



**CENTER *for* PLANNING EXCELLENCE**

**2015** Annual Report



# IMAGINING...

A CITY'S POTENTIAL  
REVITALIZED SMALL BUSINESS

MOBILITY OPTIONS

A RESILIENT COAST

SMARTER GROWTH



# TRANSFORMING IMAGINATION INTO IMPACT

Imagination is a beautiful thing. For children, imagination has the power to transform a park bench into a pirate ship, a stick into a royal scepter, and mud into pie.

At Center for Planning Excellence, we still believe in the power of imagination to transform the world around us. Our extraordinary team of planners, designers, environmental scientists and policy experts work with Louisiana's people to imagine how our communities could be better.

## **THEN THE REAL WORK BEGINS.**

We bring our expertise and dedication together with the ideas and aspirations of Louisiana residents to develop plans, resources and processes that make the imaginary real. Magic? Nope. It takes shared vision, thoughtful planning, strategic partnerships, passionate advocacy and hard work.

Please read on to learn more about how CPEX has sparked the imagination of Louisiana communities and worked with them to create real impacts in 2015.



## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Think back—what were you imagining in 2005? At the beginning of that year, we were envisioning an organization, born out of Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s *Plan Baton Rouge*, that could help communities preserve their uniqueness and guide development in a way that would improve the quality of life for all. Little did we know that just a few months later, Louisiana would change forever. The challenges presented by 2005’s catastrophic storms required unprecedented planning efforts, citizen engagement and leadership. By the end of 2005, Center for Planning Excellence would be at the forefront of “Louisiana Speaks”—the most ambitious regional planning effort in US history.

“Louisiana Speaks” highlighted four focus areas: Coastal Restoration, Community Growth, Storm Protection and Infrastructure Investment. Most importantly, the plan emphasized the importance of coordinating planning at every scale—from local, to regional, to state projects.

Looking back, we’re proud to say that CPEX has impacted these four areas and others for over a decade. In 2015 in particular, CPEX has seen its sphere of influence grow while staying true to our mission.

In the following pages, you will read more about our impact at the local, regional and state levels in 2015.

Ideas are only as good as the results that they bring to life. It doesn’t happen overnight, and it requires thoughtful, focused work towards a common goal, from a dedicated team of partners.

For the past decade, we have been so grateful to our members who understand the importance of planning and the long-term benefit it creates for communities around our state.

Thank you for partnering with us in fulfilling our mission to create a more liveable Louisiana.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl A. Hays". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light blue background.

