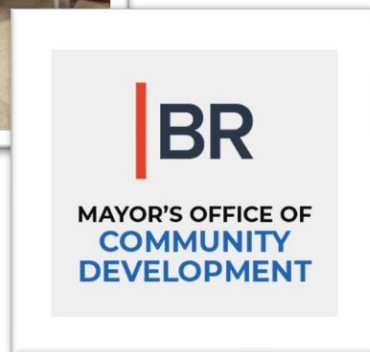


2025-2029 Consolidated Plan Community Engagement Summary Report



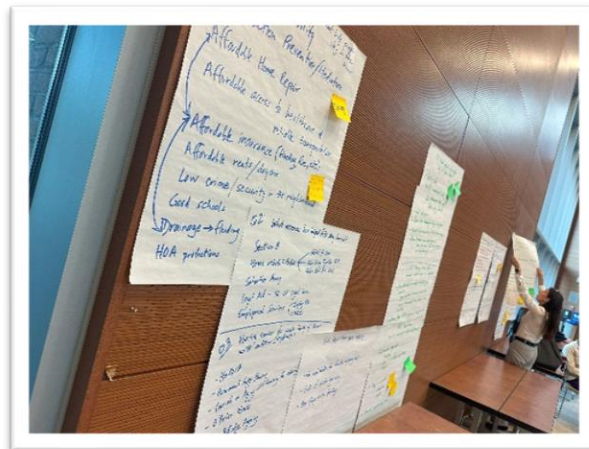
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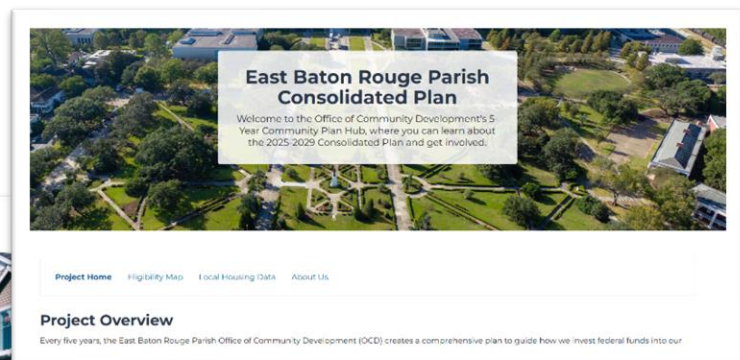
Community Workshops



Introduction

The citizen participation process for the East Baton Rouge Parish 2025–2029 HUD Consolidated Plan was designed to ensure inclusive and transparent community engagement, meeting both federal requirements and local priorities. The project was kicked off with a public project website in February 2025. The website provided citizens with project background, a project progress tracker, access to the community wide survey, local maps, and other documentation. The website included a language translation feature to accommodate non-English speakers.

Project information was also linked and available on the Office of Community Development's website. Community engagement included a community-wide survey, four focus group meetings where local stakeholders and community leaders were invited to attend, and two public community engagement workshops. While the community engagement process will not be completed until after the Consolidated Report public comment period, this report provides a summary of the results from the survey, focus group meeting, and the public community engagement workshops.



Social media flyer and project website homepage.

