

GAEDA Revitalization Corporation

Strategic Plan Outline

October 2018



PREPARED BY



PROJECT OVERVIEW

GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC), a Louisiana nonprofit corporation, was created by the Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority (GAEDA) to spearhead neighborhood revitalization initiatives, which include the creation of affordable housing, as well as commercial sector revitalization in the revitalization area. Affordable Housing And Commercial Sector Revitalization Initiatives include work in new construction of single-family housing for ownership, new construction of single-family and multi-family rental properties, rehabilitation of existing single-family housing units, development of financial literacy programs, development of a Land Bank, and commercial corridor enhancements with light retail support services.

GRC contracted with Lafe Jones & Associates, an Alexandria, LA-based planning consulting firm, to facilitate a strategic planning process for the organization. The process included in-depth meetings with staff and board members, in addition to a focus group meeting with stakeholders (see Addendum), and planning sessions with the Board of Directors. This document is a Strategic Plan Outline that will guide the development of more detailed action plans for implementation over the next 18 months, and beyond.



GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC)

Our Vision

To be known as a community catalyst for regional collaboration initiatives designed to create sustainable and stable neighborhoods that improve the health, wealth and safety of low to moderate income wage earners.

Our Mission

To work with nonprofit, government and private entities and organizations to make a sustainable impact in Central Louisiana through targeted, holistic, mixed-use and mixed-income community revitalization initiatives.



Our Values

Integrity

Respect

Transparency

Holistic Approach

Sustainable Impact

Demonstrated Quality

Collaboration

Capacity Building

Accountability

Inclusivity

Flexibility

Our Current Reality

Strengths/Opportunities	Challenges/Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Current and recent successful programs● A regional focus not bound by government, parish or city boundaries● Current Board and Executive Director - vision, strength, capacity, expertise, and reputation● Interested, diverse and positive community stakeholders including, but not limited to: United Way, Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce, Alexandria Housing Authority, and Mt. Zion Corporation● Positive relationships with regional, state and national partners and funders including, but not limited to: Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC) and Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB)● A “MACRO” collaboration approach● Development of a Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO)● Documented need for services and programs● Available land for development● Connection and financial support of Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority (GAEDA)● Current financial stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Communicating a clear and focused organizational mission● Future retirement of Executive Director● Timeframe for GAEDA financial support● Perception that the organization is competing with other local organizations for funding and program support● Current negative public perceptions and misconceptions about “affordable housing” and beneficiaries of affordable housing programs - “Not in my backyard” (NIMBY) Syndrome● Some local government entities perceive the organization as a threat to future funding and control of projects● Declining financial support for ancillary social service programs that help sustain communities● Local city and parish entities lack funding for matching funds for grants● Urban/rural divide impacting regional program success● Limited staff and operational budget affecting implementation and execution of plan goals● Lack of capacity, operational funding and staffing of some local housing nonprofit partners, government entities and agencies

- Property ownership and adjudication policy challenges/hurdles
- Silos and lack of communication between area community development agencies and organizations
- More demand than available program services



Strategic Plan Outline

Goal	Action	Timeline
<p>Enhance and develop regional strategic partnerships.</p>	<p>Facilitate joint needs assessments and planning with area government and nonprofit entities to reduce duplication and competition while leveraging resources and effecting policy changes.</p>	<p>1st Quarter 2019</p>
	<p>Strengthen relationships with state and national government and nonprofit affordable housing agencies and funding sources.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Engage private businesses in initiatives and partnerships and encourage community support for programs, policies and fundraising. Make them aware of the housing needs of their employees, area teachers, firefighters, police, etc. Make local businesses aware of the financial impact of affordable housing efforts: job creation, construction projects, etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Facilitate capacity-building initiatives for other groups/agencies in conjunction with area foundations, government and nonprofit entities (grant writing, needs assessments and technical assistance).</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Engage local, regional and national funding sources by educating them on the impact of affordable housing on health, safety, education and the overall quality of life of the communities they support and serve.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Improve community perception and support for affordable housing and community revitalization initiatives.

Engage faith-based area organizations in affordable housing efforts by facilitating capacity building and educating them on opportunities to use land and develop programs to support community revitalization.

Ongoing

Conduct a community summit on affordable housing designed to encourage all partners and stakeholders to develop a community plan.

2nd Quarter 2019

Initiate a public awareness campaign focused on improving public perception and educating community stakeholders and the community at large about affordable housing issues and agency initiatives. Work with Louisiana Housing Corporation on available materials. Educate the community on the benefits of adequate affordable housing and the positive impact on the entire community. Develop local testimonials featuring participants having positive results, maintaining their residences and contributing to the community.

2nd Quarter 2019

Initiate programs that educate and prepare current and potential recipients about preparation for and responsibility for homeownership. Focus on programs that emphasize personal commitment and responsibility from the recipients (personal financial management, credit and ongoing homeownership responsibilities and obligations).

