PART I
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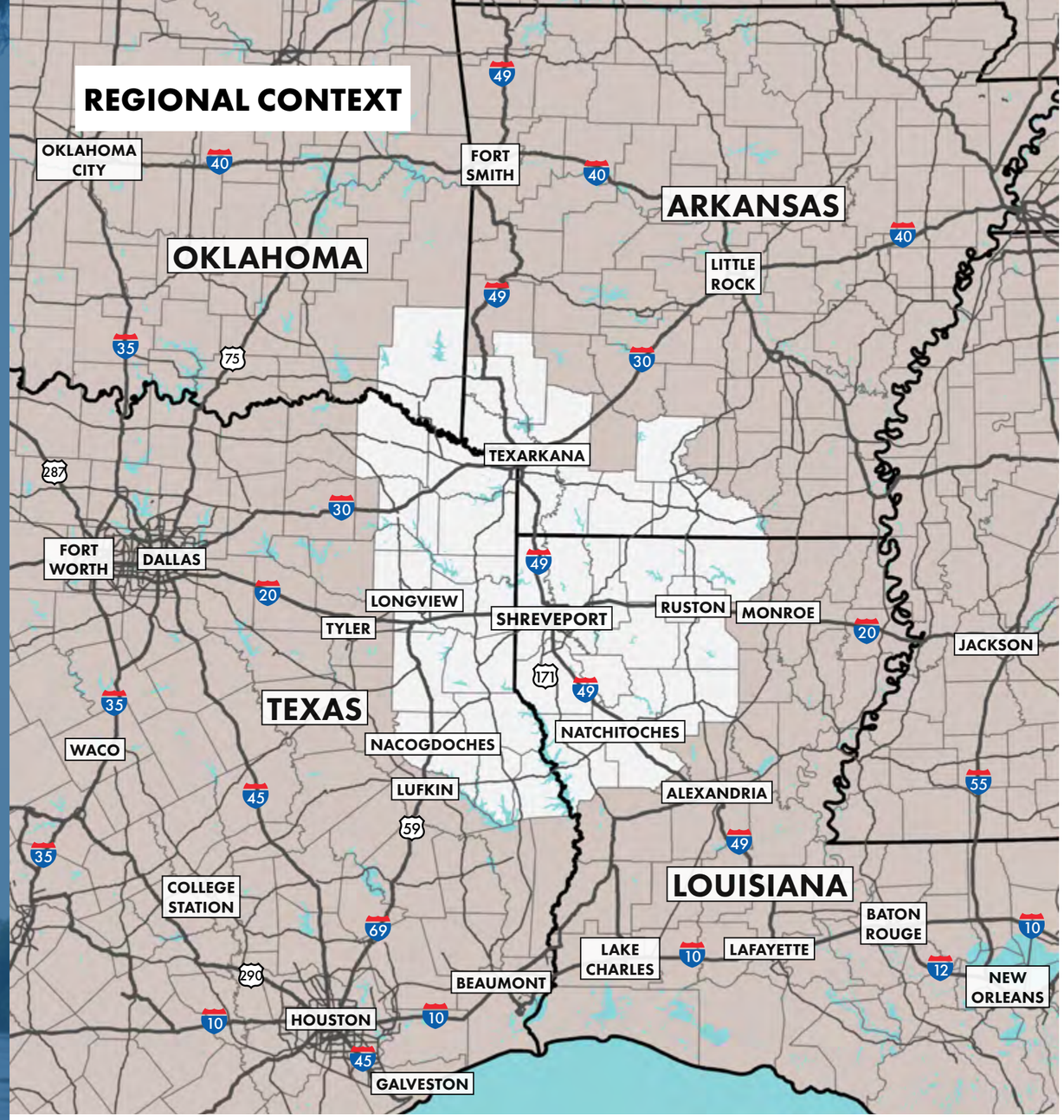
Shreveport is the economic and cultural center of the Ark-La-Tex region and the Red River Basin. It is a city rich in history, in natural resources, and in opportunity.

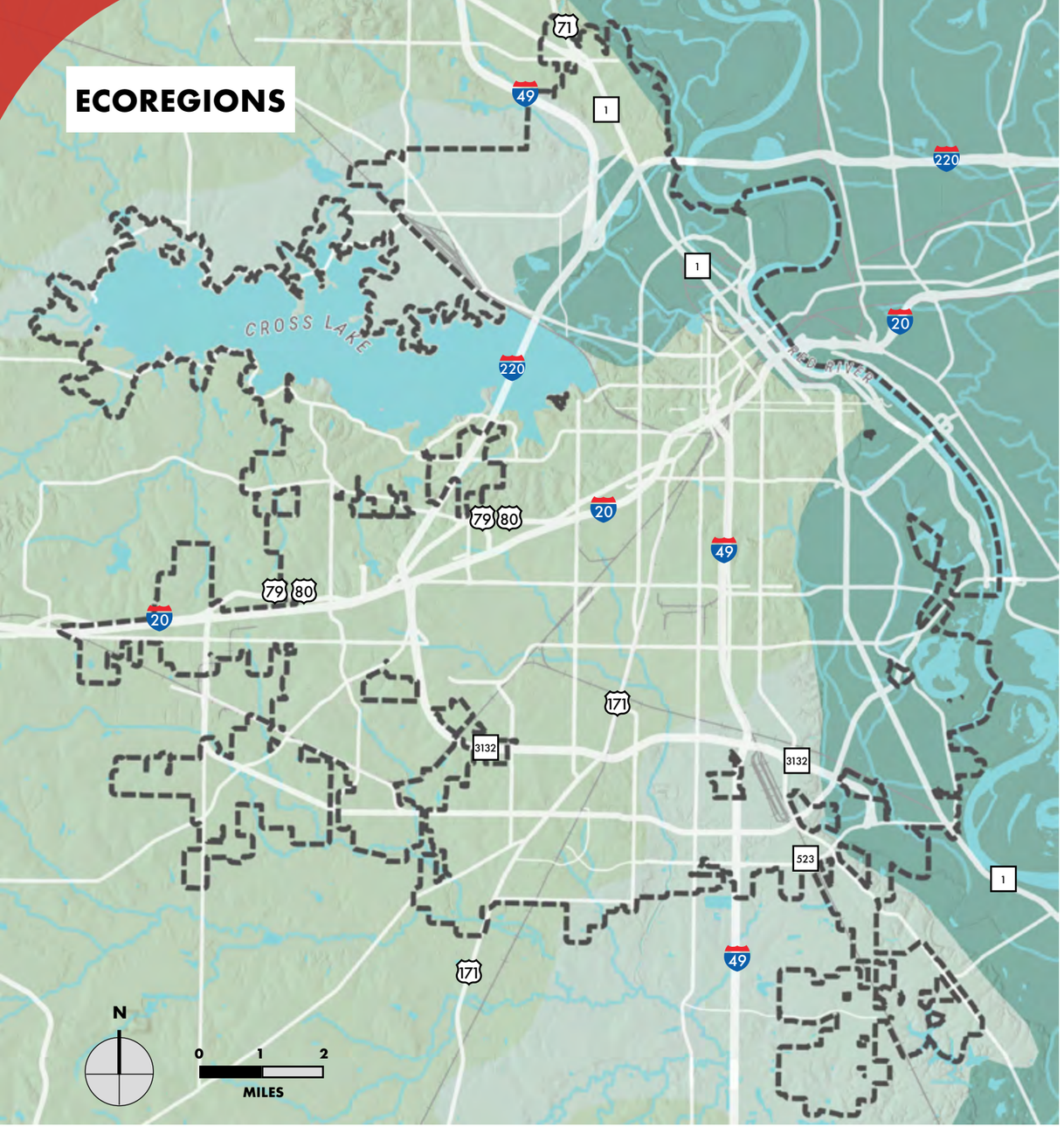
By understanding where we've come from, we can learn about where we're headed, and from our past experiences and challenges. We can also learn from ourselves: our aspirations for our city, our hopes, and the assets that we can build on.

