendations in the economic development strategy to those that can reasonably be completed within five years.
- Articulate the community's economic vision and three to five key recommendations for economic development.
- Recommendations to implement the city's economic development vision should be achievable in one to five years.
- Each recommendation should identify the lead responsible entity, resources necessary to implement the recommendation, and a target timeline for completion.
- Include opportunities for early successes by including several recommendations that can be completed within the first year or less and that are reasonably likely to be completed.

### Goal 16.2

Identify target industries for growth.

#### Action 16.2.1:

Identify the industries that fit best with the city's economic development vision and goals.

#### Action 16.2.2:

Select broad industries that have characteristics (e.g., wage levels or labor requirements) that fit with the city's objectives. The target industries should include those that build on existing industrial clusters and industries that diversify the local economy.

#### Action 16.2.3:

Plan for growth in broad industry groupings to position the city to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that arise in the future in similar or related industries.

#### Action 16.2.4:

Ensure that Gonzales has the conditions necessary to grow and attract desired industries over the next five to ten years, such as workforce training programs or land with the necessary zoning, urban services, and site characteristics (e.g., size, topography, location, and nearby compatible uses).



## **OUTCOME 17**

Land use, zoning and public policy are aligned to attract target businesses.

### **Goal 17.1**

Make changes to zoning and development regulations that will attract the city's desired types of businesses.

#### **Action 17.1.1:**

Ensure that zoning accommodates businesses with higher wages, such as export-oriented businesses.

#### **Action 17.1.2:**

Make changes to the zoning ordinance to better support economic development activities. Eliminate barriers to economic development in the zoning ordinance.

#### **Action 17.1.3:**

Align zoning case review with the community's economic development aspirations, as outlined in Gonzales's economic development strategy, recommended in Action 16.1.3.

### **Goal 17.2**

Rezoning land from retail to allow broader employment uses.

#### **Action 17.2.1:**

Rezone some of the excess retail zoned land (300 to 400 acres) to accommodate broader employment uses.

#### **Action 17.2.2:**

Rezone some retail land to an employment designation that allows commercial office uses, retail uses, and mixed use development.

### **Goal 17.3**

Consider establishing an "employment" zoning district to create opportunities for growth of traded-sector industries.

#### **Action 17.3.1:**

Amend the zoning ordinance to allow businesses that provide goods and services to petrochemical and related manufacturers in the Gonzales area. These businesses include: wholesale, construction, maintenance, light manufacturers, and professional services such as laboratory testing, training, and legal and financial services.

#### **Action 17.3.2:**

Create a new zoning district to allow these businesses to locate near similar or related businesses, resulting in a mixture of light industrial and office uses.

#### **Action 17.3.3:**

Combine light manufacturing and office development, and provide for flexible spaces that can be altered as development needs change.

#### **Action 17.3.4:**

Limit the amount and type of retail development to either serve businesses in the employment zone or to retail portions of traded-sector businesses within the employment zone.

## **OUTCOME 18**

Partnerships support the city's economic development strategy.

### **Goal 18.1**

Work with local and regional partners.

#### **Action 18.1.1:**

Work with partner organizations and agencies, such as Ascension Parish, the Ascension Economic Development Corporation, the Ascension Chamber of Commerce, the River Parishes Community College, and local utility providers to retain and recruit businesses, provide utilities, prepare the workforce, and develop property.

#### **Action 18.1.2:**

Work with the River Parishes Community College and technical training institutions to train the workforce for specific desired industries and increase the skilled workforce.

## **OUTCOME 19**

Commercial and light industrial growth is consistent with the Gonzales vision and comprehensive plan.

### **Goal 19.1**

Monitor and report on commercial and light industrial development to ensure a continued short-term and long-term supply of land.

### **Goal 19.2**

Publicize information about the supply of commercial and light industrial land that is development-ready (i.e., the land has the major urban services and is ready for development within three to six months).

### **Goal 19.3**

Coordinate with the city's capital improvements planning process to ensure that urban services are planned for areas that are important to support economic development efforts.



GO BIG BLUE!