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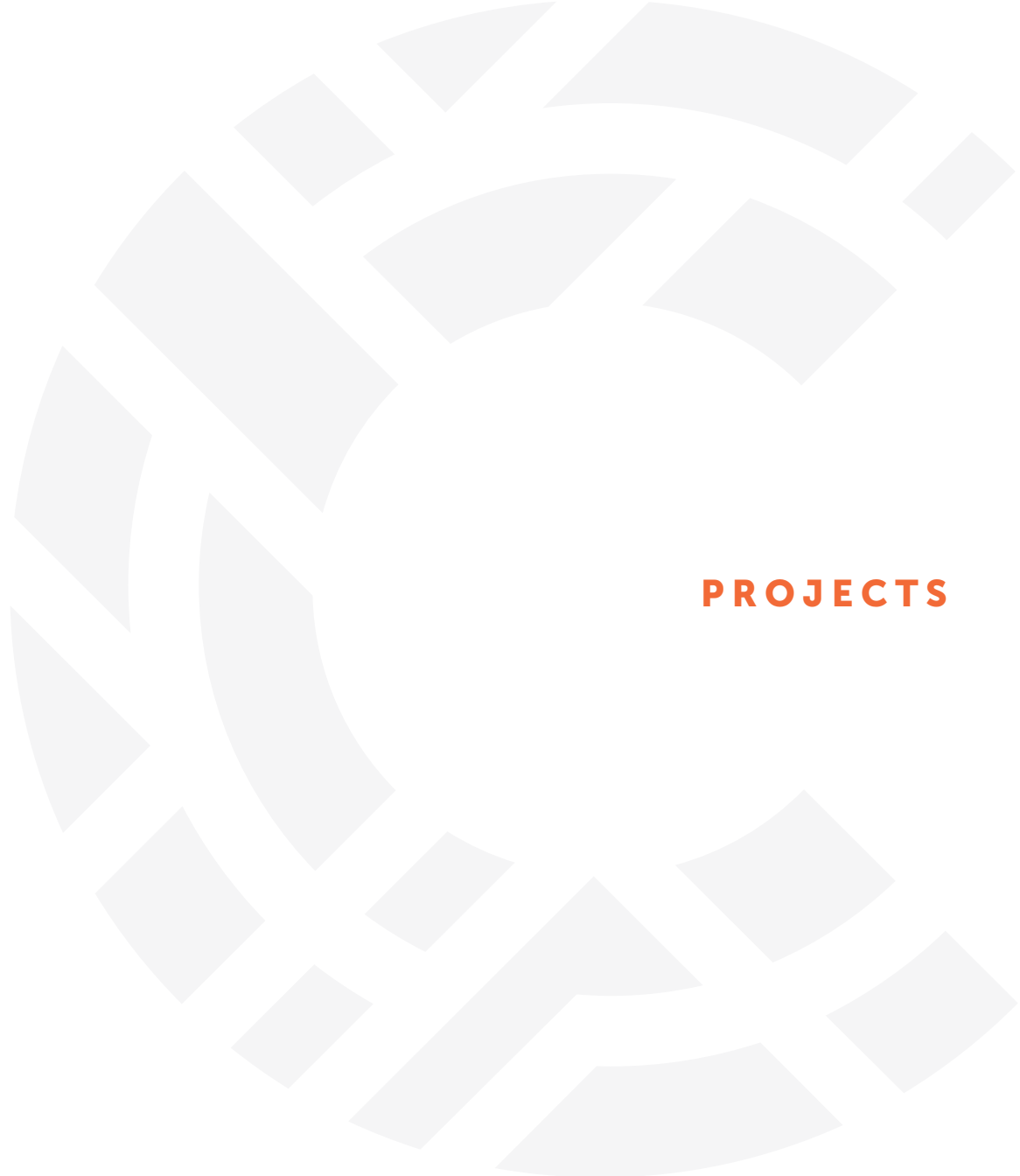
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## **PROJECTS**

# IMAGINING...

## A City's Potential



Gonzales Town Hall

*Gonzales' central location along with rapid industrial growth to the south have increased demand for retail, housing and development. Local leaders recognized the need for an updated plan to chart their course forward in this changing environment.*

CPEX worked with Gonzales residents, city staff and elected officials to create a common vision, guiding principles and comprehensive plan that reflect their core values and support their aspirations for the future of their rapidly growing town.

The resident-led, data-driven plan for sustainable growth provides the city the tools needed to address land use and urban design, downtown development, transportation, housing, and to pursue economic prosperity according to their own vision. It also includes a small area plan for a rail station in downtown.

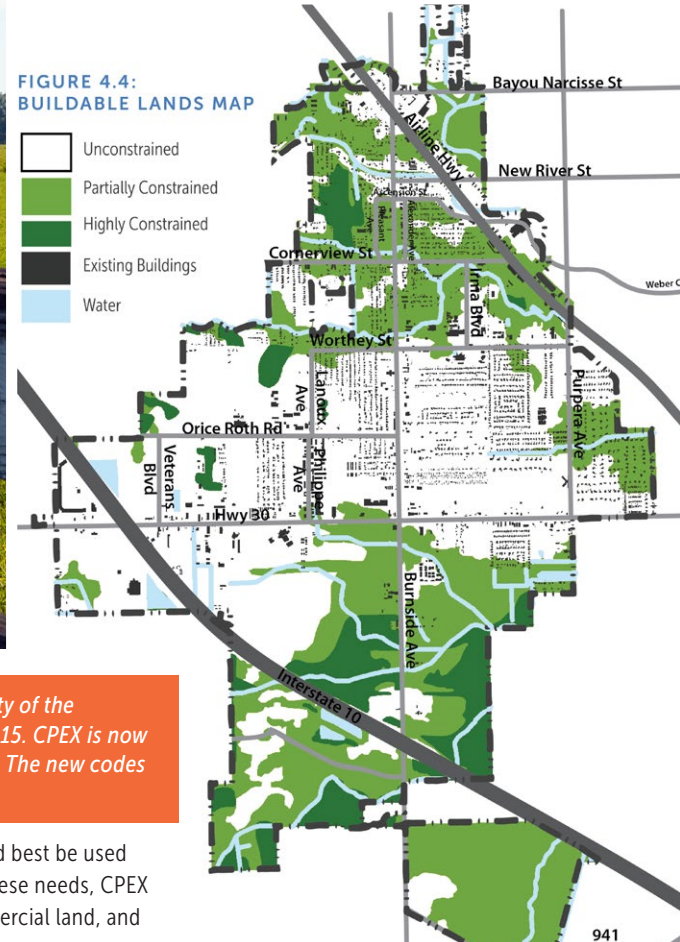
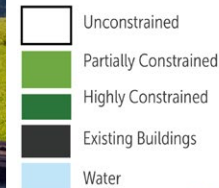
# OUR IMPACT:

## A Comprehensive Plan for Growth



Rural Land in Gonzales—Known as the M.P Evans Property, this tract on LA 44 south of I-10 is slated to be developed into a mixed-use community of retail, apartments and homes called Conway Plantation.

FIGURE 4.4:  
BUILDABLE LANDS MAP



*CPEX delivered a plan that will guide Gonzales' approach to growth, while maintaining the integrity of the community's spirit. The plan was championed by residents and unanimously adopted in August 2015. CPEX is now updating the city's zoning code and subdivision regulations to achieve the aspirations of the plan. The new codes will be easier to understand and to enforce, and will yield better development.*

Gonzales leaders wanted to understand how the city's land is currently being used and how it should best be used in the future to support a diverse economy and healthy city. To help Gonzales leaders understand these needs, CPEX analyzed existing land use, studied development patterns, projected demand for housing and commercial land, and conducted a buildable lands inventory (figure 4.4).



# IMAGINING

## Revitalized Commercial Corridors



*Street furniture, attractive signage, public art and native plants enhance the character of commercial corridors, increase economic activity, attract visitors, and increase property values.*

*Rendering of proposed exterior improvements to Letterman's*

*With support from JPMorgan Chase, CPEX created site designs and provided grant funds for exterior improvements to three Mid-City businesses to advance Government Street revitalization efforts.*

The resulting improvements reflect community character, improve accessibility, incentivize upgrades for neighboring businesses, and contribute to increased property values and economic activity. The designs created by CPEX support the FuturEBR comprehensive plan and Government Street redesign.



Offices of LA Purchase Real Estate Services LLC with improved landscaping

**THANK YOU TO OUR  
PROJECT PARTNERS!**

Mid City Redevelopment Alliance,  
Greenscape Design, Architectural  
Landscape Group and Baton Rouge  
Green's City Citrus Program.

# OUR IMPACT:

## Small Business Improvements

“

*It is exciting to be a part of the transformation currently taking place in Mid City. I am grateful for this opportunity that will assist me with making beautification improvements to my properties and contribute to the momentum on Government Street.*”

**Joseph A. “Jak” Kunstler, Owner of Louisiana Purchase Real Estate Services, LLC**

# IMAGINING...

Traditions of Tomorrow



*Our Lady of Mercy (OLOM) is a vital part of the Old Goodwood Neighborhood and a cultural and educational anchor to Mid City Baton Rouge.*