Shreveport is the economic and cultural center of the Ark-La-Tex region and the Red River Basin.



While definitions may vary, the Ark-La-Tex region generally includes 13 parishes in Louisiana, 10 counties in Arkansas, 16 counties in Texas, and one county in Oklahoma. The region is conveniently accessed by river, rail, and highways that connect Shreveport to major metros such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and New Orleans.

Parishes and counties typically considered to be part of the "Ark-La-Tex" region



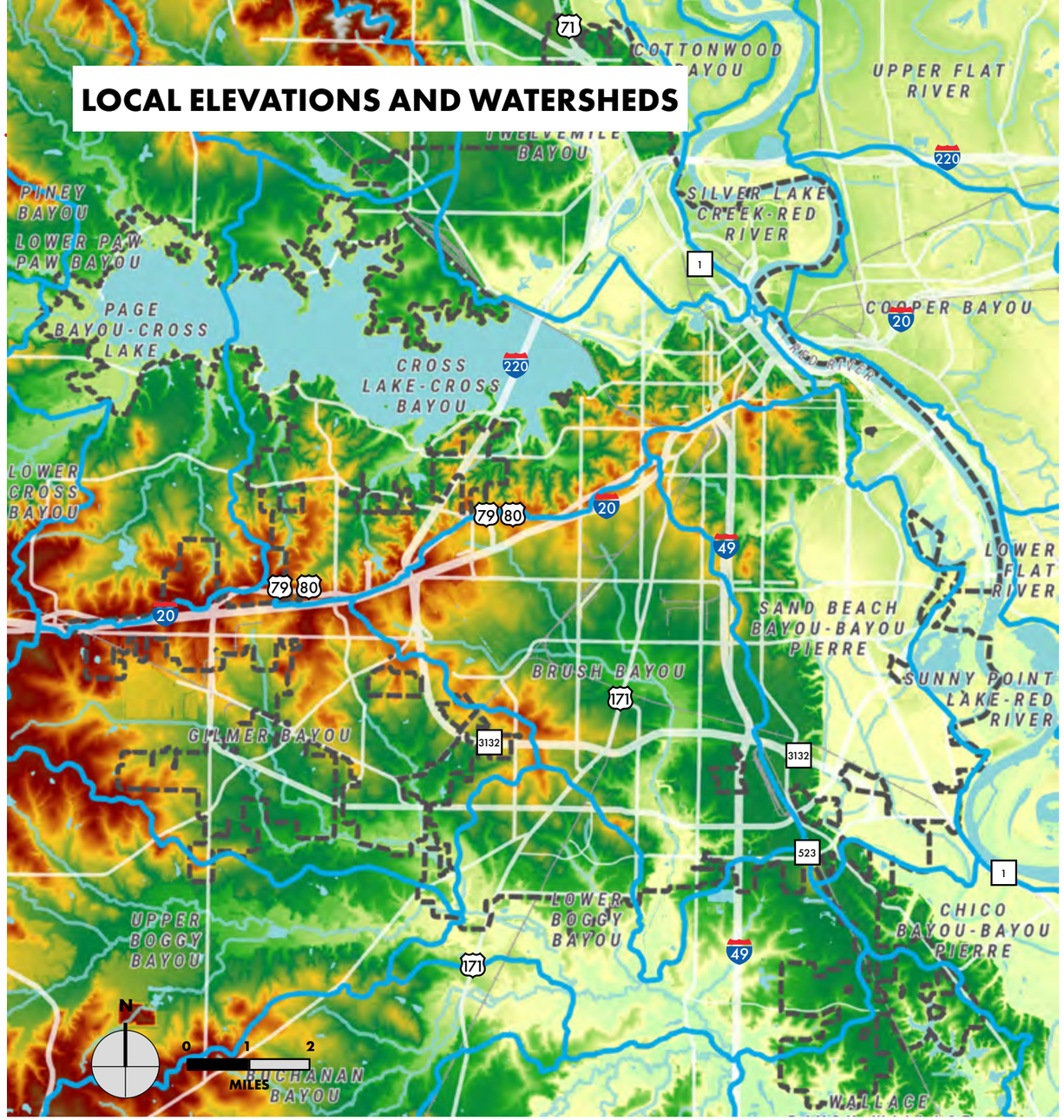
Nestled In the Piney Woods

Shreveport is located in the Piney Woods ecoregion, which is heavily shaped by the Red River. As a city built on the banks of the Red River, Shreveport is home to a mix of bottomland and floodplain areas, fluvial terraces flanking streams and these bottomlands, and upland areas. The different soils and drainage patterns shape the vegetation that grows, from upland pines to bottomland hardwoods.

ECOREGIONS

- 35a Tertiary Uplands
- 35c Pleistocene Fluvial Terraces
- 35g Red River Bottomlands

Source: EPA Level IV Ecoregions of North America



On a River and a Ridge

The original townsite was built on higher ground at the Red River, with the city's terrain generally sloping upwards from the river and rising to the west. Texas Avenue/Greenwood Road (US 79/80) as well as Interstate 20 generally follow a ridge line that separates Cross Lake's drainage area from the bayous that flow to the south.

Watershed Boundary

Lower Elevation — Higher Elevation

Source: United States Geological Survey

The Red River and Cross Lake

The Red River runs from eastern New Mexico to Louisiana, forming portions of the Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas state borders. As the river enters Louisiana, it separates Caddo and Bossier parishes before joining the Mississippi River on its course to the Gulf of Mexico. Its red clay banks are naturally erosive and give the river its name.

Each flooding event over the life of the river further destabilized the soil in the floodplain, pulling trees into the river, eventually forming a series of logjams that combined into a 150-mile blockage termed the Great Raft. The overflow caused by the Great Raft led to the formation of major lakes and bayous in the area, including Cross Lake, Wallace Lake, and Bayou Pierre. The Great Raft essentially blocked all travel on the Red River between Shreveport/the Louisiana-Arkansas State line and Natchitoches, LA.

Though the Cross Lake basin was originally formed before the Great Raft was cleared, the Cross Lake we know today was created by the City in 1926. In concert with the Kansas City Southern Railway Company, the City of Shreveport installed a concrete dam to increase water levels at the lake. They protected the adjacent railroad by creating an earthen dam using clay from the lakebed and stone to protect the land from erosion and wind.

The lake served as the primary water source for the City from 1926-1957, but drought conditions in 1954-1955 led them to seek out additional supply. The City developed the Twelve Mile Bayou Pump Station which transmitted excess water from Caddo Lake -- previously routed down Twelve Mile Bayou – into Cross Lake when needed. Prior to the engineering of Cross Lake, the City sourced water from Twelve Mile Bayou and the Red River. The McNeil Street Station was constructed in 1887 and was amongst the first to install water filtration equipment and use steam-powered pumping engines.