Ongoing

Create a graphic flowchart that can be used to educate area citizens about affordable housing programs available locally, regionally and nationally depending on the consumer's income, age, geographic location, etc.

4th Quarter 2018

Secure sustainable funding for the organization.

Initiate a communication and re-branding initiative to begin changing terminology related to affordable housing:

- Rebrand “affordable housing” as “workforce housing,” “senior housing” and “special needs housing.”
- Change program names like “down payment assistance” to “buy-down assistance.”

1st Quarter 2019

Inventory all potential funding opportunities and develop a targeted fundraising plan.

1st Quarter 2019

Study the feasibility of an annual fundraising event. Compare the return on investment of time and money to direct fundraising and revenue generation projects.

1st Quarter 2019

Create revenue opportunities through current and future programs and initiatives:

1st Quarter 2019
Ongoing

- Earn Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO) designation.
- Develop a credit repair training and counseling program.
- Develop and operate the community certified Homebuyer Education Program funded and supported by local financial institutions.
- Seek grants and programs that include administrative funds that can be used for operating expenses.

Ensure future staff and board leadership through effective succession planning.

Review current Executive Director duties, job requirements and experience.

4th Quarter 2018

Develop and continue quality and sustainable revitalization and restoration efforts.

Develop a succession plan for the Executive Director position with the goal to have a new person in place within one (1) year. Consider hiring a person for the Homebuyer Training and Credit Repair program who could eventually fill the Executive Director position. Target retired business and banking leaders for opportunity.	4th Quarter 2018
Assess future staffing and office space needs, specifically related to Homebuyer and Credit Counseling Program.	4th Quarter 2018
Determine the need for new/additional board members for the organization by reviewing demographics, age and future plans. Develop board matrix and highlight current gaps and future needs. Additional board members will allow for committee support to implement the strategic plan. Consider developing an Advisory Board of additional stakeholders for ongoing stakeholder input and involvement.	4th Quarter 2018
Clarify and document current responsibilities, policies and procedures for each program.	1st Quarter 2019
Compile and maintain up-to-date and accurate data on community needs, targeted areas and available inventory.	1st Quarter 2019
Campaign for policy changes on adjudicated property.	Ongoing
Develop a documented quality management program for the organization, determining quality outcomes and measurement guidelines for all projects.	3rd Quarter 2019

<p>Ensure all projects have a “macro” and “holistic” impact on targeted communities emphasizing that housing comes first, followed by needed services to sustain the area, which lead to improved quality of life and productivity for the entire community.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Seek out and support the development of local Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).</p>	<p>1st Quarter 2019</p>
<p>Continue current and planned Affordable Housing and Commercial Sector Revitalization Initiatives: Revitalization, New Construction, Property Development/Redevelopment, Corridor Enhancements, etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

ADDENDUM

GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC) Stakeholder Focus Group Meeting Notes

Thursday, July 12, 2018

Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Office

Overview

The GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC) Stakeholder Focus Group consisted of more than 20 participants comprised of area civic, government, business and nonprofit leaders representing agencies and entities that have a common interest in Affordable Housing issues in Central Louisiana.

The group was facilitated by Lafe Jones, principal consultant with Lafe Jones & Associates, an Alexandria, LA-based strategic planning consulting firm. Participants discussed issues related to Affordable Housing in the region, along with possible opportunities for improvements.

How do we define Affordable Housing?

- Group participants agreed that most agencies use the definition established by The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD defines Affordable Housing as housing with costs at or

below 30% of one's income. Households earning less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) are also considered low-income households by HUD, qualifying those households for some housing programs.

- Participants listed types of Affordable Housing as rental, shelter and privately-owned single-family and multiple-family dwellings that are considered “safe, clean and sanitary.”

How does a lack of Affordable Housing affect the community?

- The local community is affected by homelessness, disasters, and a general lack of affordable homes for the elderly, unemployed, disabled, underemployed and working poor population.
- Homelessness does not only refer to people “living on the street.” A homeless person is an individual without personal permanent housing. The costs (financial and social) of homelessness to a community include:
 - A general lack of stability for many sectors of the population.
 - School disruptions for children.
 - Employment limitations.
 - Increased depression, anxiety, stress and substance abuse.
 - Increased crime.
- Lack of homeownership is an indication of the poverty level in the community.
- Elderly citizens are more at risk with a lack of Affordable Housing.
- A lack of Affordable Housing affects economic development due to its impact on workforce availability. Many times, jobs are available but, due to poor housing conditions, there is no available workforce.
- The stability of Affordable Housing allows families to spend more dollars on non-housing expenses. This impacts the economy and local businesses in a positive way. Affordable Housing is a “wealth-building” tool for the community.
- The availability of Affordable Housing allows the community to be more resilient after a natural disaster, since additional housing units are available to those who are displaced.