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**CHAPTER NINE**

STRATEGIC  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Land use decisions contribute to Gonzales's fiscal stability and move the city toward the citizens' vision.</b>			
Goal 1.1	Make land use decisions consistent with the Vision Map.			
Action 1.1.1	Mix land uses to create a balanced and sustainable economy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support a variety of nonresidential uses, including office, office warehouse, commercial, industrial research and retail uses.</li> <li>Obtain a wider variety of jobs in the city, with the potential for jobs with higher wages, by diversifying types of businesses in Gonzales.</li> <li>Provide more housing choices, such as townhomes, smaller units, and affordable housing for youth, retail workers, and the aging population.</li> </ul>			
Action 1.1.2	Use the Vision Map to guide land use decisions. The Vision Map: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as a guide for long-term growth</li> <li>Serves as a guide when evaluating zoning, platting, and other development-related requests</li> <li>Allows flexibility of implementation by guiding zoning decisions in conjunction with a locational analysis</li> </ul>			
Action 1.1.3	Use the Vision Map to guide infrastructure improvements. The Vision Map: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflects the type and location of development anticipated</li> <li>Provides guidance in evaluating the transportation, water, sewer and drainage improvement required</li> </ul>			
Action 1.1.4	Revisit and update the Vision Map every five years to ensure that it reflects desired development.			
Goal 1.2	Align the zoning and subdivision ordinances with the comprehensive plan to achieve desired development.			
Action 1.2.1	Develop clear and objective standards for making land use planning decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards are clear when they are easily understood and use language that has unambiguous meaning.</li> <li>Standards are objective when they can be measured and evaluated using data that is reliable and can be replicated.</li> </ul>			
Action 1.2.2	Review and update the zoning and subdivision regulations to promote desired development. At a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the short term, update multifamily districts to allow a broader range of housing products.</li> <li>Develop design standards for multifamily development.</li> <li>Increase densities allowed in some multifamily districts.</li> <li>Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in the development code.</li> <li>Review and update the entire ordinance, including district regulations, uses, and definitions, and ensure consistency in standards.</li> <li>Allow a wider range of housing in some single family zones.</li> <li>Incorporate landscape and buffer standards to ensure compatibility between uses.</li> <li>Revise off-street parking standards to reflect actual market demand.</li> <li>Implement design standards to facilitate the development of more pedestrian-friendly and human-scaled environments, to promote a sense of identity and safety, to encourage walking and to promote cultural and civic pride.</li> <li>Review the subdivision regulations to ensure that desired types of mixed use and single-family attached housing are permitted and encouraged.</li> </ul>			

OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 1.2.3	Review zoning change and other development requests for consistency with the vision and the plan's goals and policies. Development should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a healthy balance of jobs and households</li> <li>• Protect and stabilize existing neighborhoods</li> <li>• Establish healthy new neighborhoods</li> <li>• Emphasize mixed use development in the city center, around the future rail station, and in designated mixed use areas</li> <li>• Maintain a connected transportation and circulation system</li> <li>• Protect existing employment centers</li> </ul>			
Goal 1.3	Hire planning and code enforcement staff as development activity increases.			
<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Gonzales is a walkable city with a balance of land uses within walking distance of each other.</b>			
Goal 2.1	Create a built environment that supports and encourages walkability.			
Action 2.1.1	Integrate and balance land uses that complement their surroundings.			
Action 2.1.2	Make downtown Gonzales a thriving area with employment, retail, services, public areas, and arts and culture amenities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a main street district that requires buildings be built to the street.</li> <li>• Prepare a parking management plan for main streets to allow shared parking and other parking practices.</li> <li>• Proactively provide infrastructure that will support a mix of uses.</li> <li>• Encourage property owners to form a downtown district to promote appropriate development.</li> </ul>			
Action 2.1.3	Create higher density mixed use areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform selected aging commercial strips into mixed use main streets.</li> <li>• Create pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use employment areas that will provide high quality working environments for businesses seeking to locate in Gonzales.</li> </ul>			
Action 2.1.4	Create places and cultural events for people to walk to, such as food fairs, parades, and farmers markets.			
Action 2.1.5	Zone adequate land to accommodate desired development through city initiated zoning cases following the adoption of small area plans.			
Action 2.1.6	Create urban design standards, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place buildings adjacent to the street with sidewalks, outdoor areas, attractive landscaping and pedestrian areas.</li> <li>• Require buildings to share parking lots where possible</li> <li>• Orient building entrances and windows to provide "eyes on the street," improving security and pedestrian access.</li> <li>• Size sidewalks in main street areas to accommodate seating and other amenities.</li> <li>• Place parking lots, garage doors, loading zones, and mechanical equipment away from streets.</li> </ul>			
<b>Outcome 3</b>	<b>Existing neighborhoods are maintained, stabilized and strengthened, making them attractive to new residents.</b>			
Goal 3.1	Provide access for residents in established neighborhoods to multiple modes of transportation.			

OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 3.1.1	Collaborate with the school district to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve accessibility and provide safe, direct routes (sidewalks, pathways, adequate signage) for schoolchildren and their parents.</li> <li>Minimize walking distances and conflicts with traffic by providing sidewalks and crosswalks and adopting measures to reduce traffic speed.</li> </ul>			
Action 3.1.2	Create walking and biking transportation options in neighborhoods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require sidewalks in new residential subdivisions and commercial areas.</li> <li>Develop a program to replace older, non-functional sidewalks.</li> <li>Create a sidewalk improvement program to allow residents and neighborhoods to participate in installing sidewalks in existing residential areas.</li> </ul>			
Goal 3.2	Stabilize existing neighborhoods with infill development that revitalizes, preserves and enhances these areas.			
Action 3.2.1	Promote the unique characteristics of existing neighborhoods as key to the city's long-term health and vitality.			
Action 3.2.2	Encourage applicants for zoning changes to meet with neighborhood organizations and resident groups prior to the zoning review process.			
Action 3.2.3	Locate services, educational facilities, parks and trails in appropriate areas so they are accessible and enhance neighborhood stability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage neighborhood-serving office, retail, or other non-residential uses to be located in residential community areas, primarily on significant roadways or at key intersections.</li> <li>Plan for neighborhoods to be served by and accessible to neighborhood commercial areas, parks, cultural areas, open space, libraries and schools.</li> <li>Provide appropriate transitions between nonresidential uses and neighborhoods to protect stability and quality of life.</li> </ul>			
Action 3.2.4	Maintain the desirability of existing neighborhoods through public and private investment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue and expand implementation of capital improvements projects and programming for home improvements, traffic calming, connectivity and bike/ pedestrian improvements.</li> <li>Provide residents in older neighborhoods access to programs and partners with capacity to improve and stabilize their neighborhood.</li> <li>Identify and implement programs to encourage affordable home ownership and owner occupancy in areas with high concentrations of rental single-family housing.</li> </ul>			
<b>Outcome 4</b>	<b>Natural assets are protected and enhanced by the built environment.</b>			
Goal 4.1	Sensitive areas such as wetlands are protected and best practices are used when developing in floodplain areas.			
Action 4.1.1	Use undeveloped floodplain areas strategically for storm water conveyance and retention.			
Action 4.1.2	Continue to use best management practices for development within floodplain areas by minimizing the impact of development within these areas where possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to update floodplain regulations to reflect coastal best practices.</li> </ul>			

OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 4.1.3	Use cluster development techniques or higher densities on developed parcels to maintain open floodplain areas.			
Goal 4.2	Capture stormwater through landscape design, green infrastructure practices, and other environmentally-friendly techniques.			
Action 4.2.1	Partner with businesses and property owners to implement innovative stormwater solutions as demonstration projects. These projects can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate creative approaches to stormwater management</li> <li>• Showcase creative design</li> <li>• Provide additional capacity for the city's sewer system</li> </ul>			
Action 4.2.2	Develop stormwater management standards that address stormwater quality treatment and stormwater conveyance/detention. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards should encourage retaining natural site drainage and reducing impervious pavement coverage.</li> <li>• Implement a green infrastructure improvements program to reduce runoff in areas with drainage issues.</li> <li>• Develop landscaping standards to appropriately manage runoff created by impervious surfaces.</li> <li>• Promote low impact development strategies and designs as a way to manage stormwater runoff, including techniques such as vegetated swales, biofilters, eco-roofs, green streets, pervious pavement and other methods that mimic natural processes.</li> <li>• Develop alternative street designs and standards that allow for greater filtration and more appropriate stormwater conveyance.</li> </ul>			
Goal 4.3	Protect open space and natural and sensitive areas.			
Action 4.3.1	Identify open space and sensitive areas that should be preserved for natural recreation areas such as fishing, hiking and birdwatching.			
Action 4.3.2	Develop a plan to retain a variety of natural areas for use by Gonzales's citizens.			
Action 4.3.3	Work with the private sector to maintain open space and natural areas throughout the city through passive parks, trails and natural areas.			
<b>Outcome 5</b>	<b>Gonzales is known for its park and trail system.</b>			
Goal 5.1	Provide easily accessible parks and open space in neighborhoods.			
Action 5.1.1	Make parks desirable destinations for walking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide comfort and convenience facilities, especially restrooms and drinking fountains.</li> <li>• Provide trails and loop walks within existing parks.</li> </ul>			
Action 5.1.2	Provide additional parks and recreation facilities in areas with relatively low levels of service. Look for opportunities to add or expand trails in areas that currently have few or none and connect these areas to existing trails.			
Action 5.1.3	Partner with utility companies to make trail corridors.			
Action 5.1.4	Provide trail links to specific destinations such as schools, parks, and retail centers.			



OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 5.1.5	Add and improve sidewalks through a sidewalk improvement program; prioritize areas based on proximity to schools and community centers.			
Action 5.1.6	As new parks and open space areas are established, incorporate plans to connect these areas with existing parks.			
Action 5.1.7	Maintain existing and provide new facilities as warranted by population.			
Goal 5.2	Continue to provide high quality sports venues for citizens of all ages.			
Action 5.2.1	Maintain existing and provide new sports venues as warranted by population.			
Action 5.2.2	Provide facilities in all parts of the city.			
Action 5.2.3	Increase indoor recreational basketball facilities for youth and adults.			
Action 5.2.4	Identify parks in need of upgrades and develop an action plan to accomplish upgrades.			
Goal 5.3	Develop public-private partnerships to maintain and expand parks and recreational facilities throughout Gonzales.			
Action 5.3.1	Launch partnerships and collaborations with the private sector.			
Action 5.3.2	Initiate partnerships with medical and health organizations.			
Action 5.3.3	Maintain and expand on intergovernmental agreements with schools.			
Action 5.3.4	Create an "adopt-a-park" program to enlist civic organizations and school groups to help with park maintenance, beautification and cultivation of civic pride.			
Action 5.3.5	Hold neighborhood work days to promote community caretaking of city parks.			
<b>Outcome 6</b>	<b>Mobility, connectivity, and the public realm are improved.</b>			
Goal 6.1	Develop a design plan for Burnside Avenue that includes an evaluation of a road diet to accommodate a mix of transportation modes.			
Action 6.1.1	The City of Gonzales should take over responsibility and maintenance of Burnside Avenue using the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's Road Transfer Program to provide greater flexibility and control over its design and function.			
Action 6.1.2	Develop a menu of streetscape amenities to improve pedestrian comfort that can be incorporated into capital improvement or redevelopment projects.			
Action 6.1.3	Develop guidelines for improved intersections that increase pedestrian safety and add to a unique character.			
Action 6.1.4	Provide on-street parking to support retail.			
Action 6.1.5	Work with Ascension Parish Schools to provide on-street parking adjacent to recreational fields to meet additional parking needs.			
Goal 6.2	Improve access to the area via other transit modes.			
Action 6.2.1	Utilize Alexander and Pleasant Avenues as primary north-south bike corridors, and stripe accordingly.			

OUTCOME/ GOAL/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	TO BE COMPLETED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY		
		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 6.2.2	Locate a commuter rail stop in Gonzales for Baton Rouge-New Orleans rail.			
Action 6.2.3	Improve bike and pedestrian facilities along Railroad and Ascension Streets to provide access to future rail stop.			
Action 6.2.4	Connect bike and pedestrian networks from downtown to the civic complex along Irma Boulevard.			
Goal 6.3	Enhance gateways into downtown.			
Action 6.3.1	Improve key entryways to the Burnside Avenue corridor at Highway 30 and Airline Highway to mark entrances into downtown in accordance with design guidelines.			
Action 6.3.2	Improve intersection of Burnside Avenue and Roosevelt Street to establish as Gonzales's primary "Main Street" intersection.			
Goal 6.4	Develop prioritized capital improvement plan.			
Action 6.4.1	Establish capital improvement needs inventory for downtown and station area.			
Action 6.4.2	Develop phasing and funding schedule.			
Action 6.4.3	Identify funding sources.			
Action 6.4.4	Consider using a TIF for infrastructure and public improvements in the rail station area.			
<b>Outcome 7</b>	<b>An open space network becomes a unifying element of the downtown area.</b>			
Goal 7.1	Enhance New River corridor as an amenity to encourage redevelopment.			
Action 7.1.1	Extend existing trail along New River to provide river edge amenity to support redevelopment.			
Action 7.1.2	Provide programming and events that draw visitors to the New River corridor.			
Action 7.1.3	Develop a capital improvement needs inventory to create the entire New River waterfront as a public amenity.			
Goal 7.2	Provide open space opportunities that activate downtown.			
Action 7.2.1	Add an outdoor market at the corner of Burnside Avenue and New River. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement as a "pop-up" market at first.</li> <li>• Plan permanent structure and improvements based upon success.</li> </ul>			
Action 7.2.2	Recognize the street right-of-way as an important open space opportunity and provide improvements including outdoor seating and pedestrian access.			
Action 7.2.3	Temporarily reprogram some parking areas along Burnside Avenue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide outdoor seating, sidewalk café, play areas, etc. to introduce more spaces for people to linger.</li> </ul>			
Action 7.2.4	Create plazas and gathering spaces as part of the redevelopment plan for the transit station. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide open space for residents of new development.</li> <li>• Create an attractive gateway to Gonzales for transit users.</li> </ul>			
Goal 7.3	Continue successful utilization of Ascension Parish Schools' recreational fields on Burnside Avenue.			
Action 7.3.1	Improve parking surface between the football field and the soccer fields.			