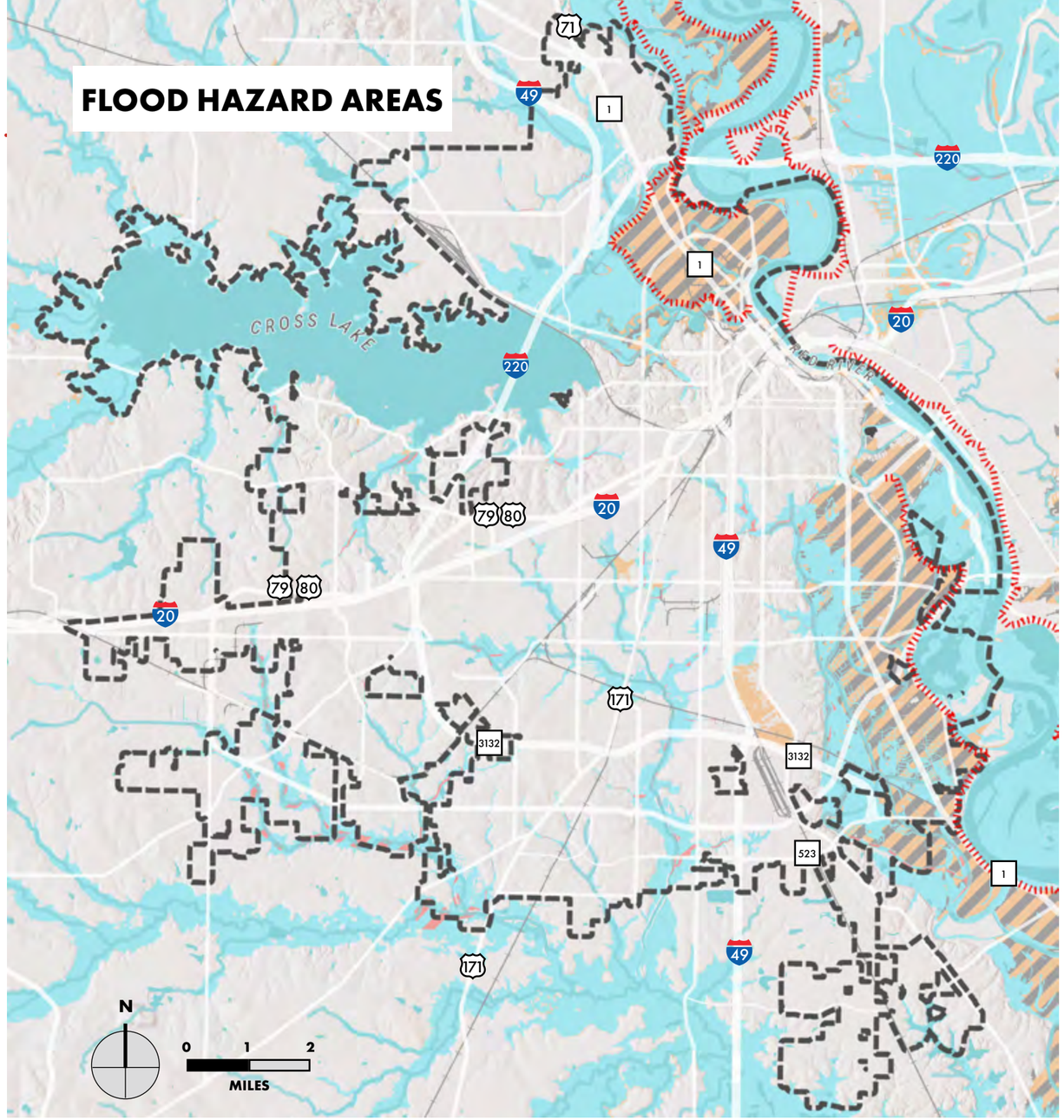
Shaping the Red River

The Red River is, and has always been, a force to be reckoned with. The removal of the Great Raft set the stage for future flooding: lowering the water level significantly left behind high banks which were susceptible to erosion, leading to silt buildup downstream and unstable protection from river overflow. The silting and erosion continues today, even with reduced river traffic.

The historic flooding events along the Red River are not a problem of the past that we have since solved, though the factors influencing the severity of the flooding has changed over time. On August 10, 1849, the river crested at 45.9 feet – a full thirteen feet above what is considered a minor flood, ten feet above the major flood stage. In the 1890s, the State of Louisiana organized the development of an extensive levee system along the river. The top ten highest floods on record for the Shreveport were all prior to 1908, but the river reached the minor flood stage nearly 50 times between 1849 and the 2015.

The levees have helped mitigate flooding since their installation, but they have not removed it entirely. Given the naturally erosive banks and easy silting of the river basin, the levees should be considered an assistive measure rather than a solution. Today, the Caddo Levee District manages the system of levees built along the banks of the Red River, Black Bayou, Twelve Mile Bayou, and Cross Bayou.

1873 photograph of the Red River Raft by R.B. Talfor studio.
Source: Library of Congress



FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

- Regulatory Floodway
- 1% ("100-year") Annual Flood Hazard Area
- 0.2% ("500-year") Annual Flood Hazard Area
- Levee
- Area With Reduced Flood Risk Due To Levee

