

# THE URBAN UPDATE

HOW BATON ROUGE'S LEADING ORGANIZATIONS  
WORK FOR A VIBRANT, THRIVING CITY

DECEMBER 2021

## LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

Issue 4

*Many of Baton Rouge's leading organizations have had to significantly adjust their operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent effects. During these times of disruption and uncertainty, your organizational leaders have found adaptive and innovative ways to serve you through coordinating efforts. In this End of Year Urban Update, read on to find out how BREC, UREC, LPCA, and others have responded to our city's latest crisis by recognizing their interrelatedness.*

LOUISIANA PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION  
GERREDA DAVIS



As the Executive Director of The Louisiana Primary Care Association, my team and I have been working diligently to end the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid crisis impacting the Baton Rouge community and the entire State of Louisiana. We created a Health Equity Task Force and have been addressing these issues by ensuring equitable access to health care, reducing health disparities, and addressing social determinants of health. We have been working internally and externally with community partners, non-profit organizations, community leaders and elected officials on health policy issues that directly relate, intersect, and impact health equity for individuals, communities and systemically. We created a policy platform that aligns with our goals and worked during the 2021 Louisiana Legislative session to educate, advocate and lobby for and against policies that impacted underserved and marginalized persons and communities. We are currently revising our policy platform to continue our work during the 2022 Louisiana Legislative Session. My staff and I have been recruited to serve on multiple national committees to share knowledge and expertise on health equity and community health centers. We will continue to effectively leverage our voices and influence to impact change [Click here for more information about LPCA](#)



This year has been one of growth and gratefulness at UREC in the areas of affordable housing and youth development. We are currently in the construction phase of the Satinwood Grove neighborhood development and are nearing completion on a home rehabilitation project. Both developments are in North Baton Rouge and will provide affordable, single-family housing opportunities to low-to-moderate income families. We also facilitated several homebuyer webinars this year and partnered with the City-Parish to provide case management services for the Covid-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program.

On the youth development front, UREC launched two new College & Career Ready Initiatives—the Certified Nursing Assistant Institute and the CompTIA IT Institute. Both initiatives provided technical training, pathways to certification, and ACT and college preparation. We're delighted to report that seven of our CNA graduates earned certification, and CompTIA IT students participated in more than 150 hours of instruction. In addition, online and hybrid learning environments allowed us to continue to serve high school students through our College & Career Ready Pre-Law and IGNITE Entrepreneurship & ACT Prep Institutes. Our pre-law scholars culminated their program by facilitating a virtual mock trial. IGNITE participants facilitated their first in-person business pitch competition since the pandemic, and one IGNITE participant stood out by scoring a 27 on the ACT.

UREC continues to host enrichment programs in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) at our WHIZKIDS! after school programs at Geo Prep Mid-City and Glen Oaks Park Elementary School. We recently added kindergarten and first grade to the Glen Oaks Park program, which provides the opportunity to serve more students long-term. Our growth is connected to the support we receive from community partners who stand with us as we Build Today's Communities for Tomorrow, and we are truly grateful. To learn more, visit [www.urecbr.com](http://www.urecbr.com).





**BREC**

COREY WILSON



BREC has continued working through COVID related supply chain issues, skyrocketing prices and record rain to move forward on many transformational projects such as the first phase of the reimagination of the Baton Rouge Zoo and Greenwood Community Park, expanded and air-conditioned recreational centers at Jackson and Howell Community Parks, a new education building at Frenchtown Conservation area, a sixth dog park at Lovett Road Park and significant progress on new greenways as part of the ambitious parish wide Bicycle Pedestrian master plan.

Recently, BREC was excited to announce that it received Energy Efficiency funds from the Louisiana Public Service Commission for new state-of-the art ballfield lighting, totaling \$1.2 million for Oak Villa Sports Park, Anna T. Jordan and Howell Community Parks and Longfellow, Cedar Ridge, Antioch Boulevard and Kathy Drive Parks. The improvements will begin in early 2022 and will provide energy savings, improved lighting quality, reduced maintenance and labor costs, improved visitor experience and reduced carbon footprint. The new lights are expected to save BREC an estimated \$70,000 in savings each year. BREC will fund the respective new light poles at each of these parks and will also turf all eight fields at Oak Villa Sports Park with artificial turf.