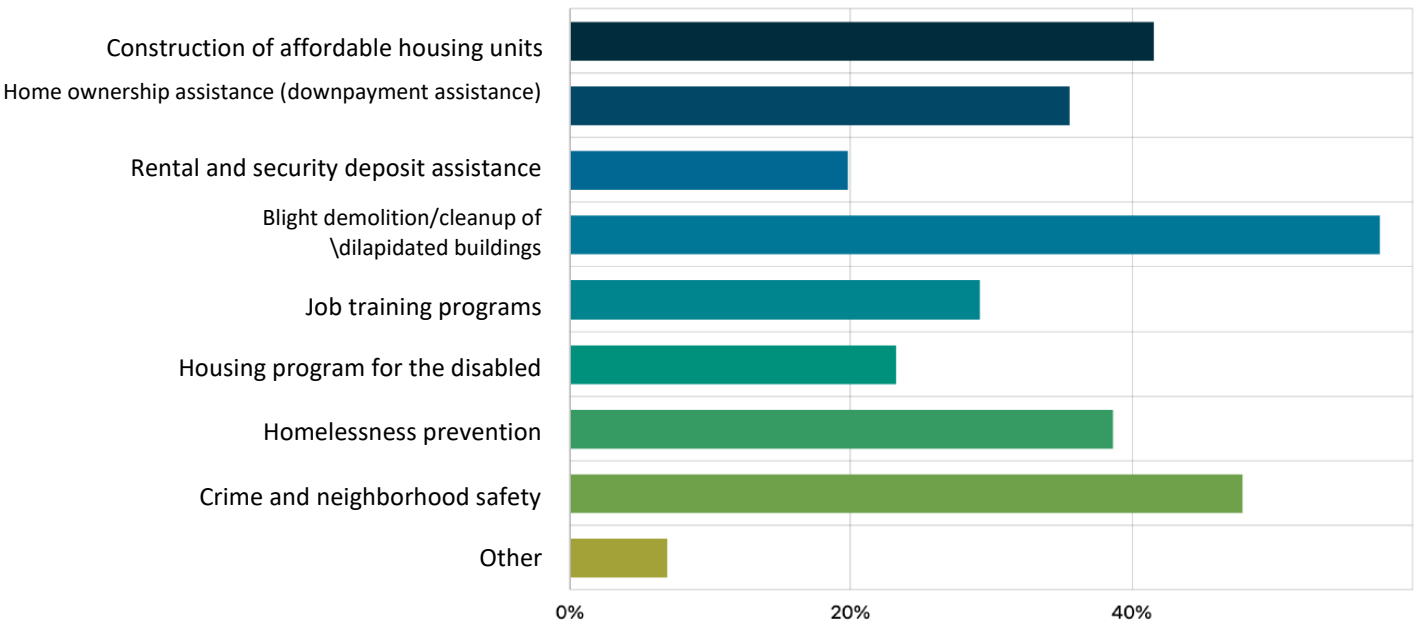


Community Survey

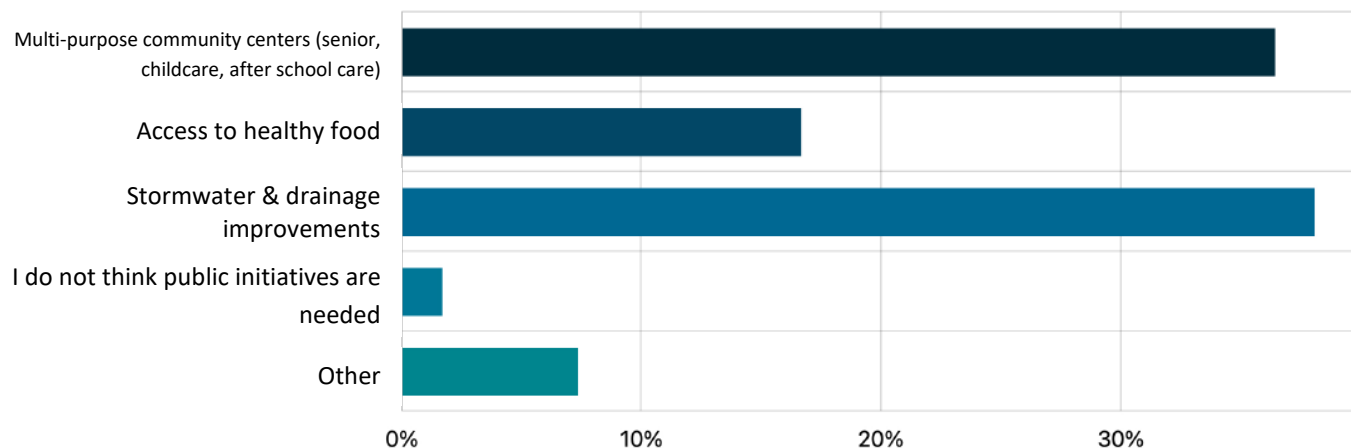
A community survey was conducted from April 4 through May 19, 2025. The survey was disseminated via social media, tabling at partner events, announced at public hearings, and directly from the Office of Community Development and local community leaders. The survey consisted of 12 questions set up as multiple choice, and one open-ended question. There were a total of **489 responses**. The multiple-choice question response rate ranged from 96.9% - 99.8% and the open-ended question had a response rate of 49.5%.

Below, you will find the community survey questions along with the responses provided by community members.

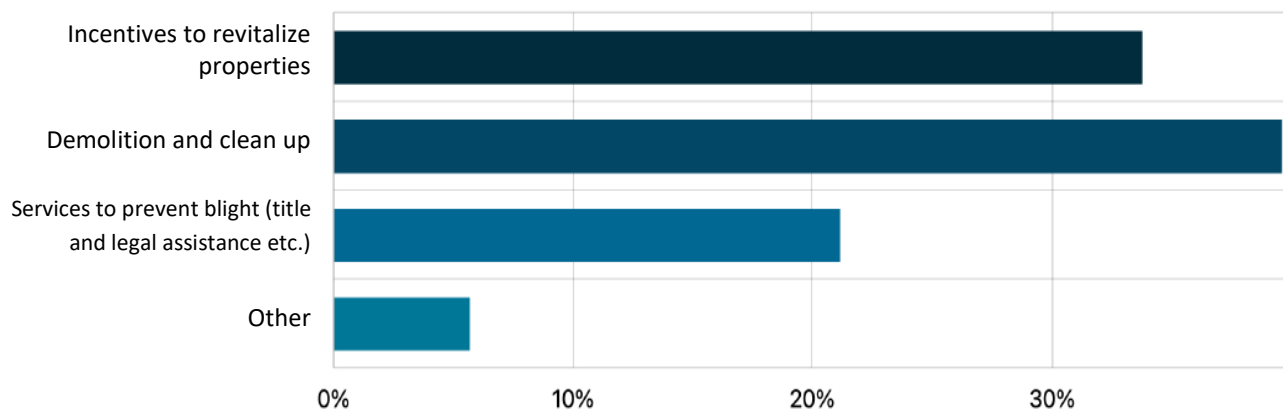
In your opinion, how should HUD grant funding be used to address community needs?



What type of public initiatives would you recommend be funded using grants?