Source: National Flood Hazard Layer

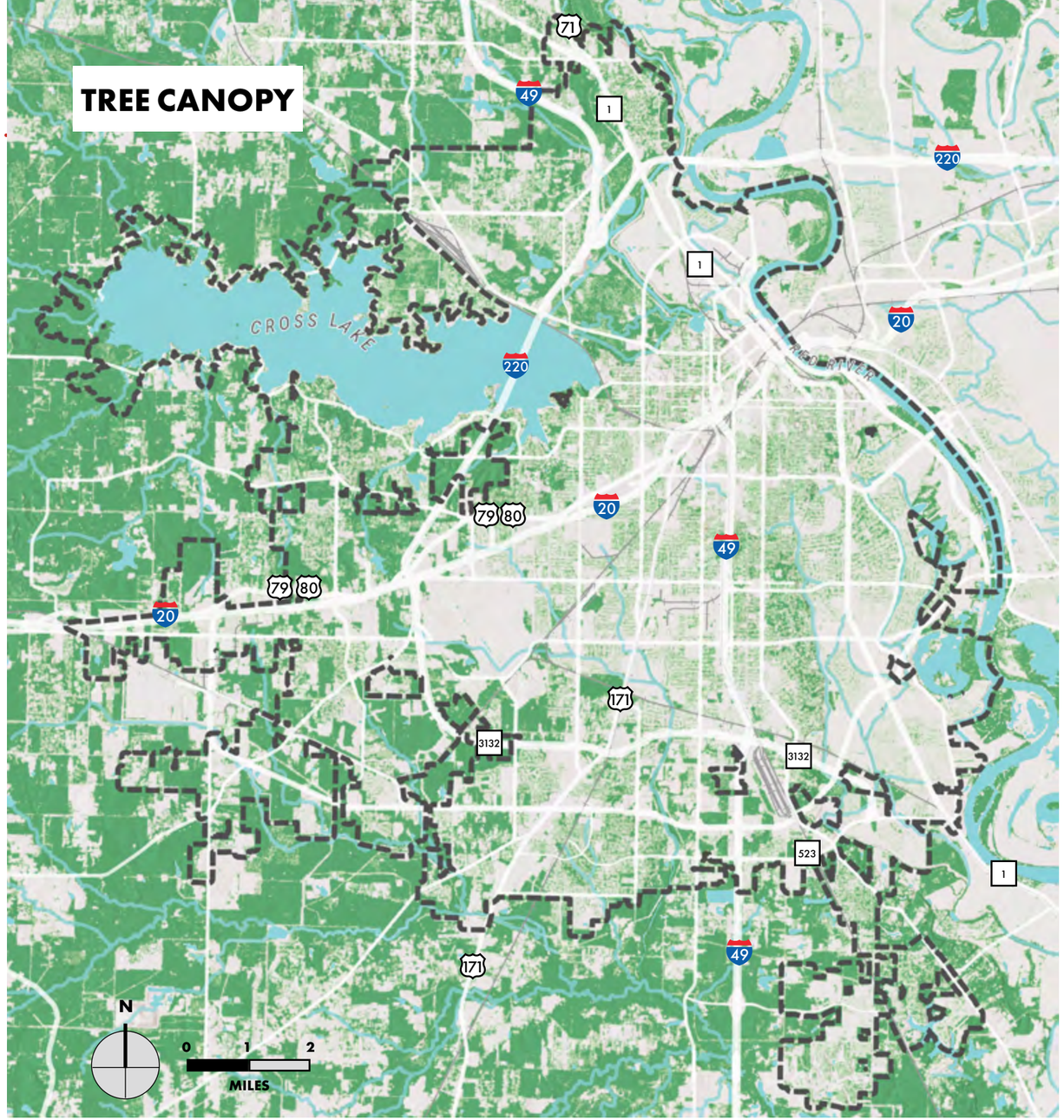
LAND COVER

As Shreveport has grown, development and human activity have shaped the surrounding landscape. At the edges of the city near the Red River, fertile bottomlands have been adapted for pasture and cropland or for residential development protected by levees. In low-lying floodplain areas near Twelve Mile Bayou and Wallace Lake, much of the land cover remains largely undeveloped as forested woody wetlands that help provide clean water and habitat.

- Developed High Intensity
- Developed Medium Intensity
- Developed Low Intensity
- Developed Open Space
- Cultivated Crops
- Pasture/Hay
- Barren Land
- Woody Wetlands
- Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands
- Grassland/Herbaceous
- Evergreen Forest
- Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Shrub/Scrub

Source: National Land Cover Database.

TREE CANOPY

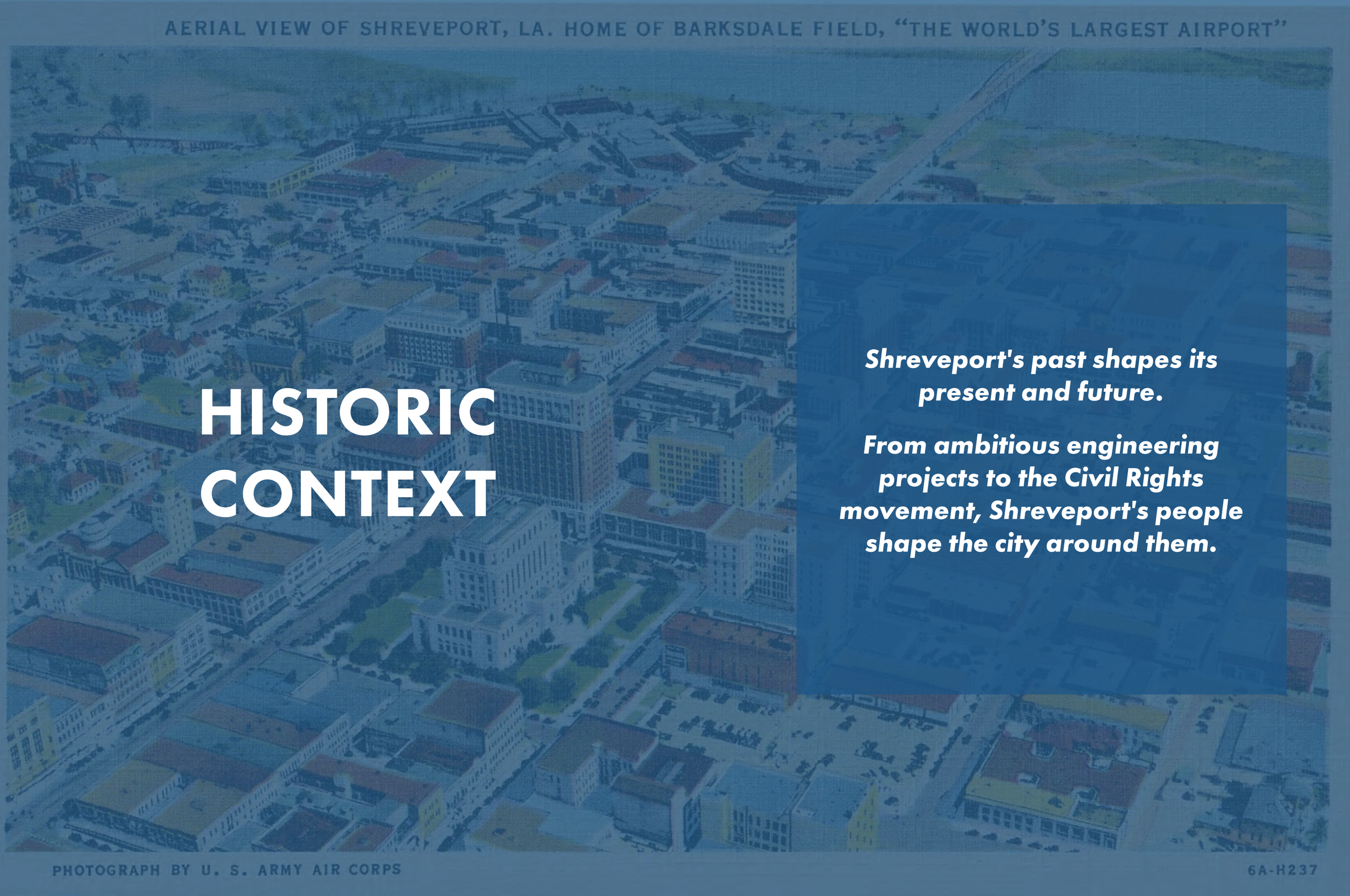


In highly-built up urban and industrial areas, impervious surfaces give way to lower-intensity development and open space towards the edge of the city. Major pockets of developed open space such as the Querbes Park Golf Course are visible.

At the edges of the city, urban development gives way to evergreen and mixed forests interspersed with pasture, cropland, and shrubland.

- Tree Canopy

Source: National Land Cover Database



HISTORIC CONTEXT

Shreveport's past shapes its present and future.

From ambitious engineering projects to the Civil Rights movement, Shreveport's people shape the city around them.