BREC also announced the kick-off of a new public engagement process with the creation of a local project team made up of community members from each area of the parish along with key BREC staff members. This team will meet to discuss models used by similar park agencies across the nation and discuss a plan for how our citizens will be engaged to provide regular input to BREC in the future. The local project team will be instrumental in providing input for the development of future community engagement policies and procedures that will also be made available for public input before being presented to the BREC Commission for approval.

And as always, the BREC team will hold its popular holiday camps and events in November and December with some exciting new additions such as a special event to celebrate BREC's 75th anniversary on December 18 at Independence Community Park. You'll find the details at [www.brec.org/ThisMonth](http://www.brec.org/ThisMonth).





Mid City Redevelopment Alliance (MCRA) has had a year that speaks to our vision of prioritizing People, Places, and Progress!

Mid City Redevelopment assisted in meeting the needs of families impacted by the economic burden associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the City of Baton Rouge's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), MCRA serves as one of five community partners collaborating to address over 10,000+ applications for rental assistance. This initiative directly aligns with the agency's mission to guide and move families toward housing stability and security. By the end of the program, MCRA is projecting to have processed over \$5 million dollars in rental assistance applications.

Also, in partnership with the Mayor-President's Office and the Office of Community Development, MCRA launched Safe Hopeful Neighborhoods this year, a multi-pronged effort to empower residents, fight blight, and improve our community. Together, we launched Baton Rouge's first Resident Leader Academy, we've granted residents over \$20,000 for projects, hosted several Operation Cleanups, and provided leadership and stipend opportunities to neighbors willing to lead their communities and make a difference.

We introduced a new program, reimagined ongoing initiatives, and developed a dedicated team to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 all while celebrating 30 years of commitment and service to developing and promoting community revitalization.

If you are looking to purchase a home, experiencing difficulty paying your mortgage, or having financial issues and need someone to help you develop an action plan, we can be reached at 225-346-1000, ext. 216. Leave a message and we will return your call. [Click here for more information from Mid-City Redevelopment](#)



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**2021 - 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

*People. Places. Progress.*

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## EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH HOUSING AUTHORITY

J. DANIELS



EBRPHA continues to execute its ACCESS initiative which leverages its housing opportunities to provide greater access and resources to Education, Economic Opportunities and Health & Wellness.

During this COVID pandemic, EBRPHA has been active:

**Beds for Kids** – EBRPHA and Partners Southeast are joining to provide EBRPHA children with a bed frame, mattress, linens, and pillows at an average cost of \$300 each. The fundraising goal was \$15,000. We are proud to share the initiative has exceeded the \$15,000 goal with a total of over \$25,000. Bed delivery and installation began on July. All 68 beds have been distributed and installed. Each child received bedding supplies and pajamas and parents received valuable sleep training. EBRPHA team members sleep well each night knowing that our beautiful little ones are also sleeping soundly and safely. Nan McKay and Associates, a firm working in the administration and inspection of housing agencies nationwide, gave EBRPHA the Resident Service Award for its service.

**Cypress at Gardere** – Construction of the new 4-story, 99-unit multifamily facility for seniors started on April 26, 2021. The nearly 4-acre site is located adjacent to Bayou Fountain on Gardere Lane between Highland Road and Burbank Drive. Completion is scheduled for July 2022.

**Tech Ready** - In partnership with EBR Schools, EBRPHA worked to ensure that its families and students were properly equipped and prepared for the new virtual learning environment due to COVID-19. EBRPHA coordinated the delivery of EBR Schools Chromebooks, tablets and hotspots. In addition, our team delivered laptop bookbags, headsets (with microphones), mouse, mousepads, hand sanitizer and disposable masks.

