



# Southside Economic Development District Plan

Parish of Ouachita  
City of Monroe, LA

**BRINGING  
COMMUNITIES  
TOGETHER**







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Parish of Ouachita  
City of Monroe, LA**

**Submitted to the Monroe City Council**

**April 2022**



***Bringing Communities Together!***

The successful development of this project was made possible by individuals who contributed their time and expertise for the expressed purpose of making the Southside a better community to live, work, and visit. The SEDD and City of Monroe would like to express its appreciation to those individuals and residents who provided invaluable time and input.

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*The mission of the Southside Economic Development District is to provide a path out of poverty for district residents by improving economic opportunities, critical infrastructure and access to capital, and neighborhood improvement resources.*

### **Executive Summary**

The City of Monroe, Louisiana, located along the Ouachita River, is ranked among the top small cities to do business, according to Forbes magazine. Today, Monroe thrives on business, Industrial practices, and higher education. Monroe is the home of several major corporations. Nevertheless, almost all new development is located in the northern and adjoining sectors of the city, bypassing the City's southern sector.

The development of Monroe's Southside reflects decades-long missed opportunities for community investment and socio-economic segregation.

This plan reflects the City of Monroe's effort to reverse the downward trends that have crippled its Southside by investing in projects that promote the economic growth of the district while at the same time addressing many of the root causes of its economic decline.

The plan is directly based on the needs of the community as expressed in its mission. The plan has had direct input by the Southside Board of commissioners, clergy, and representatives of the disenfranchised. Their input has been invaluable to the process.

The recommendations in the plan are divided into two groups: Five Project areas designed to stimulate economic growth activities action items and two project areas designed to stimulate opportunities for promoting safe communities and improved "Quality of Life" for residents.

### **The History of SEDD**

The Louisiana State Senate created the Southside Economic Development District in response to legislative initiative of then Senator Charles D. Jones (D. 34) and then Rep. Willie Hunter Jr. (D.17). The legislation gave governess powers to a board of commissioners that manages and guides the program.

The legislation, included in Senate Bill Number 990, clearly states that the SEDD Board shall prepare or cause to be prepared a plan or plans specifying the public improvements, facilities, and services proposed to be furnished, constructed, or acquired shall conduct public hearings, publish notices with respect thereto, and disseminate such information assist, In the exercise of its sound discretion, may deem to be appropriate or advisable and in the public interest.

The first action of the board is development of a plan that can be used to guide the Southside district's energy, time, and dollars. In June of 2003, the district submitted its first plan to the Monroe City Council and it was approved.

This plan updates the 2003 plan by addressing the present economic development needs of the district as well as addressing some of the underlying social issues that contribute to the district's decline.



## Demographic Profile of Monroe, Louisiana

Monroe is a city located in Ouachita Parish Louisiana. With a 2020 population of 47,702, it is the 8th largest city in Louisiana and the 863rd largest city in the United States. Spanning over 33 miles, Monroe has a population density of 1,562 people per square mile.

The average household income in Monroe is \$55,538 with a poverty rate of 36.82%. The median rental costs in recent years comes to \$702 per month, and the median house value is \$139,600. The median age in Monroe is 32.7 years, 30.7 years for males, and 34.5 years for females.

### Monroe Demographics

According to the most recent ACS, the racial composition of Monroe, Louisiana was:

- Black or African American: 62.2%
- White: 33.92%
- Other race: 1.92%
- Two or more races: 0.99%
- Asian: 0.85%
- Native American: 0.17%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.00%

| Name             | Median   | Mean     |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Households       | \$30,438 | \$55,538 |
| Families         | \$38,374 | \$71,106 |
| Married Families | \$75,089 | -        |
| Non-Families     | \$21,210 | \$33,595 |





## **SEDD's 25-Year Action Plan**

The SEDD will pursue a plan of action detailed within to achieve its goals. This plan creates a framework for attracting public and private investment within the community, improving existing infrastructure, protecting natural resources, providing linkages to other areas of the City, community promotion, and preserving qualities associated with community character. At the same time, it will encourage resident stakeholders to invest in the community. These actions will require developing partnerships with various public, private, and non-profit entities, both locally and at the state level.

In addition, these actions allow the community to leverage funding and prioritize projects based on community needs and funding availability.

The SEDD's Goals, listed below, are the basis for all action items. Each action item lists which goals it helps to achieve. While all actions and steps share equal importance in achieving the Southside's goals and objectives, *the first five goals are the district's top priority.*

*The SEDD will appoint committees indicated in this plan, according to its approved bylaws and procedures.*

### **Southside Community Goals**

- Retail Creation and Expansion DBEs
- Training Opportunities for disabled women and minorities
- Infrastructure improvements to encourage economic growth
- Access to Capital
- Safe Neighborhoods
- Studies and Partnerships
- Housing



## **GOAL 1:**

### **ACQUISITION OF LAND AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE DISTRICT**

**OBJECTIVE: To increase homeownership in the district and the quality of rental properties.**

#### **Action Plan**

SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will:

- a. Acquire or develop land, easements, rights of ways, construction, conversion, or renovation of acquired properties, plants, machinery, equipment of access to streets that will result in creation of increased affordable housing in the district.
- b. Assist applicants to participate in federal programs to establish subdivisions.
- c. Partner with the City of Monroe and existing homeownership training programs to assist with recruitment and funding.
- d. Help underwrite the costs of studies that will help the city expand affordable housing in the community.