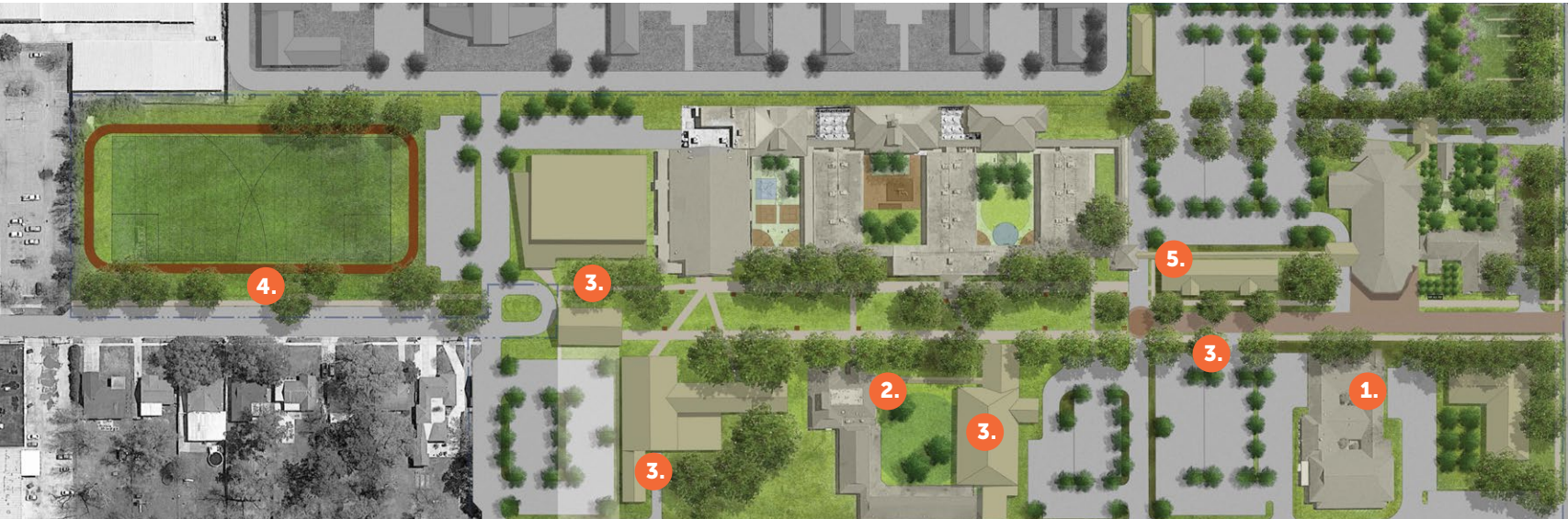
*Rendering of Marquette Avenue entrance to OLOM Campus*

# OUR IMPACT:

A Campus Master Plan

*With robust input from stakeholders, CPEX developed a campus master plan for OLOM that addresses barriers to pedestrian and vehicular circulation, improves safety, integrates the church and school, and provides guidance for growth and investment over the next 15-20 years.*

The planning process was driven by collaboration and consensus-building among administration, staff, parishioners and parents. OLOM is now raising funds to implement the plan.



**1.** Marquette Avenue is no longer a barrier. While the northern end of the street will remain a public road, the portion in front of the school will be replaced with a central green connecting the core of campus. A new private plaza provides a welcoming entrance and gathering space for the church.

**2.** Campus buildings are organized around a central green that connects buildings and increases safety.

**3.** New buildings address current and future growth needs, including support space for the church, a new gym, a new middle school, additional classroom space and administrative offices.

**4.** New or improved gathering spaces are provided for groups of all sizes: the central green, church plaza, pavilion, courtyards, columbarium and prayer garden.

**5.** Parking areas are improved and distributed more evenly across campus, shaded with tree canopy, and reconfigured for safety.

# IMAGINING...

## Enhanced Regional Mobility



*Mobility choices that include transit, walking and bicycling are essential to strengthening economies, revitalizing neighborhoods, reducing congestion, and connecting people to opportunity.*

CPEX works to advance policies and projects that expand and improve our transportation choices by building coalitions, providing data and research, and advocating for best practices.

# OUR IMPACT:

Improving Commutes +  
Expanding Transportation Choices



Mississippi River Bridge = Commuter Chokepoint

CPEX's CONNECT initiative makes the case that investing in a multi-modal regional transportation network is key to healthy growth and vibrant communities.

# CRISIS

Capital  
Region  
Industry for  
Sustainable  
Infrastructure  
Solutions

## Capital Region Industry for Sustainable Infrastructure Solutions (CRISIS)

In partnership with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and the Greater Baton Rouge Industrial Alliance, CPEX created CRISIS – a coalition of major employers and industry leaders committed to identifying data-driven solutions to regional workforce mobility needs and providing a unified leadership voice on regional transportation priorities.

## Passage of DOTD Performance Measures

In 2015, CONNECT members successfully advocated for passage of HB 742, which amended the DOTD project selection process to include modernized performance measures that account for economic development, job creation and access, safety and other community benefits. Performance measures help ensure that we receive maximum benefit from our limited transportation resources.

## Entering the Pipeline: Engaging Disconnected Workers in our Regional Economy

CPEX released a policy paper creating greater awareness of the transportation barriers faced by the approximately 170,000 disconnected workers in the capital region who need access to services, training and jobs in order to participate in our economy.

# IMAGINING...

## A Connected Super Region



*Passenger rail will provide a vital link to the one million jobs located along the Baton Rouge-to-New Orleans corridor and an efficient and reliable alternative for the more than 58,000 commuters who travel between the two metros on a daily basis.*

Passenger rail will also increase evacuation capacity for those who need it the most.