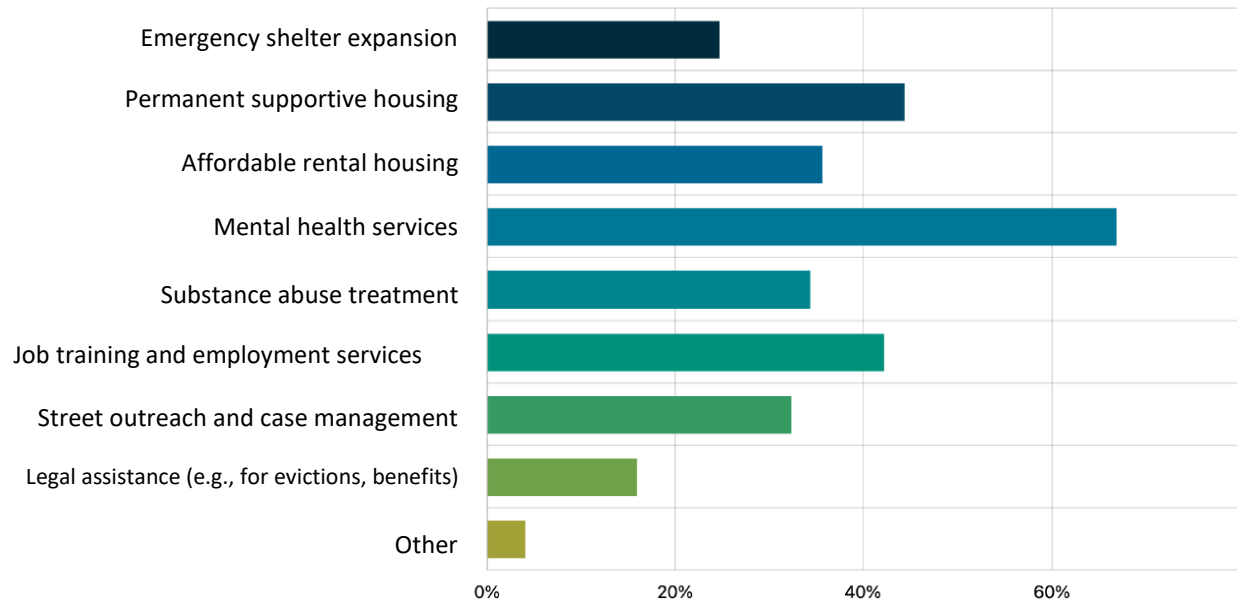
There are an estimated 5,000 blighted properties in Baton Rouge. How do you think Baton Rouge should address this issue?



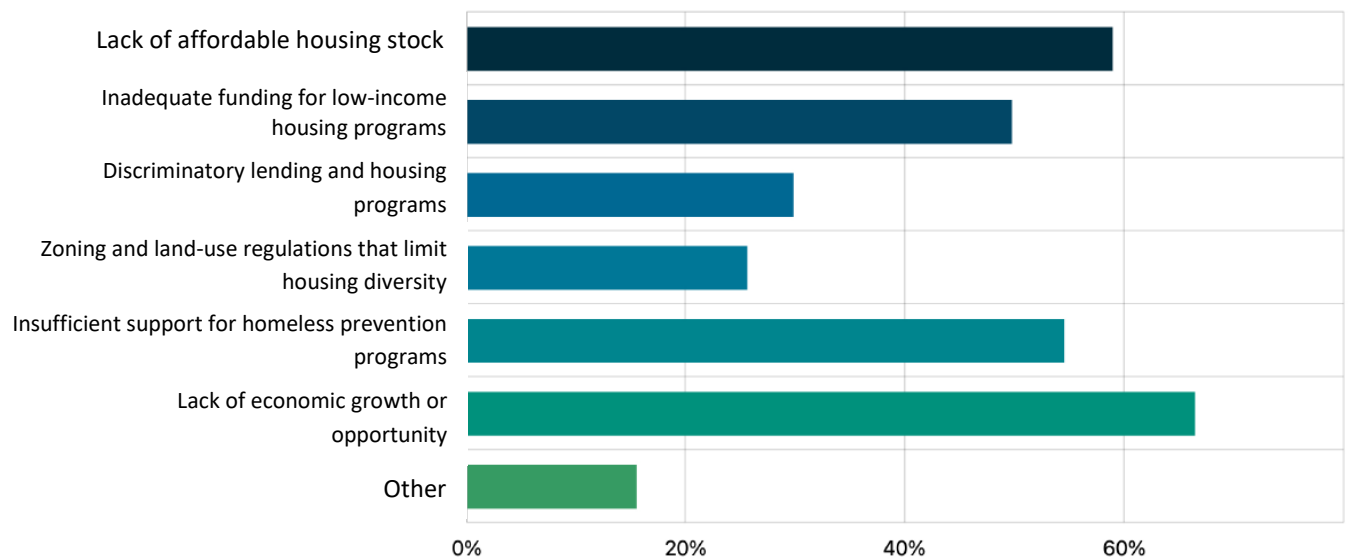
“Provide incentives to small developers to revitalize blighted properties and build on empty infill lots. This will address both the blight and affordable housing. This can be done with grant funding to bridge the gap between cost to build and affordability.” -70814 Citizen



Which of the following should be the top priorities for investment to support unhoused individuals in Baton Rouge?



In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges to achieving equitable housing in Baton Rouge?



Do you have any additional comments or insights about community development in Baton Rouge that you'd like to share with us? (Open-ended)

This open-ended question allowed residents to provide candid feedback on community development in Baton Rouge. Residents seek safe, affordable housing, investment in youth and neighborhoods, and transparent government practices. There's a strong desire for prevention-focused public safety, expanded mental health services, and transportation solutions that connect people to opportunity. The responses had several recurring themes.

Housing Concerns: Housing was the most prominent issue mentioned. Residents voiced concerns about:

- The lack of affordable and safe housing.
- Barriers to home ownership, specifically mentioning unfair or predatory lending practices.
- Increasing rental prices and evictions that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. The tone of these comments often reflected a desire for more government oversight, supportive housing policies and programs, and greater accountability from landlords.
- Needing affordable housing in proximity of amenities and resources (grocery stores, schools, parks, etc.).

Community Investment and Development: Many responses emphasized the need for equitable investment in underserved neighborhoods, calling for:

- Infrastructure improvements.
- Safe and accessible access to community resources like libraries, parks, and youth centers.
- Support for small businesses and economic revitalization, particularly in historically neglected areas.