What are major challenges related to Affordable Housing programming and planning in our area?

- There is a disconnect between the lack of available housing units and the amount of land that is available for development.
- Lack of Affordable Housing has a direct impact on the community's ability to attract new businesses.
- Lack of Affordable Housing has a direct impact on the health of the community - consistent medical care, follow-up treatments, etc.
- There is a negative connotation related to the term, "Affordable Housing." To many, it only relates to subsidized housing or government housing. Although this type of housing is part of the mix, "Affordable Housing refers to much more than government housing or 'the projects,' which sometimes conveys a negative image."
- Several organizations and groups are working on small-scale projects individually. There is a need to collaborate and leverage resources for greater impact.

How big is the Affordable Housing problem in Louisiana?

- According to State of Louisiana officials at the meeting, there is currently a need for more than 100,000 Affordable Housing units in the state, not counting the need for repair of houses and units in disrepair. *(State officials will provide more information and data related to specific needs in Central Louisiana.)*

What is being "done right" in our community related to Affordable Housing? What is working?

- The Alexandria Housing Authority Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program.
- The GRC Project for substandard housing - Affordable Housing Program (AHP) providing matching funds for elderly and disabled home revitalization and repair.
- The interest of local churches in Affordable Housing efforts. Specifically, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church's work in the past with blighted properties converted to Affordable Housing.
- The City of Alexandria and GAEDA working to clean up city corridors.
- Louisiana tax credit projects. (Louisiana Housing Corporation)

- Louisiana 30% Down Payment Program. (Louisiana Housing Corporation)
- Louisiana housing fair planned for March 2019. (Louisiana Housing Corporation)
- The City of Alexandria's work on infrastructure improvements in the city.
- Various banks and credit unions offering homeownership and credit education.
- The state offering homeownership counseling services.
- The Tunica Biloxi tribe offering money management and credit counseling to tribe members.

Where are "the gaps?" What is missing in our community related to Affordable Housing?

- Capacity gaps - many agencies and organizations have programs and projects. However, most are too small to make a large impact.
- Residents have problems with credit and understanding factors that impact their credit.
- The largest homeownership need is single-family dwellings in the \$90,000 - \$160,000 price range.
- Government funding of many projects is no longer available. The demand for state funding greatly exceeds the dollars available.
- The lack of availability of rental property for the working poor.
- Lack of higher paying jobs means many residents are unable to purchase homes that are on the market.
- A high rate of incarceration in the state means that, as these folks are released, they need Affordable Housing, which is not available.
- Lack of an adequate number of half-way and three-quarter homes for those residents transitioning from substance abuse facilities.
- There are zoning issues in certain neighborhoods where smaller lots that residents might be able to afford and that could be redeveloped are not large enough to meet code.
- The application process for housing can be complicated and hard for some residents to complete without assistance. For many, there is a general lack of knowledge of what programs are available and how those programs work.
- The lack of Affordable Housing in lower income geographic areas affects certain minority neighborhoods more than others in the community.

- In some areas, there has not been an aggressive push to improve housing situations.

What are the primary barriers to having an adequate supply of Affordable Housing in the community?

- There has been “a lack of economic policies” that channel dollars into needy areas.
- With many worthwhile efforts to impact the problem, there is not one overall effort that would allow leverage of all efforts and create more impact. This means that many smaller projects are sometimes disconnected, making several “small-scale” improvements that are not demonstrating the same impact of combined efforts and resources.
- Resources for the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (A.L.I.C.E.) population are very limited.
- Lack of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).
- Lack of credit repair services in the community.

What are possible solutions that could have a positive impact on the problem?

- Engage in coalition-building and capacity-building efforts with other organizations - pulling together more resources, reducing duplication and encouraging joint planning and implementation to make a larger impact in the community.
- Engage local businesses in the issue by creating initiatives to:
 - Increase living wage for employees.
 - Understand the impact that Affordable Housing has on their workforce.
 - Understand how investments in Affordable Housing initiatives will have a positive impact on their businesses and the community as a whole.
 - Develop public-private Affordable Housing partnerships and coalitions that can benefit the business as well as the community.
- Develop Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) for the community.
- Research potential for Opportunity Zones in Central Louisiana for use in housing development.
- Develop credit repair services/programs for the community.

- Community education related to: personal financial responsibility, credit, money management, homeownership costs, etc.
- Re-brand “Affordable Housing” in the community by creating awareness of all aspects of Affordable Housing as well as the need for and impact of additional Affordable Housing in the area, beyond government and subsidized housing. Use specific terms like “elderly housing, worker housing, etc.” Educate the general public to dispel misconceptions about Affordable Housing programs and participants.