Estimated Costs:

\$5 million

## GOAL 2:

### RETAIL CREATION AND EXPANSION OF DBES

**OBJECTIVE:** To identify and increase the involvement of racial minorities, women, and other Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, in opportunities for the creation of economic programs and procurement activities.

**STRATEGY:** The SEDD will appoint sub-committees charged to **identify and plan ways to increase DBE and retail opportunities.**

#### Action Plan:

1. SEDD will appoint a DBE sub-committee composed of board members and resident stakeholders.
  - a. The committee will develop a database of all DBEs within the district, Metropolitan Monroe and within Senate District 34.
  - b. The subcommittee will be responsible to partner with a local group. Economic development entity, or university to fund and begin Initial development of an annual Monroe area commercial real estate market report. The sub-committee would serve as an oversight body with limited responsibilities defined by the Southside board.
  - c. The sub-committee will work with partners in the development of data sets, the review of criteria for measuring accuracy and analysis, and document content. The partnership should determine the scope of the market report and determine the criteria used to analyze and maintain accuracy.
  - d. The partnership should begin creation of a base commercial real estate market data set used for measuring future trends.
  - e. The subcommittee will **produce a commercial real estate market report that will list and categorize DBEs physically located in Districts 3, 4, and 5.**
2. The sub-committee will plan and recommend programs to:
  - a. Promote and advertise DBEs.
  - b. Development methods to help local industries diversity procurement among DBEs.
  - c. Increase women and DBEs in construction, technical services and as commodity vendors.
  - d. Acquire or develop land, easements, right of ways, construction conversion, renovation of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access to streets and roads; parking areas and utilities for business expansion in Districts 3, 4 and 5.
  - e. Develop methods to provide **automatic alerts to women, minorities and other DBEs when RFPs and participation opportunities are available.**
  - f. Study and recommend the establishment of DBE incubator and startups in Districts 3,4 and 5.
  - g. Provide license instruction and assistance for DBE participation in local, state and federal procurements and contracts.
  - h. Business plan development for DBEs.
  - i. Promote networking opportunities for DBEs.
  - j. Leadership and Entrepreneur Training Workshops for DBEs.

#### Estimated Costs:

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Assistance to DBE Creation and internet Opportunities | \$ 60,000   |
| Programs to promote and advertise DBEs                | \$ 50,000   |
| Programs to diversify procurements among DBEs         | \$ 100,000  |
| Programs to acquire for business expansion            | \$6,000,000 |
| Programs for DBEs in construction, incubators, etc    | \$1,000,000 |
| Programs to promote DBE Networking                    | \$ 50,000   |

### GOAL 3:

#### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABLED, WOMEN AND RACIAL MINORITIES

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide training opportunities for women, DBEs and racial minorities in Districts 3,4 and 5 designed to help them own and operate businesses and learn technology skills for job retention in the workforce.

#### STRATEGY:

The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee charged with developing training opportunities for DBEs and resident stakeholders.

#### Action Plan:

1. SEDD will appoint a DBE sub-committee composed of board members and resident stakeholders.

The committee will develop and recommend programs to:

- a. Retrain displaced workers (Cooperate with existing programs by providing transportation assistance and childcare).
- b. Develop technology based economic development programs.
- c. Empowerment programs for the poor, unemployed and disenfranchised. To help overcome barriers caused by lack of transportation, childcare, etc.
- d. Promote participation in existing distant adult learning programs by eliminating barriers caused by the lack of transportation, childcare, equipment, internet access, etc.
- e. Promote youth and young adult DBE training programs and assistance.

2. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to renovate and equip its existing headquarters to function as a site to train displaced workers, meet with prospective entrepreneurs and to house incubator labs.

#### Estimated: Costs

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Programs for retraining of displaced workers  | \$300,000 |
| Distant learning and job training             | \$ 50,000 |
| Technology based economic development         | \$ 50,000 |
| Empowerment programs for the poor, unemployed | \$100,000 |
| Youth DBE                                     | \$ 75,000 |
| Renovation of Existing headquarters           | \$500,000 |

## GOAL 4:

### PROMOTION OF PROJECTS TO IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS TO ENTERPRISE SITES, BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AND SAFETY

OBJECTIVE: To plan and execute projects that will provide infrastructure improvements to present and prospective enterprise sites, improve lighting, promote business opportunities and create **safe pedestrian walkways in districts 3, 4, and 5.**

#### GOAL:

The SEDD will develop a master plan for infrastructure improvements targeted for the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo, Enterprise sites, and Pedestrian walkways. Through these subcommittees the board will plan and execute projects to achieve this goal.