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		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Action 7.3.2	Create permanent on-street parking adjacent to the fields.			
Action 7.3.3	Provide additional equipment and amenities to support programming.			
Action 7.3.4	Provide pedestrian and bike access to the fields from adjacent neighborhoods along Bayou Francois.			
<b>Outcome 8</b>	<b>Development opportunities are maximized and parking needs are addressed.</b>			
Goal 8.1	Create an organization such as a downtown chamber of commerce or similar that is charged with advocating for downtown and station area improvements.			
Action 8.1.1	Evaluate types of organizations and implement an organizational framework appropriate for Gonzales.			
Action 8.1.2	Develop work program and strategic priorities to guide organization.			
Goal 8.2	Enhance curb appeal of Burnside Avenue and define a unique character for downtown.			
Action 8.2.1	Develop design standards to advance objectives outlined in this plan.			
Action 8.2.2	Create a façade improvement program to provide incentives, either monetary or regulatory, that encourage investment to improve exterior facades or create site improvements that support goals identified in this plan.			
Action 8.2.3	Create a program to proactively fill vacant retail frontage along Burnside Avenue through temporary uses or other incubator uses.			
Goal 8.3	Evaluate and address parking needs.			
Action 8.3.1	Complete an inventory and assessment of location, amount, condition, and use of existing on- and off-street parking to identify areas of need and opportunities for sharing.			
Action 8.3.2	Identify potential locations for off-street parking.			
Action 8.3.3	Develop guidelines for placement and design of parking lots to ensure that they contribute to downtown’s character and are sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incentivize shared parking lots consolidated in the center of development blocks.</li> </ul>			
Action 8.3.4	Evaluate code requirements for parking and make necessary adjustments.			
Action 8.3.5	Maximize on-street parking opportunities.			
Goal 8.4	Adapt and reuse existing buildings to transition between commercial uses and adjacent neighborhoods.			
Action 8.4.1	Evaluate existing zoning and identify changes to encourage adaptive reuse of buildings downtown.			
Action 8.4.2	Protect neighborhoods from impacts of adjacent non-residential uses through site control, design criteria, and use or performance restrictions.			
Goal 8.5	Stabilize and improve neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.			
Action 8.5.1	Continue adaptive reuse of Alexander and Pleasant Avenues as transitions.			

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<b>Outcome 9</b>	<b>A commuter rail station unifies Airline Highway with the downtown core.</b>			
Goal 9.1	Support rail station area redevelopment to encourage rail ridership and promote economic opportunity.			
Action 9.1.1	Create a detailed redevelopment plan for station area, including a public realm plan that provides additional connections over New River to improve access to the rail station site.			
Action 9.1.2	Develop a request for proposals to seek partnership opportunities for redevelopment of city-owned property.			
Action 9.1.3	Work with property owners of large tracts near the station area along Airline Highway to evaluate redevelopment options.			
Action 9.1.4	Incentivize quality transit-supportive redevelopment near the rail station. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development and redevelopment in downtown and along Airline Highway.</li> <li>• Support complete street, park and trail improvements.</li> <li>• Plan and zone for high density mixed use and residential development.</li> </ul>			
Action 9.1.5	Build adequate, well-designed parking to support rail ridership.			
Action 9.1.6	Use New River as open space corridor that connects rail station to adjacent areas and provides an attractive gateway to Gonzales. Incorporate plazas and other open space opportunities as well.			
<b>Outcome 10</b>	<b>Transportation improvements accommodate projected growth.</b>			
Goal 10.1	Plan and build a well maintained network of roadway and trail infrastructure.			
Action 10.1.1	Adopt the Master Street Plan and complete streets maps in this plan.			
Action 10.1.2	Based on the Master Street Plan, reserve right-of-way for future improvements.			
Action 10.1.3	Develop an interconnected street pattern that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eases congestion</li> <li>• More evenly distributes traffic</li> <li>• Offers route flexibility</li> <li>• Connects people to jobs, shopping, and services</li> </ul>			
Goal 10.2	Continue to address traffic, access and safety issues.			
Action 10.2.1	Continue to aggressively enforce the city's access management policy and review and update every 3 to 5 years.			
Action 10.2.2	Coordinate access management with the parish and nearby communities.			
Action 10.2.3	Identify accident-prone areas to study for improvements.			
Action 10.2.4	Continue to pursue funding for maintaining and reconstructing infrastructure.			
Action 10.2.5	Continue program providing curb ramps and other accommodations for persons with disabilities. In conjunction, review roads, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossing areas to make sure they provide access to disabled people.			
Goal 10.3	Continue to work with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to coordinate expansion and improvement plans within Gonzales and the region.			