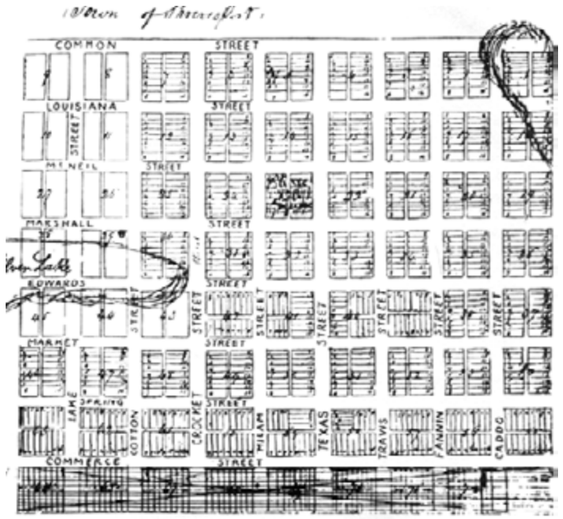
Shreveport's Early Decades

Caddo Nation

The Caddo in Shreveport were rooted in their relationship with the environment, specifically the Red River dating back to 800 A.D. The term Caddo is the French abbreviation of Kadohadacho, meaning “real chief” or “real Caddo”.

The Caddo were matrilineal (following the female lineage), horticultural societies. Their agricultural outputs included tropical crops such as corn, squash, and beans, and native plant species such as maygrass, amaranth, chenopods, and sunflowers. They were also skilled craftsmen who specialized in both artistic and functional ceramics, as well as toolmaking.

During European colonization, the Caddo people played economic and diplomatic roles during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Caddo Indian Treaty of 1835 resulted the cessation of Caddo land to the United States, while also displacing the Caddo to present day Caddo County, Oklahoma. Today, the Cadddo people are memorialized locally as the namesake of Caddo Parish.



Map of Shreveport, 1830s.
Source: Downtown Development Authority

Shreve Town and the Great Raft

In the 1830s, Captain Henry Miller Shreve spearheaded the effort to open up the Red River, clear the Great Raft, and stabilize the banks of the river. With this work, Captain Shreve opened the area to commerce, connecting the Gulf Coast to northern Texas and other markets located inland.

In Captain Shreve’s honor, the Shreve Town Company and the village of Shreve Town were started in 1836. The emerging community became the seat of Caddo Parish in 1838 and was incorporated as Shreveport in 1839. The town site was eight streets wide and eight streets deep, spanning 64 city blocks running from Cross Bayou to the north to Silver Lake to the south, with the Red River bounding the town to the east.

The clearing of the Great Raft opened up the area to trade, providing an unobstructed route along the river and led to a population influx in line with the increased commercial opportunity. After the clearing of the Great Raft, Shreveport served as the new point of connection to the Texas Trail, a land route which extended into Texas and Mexico.

From top left, clockwise; sources in parentheses: Sunflower Plant(Clean png), Caddo Hut (Daytripper, Facebook page), Caddo Ceramics (64 Parishes), amaranth plant (Clean PNG).

Antebellum Era

This was the beginning of a new era for Shreveport: with steamboat travel now possible along the river, the area became an important commercial port.

After its formation in 1839, Shreveport became central to steamboat commerce and the movement of cotton and agricultural crops to downriver markets, as well as a slave market. Free blacks, despite slavery being prominent in the city, moved to the city and settled in the Blue Goose neighborhood (near Interstate 20's crossing in the Downtown area today) and along Texas Street, where black businesses thrived. Formerly enslaved people founded the Antioch Baptist Church in 1866.

At this time, Shreveport was also starting to see Jewish and Italian immigrants integrating into the city and developing land. By 1860, there was a free population of 2,200 and an enslaved population of 1,300 within the city limits.

The Civil War and Reconstruction

During the American Civil War, Shreveport served as the capital of Confederate Louisiana, becoming a command center for military operations and communication networks. Irish and German immigrant troops, as well as free Black troops, responded to the Confederate call to arms. Following the Red River Campaign and other offensive tactics by the Union, the Confederacy eventually surrendered in May 1865, and Shreveport citizens began to rebuild the city and its commerce again.

The Reconstruction era was fraught with racial violence, with the extrajudicial violence and lynching of African Americans earning the parish the nickname "Bloody Caddo." The region's economy was still primarily rooted in cotton and timber, with sharecropping and plantation agriculture in the rural areas near Shreveport.

Bank's Army in the Advance on Shreveport Crossing Cane River, C.E.H. Bonwill, 1864.
Source: Library of Congress

Cotton and River, to Oil and Railroads

Shreveport's industries, 1830 - 1945: Left to Right: Cotton production near Shreveport in 1937, postcard of Charity Hospital, oil derricks on Caddo Lake.
Sources: Library of Congress; University of North Texas Libraries The Portal to Texas History; Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

1830 - 1890 **1900 -1945**

River Commerce

The clearing of the "Great Raft" by Captain Henry Miller Shreve opened up a gateway for the transportation of goods and commodities. It served as the vital economic lifeline for the growing city, connecting to New Orleans' ports, cities in Texas, and other inland markets.

Cotton

Cotton cultivation drove economic prosperity and growth in Shreveport. The surrounding lands and soils were fertile and supported production, processing, and trade.

Lumber

Vast, pinewood forests facilitated the development of a thriving lumber industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Timber was harvested for construction, furniture production, and other purposes.

Manufacturing

Shreveport was a central hub for the manufacturing of textiles, ironworks, and metal products that aided the industrial growth and urbanization of the city.

Oil and Gas

The discovery of oil in 1906 spurred a transformation in Shreveport's economic history. As river commerce dwindled, the city saw railroads becoming vital to the movement of goods. Oil fields attracted new investment and entrepreneurs to the region, such as the first black-owned oil company in the United States.

Healthcare/Hospital Systems

Shreveport's thriving healthcare systems have supported the health of communities in the city for over a century.

Willis Knighton Health was founded in 1924 as a small, neighborhood hospital in west Shreveport. As it transitioned into a not-for-profit healthcare organization, it pioneered some "firsts" for healthcare in the region such as the Center for Women's Health and the Eye Institute.

LSU Health Shreveport's beginnings can be dated back to the late 1800s, and continued to grow in its services, staff, and facilities during the early 1900s.

The Arrival of the Railroads

The strategic Red River crossing for the Texas Trail also made Shreveport a key junction for railroads. Rail service in Shreveport began in 1866, with rapid expansion in the 1880s leading to railroads overtaking steamboats as the dominant form of freight transportation. Shreveport was home to several railroads that connected the city with regional and national markets. Shreveport's presence as a cotton exporting hub was second only to Dallas and Memphis, and railroads supported the export of timber from the Piney Woods to national markets.

The presence of the railroads significantly shaped the footprint of the city. In the downtown area, warehouses and hotels clustered near junctions and freight and passenger depots, and the many street intersections eventually led to several grade-separated railroad crossings. Additionally, rail yards, junctions, and sidings occupied large land areas and created boundaries between neighborhoods.

Oil, Gas, and Civic Growth

The discovery of oil in Caddo Parish in 1906 ignited a boom in Shreveport: by 1910, Caddo Parish was responsible for 77% of Louisiana's crude oil production. Oil production, refining, and distribution became significant anchors of the regional economy, trading the region's natural resources and bringing outside wealth into Shreveport.

With the growth of Shreveport's oil economy and improved railroads also came increased industrial activity and manufacturing. Manufacturers also began to select sites near the outskirts of the city limits for plants and factories. Communities like Cedar Grove and Agurs developed as industrial areas due to their rail connections before being annexed into Shreveport in the 1920s. Near Jewella Avenue, the Libbey-Owens-Ford glass factory opened in 1922, as well as today's Calumet refinery. These facilities were located just outside the city's limits and would not be annexed into Shreveport until 1958.