#### Action Plan:

The SEDD will appoint three subcommittees, each charged with studying and recommending infrastructure related projects: Acquisitions and Improvements, Lighting and Pedestrian walkways.

#### Action Steps:

1. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will study and recommend ways to assist the city with improvements and enhancements to the **Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo**. The Louisiana purchase Gardens and Zoo is an established asset within the Southside community. This facility has the possibility to be an even greater attraction to draw people from Monroe and from throughout the region to the Southside with the potential to create spin-off businesses catering to visitors and jobs for community residents. This facility should capitalize off its name and take the next step to expand its intended purpose by becoming a center of recreation, learning and information for the general community. To accomplish this goal SEDD will pursue the following plan of action in cooperation with the City of Monroe.

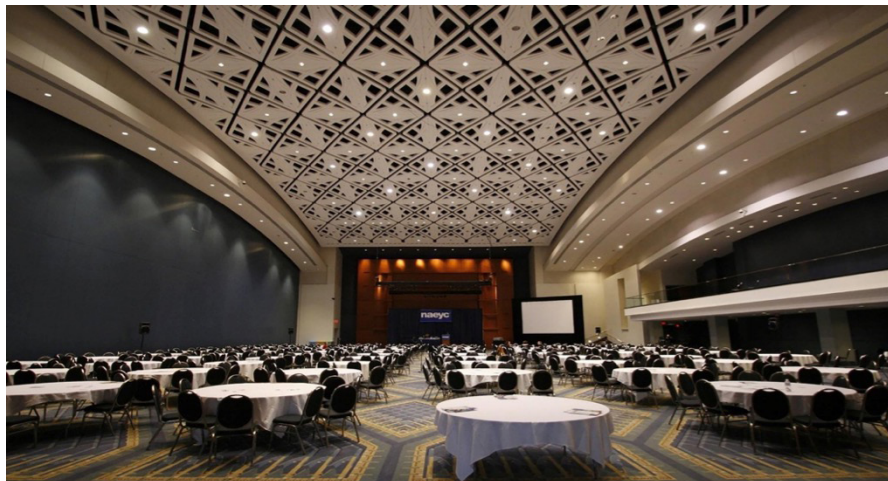


**Objective:** To assist the city in expanding, maintain and increasing the traffic at the Zoo in ways that will measurably increase its use and value to the city and surrounding neighborhoods.

The subcommittee will:

- a. Study ways to partner with the City of Monroe, the Louisiana Purchase Zoological Society and botanical organizations to enhance the Gardens of the Zoo as a possible tourist attraction. The committee will study ways focus on developing and maintaining the gardens and other botanical aspects of the zoo in ways that will attract visitors.
- b. Will explore the development of ways to enhance tourism at the Zoo by use of sponsored pavilions, live enactments, heritage celebrations unique to the area such as Black History month, St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and others.
- c. Explore development of an IMAX theater and museum to increase traffic.
- d. Study and plan for the acquisition of properties bordering the Zoo to create a fairway and buffer, effectively creating a loop around the zoo.
- e. Hiring of a planning organization to develop a Park and Exhibit Master Plan.
- f. Partner with the Ouachita Parish and the City of Monroe's Transportation Department to enhance Bernstein Park east to US Highway 165. To provide greater access to the zoo.
- g. Partner with Monroe's transportation department to enhance Wilson Street to South 2nd Street from Standifer Avenue to downtown Monroe to provide greater access to the zoo.
- h. Partnering with national and international organizations and exhibits with shared focus related to the Louisiana Purchase.

2. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will study the feasibility of establishing **a convention center in South Monroe** to serve Southside residents and business owners in their daily needs and foster a commercial town square development that is identifiable with the SEDD. In addition to the town square development, SEDD will endeavor to bring live entertainment and theater shows to the southside that would show our rich culture and heritage.



**GOAL:**

The following action steps will create a quality development pattern that will provide employment opportunities in the Southside for this land use. The strategy, and resulting action steps, provides; Statewide identification, quality data (population, market, services, and community) gathering, Southside community support, Police Sub-station, supporting infrastructure system and infrastructure upgrades, and a preliminary location analysis.

**Action Plan:**

1. The subcommittee will **develop a plan to own or partner with a hotel or other entity to own or build the facility.**
2. The subcommittee development leadership teams that explore the necessary components to achieve the goal. The team should at a minimum consist of the following:
  - a. Realtor
  - b. Architect
  - c. Engineer
3. The subcommittee will review and update previous board action toward implementation of this project.
4. The subcommittee will review various development tools such as the grants, subordinate debt, opportunity zones, new market tax credits and other state and federal incentives will be used to minimize cost to a reasonable amount.

Approximate costs are estimated as follows and will require additional development up the approval of final program.