Crime and Public Safety: Residents highlighted how public safety impacts home values, neighborhood stability, and quality of life calling for:

- More community policing and preventative programs
- The need to be "Smart on Crime" through education, engaging the youth, and substance abuse and mental health programs

Youth and Education: Responses emphasized the importance of preparing young people for the future. They called for:

- Soft skills and workforce development programs in high schools
- Youth mentorship programs
- Engagement activities and spaces
- Programs to help youth falling behind in school

Access to Government Processes and Equity: Residents expressed frustration with accessibility and transparency of public processes and programs. These concerns centered around:

- More open, inclusive decision-making.
- Not being heard or the need for better outreach to the community.



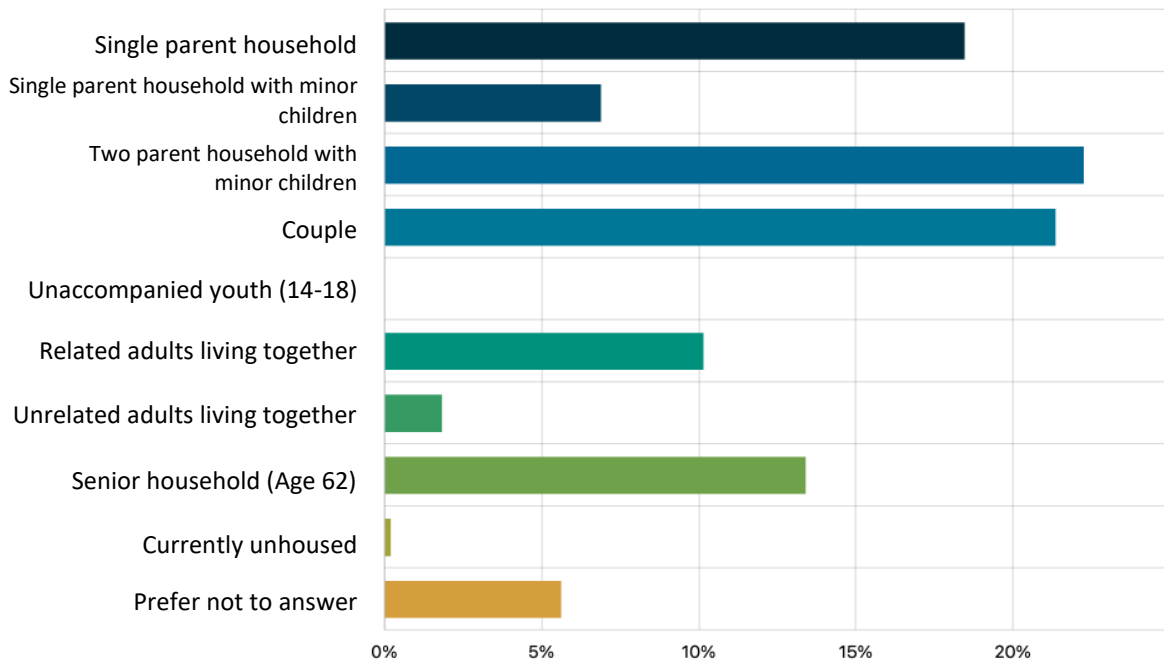
Mental Health Services: Residents feel that mental health impacts the overall health and safety of the community. Responses noted:

- A lack of awareness and accessibility of programs.
- A connection between untreated mental health issues and crime or homelessness.
- The need for community-based mental health interventions.

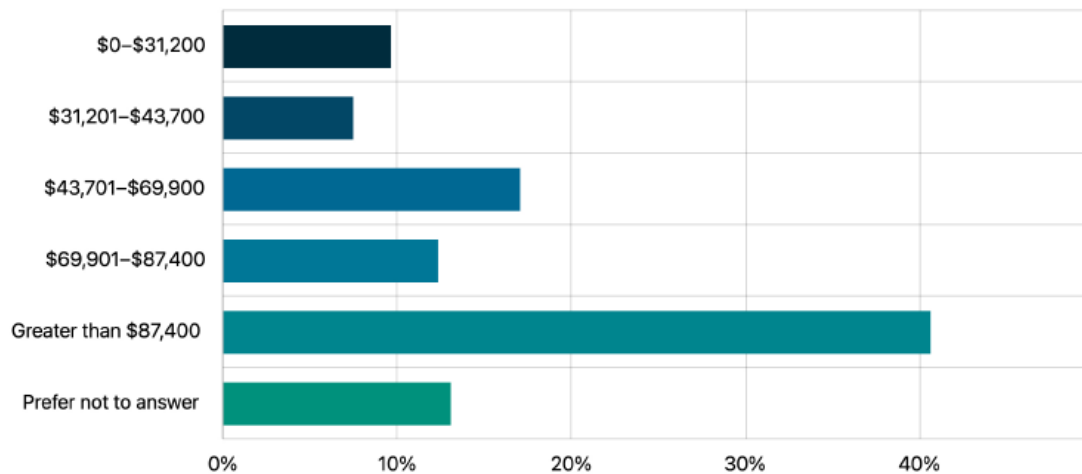
Transportation: Though less frequent, transportation issues still surfaced as a barrier to community resources and needs. Comments noted:

- The need for a better bus service, safer roads, and more equitable access to transit and community resources for low-income residents.