Beyond production, Shreveport was home to a robust managerial class that included the headquarters of major players such as Standard Oil of Louisiana and the first Black-owned oil company in the United States. The United Gas Corporation was a major local corporate presence, with its 1940 office building on Fairfield Avenue eventually becoming the Louisiana State Office Building.

Shreveport's local wealth and corporate presence supported the growth of an emerging booster class that shaped civic affairs before the advent of urban planning. Civic leaders and the City of Shreveport advocated for the siting of a military flying field in the area, purchasing land for the future Barksdale Field as supported by a 1929 municipal bond issue. Downtown architectural and cultural landmarks such as the Scottish Rite Cathedral, the Strand Theatre, and the B'Nai Zion Temple were constructed during the 1910s and 1920s.

Buoyed by oil as well as Barksdale Field, Shreveport was able to weather the Great Depression relatively unscathed.

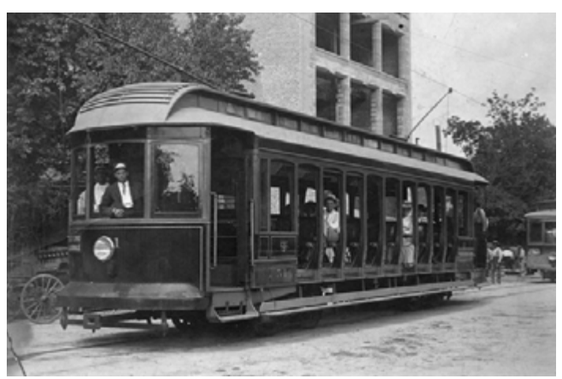
Streetcar Suburbs

As Shreveport grew, surrounding areas began to develop as factory towns and independent communities. Many of Shreveport's historic neighborhoods were established as "streetcar suburbs" during this period and annexed into the city in the late 1920s, including A.C. Steere's Broadmoor and South Highlands developments and the formerly independent community of Cedar Grove.

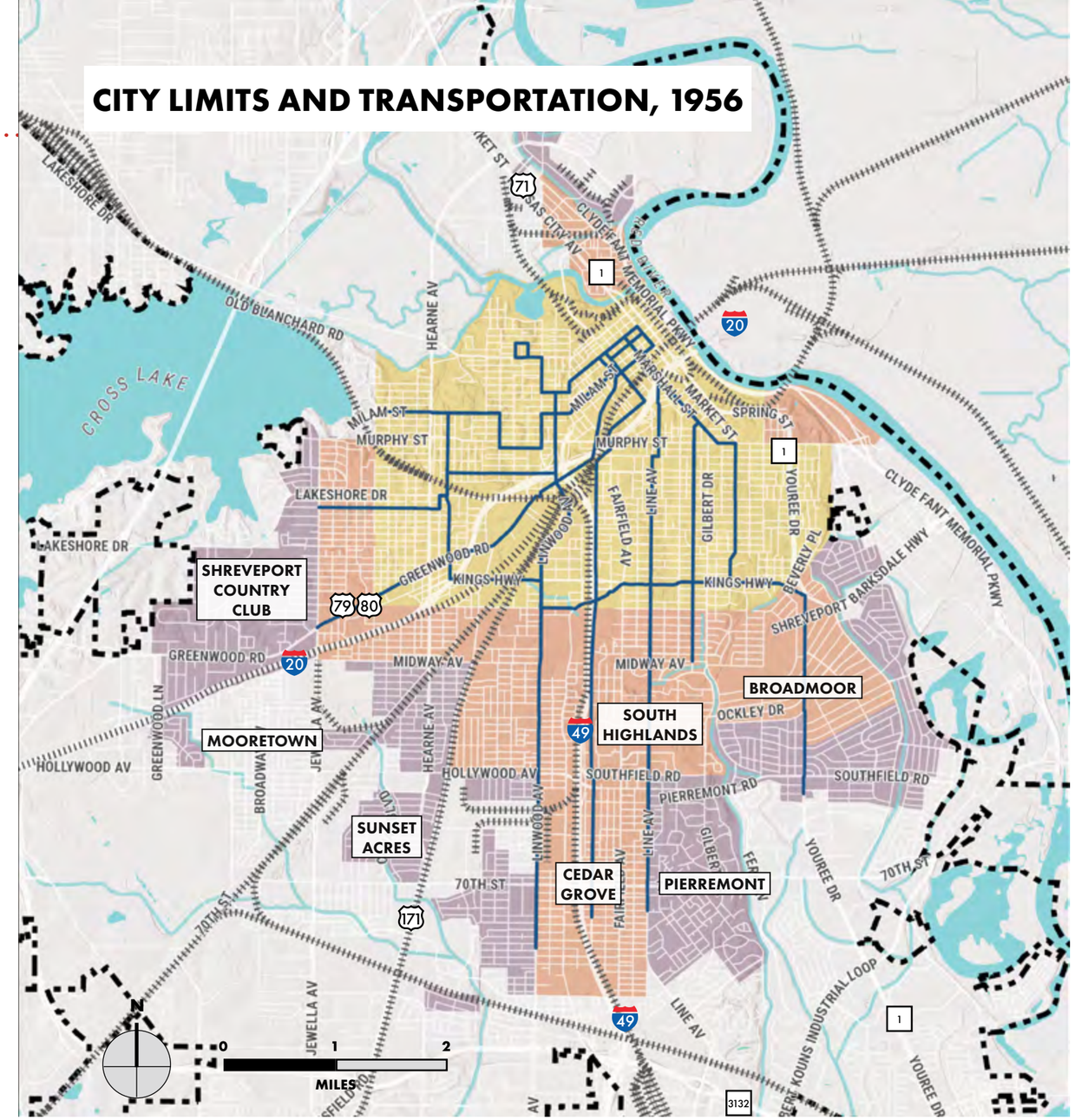
Shreveport has a rich history of investing in public transit and creating a connected city. Within ten years of its incorporation the city was connected to outlying areas via street cars – mule-drawn until the 1890s, when street cars electrified – operated by companies who developed the rail and power lines that opened up the Shreveport area to trade across the Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma area. The electrified trolley system operated for 50 years, from 1890 to 1939, when it was replaced by rubber-tire trolleybuses. Residents were highly dependent on the concentrated service area of the public transit system, with trolleys running every eight minutes at peak hours.

Following Shreveport's outward expansion in the 1920s, annexation generally paused through 1946, reflecting the economic challenges of the Great Depression and World War II.

Top: Drawing of a proposed manufacturing plant in Cedar Grove from the March 3, 1918 Shreveport Times. Above: South Highlands Fire Station.
Sources: KTAL, HMDB.



Shreveport's trolleys through the years. Left: Allendale streetcar, 1905. Right: Rubber-tired trolleybus, 1930s-1940s.
Sources: SporTran, LSU Shreveport Archives on Flickr.



ANNEXATION HISTORY

- Areas Annexed before 1920
- Areas Annexed 1920-1930
- Areas Annexed 1930-1956
- General Location of Trolleybus Routes 1956-1965
- General Location of Railroads in 1956

Source: City of Shreveport; Shreveport: The Trackless Trolley Years 1931-65", In Southern Traction Annals Trolley Coach News, Ruffin, Tom, Winter and Spring, 1981, Vol. 12, Number 1, Published May, 1984.

Postwar Booms and Busts

Following World War II, Shreveport's economy soared to historic heights. In 1950, Shreveport's per capita income exceeded the national average for its first and only time, buoyed by a white-collar managerial class and the growth of oil and natural gas industries.