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Facility Improvement (pre-design estimate) ..... | \$ 350,000.00               |
| 2. Land purchase .....                              | \$2,000,000.00              |
| 3. Site improvements .....                          | \$ 500,000.00               |
| 4. Building Cost .....                              | \$5,500,000.00              |
| 5. FF&E .....                                       | <u>\$1,200,000.00</u>       |
|   |                             |
| a. Total cost to construct the facility .....       | \$9,550,000.00              |
| b. Incentives, tax credits, grants.....             | <b>\$3,500,000.00</b>       |
| c. Bond financing from hotel tax.....               | <b>\$1,400,000.00</b>       |
| d. Branding revenues .....                          | <u><b>\$ 500,000.00</b></u> |

Total Cost after incentives, tax credits, grants, hotel tax bonding, branding \$4,050,000.00

3. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will study and promote the development of a **Renwick Street Business Corridor from South of Carroll Jr. High School to Powell Avenue.**

**Objective:** To develop the Renwick Street business corridor in such a way that it is attractive to investors. To achieve the goal some acquisitions may be necessary, as well as infrastructure improvements, and matching funds for necessary capital outlay.

The subcommittee will:

- a. Conduct a study of methods, uses and particulars of developing a business corridor along Renwick Street South of Carroll Jr. High to Powell Avenue.
- b. Recommended the acquisition land and installation of infrastructure improvements to facilitate development of the corridor.

4. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will study ways to provide **enhanced access to Opportunity Zones at Texas Avenue, Highway 165 and along the Ouachita River South of Interstate 20.**

**Objective:** There are three Opportunity Zones in the District that are presently not used. The objective is to focus on developing the zones with infrastructure improvements and leveraged funding in a way that the maximize their attractiveness to potential investors.

The Subcommittee will:

- a. Study ways to improve the Texas Avenue Roadway by closing open ditches and widening roadways.
- b. Maximize capital outlay plans for improvements to Texas Avenue.
- c. Explore grants to obtain state, federal or investor funding.
- d. Explore ways to hire a private consultant to study the current conditions of the Southside thoroughfares and begin execution of the proposed plan.
- e. Explore ways to enhance infrastructure for opportunity zone properties along Highway 165 and the Ouachita River Corridor within the district.

5. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will study ways to attract major investors in opportunity zones by improving infrastructure, and access roads targeting **a bank branch, grocery store outlet and a U.S. Post Office Branch.**



**Objective:** To provide infrastructure improvements and other incentives that will be assist SEDD's efforts to attract commercial establishments such as bank branches, grocery store and a branch of the U.S. Postal service.

The Subcommittee will:

- a. Study ways to attract major retailers to the district through infrastructure improvements.
- b. Promote high speed internet access availability to attract commercial and governmental establishments.

6. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to develop and implement a master planned **riverside intermodal facility** in the southern tip of the Southside designed for the loading and unloading of containers and trailers for the subsequent movement of goods on the streets, railroad, or river barges that would enhance job opportunities and development of associated industrial and distribution parks.





**Strategy:**

The Ouachita River runs along the western stretch of the City of Monroe and the Southside community and holds much potential for economic expansion with the community, City, Ouachita Parish, and the region. In addition, the US Highway 165 corridor, and the Union Pacific Railroad both run parallel to the river’s eastern side.

To foster economic development opportunities, the SEDD working with local and state authorities and local utility companies should examine the merits of developing a river port and intermodal facility along the Ouachita River’s eastern side where US Highway 165 and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks come to proximity.

**Action Plan:**

The Subcommittee will:

- a. Create a sub-committee within the SEDD to work with City and State officials, the Corps of Engineers, and officials with the Union Pacific Railroad and the Kansas City Southern Railroad in identifying and analyzing appropriate sites for a river port and intermodal facility.
- b. Perform a market study and feasibility study of the various development sites and their economic Impact to the City and the Southside with regards to job creation and tax revenue.
- c. Select a preferred site.
- d. Develop a master land use plan and zoning plan for the port/intermodal facility.

**Estimated Costs:**

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Access and improvements to Zoo                    | \$ 500,000  |
| Access improvements to Wilson St. Corridor        | \$ 250,000  |
| Acquisition and infrastructure Renwick Projects   | \$1,600,000 |
| Acquisition for Post Office, bank, Grocers        | \$5,000.000 |
| Development of Intermodal Facility                | \$1,000.000 |
| Infrastructure surrounding Opportunity Zone Sites | \$1,500.000 |

7. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to **take Economic Advantage of Southside's Proximity to I-20.**



**Goal:**

**Capitalize on the economic potential of the Southside's proximity to interstate 20 corridor** by performing a market study of the corridor's development possibilities and instituting quality controls and transportation enhancements.

**Strategy:**

The Interstate 20 corridor (between the Ouachita River on the west to US Highway 165 on the east and the Kansas City Southern Railroad tracks to the North to 1,000 feet from the right-of-way to the south). Runs east-west through the middle of the City of Monroe and Southside. This freeway corridor serves as the major gateway into the City of Monroe and the Southside District. Corridor development along interstate 20 in the area around Pecanland Mall has been achieved through efforts of the Interstate 20 Economic Development District and through the use of frontage roads, especially along the north side of the freeway.