**Free WiFi Access** - EBRPHA received funding from the CARES Act. The intended use of these funds will support EBRPHA implementation of free, broadband access for our public housing residents for 2021.

**Community Gardens** – EBRPHA is partnering with the Baton Roots Community Farm to install raised garden beds to raise vegetables and fruits that will produce a sustainable food source for residents at eleven (11) of its communities.

[Click Here for More Information on EBRPHA](#)





CATS, in 2021, reached a major inflection point for both itself, and the great community it serves. The successful 2012 dedicated tax millage that passed under the leadership of Together Baton Rouge with the collaboration of so many more across the spectrum of our joint communities, would have expired, for all intents and purposes, at the end of 2021. All of us at CATS prepared for this moment the day after that successful campaign concluded in 2012. As the selected CEO, that took over that helm, a little north of 4 years ago, late in 2016, the board of commissioners' mandate given me as the new CEO then, was to step CATS up to the next level. It was time to create the best transit system anyone could imagine – serving the great state capitol, Baton Rouge, and the city of Baker, and the surrounding communities.

CATS has made remarkable progress In the last ten years, because we received the support of the community.

We continued serving essential employees to essential services all through the pandemic disaster and executed a new Microtransit Pilot program for North Baton Rouge/Baker area.

At CATS, we reviewed all of the promises made, and we saw that we kept nearly all, and even added some along the way – as demonstrated by the updated five year Strategic Plan and ten year Capital Improvement Investment Plan accepted by CATS board for implementation, a road map to becoming that great transit system we all desire. This can be achieved by leveraging well managed millage funds and take advantage of the recent \$1 trillion infrastructure bill passed by congress pending expected signature by President Biden.

Going forward, CATS will continue improving with faster routes with less wait times; provide transportation for emergencies/disasters; continue with prudent planning with the advent of converting its fleet to electric buses; implement new state of the art technology; and consider regional transportation collaboration planning.

We thank all of our customers for a great year in spite of the challenges of the pandemic and several extreme weather events, we roll together as a community.

Every great city has a great transit system.

[.Visit BRCATS for more information](#)



This year BBR has worked to advance a number of projects under the Plank Road Masterplan and funded by the 3-year, \$5 million JP Morgan Chase AdvancingCities grant awarded in 2020. Those projects include the community park, a grocery-anchored mixed-use development, a food incubator, the establishment of a Community Land Trust, and the launch of a revolving loan fund and support program for North Baton Rouge-based minority businesses. The community park is being done in partnership with BREC and a host of other community members and organizational stakeholders. By year's end the final plans and budget will be complete and we expect to break ground in early 2022.

For the grocery-anchored mixed-use development, BBR acquired a 4-acre assemblage of property located at the intersection of Plank and Choctaw. This prime location offers an unprecedented mixed-use redevelopment opportunity. The food incubator work is being done in partnership with MetroMorphosis and the operational plan and strategy is finalized. BBR's Co-City partnership with the Marron Institute for Urban Management has worked this year to establish the city's first Community Land Trust. The Community Land Trust will form before the end of the year. Finally, this year BBR's partners TruFund and MetroMorphosis launched the AdvancingBR Small Business Initiative which includes training and assistance for businesses, as well as financing. The workshop series has begun and one business has already received funding.

BBR continues to work on the Plank-Calumet mixed use development, which has been hampered by the global construction price increases. BBR also continues to work with the City and the Housing Authority on the Ardendale development and the \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods HUD grant the City received in 2019.

This year Senator Cleo Fields secured \$500k in funding for BBR and the Scotlandville Community Development Corporation to advance a grocery-anchored mixed use masterplan long championed by the Scotlandville CDC for land located near the entrance to Southern University and held in the BBR land bank. Planning is proceeding with the hopes that a grocery store will be developed there in 2022.

BBR continues to work on the home rehabilitation and roof reset projects in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Community Development. Over 200 roofs have been completed out of the 631 applications that have been received.