In 1947, the Shreveport-based Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation, led by former United Gas Corporation executive and a group of Houston-based oilmen, purchased the massive "Big Inch" and "Little Big Inch" pipelines from the federal government, the largest disposal of post-World War II war-surplus property. This major acquisition represented a significant expansion of Shreveport's economic reach, transporting natural gas across the United States and supporting a boom in pipeline companies. In 1957, a winning slogan from a contest nicknamed Shreveport the "Pipeline Capital of America".

Oil, natural gas, and its affiliated industries would spur a building boom in the Downtown area, as new office space was needed to support the growing white-collar workforce. International Style towers such as the Beck Building and the Petroleum Tower were marketed as Shreveport's premier addresses for its rising oil and gas industry.

According to an August 1958 Shreveport Magazine article, 30% of the metropolitan area's workforce was employed directly by the oil and gas industry, with an additional 15% working in allied industries. Shreveport's economy was absolutely tied to oil and gas, though production was shifting.

Outside trends and events brought an end to the postwar boom by the early 1960s, as pipeline and oil company headquarters began to leave Shreveport to consolidate operations and move its relatively footloose managerial class to larger metros such as Houston. Anecdotally, a 1954 plane crash in Wallace Lake has been tied to a change in Shreveport's fortunes: the loss of civic leaders, particularly Texas Eastern head R.H. Hargrove, has been attributed to a weakened booster class and Texas Eastern's later move to Houston. In the mid-1960s, an upstart Pennzoil purchased the much larger United Gas Corporation in a leveraged buyout, building a new headquarters in downtown Houston and leaving yet another corporate headquarters in Shreveport vacant.

Economic Transitions

The retreat of the oil industry through the 1960s resulted in the loss of a significant middle-class workforce and civic leadership: an economic history by former Mayor James C. Gardner mentions the indirect impacts of losing leaders on organizations such as the Caddo Parish School Board, the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, and church boards.

In response to the loss of oil jobs, civic and state leaders began to collaborate to recruit manufacturing jobs to Shreveport to diversify the city's economy. Senator Russell B. Long was involved in securing Western Electric's plant in southwest Shreveport, which opened in the late 1960s. At the same time, Governor John McKeithen provided an essential ally at the state level, helping to secure educational campuses in Shreveport for LSU Shreveport, Southern University, and LSU Health Shreveport.

Above: Petroleum Tower under Construction, 1957.
Right: Postcard of the Henry C. Beck Building, ca. 1950s.
Sources: Downtown Development Authority, eBay.

Initial Plans For A Modern Shreveport

The 1956 Master Plan

Planning in Shreveport began in the early 1950s with the establishment of a City Planning Commission. Mobile-based architect and planner Arch Winter was recruited in 1952 by the City Planning Commission and its chair Dewey Somdal, a local architect. The city's business boosters likely played a large role, as a 1986 oral history interview with Arch Winter mentions Planning Commission members flying to Mobile in a United Gas plane in 1952.

Between 1952 and 1956, Winter worked with local leaders to develop Shreveport's first Master Plan and gain state legislative approval to create the Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission of Caddo Parish in 1954. The first Master Plan, "The Shreveport Plan", was delivered and adopted in 1956.

Like many master plans from this era, it reflects midcentury planning concepts: outward, low-density growth supported by systems of radial loop roads and parkways intended to serve large volumes of vehicular traffic and the strict separation of residential, business, and industrial areas. Other significant elements included major industrial development in southeast Shreveport near the proposed Overton Canal as well as parkways, loop roads, and expressways such as the Inner Loop and Red River Parkway, and future Interstate 20 expressway.

Building on urban renewal practices from the 1940s and 1950s, the plan also proposed a plan of slum clearance and redevelopment in several neighborhoods. A conceptual plan for the Stoner Hill-Anderson Island area shows the redevelopment of this area with typical suburban roadways.

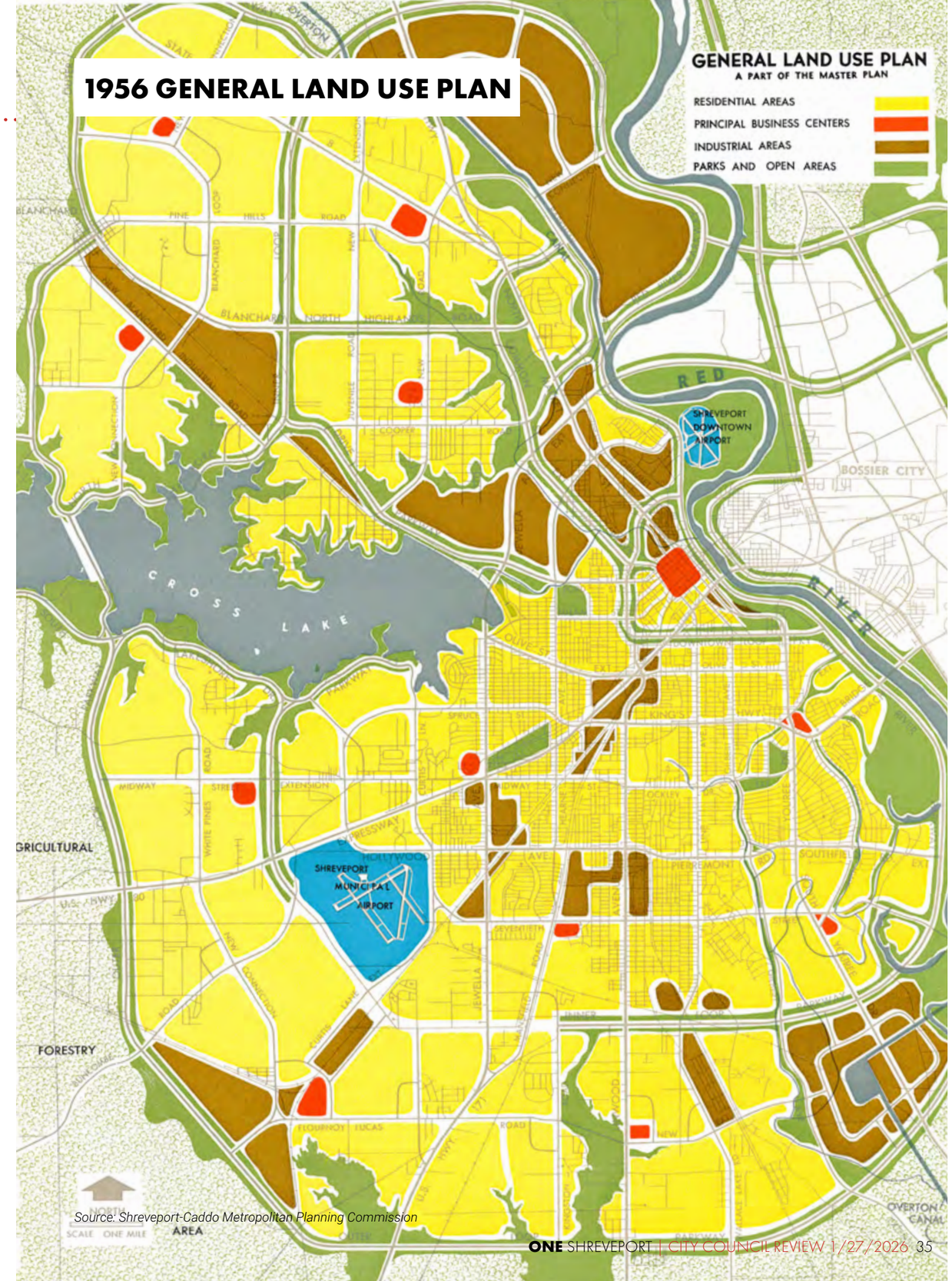
1976 Master Plan

While Shreveport began to implement the 1956 Master Plan through the 1960s, the first major plan update occurred in the 1970s and responded to the city's changing economy. Though the industrial recruitment efforts that resulted in Western Electric were vital to the city's economic transitions, the 1970 Census showed much lower growth than expected, largely due to the loss of oil jobs. In response, a revised economic strategy focused on five points:

- Improving navigation on the Red River;
- Constructing a north-south interstate connection with south Louisiana (Interstate 49;)
- Attracting a major manufacturer (General Motors);
- Completing the Inner Loop; and
- Starting graduate courses at LSU Shreveport.