The use of frontage roads provides easy access to the retail, eating, and lodging establishment as well as visibility that retailers demand from well-traveled highways. In the Southside, the Interstate 20 corridor represents an economic opportunity that needs to be developed further, especially within and adjacent to the Southside District boundaries.

Within the Southside, there are few if any frontage roads along Interstate 20 that would help to foster business development and to spur economic growth. To help foster growth in the Southside along Interstate 20, the SEDD should partner with other local and regional interest (such as a downtown association, Interstate 20 Economic Development District, City of Monroe, Ouachita Parish, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, local school systems, Monroe Chamber of Commerce, and Ouachita Economic Development Corporation) to enhance and assess any opportunities the corridor could generate.

**Action Plan:**

1. The SEDD Board will appoint an Interstate 20 / US Highway 165 sub-committee to study, review and recommend matters pertaining to maximizing the economic potential Interstate 20 corridor.
2. The sub-committee also would be responsible for identifying and developing partnership with the purpose of finding common goals and developing linkages. The sub-committee’s main goals are to coordinate and develop economic opportunities in the Southside portion of the Interstate 20 corridor.
3. The sub-committee will be responsible for overseeing the establishment of guidelines for promoting infrastructure improvements along the Interstate 20 corridor within SEDD.
4. The sub-committee will identify key partners with a personal stake in the economic potential of the Interstate 20 corridor that will actively participated in aesthetic improvements and regular maintenance along the Interstate 20 corridor. Collaborating with known partners, the sub-committee will identify specific locations along the Southside’s Interstate 20 corridor for improvements and maintenance.
5. The sub-committee will be responsible for developing a database of all landowners along southside’s interstate 20 corridors for improvements and Maintenance.
6. The sub-committee will be review qualifications and make recommendations to the board for services to perform a market study of the Interstate 20 corridor to explore various scenarios for development and its economic impact for the city and the Southside with regards to tax revenue and job creation.
7. The sub-committee will be review qualifications and make recommendations to the board for services to perform a master land use plan, urban design plan, and overlay zoning district committee plan along the corridor.
8. The sub-committee will be review qualifications and make recommendations to the board for services to develop a transportation enhancement plan along the interstate 20 right-of-way.
9. The sub-committee will identify and make recommendations to the board for a key interchange to jump-start primary investment by both public and private entities.

**Infrastructure Improvements (pre-design estimate)**

|                                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Access & Frontage Road Improvements | \$ 19 Million       |
| Drainage Improvements               | \$ 5 million        |
| Local Signage & Wayfinding          | <u>\$ 5 Million</u> |
|                                     | \$24.5 Million      |

**Partnerships:**

- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
- Louisiana Department of Economic Development
- City of Monroe
- Ouachita Parish
- Interstate 20 Economic Development District
- Downtown Economic Development District
- Monroe Chamber of Chamber of Commerce

8. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to study and execute plans to **attract light industrial, distribution or manufacturing entities to the district.**



**Goal:**

Expand production and trade employment opportunities for Southside residents by identifying locations for attracting light industrial, distribution, and manufacturing developments within and adjacent to the Southside community.

**Strategy:**

The following strategy will create a quality development pattern that will provide employment opportunities in the Southside for this land use. The strategy, and resulting action steps, provides; Statewide identification, quality data (population, market, and community), Southside community support, supporting infrastructure systems and infrastructure upgrades, and a preliminary location analysis.

**Action Plan:**

1. Complete and adopt the Southside Economic Development Plan. This document will provide the strategic focus for creating a development focus and leveraging state-wide economic development funds for implementation.
2. Create a more detailed data base which is specific to this land use / development type.
3. With The aid of the State of Louisiana create a plan that provide development incentives for light industrial / distribution / manufacturing developments in the Southside.
4. SEDD and the State of Louisiana will solicit state-wide light industrial development companies to the Southside through an RFP (request for proposal) process.

**Estimated Cost:**

Land and infrastructure cost \$15,000,000.00 (Fifteen Million Dollars)  
Estimated grants, tax credits, opportunity zone investments and partnerships \$7,500,000.00  
Investment of SEDD funds for studies and grant writers, etc. \$150,000.00

9. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to study the feasibility of building a **regional sports and water recreational amenity in the district.**



**Goal:**

Seek a regional recreational amenity convenient to Southside residents to provide seasonal employment opportunities and recreational and recreational choices and attract development potential for establishments that cater to tournament play, such as restaurants, retail, and lodging.

**Strategy:**

The Southside has several recreational centers within the community providing limited indoor and outdoor activities. Other indoor and outdoor facilities in the Southside are limited to those found at public schools, at Bernstein Park, and at King Oaks/Robinson Place Park. In the City of Monroe and the surrounding region scheduled sporting events and recreational activities are held at available parks and school facilities. A regional sports and water recreational complex located in the Southside community should be considered. This would provide expanded activities for youths, adults, and families, attract regional scheduled competitions, plan for traffic movement, and attract establishments catering to visiting teams to visiting teams and fans (such as restaurants, hotels, and sporting goods retailers).