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<b>Outcome 11</b>	<b>Transportation improvements are planned, designed, and constructed to accommodate all anticipated users.</b>			
Goal 11.1	Endorse a complete streets policy with the intent to plan, design, improve, and maintain streets so they are safe for all users.			
Action 11.1.1	Direct planners and engineers to design and construct the right-of-way to accommodate all anticipated users.			
Action 11.1.2	When planning transportation improvements, consider the complete street category of the street and prioritize improvements based on that designation.			
Action 11.1.3	Provide sidewalks or other walkways on appropriate streets, with a priority placed on mixed use streets.			
Goal 11.2	Provide a wide range of transportation options for getting around the city.			
Action 11.2.1	Design and plan road projects, to the greatest extent possible, to accommodate all users of the transportation system, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, truckers, and emergency responders, while respecting the access needs of adjacent land uses.			
Action 11.2.2	Pay special attention to the needs of older people and people with disabilities when designing and planning a project.			
Action 11.2.3	Make use of best practice design standards, policies, and guidelines while respecting the character of the area.			
Action 11.2.4	Incorporate sustainable stormwater management techniques in road development.			
Action 11.2.5	Establish a dedicated funding source and program to partner with residents in funding maintenance and enhancements to sidewalks.			
Action 11.2.6	Create a bicycle and trails master plan to focus on connecting neighborhoods with destinations, such as employment, shopping and recreation.			
Action 11.2.7	As development increases, plan for bus, shuttles and other transit options to connect the proposed rail station with employment and commercial centers.			
Action 11.2.8	Initiate a "shopper shuttle" in the form of a single bus line to provide transportation between employment and retail centers.			
Goal 11.3	Plan for transportation investments that enhance the land uses they serve.			
Action 11.3.1	Add light fixtures, signs, and sidewalks to make the city's roads unique, and to help residents and visitors recognize that they are in Gonzales.			
Action 11.3.2	Provide comfortable and attractive pedestrian and bicycle facilities on streets.			
Action 11.3.3	Connect off-street trails to neighborhoods and regional destinations.			
Action 11.3.4	Prioritize sidewalk, curb ramp and crosswalk rehabilitation and construction projects according to ranking that takes into account concentrations of persons with disabilities, public facilities, and mixed use development.			
Action 11.3.5	Recognize that flexibility in project development and design is necessary to balance safety, mobility, economic development, and environmental issues for new and redesigned urban transportation facilities.			
Action 11.3.6	Adopt the most recent Institute of Transportation Engineers' document <i>Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach</i> .			

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Action 11.3.7	Require connectivity in new subdivisions so the number of dead end streets is limited and opportunities are provided for the creation of an interconnected street network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require all subdivisions smaller than 100 dwelling units to include at least one stub-out street to extend and connect with future streets.</li> <li>Require all subdivisions larger than 100 dwelling units to include at least two stub-out streets to extend and connect with future streets; more stubout streets may be required based on the size of the development.</li> <li>Require new subdivisions to connect to or continue all collector and local streets stubbed to the boundary of an adjacent previously approved but unbuilt subdivision or existing development.</li> </ul>			
Goal 11.4	Continue to update access management regulations to reflect national best practices.			
Action 11.4.1	Monitor the effectiveness of existing access management practices and update as needed.			
<b>Outcome 12</b>	<b>Gonzales citizens have a wide range of housing options.</b>			
Goal 12.1	Provide a range of housing types and affordability levels throughout the city.			
Action 12.1.1	Preserve and strengthen existing single-family areas through proactive code enforcement and maintenance of existing infrastructure.			
Action 12.1.2	Build new housing that will retain current and attract future residents, including young people, area workers, entrepreneurs and older people.			
Action 12.1.3	Allow a wider range of housing in some single-family districts through ordinance changes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow duplexes or townhouses on corner lots.</li> <li>Allow small-scale multifamily buildings in key areas, such as along transportation corridors or near commercial areas.</li> <li>Allow cluster housing.</li> <li>Allow secondary living units under certain conditions.</li> </ul>			
Action 12.1.4	Create moderate density attached and multifamily housing districts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a variety of allowable densities with increased design standards.</li> <li>Amend ordinance to allow small lot single family detached houses, cottage or courtyard homes, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and small-scale apartment buildings.</li> </ul>			
Action 12.1.5	Revise multifamily densities and establish a variety of districts to accommodate a range of housing types. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow increased densities with additional design standards.</li> <li>Require mixed use components for higher densities.</li> </ul>			
Goal 12.2	Zone more land for multifamily use to encourage development in areas consistent with the Gonzales Vision Map.			
Action 12.2.1	Develop a plan to phase in more multifamily zoning.			
Goal 12.3	Identify opportunities for mixed use development.			

