

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Build Baton Rouge Receives Federal Investment to Launch Strategic Plan for Economic Development in North Baton Rouge**

*Baton Rouge, LA — September 19, 2025* — Build Baton Rouge, the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority, announced today that it has received critical federal support, in the amount of \$140,000, from the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) to develop a comprehensive strategic plan that will improve economic development and quality of life in North Baton Rouge, a historically underserved and economically distressed area. This effort is supported through DRA's Strategic Planning Program, which recently provided a \$1.8 million investment across the Delta Region in infrastructure and planning projects that address pressing community and economic needs.

The North Baton Rouge Strategic Plan will provide a roadmap to address longstanding challenges and create new opportunities for residents. The plan will:

- Assess land use and infrastructure to identify development opportunities.
- Optimize the use of two catalyst sites to attract employers and service providers.
- Explore the feasibility of recruiting anchor institutions such as a grocery store and healthcare center.
- Identify workforce training opportunities aligned with high-growth sectors, including healthcare, clean energy, construction, and retail.
- Advance broadband access and digital literacy to close the digital divide.
- Improve public transit connectivity to expand access to jobs and services.

Community engagement will be central to the process. Residents will shape priorities through community gatherings, interviews, and surveys that include youth, neighborhood leaders, small business owners, and university partners. Their input will ensure strategies reflect local needs, build trust, and strengthen support for implementation.

“North Baton Rouge is home to extraordinary talent and potential, but persistent barriers have limited access to jobs, services, and economic opportunity,” said Deidre Deculus Robert, President & CEO of Build Baton Rouge. “This plan will chart a new course, one that puts residents at the center, aligns resources across institutions, and creates pathways for long-term, inclusive growth.”

The need for targeted investment is urgent. North Baton Rouge's unemployment rate is 7.6%, significantly higher than parish and national averages. Median household incomes range from \$23,500 to \$29,400, and more than 40% of residents live below the poverty line. Labor force participation is just 54.5%, and residents face commute times of 22–28 minutes, signaling limited transit options and job accessibility.

By addressing these challenges, the strategic plan will benefit residents, particularly low-income families by expanding pathways to employment, education, healthcare, and essential services. It

will also strengthen local businesses and public agencies through coordinated investment, contributing to long-term, inclusive economic resilience.

“Through investments like this, DRA is proud to support communities like North Baton Rouge as they work to strengthen infrastructure, expand access to opportunity, and build sustainable economies,” said Dr. Corey Wiggins, Federal Co-Chairman of the Delta Regional Authority. “This strategic plan will serve as a foundation for transformational growth ensuring residents, businesses, and institutions can thrive together.”

“This partnership reflects the power of collaboration between local leaders and federal agencies,” said Rodney Braxton, Chair of the Build Baton Rouge Board of Commissioners. Braxton added, “Build Baton Rouge’s focus on equity and resident engagement makes this initiative especially meaningful, and we look forward to seeing its impact on the region.”

Regional collaboration will play a key role in the planning process. Partners include East Baton Rouge Parish government, Regional Planning Commission, Southern University, Baton Rouge North Economic Development District, Area Chambers, workforce development agencies, and health and food equity partners. Together, these organizations will align resources and ensure that the plan advances shared goals outlined in DRA’s Regional Development Plan IV.

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### **About Build Baton Rouge**

Build Baton Rouge is the redevelopment authority for East Baton Rouge Parish, working to eliminate blight, drive equitable economic development, and create sustainable opportunities for all residents. Through planning, partnerships, and direct investment, Build Baton Rouge transforms underutilized land and strengthens communities to ensure inclusive growth across the parish. Learn more at [www.buildbatonrouge.org](http://www.buildbatonrouge.org).

### **About the Delta Regional Authority**

The DRA was established in 2000 as a federal-state partnership to promote and encourage economic development in the eight-state Delta region. DRA invests in projects that support job creation, improve infrastructure, and advance regional competitiveness, with the goal of strengthening communities and creating long-term growth. Learn more at [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov).

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