CPEX facilitates the work of the Louisiana Super Region Rail Authority, a formal collaboration of seven parishes legislatively empowered to plan, implement, fund and operate passenger rail serving Baton Rouge, New Orleans and the communities in between.



*From left: Buddy Boe (St. Charles), Mark Drewes (Jefferson), Parish President Tommy Martinez (Ascension), Parish President Timmy Roussel (St. James), Parish President Natalie Rrobotom (St. John), Mayor Barney Arceneaux (Gonzales), Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden (Baton Rouge), Rep. Walt Leger III (New Orleans), Kristin Gisleson Palmer (New Orleans) and Mayor Knox Ross (Pelahatchie, MS).*

# OUR IMPACT:

## Empowering Leaders to Implement Passenger Rail



*Vision for future downtown Gonzales Rail Station from Gonzales Master Plan*

*In September 2015, CPEX and the Louisiana Super Region Rail Authority hosted a historic press conference at the site of the future Gonzales rail station, where seven parish leaders came together in an unprecedented show of support for regionalism, collaboration and implementation of passenger rail service.*

### **Gubernatorial Briefing Book on Passenger Rail**

CPEX worked with Transportation for America and the Southern Rail Commission to create a step-by-step guide for Louisiana's newly elected governor and other state officials to secure funding and begin operation of passenger rail.

Governor Edwards has listed the rail project linking Baton Rouge and New Orleans as a top transportation priority for the state.



# IMAGINING

## Streets that Work for Everybody



### Complete Streets Policy

Adoption of a policy is only the first step towards facilitating development of Complete Streets infrastructure over the long term. Stakeholders must continue to advocate for the expertise, resources, standards and priorities required for implementation.

By encouraging implementation of Complete Streets, CPEX is helping to provide active transportation options and safer streets, which improves quality of life.

### Plans and Implementation: The Street Smart Neighborhood Connectivity Plan

*When Baton Rouge Mid City residents approached CPEX, frustrated because their efforts to improve their streets had not been successful, CPEX responded with Street Smart—a neighborhood-driven planning process that empowered residents to identify features such as bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks and traffic calming measures that would benefit them the most. What resulted was the Street Smart Plan. Civic Association leaders are working with city-parish officials towards the implementation of their plan.*



“The planning process they (CPEX) guided us through was thorough and the recommendations we all agreed on were based on national standards and vetted with lots of public input. The Street Smart Plan is helping our neighborhood proactively take steps to improve our streets and quality of life.”

Tyler Hicks, President of the Capital Heights Neighborhood Association

# OUR IMPACT:

## Neighborhood Plans + Complete Streets Policies

### Complete Streets Policy

CPEX and AARP Louisiana have been leading the Baton Rouge Sustainable Transportation Advisory Committee's (BR STAC) efforts to advance implementation of the city's Complete Streets policy. In 2015, BR STAC hosted an implementation workshop, organized walking audits, worked closely with the Metro Council to identify needs in underserved neighborhoods, and ensured citizen input by successfully advocating for formation of the Complete Streets Advisory Committee.