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Action 12.3.1	Zone for both vertical and horizontal mixed use development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vertical mixed use is where one building has two or more uses.</li> <li>Horizontal mixed use is where two or more uses are located in buildings adjacent to each other, such as allowing multifamily housing in some commercial districts or allowing a limited amount of neighborhood serving commercial in a residential neighborhood.</li> </ul>			
Action 12.3.2	Zone for higher density mixed use development in the downtown and the future rail station area.			
Goal 12.4	Adopt multifamily design standards to promote compatibility and ensure that new multifamily housing is consistent with Gonzales's design and character.			
Action 12.4.1	Establish multifamily housing design standards that fit with the community and neighborhood character.			
Action 12.4.2	Develop a menu of pre-approved design standards for multifamily housing that allows developers to select preferred design elements and meet requirements without a public hearing.			
Action 12.4.3	Explore a tiered approach in which higher densities require higher standards and amenities. The menu of amenities and standards could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to public areas, plazas, play yards, open areas</li> <li>Amenities such as recreation areas, pools, gyms, club houses</li> <li>Specified design elements such as exterior finishes, windows, building materials, building orientation, and internal entrance halls</li> <li>Interconnected street networks and pedestrian connections</li> <li>Green infrastructure</li> <li>Street trees, landscaped boulevards, bayou corridors, wetlands, or wooded areas</li> <li>Variety in architectural forms and building types</li> <li>Placement and design of buildings, accessory structures, and private outdoor spaces</li> </ul>			
Goal 12.5	Establish single family design guidelines to ensure that new single family development is consistent with the community and neighborhood character.			
Action 12.5.1	Include a list of design features required for new subdivisions, from which developers could choose a required number of options to incorporate into the development. This would provide flexibility while also breaking up monotony of housing all designed in one style. The list of features could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dormers or gables</li> <li>Recessed entries or covered front porches</li> <li>Architectural pillars or posts</li> <li>Window or transparency requirements</li> <li>Varied facades to reduce monotony</li> <li>Duplexes appearing as a single unit</li> <li>Exterior finishes</li> <li>Open space requirements</li> <li>Attached front garage standards</li> </ul>			

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		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
<b>Outcome 13</b>	<b>Gonzales's existing neighborhoods are revitalized, preserved and maintained.</b>			
Goal 13.1	Create partnerships and incentives for revitalization and rehabilitation of existing housing into good condition in targeted areas.			
Action 13.1.1	Create a set of sample revitalization and renovation plans, available to homeowners who want to improve their homes.			
Action 13.1.2	Partner with lending institutions to provide low-cost loans and modest subsidies for housing rehabilitation.			
Action 13.1.3	Encourage services to locate close to and within neighborhoods. Potential service providers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational centers</li> <li>• Health clinics</li> <li>• Educational support</li> <li>• Banking facilities</li> </ul>			
Goal 13.2	Proactively enforce codes to ensure residential units are complying with health and safety requirements.			
Action 13.2.1	Ensure nuisance codes are enforceable.			
Action 13.2.2	Support neighborhood groups in self-enforcement and partner with them to publicize code compliance issues.			
Goal 13.3	Protect the character and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods when evaluating zoning changes.			
Action 13.3.1	Analyze zoning change requests for compatibility with requested uses.			
Action 13.3.2	Amend the zoning ordinance to require buffer areas between high intensity uses and neighborhoods.			
<b>Outcome 14</b>	<b>Provide opportunities for affordable and mixed-income housing development.</b>			
Goal 14.1	Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in the zoning and subdivision ordinances.			
Action 14.1.1	Identify barriers to multifamily and affordable housing development in Gonzales's development code. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review building height limits, high parking requirements and other potential barriers.</li> <li>• Eliminate or reduce barriers to make multifamily development more feasible.</li> </ul>			
Action 14.1.2	Explore partnerships and programs to encourage mixed income housing in appropriate areas of Gonzales.			
Goal 14.2	Work with for-profit and non-profit developers to encourage new mixed-income developments across the city.			
Action 14.2.1	Encourage the development of unit types and sizes, including multifamily units and townhomes, which have lower energy use per unit than single family homes.			
<b>Outcome 15</b>	<b>Housing growth is consistent with the Gonzales vision and comprehensive plan and is sufficient to accommodate desired growth.</b>			
Goal 15.1	Monitor residential development to ensure a continued short-term and long-term supply of residential land for single family and multifamily uses.			