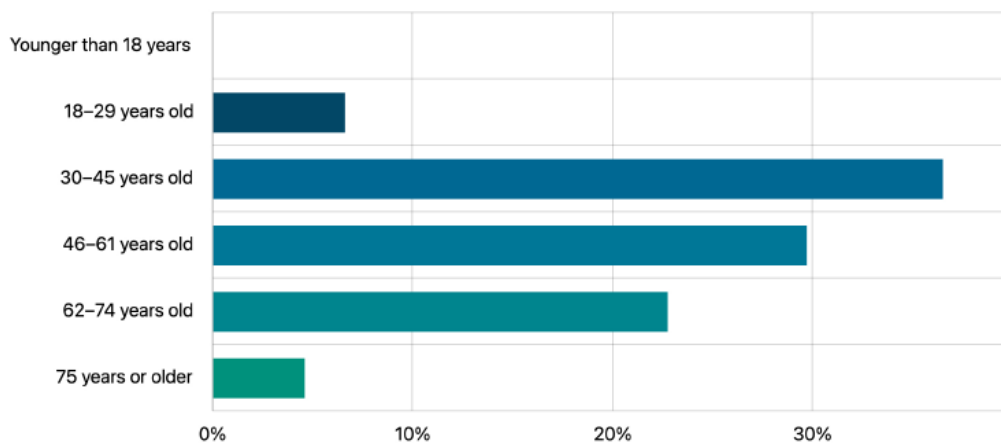
Which option best describes your household?



What is your annual household gross income?



How old are you?

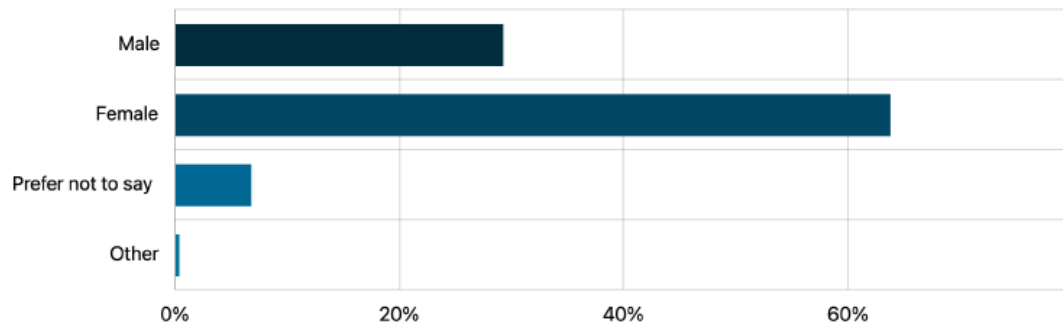


"I truly believe Baton Rouge is a city that could be one of the best in Louisiana. We are missing out on young entrepreneurs and new businesses due to lack of jobs, housing, and incentives for business development/growth."

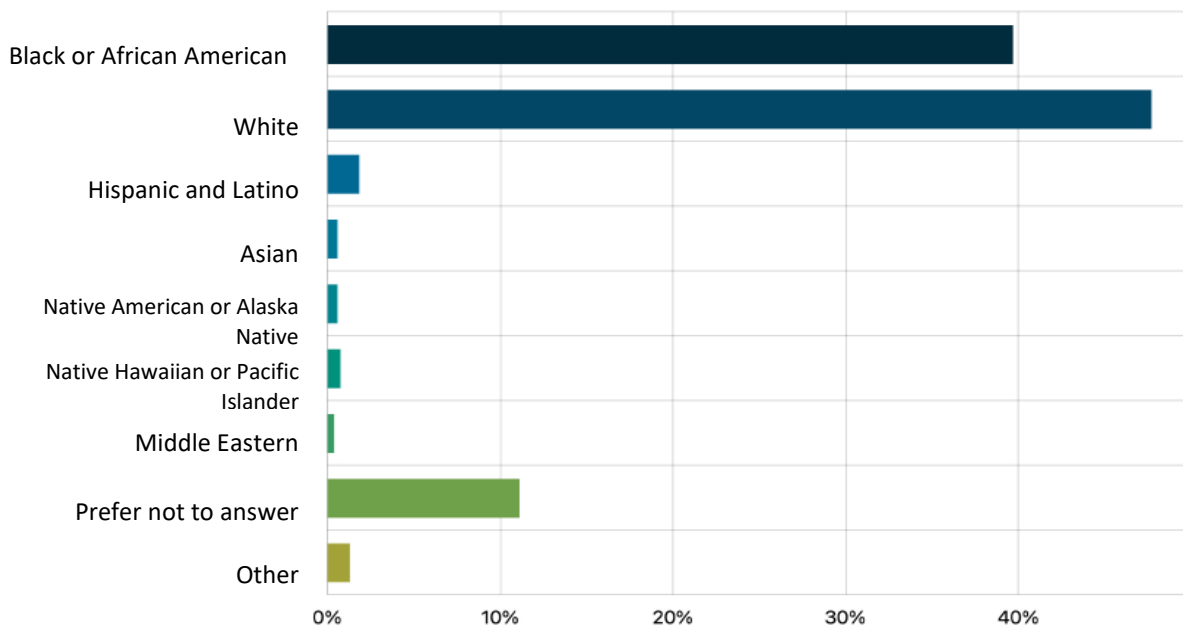
-70802 Citizen



What is your gender?



What is your race and/or ethnicity?