**Action Plan:**

1. Create a sports and recreation sub-committee within the SEDD responsible for pursuing the development of a regional sports and water recreational complex in the Southside.
2. Partner with the City of Monroe to fund both a market and feasibility study for development of a regional sports and water recreational complex.

Costs: Feasibility studies and market studies

\$100,000

10. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to explore and plan for the **creation and promotion of a Southside Entertainment District.**



**Goal:**

To establish an entertainment district with special permits for mixed development purposes whose result would be to attract tax dollars that are presently dwindling because of online and virtual activities.

**Strategy:**

By taking advantage of the lack of entertainment to the east of Monroe Louisiana and the SEDD District, the Board would hope to encourage a broader “Critical Mass” of shopping looking for ways to entertain their families and friends. The strategy would be to bring shoppers into Monroe and to keep local dollars in the Monroe area. When Pecanland Mall was in its hay-day it was reported by the Green Report that the mall brought in over 990,000 shoppers per year. With the advent of internet an Entertainment District would create a different type of spending in Monroe that cannot be duplicated over the internet.

- a. The Subcommittee will explore ways to carve out areas within the district that can be promoted for mixed-use development including hospitality, recreation, and entertainment.
- b. Explore the use of lands South of interstate 20 or within the boundaries of SEDD, to promote sustainable economic development through creation of the entertainment district.
- c. The subcommittee will work with city planners for SEDD to provide special permits within the entertainment district for a mixture of retail, hospitality, recreational, entertainment, commercial and other compatible uses on large tracts of land in order to foster greater opportunity for the construction of quality developments by providing flexible guidelines.
- d. The subcommittee will work with city government and state officials initiate the passage of necessary laws or ordinances to facilitate the district’s goals.

Estimated Planning Costs:                      \$150,000

Estimated Private Investment                \$100 million

11. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will plan ways to **expand broadband accessibility within the district.**

**Goal:**

The goal of the SEDD is to have accessible Broadband capabilities available to any area of the district. The Citizens, students, office workers and all will be able to be more productive at home, school and office.

**Strategy:**

To understand the need for more broadband efficiency in the district whereby inviting more businesses and industry to locate within the district. SEDD will also achieve greater communications by having broadband installed within our boundaries.

**Action Plan:**

The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee coordinate with the City of Monroe to develop strategies and methods to insure broadband access within the district.

The subcommittee will:

- a. Review and provide input on the city's broadband master plans.
- b. Identify methods to insure that the underserved have broadband access.
- c. Develop materials that will help businesses in the district understand how to take advantage of broadband opportunities.
- d. Recommend means of securing financing broadband installations for areas of the district not accessible to the city general access programs.

**Cost:**

- a. Broadband studies promotion \$50,000.00

## GOAL 5:

### PROMOTE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS THAT WILL IMPROVE ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR POTENTIAL AND EXISTING SOUTHSIDE BUSINESSES

**OBJECTIVE:** To plan and execute projects that will **increase the ability of Southside business startups, existing businesses and contractors to gain access to capital** and take advantage of available incentive programs.

#### Strategy:

SEDD will actively promote programs that will help businesses in the district to leverage their available funds by helping them take advantage of existing incentives in the public and private sector as well as providing micro-loan guarantees for emergencies when needed.

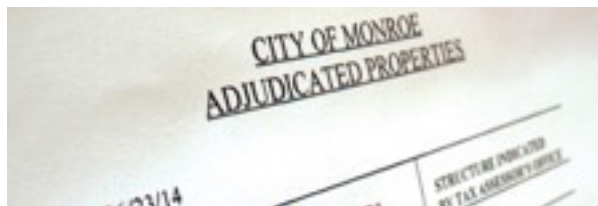
#### Action Plan:

1. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to implement this objective.

The Subcommittee will:

- a. Establish a **micro-loan program** for startups and existing businesses in District 3,4, 5.
- b. Establish a program of loan guarantees for new businesses or expanding businesses.
- c. Establish a **bond finance pool** to expand the bidding capabilities of DBE contractors.
- d. Develop programs to **leverage grant opportunities** for DBEs.
- e. Form partnerships to increase the availability of **venture capital for women, racial minorities, and DBEs.**
- f. Establish information banks that will help business take advantage of **tax credits available in Enterprise Zones, Opportunity Zones, and special taxing districts.**
- g. Develop programs that will help potential businesses take advantage of and **leverage funding from the Community Reinvestment Act.**
- h. Programs that will enhance the ability of **DBEs to participate in the public and private procurement activities** of local governments and corporations.

2. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee help district **stakeholders acquire surplus city properties.**



- a. The subcommittee will work with the city to streamline some of its policies to make it possible for more **district stakeholders, especially the poor, to become landowners** through the purchase of adjudicated properties.
- b. The subcommittee will assist stakeholders in the particulars of **new construction especially in older neighborhoods to improve area perceptions.**



3. SEDD will develop and implement an **intermediary lending program** in partnership with local banking institutions.



**Goal:**

Provide Southside businesses and residents with convenient and much needed access to capital.