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		TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING SOURCE
Goal 15.2	Publicize information about the supply of residential land that is development-ready (i.e., the land has the major urban services and is ready for development within three to six months).			
Goal 15.3	Coordinate with the city's capital improvements planning process to ensure that urban services are planned for areas that are important to support housing growth and economic development efforts.			
<b>Outcome 16</b>	<b>Gonzales's employment base is diversified.</b>			
Goal 16.1	Develop a local economic development strategic plan.			
Action 16.1.1	Work with the Ascension Economic Development Corporation to prepare an economic development strategic plan for Gonzales.			
Action 16.1.2	Identify the types of businesses that the city wants to focus on growing and attracting, and the resources available to support this effort.			
Action 16.1.3	Focus Gonzales' economic development strategy on a limited number of recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit the number of recommendations in the economic development strategy to those that can reasonably be completed within five years.</li> <li>• Articulate the community's economic vision and three to five key recommendations for economic development.</li> <li>• Recommendations to implement the city's economic development vision should be achievable in one to five years.</li> <li>• Each recommendation should identify the lead responsible entity, resources necessary to implement the recommendation, and a target timeline for completion.</li> <li>• Include opportunities for early successes by including several recommendations that can be completed within the first year or less and that are reasonably likely to be completed.</li> </ul>			
Goal 16.2	Identify target industries for growth.			
Action 16.2.1	Identify the industries that fit best with the city's economic development vision and goals.			
Action 16.2.2	Select broad industries that have characteristics (e.g., wage levels or labor requirements) that fit with the city's objectives. The target industries should include those that build on existing industrial clusters and industries that diversify the local economy.			
Action 16.2.3	Plan for growth in broad industry groupings to position the city to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that arise in the future in similar or related industries.			
Action 16.2.4	Ensure that Gonzales has the conditions necessary to grow and attract desired industries over the next five to ten years, such as workforce training programs or land with the necessary zoning, urban services, and site characteristics (e.g., size, topography, location, and nearby compatible uses).			
<b>Outcome 17</b>	<b>Land use, zoning, and public policy are aligned to attract target businesses.</b>			
Goal 17.1	Make changes to zoning and development regulations that will attract the city's desired types of businesses.			
Action 17.1.1	Ensure that zoning accommodates businesses with higher wages, such as export-oriented businesses.			

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Action 17.1.2	Make changes to the zoning ordinance to better support economic development activities. Eliminate barriers to economic development in the zoning ordinance.			
Action 17.1.3	Align zoning case review with the community's economic development aspirations, as outlined in Gonzales's economic development strategy, recommended in Action 16.1.3.			
Goal 17.2	Rezone land from retail to allow broader employment uses.			
Action 17.2.1	Rezone some of the excess retail zoned land (300 to 400 acres) to accommodate broader employment uses.			
Action 17.2.2	Rezone some retail land to an employment designation that allows commercial office uses, retail uses, and mixed use development.			
Goal 17.3	Consider establishing an "employment" zoning district to create opportunities for growth of traded-sector industries.			
Action 17.3.1	Amend the zoning ordinance to allow businesses that provide goods and services to petrochemical and related manufacturers in the Gonzales area. These businesses include: wholesale, construction, maintenance, light manufacturers, and professional services such as laboratory testing, training, and legal and financial services.			
Action 17.3.2	Create a new zoning district to allow these businesses to locate near similar or related businesses, resulting in a mixture of light industrial and office uses.			
Action 17.3.3	Combine light manufacturing and office development, and provide for flexible spaces that can be altered as development needs change.			
Action 17.3.4	Limit the amount and type of retail development to either serve businesses in the employment zone or to retail portions of traded-sector businesses within the employment zone.			
<b>Outcome 18</b>	<b>Partnerships support the city's economic development strategy.</b>			
Goal 18.1	Work with local and regional partners.			
Action 18.1.1	Work with partner organizations and agencies, such as Ascension Parish, the Ascension Economic Development Corporation, the Ascension Chamber of Commerce, the River Parishes Community College, and local utility providers to retain and recruit businesses, provide utilities, prepare the workforce, and develop property.			
Action 18.1.2	Work with the River Parishes Community College and technical training institutions to train the workforce for specific desired industries and increase the skilled workforce.			
<b>Outcome 19</b>	<b>Commercial and light industrial growth is consistent with the Gonzales vision and comprehensive plan.</b>			
Goal 19.1	Monitor and report on commercial and light industrial development to ensure a continued short-term and long-term supply of land.			
Goal 19.2	Publicize information about the supply of commercial and light industrial land that is development-ready (i.e., the land has the major urban services and is ready for development within three to six months).			
Goal 19.3	Coordinate with the city's capital improvements planning process to ensure that urban services are planned for areas that are important to support economic development efforts.			