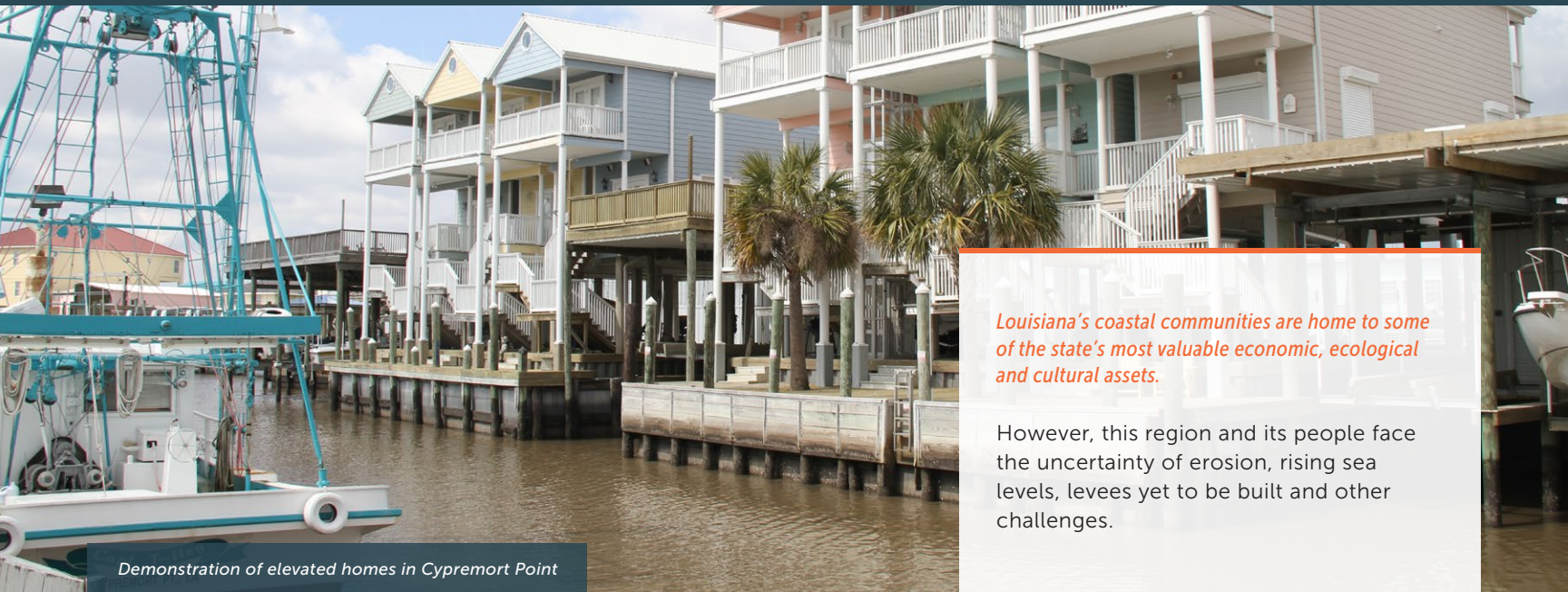
CPEX supports development of strong policy at the state level by serving on the Statewide Complete Streets Advisory Committee, helping to develop new guidelines and practices to ensure that future DOTD projects incorporate Complete Streets policy requirements.



Demonstration of separated bike lanes on Country Club Drive

# IMAGINING...

## A More Resilient Coast



Demonstration of elevated homes in Cyremort Point

*Louisiana's coastal communities are home to some of the state's most valuable economic, ecological and cultural assets.*

However, this region and its people face the uncertainty of erosion, rising sea levels, levees yet to be built and other challenges.

# OUR IMPACT:

## Engaging Communities + Improving Plans

CPEX continues to work closely with residents, state agencies and international experts to provide communities along the coast the tools they need to adapt, survive and thrive in the rapidly changing coastal environment.

*In 2014, CPEX published **View from the Coast**, a set of community-driven policy recommendations for coordinating the state's Coastal Master Plan with local needs to protect coastal culture and livelihoods. In 2015, 85% of those recommendations have been addressed in the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Risk and Resiliency Program.*

*The CPRA's 2017 Flood Risk and Resilience Program will, for the first time, dedicate \$1.2 million in 2017 towards nonstructural program development and \$1.7 million towards coastal education.*



Jean Lafitte nature trail

## CPEX also ...

Fostered greater coordination across state agencies to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of risk reduction for local communities.

Empowered coastal communities to address sea level rise at the local level by providing tools such as draft ordinances that communities can use to increase safety and lower risks.

Led a diverse coalition of non-profit partners dedicated to advancing coastal resiliency, advocating for community-level interests, and supporting progress of the Coastal Master Plan.

Provided communities with project funds, knowledge, technical assistance and staffing support they need to move forward with risk mitigation and coastal protection measures such as coordinated structural elevation, equitable property acquisition, relocation and affordable flood insurance premiums.

# IMAGINING...

## Strong Coastal Communities



*A unique contributor to Louisiana's fishing industry and historic culture, the town of Jean Lafitte is increasingly threatened by storm surge and the ever-encroaching Gulf of Mexico.*

*Image produced by Dover-Kohl for Jean Lafitte Resiliency Plan*

# OUR IMPACT:

## Protecting Cultures and Economies Facing Rising Seas



*Elevation Design Guideline from the Jean Lafitte Flood Preparedness Toolkit*

*CPEX collaborated with the town of Jean Lafitte and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to create the Flood Emergency Preparedness Plan and Flood Preparedness Toolkit, which informs residents of their risk reduction options and provides strategies for protecting assets and maximizing use of available resources.*

The Flood Preparedness Toolkit strategies include coordinated elevation that maintains community character and incentives for use of flood-proof building materials.