**Strategy:**

By utilizing funds and guarantees provided through SBA, SEDD, Grants, and other Governmental bodies and or individuals and companies.

Local minority businesses face challenges when it comes to loans, guarantees, financial literacy, and mentoring our particular minority community.

Monroe's Southside minority businesses are under capitalized and in need of assistance.

**Action Plan:**

1. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee to seek out ways to develop an Intermediary Relending program by-way of cooperative endeavor agreements with lending institutions.
2. The committee will oversee the development the rules and regulation by which the relending program should operate.
3. The committee will seek special counsel to give advice on the establishment of the program and the legalities of public provide investments of this type.
4. The committee will study the strengths and weaknesses of similar programs with information gathered from:
  - a. North Delta
  - b. Winnsboro's micro loan program
  - c. Monroe Empowerment community (Gene Tarver)

5. The Committee will study the following concerns related to lending program
  - a. Area of Operation
  - b. Eligibility of Applicants
  - c. Eligible uses of funds
  - d. Ineligible uses of funds
  - e. Loan Purposes
  - f. Loan Terms
  - g. Loan Fees
  - h. Interest rates
  - i. Security
  - j. Equipment and Personal Property
  - k. Real Property
  - l. Personal Guarantees
  - m. Abundance of Collateral properties
  - n. Loan Limits

**Partnerships:**

Minority owned Businesses  
 Dept of Economic Development (if possible)  
 Small Business Development Center (if possible)

**Action Plan:**

- Partner with the City of Monroe’s Planning and Zoning to streamline policies.
- Work to streamline permit and entitlement process.
- Work to achieve fairness in fees and costs to first time participants.

**Estimated Cost:**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Loan Guarantees for Startups in Districts 3, 4, 5              | \$ 300,000  |
| Intermediary Lending Program                                   | \$1,000,000 |
| Micro-Loan Program   | \$ 100,000  |
| Bond Finance Pool for DBE Contractors                          | \$ 500,000  |
| Programs to assist DBE participation in procurements, contract | \$1,000,000 |

**GOAL 6:**  
**PROGRAMS TO REDUCE CRIME AND PROMOTE  
SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS IN DISTRICTS 3,4 AND 5**

**OBJECTIVE:** To help reduce opportunity for criminal activity through increased use of technology in the district, increased lighting, addition of police substations and programs to reduce delinquency and blight. In addition, the objective is to reduce crime through environmental design.

**Action Plan:**

1. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will Improve **pedestrian access, neighborhood security**, and the Southside's quality of life by creating and implementing a community-wide plan for the development of sidewalks and street lighting.



The subcommittee will:

- a. Review the City's current capital improvement program (CIP) for planned sidewalk and street lighting improvement projects. It will note any projects that are being targeted for the Southside, and leverage the SEDD Improvements with the City's plans. It will not duplicate any ongoing plans of the city. It will city standards for pedestrian sidewalks and street lights.
- b. Phase one maps to be developed to show residents the areas that will have Improvements.
- c. Develop a sub-committee within the SEDD that will oversee the pedestrian improvements and work as a liaison between the community and the City's public entities (Department of Public Works and Civil Engineering Department).
- d. The subcommittee, working with public officials, will identify and prioritize needs for these pedestrian Improvements.
- e. The subcommittee will develop the necessary documents and permits to construct the phase one improvements that include street lighting and/or pedestrian sidewalks and other enhancements. This will be done in conjunction with the city's Engineering department.
- f. The subcommittee will recommend ways to work with elected representatives, to share costs for design and construction of these projects to speed up implementation.

**Cost Estimates:**

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Design and Implement pedestrian sidewalks in Districts 3,4,5         | \$2 million per district          |
| Street, Walking trails, and intersection lighting in Districts 3,4,5 | \$3 million per district          |
|  | Total Estimated cost \$15 million |

2. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will explore ways to **reduce opportunities for crime** in the district through establishment of police substations in high crime areas.



The Subcommittee will:

- a. Work with the MPD and the Monroe Housing Authority to **activate police substations in and around public housing facilities** and in high density housing units.
- b. Work to establish and maintain **safe houses for latch key kids in districts 3, 4, and 5**. The Subcommittee will seek partnerships with major corporations and agencies to fund the safe houses.
- c. Work with MPD to **expand use of cameras in targeted high crime areas**.
- d. Seek local, state, federal and local funds to finance the substations through grants and matching contributions.

3. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will help **promote and inspire Southside Pride** through regular projects to remove blight and pollutants as well as promote beautification activities.



The Subcommittee will:

- a. Work with the Monroe Beautification Department and Botanical organizations to promote beautiful yards and neighborhoods.
- b. Will work with churches and civic organizations to establish regular clean up campaigns.
- c. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will engage neighborhood groups in programs that discourage delinquency, violence and criminal activity.