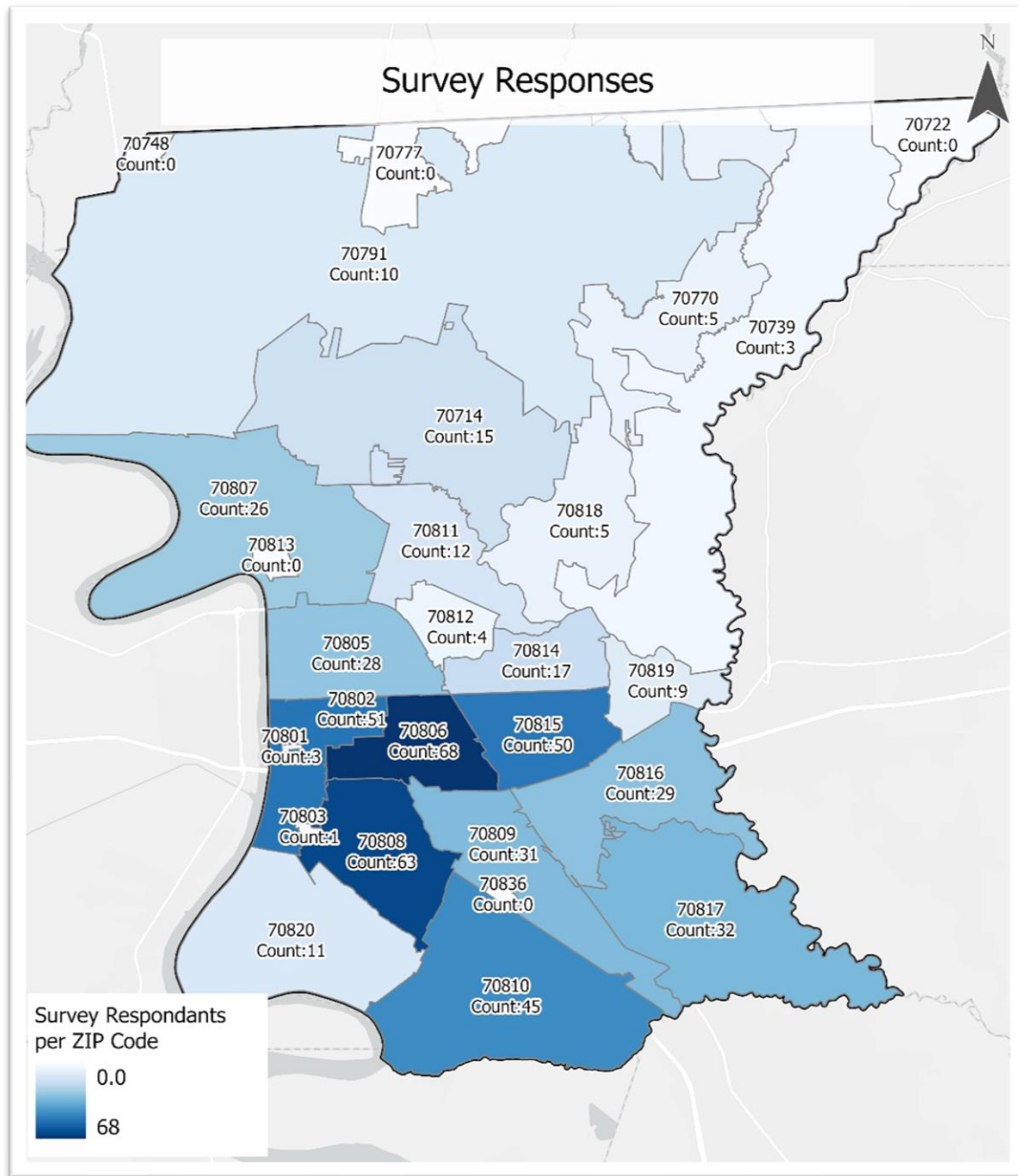


“We need to build an effective coalition of nonprofit and community partners to help with the work that's needed in our community, if we don't, this is pointless.”

-70815 Citizen



What is your zip code?



Map of East Baton Rouge Parish showing the geographic distribution of survey responses.



Focus group highlights

Focus Group #1

Affordable, healthy housing

A meeting with stakeholders who work and represent the affordable housing sector revealed significant gaps in affordable, healthy housing, especially for middle-income earners, seniors, and low-income renters. Participants expressed concern over the lack of housing diversity and the isolation of affordable units in low-income areas. Ideal locations for new, affordable housing, such as those with access to transit, groceries, and healthcare, are often constrained by land scarcity or title issues.

Developers face steep costs due to construction standards, flood zones, and unexpected permitting issues. Additionally, community opposition and lack of early engagement further delay or derail projects.

The discussion emphasized the need for proactive maintenance and repair of older homes, though high costs and code-triggered displacements are barriers. Soft second mortgages, legal support for succession planning, and better use of underutilized funding sources were highlighted as practical solutions. Title issues remain a major obstacle, with thousands of properties tied up in legal uncertainty.

Participants also stressed the importance of aligning housing efforts with transportation, utilities, and public space planning, and called for more visible investment and coordinated community outreach to build trust and ensure equity.

Focus Group #2

Stable housing and homelessness

A second stakeholder meeting brought together community leaders, service providers, and advocates to examine the root causes and challenges of housing instability and homelessness in the region. Participants emphasized that housing affordability, precarious employment, and limited access to supportive services are major contributors to local housing crises.

Vulnerable groups such as survivors of domestic violence, the ALICE population, youth aging out of foster care, and individuals with mental health needs often fall through service gaps. The group also noted that while programs like the Street Outreach Network and the Bridge Center for Hope show promising results, the scale of homelessness far exceeds available shelter beds and long-term support resources.



Stakeholders called for systemic, proactive solutions that go beyond temporary fixes such as expanded affordable housing, consistent case management, and transportation infrastructure. They stressed the importance of removing bureaucratic barriers and increasing flexible, locally controlled funding to support housing stability. In particular, investments in document recovery, employment support, and cross-agency coordination were seen as crucial to shifting the parish's approach from reactive crisis response to sustainable prevention.

Focus Group #3

Community development

A targeted community development stakeholder meeting highlighted a strong consensus around prioritizing workforce development, particularly in tech and AI, as essential to long-term neighborhood revitalization. Participants repeatedly emphasized that sustainable economic growth, including support for small businesses, youth entrepreneurship, and job training, must come before physical infrastructure investments.