CPEX also created a companion Flood Emergency Preparedness Plan that compiles local, regional and state plans, and lists state and federal support resources available directly to communities.



U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx and former Secretary of LA Department of Transportation and Development Sherri LeBas discuss the future of transportation in LA and the U.S.



*CPEX celebrated our 10th Smart Growth Summit with an all-star line-up of speakers that delivered bright ideas, inspired innovation and a passion for progress to our audience.*

Over 800 planners, developers, advocates and elected officials attended the 10th anniversary Summit.

*Due to the lack of land use planning in Louisiana, it is vital that educational opportunities like the Summit be available to elected leaders, local business owners and civic leaders so that they have the necessary information to lead their own cities and towns.*

**Murphy R. McMillan, Executive Director, LaSalle Economic Development District and former Mayor of Town of Jena**

# OUR IMPACT:

## Educating + Inspiring Louisiana Leaders



Smart Growth Summit Resiliency Workshop

*The 2015 Smart Growth Summit included a day-long resiliency workshop hosted in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, which offered participants the opportunity to learn from Rockefeller's global resiliency program, 100 Resilient Cities, and the recently completed New Orleans Resiliency Plan.*

CPEX's Smart Growth Summit has established itself as an exciting venue where planners, developers, community advocates, elected officials and other forward-thinking citizens can network, brainstorm and learn alongside internationally acclaimed smart growth experts.



# IMAGINING...

## Smarter Growth



Boo Thomas facilitates Louisiana Speaks Panel with Sean Reilly, Andy Kopplin and Walter L. Leger, Jr.

“At this year’s 10th anniversary, in partnership with American Planning Association, Louisiana Chapter, I conducted a half-day workshop designed to help planning commissioners learn best practices and interface with their colleagues from across the state. ...The Summit contributes immensely to the practice of planning in Louisiana.”

Steven D. Villavaso, AICP, Villavoso and Associates

# Featured Speakers and Expert Panelists

## *National Transportation Policy*

Anthony Foxx, Secretary of U.S. Department of Transportation

## *Addressing Climate Change*

Peter Calthorpe, co-founder of Congress for the New Urbanism, author of *Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change*

## *Healthy Communities*

Dr. Elizabeth Baca, Senior Health Advisor, California Governor's Office of Planning & Research

## *Great Rural Places*

John Fregonese, President of Fregonese Associates, lead consultant on FutureBR

## *Vibrant Neighborhoods*

Ron Sims, former Deputy Secretary of U.S. HUD & former Executive of Seattle area's King County

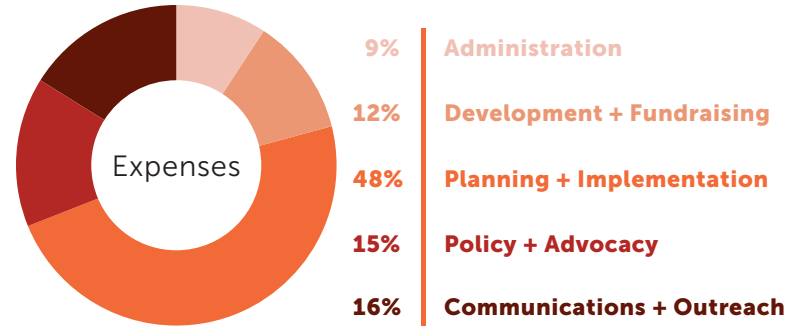
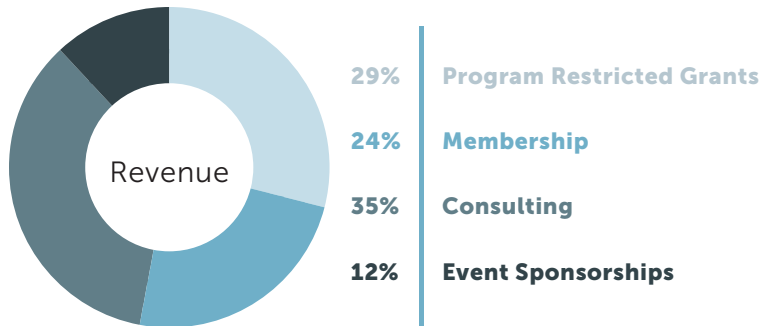
## *Walkable Development*