The Subcommittee will:

- i. Work with local youth groups provide matching funds for structured projects that promote finer womanhood and finer manhood among Southside Youth.
- ii. Promote youth adult programs that utilize the services of reformed offenders to mentor, guide and direct into non-violent and productive lifestyles.
- iii. Promote youth activities among the underserved that discourage violence, and criminal activity inclusive of sports, arts and organized competitions, inclusive of STEM training, robotics and coding.

4. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will initiate a YouthBuild program to promote development of marketable skills in the area of construction.

The subcommittee will:

- a. Work with established agencies and organization to help youth between 16-24 years of age develop marketable skills.
- b. Help eradicate the blight within the underserved communities that are currently disenfranchised.
- c. Foster partnerships with local businesses, community residents, education system, law enforcement, health care organizations, local, Federal and State Government, banks, and other stakeholders to bring about economic development to the above stated communities.
- d. Make youth bankable through financial literacy and coaching programs.
- e. Encourage and support homeownership through a first-time home buyer's program.
- f. Bring back into commerce the vacant and abandoned properties within the above stated communities, providing additional lighting, sidewalks, biking routes, rest areas, neighborhood watch program, establishing neighborhood police who live within the community.
- g. By training the youth in construction we will be better prepared in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. This will also provide our professional community with a workforce who is able to help in any recovery efforts.
- h. Promote healthy lifestyles and an enhanced quality of life through more outdoor activities.

The Subcommittee will coordinate with Northeast Louisiana universities and labor unions to train youth in established workstations to:

1. learn hands on brick masonry
2. Dry wall installation, Mudding
3. Installation of crown molding and baseboards
4. How to lay laminate, ceramic, wood and tile flooring
5. Setting door units and window units
6. Prepare our students for employment and provide each with a Certificate of Learning

The Subcommittee plan ways for students of the YouthBuild program to have hands-on training and onsite training.

- a. Students will be trained, with field coaches, on jobsites.
- b. Upon completion of the program students will be provided a tool belt with a hammer, utility knife, tape measurer, carpenter pencil, right angle ruler square and a T-Square, safety glasses and gloves and anything else needed to be prepared to go to work.

The Subcommittee plan ways for students of the YouthBuild program to learn money management skills and to become credit worthy.

- c. Students will be encouraged to open bank accounts and manage their finances based on the goals they have set for themselves.
- d. Students will be assisted and encouraged to look toward purchasing a home one day as a way of building wealth for themselves and their family.

5. The SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will plan and coordinate the **development of a health care district** with the boundaries of SEDD.

**Goal:**

Develop and implement a Master planned Healthcare District for the convenience of the people or citizens living in the district.

**Strategy:**

The SEDD will use intra-district incentives to attract health care providers to locate in an area east and west of South 2nd street within the SEDD boundaries.

**Action Plan:**

The subcommittee will:

- a. Plan the location and boundaries of the district.
- b. Conduct hearings, interviews and meetings with leaders and the healthcare community for input on district components.
- c. Develop policies and guidelines for district participants.
- d. Have oversight of the district under the direction of the SEDD board.

**Estimated Costs:**

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Lighting Programs in District 3, 4, and 5 | \$15,000,000 |
| Police Substations                        | \$ 4,000,000 |
| Safe Houses                               | \$ 1,000,000 |
| Youth Build                               | \$ 200,000   |
| Beautification Programs                   | \$ 100,000   |
| Youth Violence deterrents                 | \$ 500,000   |
| Ex-offender Mentors                       | \$ 500,000   |

**GOAL 7:**  
**STUDIES AND PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**



**OBJECTIVE:** To **undertake studies of socio-economics of the Southside** and to chart paths to capitalize on strengths and overcome weaknesses by forming partnerships with existing agencies and government agencies to leverage resources.

**Action Plan:**

1. SEDD will appoint a subcommittee that will:
  - a. Study ways to promote, expand, create, and fund economic opportunities in the district.
  - b. Conduct a disparity study of DBE participation in municipal government, Monroe City School and Ouachita Parish School procurements and contracts.
  - c. Studies that will help develop proactive measures to reduce the culture of violence in the district.
  - d. Study ways to attract major industries to South Monroe.
  - e. Studies that will show ways to reduce crime in the district as well as funding sources.
  - f. Studies of ways to improve the job readiness and available workforce within in the district.
  - g. Study the benefits of creation of a regional water park/sports complex in the district.

**Estimated Cost of all Studies**

**\$1.2 million**

### **Public Meetings Held**

Input for these projects is the result of meetings with members of the SEDD, members of the Monroe City Council, community leaders, Advocates for the disenfranchised and community stakeholders.

The meetings were used as a tool to gain a greater perspective from the citizens who live in the neighborhoods that will be affected by this plan.

A final public hearing was conducted on March 29,2022 via Zoom to get additional input for residents and stakeholders.

**Approved by Southside Economic Development District  
Board of Commissioners**

**In Regular Session**

**March 7, 2022**



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# Notes





# Southside Economic Development District Plan

City of Monroe, Louisiana  
Parish of Ouachita