Scotlandville and Baker were identified as high-need areas, with Scotlandville especially described as having significant but untapped potential due to the strategic location to Southern University. Urgent demand for a full-service grocery store in Scotlandville, a need voiced for over two decades, stood out as a major symbol of ongoing disinvestment.

The group also expressed frustration over past plans that lacked follow-through and called for better coordination among nonprofits and public agencies. Ideas like creating tech incubators, adopting community coalition models with clear roles, and learning from successful national programs (such as Tulsa Remote and Detroit's tech hub redevelopment) were seen as potential models.

Participants stressed that reinvestment must be equitable and rooted in accountability, including tools like Community Improvement Plans and technical assistance for local nonprofits. Overall, the discussion underscored that building economic opportunity and community ownership is key to preventing displacement and creating lasting change.

Focus Group #4

Community programming

Focus group meeting four focused on community programming needs. Participants emphasized the importance of mentorship, access, and community-based delivery in effective youth and family programming. Mentorship emerged as a cornerstone, especially when rooted in long-term, organic relationships with diverse role models beyond just sports figures.



Schools, after-school providers, and nonprofits were seen as essential hubs for youth engagement, though inequities in program access and staffing were flagged. Participants advocated for summer and technical skill-based programs with stipends and transportation, echoing past successful models like the National Youth Sports Program or the Mayor’s Youth Workforce Program. Neighborhood safety and connectivity were also key, with support for trusted local mediators, improved walkability, and storefront revitalization.

Beyond youth programming, attendees pointed to critical needs for returning citizens, immigrants, and low-income or isolated residents. Transitional support with housing, employment pipelines, and trained navigators was highlighted as vital for people re-entering the community after incarceration. Immigrant and refugee communities were seen as deeply underserved due to trust gaps, requiring culturally competent outreach through familiar community allies.

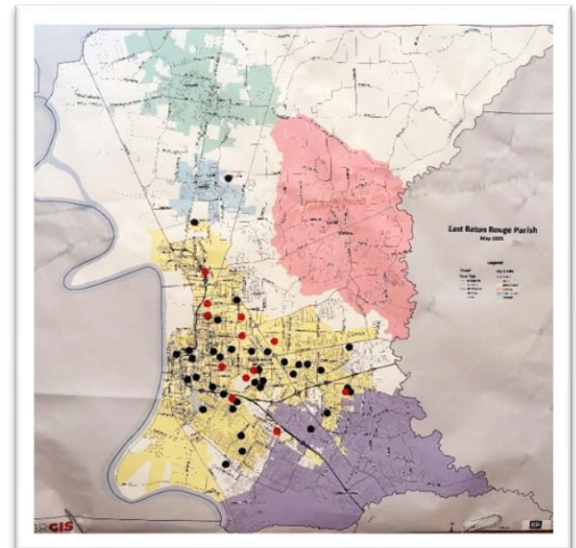
Participants also called for improved marketing and collaboration among nonprofits, as well as technical assistance to boost nonprofit capacity and effectiveness. Despite challenges, several programs like the Mayor’s Youth Workforce Program and Louisiana Leadership Institute were recognized as transformative models for future investment.



Community Workshops

Two in-person community workshops were held to inform the public about the consolidated plan process, the relevant HUD grants and how they could be applied to community development to benefit low-to-moderate income residents. The intent of the workshops was to gather feedback and community input about issues in East Baton Rouge Parish.

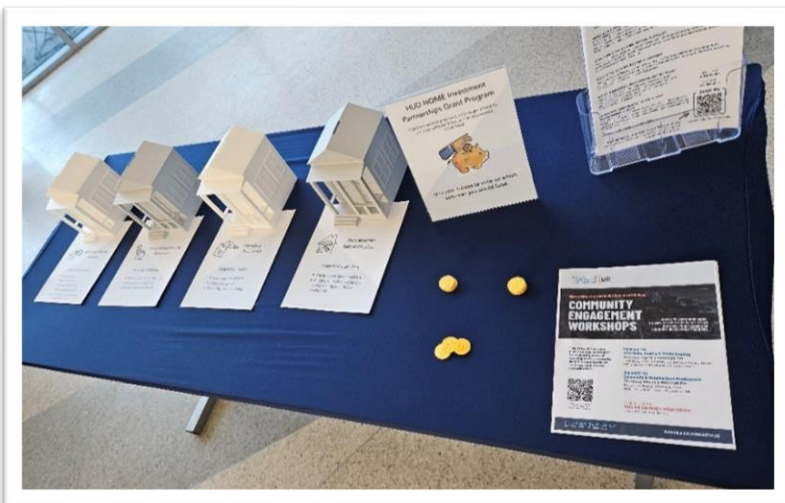
Upon entering the meetings participants were asked to place a dot on a map of East Baton Rouge parish to identify the area where they are from. The dot map represents who showed up at the workshop and which communities had voices present. The black dots are from the first meeting and the red dots are from participants of the second meeting.



Dot map with dot stickers placed by participants representing their neighborhoods

Affordable, Healthy, and Stable Housing

The first workshop, held in the evening, at the Main Library on Goodwood, focused on affordable, healthy, and stable housing. There were over 44 people in attendance. Upon entering participants were given three tokens that represented grant funds. There were four house banks set up, each representing different ways that HOME grant funds could be used. Participants used their tokens to prioritize fund spending. At the end of the workshop the tokens were counted, and the results were presented. While the options provided were not an exhaustive list of the services the HOME program can fund, it did get participants thinking about HOME related services and how the program might



HOME grant bank activity



relate to them. Image 1 shows the results of the token bank activity. Participants prioritized affordable rental housing over the other options, but all options received funding support.