Christopher B. Leinberger, LOCUS President & Nonresident Senior Fellow at Brookings

## *Creating Long Term Value*

Charles L. "Chuck" Marohn, Jr., Founder & President of Strong Towns

# FINANCIALS 2015



**Total Revenue - \$1,233,690**

\*2015 Revenue & Expenses are unaudited

CPEX received major grants to support our programs from:

blue moon fund  
 Credit Bureau of Baton Rouge  
 Ford Foundation  
 Greater Baton Rouge Association of REALTORS ®

JPMorgan Chase Foundation  
 The Kresge Foundation  
 Walton Family Foundation

Our strong financial position is the result of a diversified business model that includes mission-driven consulting revenue, restricted program grant funding, event sponsorships and membership support.

*Our annual membership campaign included 174 members with a 15% increase in renewals from 2014 and 22 new members.*

# VISION MEMBERS

## LEVEL TWO: \$25,000+

Lane Grigsby

Cordell and Ava Haymon

Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation

## LEVEL ONE: \$10,000+

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Baton Rouge Area Foundation

Roberta A. Guillory

John and Virginia Noland

Dee Dee Reilly

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Stantec Consulting

Denis Taylor, Audubon Companies

The John A. Thomas and Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas Family Fund

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Parish President Natalie Robottom, St. John the Baptist Parish

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Whitney Bank

WHLC Architecture

Joanna Wurtele

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Louisiana Chapter

Baton Rouge Growth Coalition

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Commercial Properties Realty Trust

Cox Communications

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R. W. Day and Associates

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John and Susan Kelliher

Kracke Consulting

Lafayette Consolidated Government

LCTA Workers' Comp

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Roger and Marcia Moser

Moyse Family Foundation

Jay and Elizabeth Noland

Phelps Dunbar LLP

River View Development LLC

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Cameron Parish Police Jury

Crompton International

John and Marty Engquist

Forum 35

Brian and Barbara Haymon

Kevin and Debbie Knobloch

La Capitol Federal Credit Union

Latter & Blum Property Management

Jeannine and Tim Lomax

LUBA Workers' Comp

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BREC Foundation

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Burns & Co., Inc. / REALTORS

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Cazayoux Ewing, LLC

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Norman Chenevert, Chenevert Architects

Citizens Bank & Trust Co.

Charles H. and Peggy Coates, Jr.

Commerce Title Company

Michael B. Cooper, Mayor, City of Covington

Thomas and Debbie Cotten

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Robert and Darlene Daigrepoint

Rachel and Michael DiResto

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Planning Commission

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Eliza Eugene Enterprises

Execute Now!, Inc.

Patricia H. Felder, Felder's Collision Parts, Inc.

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Martha and Joseph E. Juban

Megan and Adam Knapp

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LA 1 Coalition

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Alyson Lapuma, Tangipahoa Parish Government

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Ryland Percy

Ken Perret, Louisiana Good Roads & Transportation  
Association

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\*deceased





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President/CEO, CPEX

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CEO, Zehnder Communications

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Director of Development

Janet Tharp  
Director of Planning

Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas, FASLA  
President/CEO



# LOOKING AHEAD

## OVER THE NEXT DECADE, CPEX IS FOCUSED ON THESE KEY INITIATIVES:

Shaping the direction of Baton Rouge's future development and redevelopment by focusing on neighborhood planning

Influencing regulatory decisions at the local, state, and national levels through coalition-building, direct advocacy, dissemination of position papers and best-practice planning models

Delivering technical assistance to communities across the state in implementing their plans

Empowering residents and stakeholders to have a meaningful voice in shaping their community by providing quality information and opportunities for engagement

Promoting regional connectivity with equitable transportation choices including passenger rail and transit

Developing adaptation alternatives to living in a coastal environment faced with sea level rise

Encouraging multi-modal transportation investments

Publishing briefs to advance understanding of Smart Growth policies and practices

Producing tools and resources for coastal communities to reduce flood risk

Supporting sustainable economic investment by creating more livable communities, providing equitable access to opportunity and predictable policy environment



**TRANSFORMING IMAGINATION INTO IMPACT**