Results from the HOME grant bank activity.

Attendants were split into three groups and were asked to discuss issues related to affordable housing, healthy housing, and stable housing. The answers were written down on posters and later posted on the wall. Once the discussions were complete, participants were asked to view the posters to see answers and ideas that other groups had provided. They were given the option to place dot stickers next to the issues or answer that they felt were important.

The questions and responses that received three or more dot votes are presented below.

Affordable Housing Development

What types of housing are missing in your neighborhood?

- Mixed income
- Multi-family
- Mixed use

Where in your neighborhood could new housing be built?

- Housing in areas of opportunity

What are the biggest barriers to affordability?

- Cost (security deposits, utilities, additional fees)

Healthy Housing and Home Repair

What health and safety issues are common in your area?

- Roof, flooring, plumbing, and electrical
- Asbestos
- Lead paint and pipes
- Termites, rodents, and roaches



- Lack of garbage pick-up
- HVAC

Are there programs helping with repairs?

- Rebuild Together Baton Rouge

What prevents residents from making needed home repairs?

- Funding

Housing Stability and Homelessness

What supports help people stay in their homes?

- Affordable insurance (flood, fire, property insurance, etc.)
- Housing choice and options
- Eradication of systematic racism

What resources or services have helped you or someone you know stay housed?

- Section 8
- Habitat for Humanity

Are there housing services for people living with chronic health conditions including HIV/AIDS?

- HOPWA
- Lower the threshold for people in middle

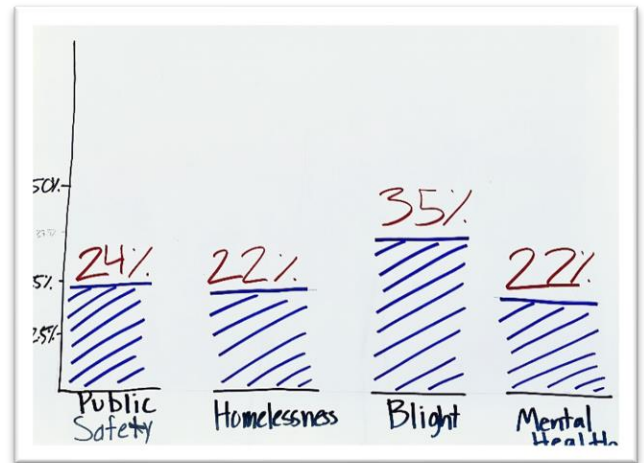
What short-term services (like emergency shelter or rental assistance) are missing in your neighborhood?

- Services are inadequate
- Shelters outside of downtown
- No shelters for families with young boys
- Funding for One Stop
- Foster care age-out services (housing)



Community and Neighborhood Development

The second workshop was held at the BREC Milton Womack Center, in the evening, where the focus was on community and neighborhood development. There were over 25 community stakeholders in attendance. Upon entering, participants were given three tokens that represented grant funds. There were four house banks set up, each representing priority issues that affect EBR City-Parish and lists of some CDBG eligible programs and services that could help address those issues. Participants used their tokens to prioritize funding. At the end of the workshop the tokens were counted, and the results were presented. While the options provided were not an exhaustive list of the issues that Baton Rouge faces and the services the CDBG program could fund, it did get participants thinking about CDBG related services and how the program might relate to them. The image to the right shows the results of the token bank activity. Participants prioritized blight as their greatest issue of concern, with the other three issues also showing heavy concern.



Results from the CDBG grant Bank Activity

Participants were split into two groups and were asked to discuss issues related to blight and redevelopment/infrastructure and community assets, services, and programs. The answers were written down on posters and later posted on the wall. Once the discussions were complete, participants were asked to view

the posters to see answers and ideas that other groups had provided. They were given the option to place dot stickers next to the issues or answer that they felt were important.

Questions with responses that received three or more dots indicating significance to multiple people:

Blight and Redevelopment/Infrastructure

What types of properties or areas in your neighborhood feel most neglected or abandoned?



Participants place dot stickers next to issues they feel are significantly important.



- Blighted residential housing
- N. Foster from Florida to Airline
- Properties with forever succession issues

How could CDBG funds support cleanup, demolition, or reuse of these spaces?

- Grants to fund non-profit development focused on eliminating blight and redeveloping properties
- Code enforcement

What would a successful reuse or revitalization effort look like?

- Vacant lots developed for single family
- Affordable housing on vacant property

What improvements to streets, sidewalks, drainage, or public spaces are most needed in your neighborhood?

- Street overlays
- Lighting
- Sidewalks
- Public dumping
- Bike paths
- Lighting and crime prevention

What new or missing infrastructure would make your neighborhood stronger or more connected?

- Community hubs
- Programming for youth repeat offenders

Community Assets/Services and Programs

What parks, community centers, or gathering spaces matter most to you—and how could they be improved?

- Gaps in crime and services
- Melrose East
- Public spaces for meetings
- Code enforcement equity



What community services (like youth programs, job training, or senior support) are making a difference?

- Job training – trades
- C4 Carpentry Camp (Mid-city)

Who in your neighborhood still needs help—and what kind of services would make a difference for them?

- Power Coalition
- Boots on the ground – bring services to neighborhoods
- Elders need assistance with mail, scam prevention
- Literacy - children

If the City could invest in just one new or expanded service using CDBG funds, what should it be?

- Blight
- Homelessness prevention
- Working with juvenile offenders
- Affordable housing

“Solutions for community development should be place-based and should strongly consider investing in middle neighborhoods not just areas that are deeply distressed. Relatively small investments in these neighborhoods to help keep them from sliding into decay can have excellent returns...”

-70806 Citizen