Accordingly, the 1975 "Sketch Plan" for Metropolitan Shreveport shows major highways and employment areas, including Interstates 20 and 220, the future Interstate 49 corridor, the Inner Loop Expressway and Industrial Loop, and refined industrial areas near General Motors, Western Electric, and the future site of the Port of Caddo-Bossier.

Photograph of the planning committee from the 1956 master plan.
Source: Shreveport-Caddo Metropolitan Planning Commission



Source: Shreveport-Caddo Metropolitan Planning Commission

Civil Rights in Shreveport

Shreveport's development and early planning context cannot be separated from the Civil Rights Movement. At the same time that Arch Winter was developing the first Master Plan, the Civil Rights movement was picking up steam in Shreveport.

Community and Commerce

Shreveport's Black residents were community builders in spite of the racial segregation and violence they faced: they actively developed land, organized businesses and charitable associations, and shaped the city. During Reconstruction, Allendale resident Caesar Carpentier Antoine served as a state senator from Caddo Parish and as Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana.

Along Texas Avenue near today's Shreveport Common, "The Avenue" was an important district for Shreveport's Black community, with anchors like the Star Theatre and the Calanthean Temple serving as hubs of Black life. Named for the Grand Court Order of Calanthe, a women's fraternal organization, the Calanthean Temple was constructed in 1923 under leadership from womens' rights activist Cora Murdock Allen. The Calanthean Temple provided a critical space for Black-owned businesses. Nearby, the Universal Oil, Gas, and Mining Company - the first Black-owned oil company in the United States, founded in 1930 by Odessa S. Strickland - made its offices.

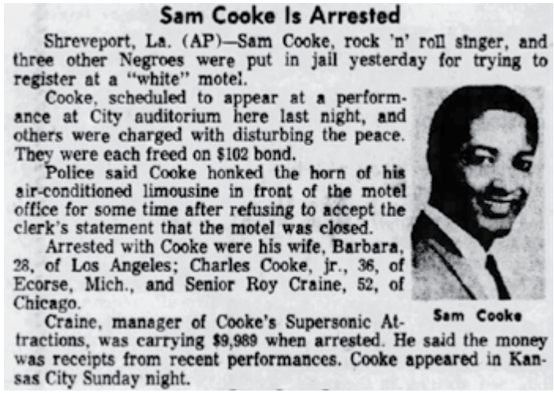
Further away from the downtown district, Black residents built communities. Colonel Giles D. Moore led the development of Moore's Town (now Mooretown) in what was once a rural portion of western Shreveport, supporting land ownership and establishing the Zion Rest Cemetery. North of Shreveport, one of the largest Black communities in the United States coalesced on the Cooper Road, now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. This independent enclave is home to Southern University Shreveport and was annexed into Shreveport in 1978.

The Civil Rights Movement

The landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954 ruled that racial segregation in public schools violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, paving the way for school integration. Desegregation of Caddo Parish Schools resulted in the 1965 Jones v. Caddo Parish School Board case and a 1981 consent decree that mandated a unitary educational system.

During the Civil Rights era, faith leaders in Shreveport were important advocates for racial equality. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at Galilee Baptist Church in 1958 and 1962, and at Little Union Baptist Church in 1962. Little Union Baptist Church was also a key gathering place for local leaders under the leadership of Rev. C.C. McLain, and today the church is recognized with a marker on the Louisiana Civil Rights Trail.

In another incident, singer Sam Cooke was arrested at the Black-owned Castle Hotel on Sprague Street on October 8, 1963 after being refused lodging at a whites-only Holiday Inn in Shreveport. Cooke proceeded to perform at the Municipal Auditorium despite a bomb threat, and the experience is said to have compelled Cooke to write "A Change Is Gonna Come".



Sam Cooke Is Arrested

Shreveport, La. (AP)—Sam Cooke, rock 'n' roll singer, and three other Negroes were put in jail yesterday for trying to register at a "white" motel.

Cooke, scheduled to appear at a performance at City auditorium here last night, and others were charged with disturbing the peace. They were each freed on $102 bond.

Police said Cooke honked the horn of his air-conditioned limousine in front of the motel office for some time after refusing to accept the clerk's statement that the motel was closed.

Arrested with Cooke were his wife, Barbara, 28, of Los Angeles; Charles Cooke, jr., 36, of Ecorse, Mich., and Senior Roy Craine, 52, of Chicago.

Sam Cooke

Craine, manager of Cooke's Supersonic Attractions, was carrying $9,989 when arrested. He said the money was receipts from recent performances. Cooke appeared in Kansas City Sunday night.

Above: Newspaper clipping from the Kansas City Times reporting on the arrest of Sam Cooke in Shreveport.
Opposite page from top, clockwise: Image of MLK, C. O. Simpkins, and other leaders and participants at Gallilee Baptist Church in Shreveport, 1958; photograph of the Calanthean Temple on Texas Avenue; photograph of the neon sign at Little Union Baptist Church on Milam Street; photograph of monument to C.C. Antoine at C.C. Antoine Park.
Sources: Newspapers.com, KTAL, Asakura Robinson.

Housing Discrimination

Throughout history, Shreveport and Caddo Parish shaped the city - whether directly or indirectly by racial means - through decisions such as school construction projects, water and sewer line extensions, and housing projects. Black communities in Shreveport were often less likely to be annexed and provided with city services than their white counterparts in a trend called municipal underbounding.

Redlining and Lending

Under the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Homeowners Loan Corporation, an organization that developed what are now popularly referred to as “redlining” maps. These maps graded areas that would be a “risky” mortgage investment for banks based on the land use, quality of housing, home values, and the race of current residents, assigning the highest risk scores to neighborhoods with predominantly black or minority populations. Areas with the lowest grade were typically marked as red on these maps, and these “redlined” areas were excluded from receiving federally-backed home loans, effectively barring the path for home ownership for minority residents and perpetuating the deteriorating quality of the homes.

Local redlining maps were created by local appraisers and real estate professionals with supporting narratives and racially explicit language. An example area in Shreveport is described as:

“Population 80% negro, 20% white. Negro population composed of laborers and mechanics, and white population composed of some of the higher-class salaried workers residing on what is called Jordan Court and Hamilton Terrace. The section contains a great many negro rental properties, some apartment houses, but predominantly single family residences… …White residents of this section moving away as fast as they can dispose of their properties due to detrimental influence of negro population and encroachment of commercial district.”

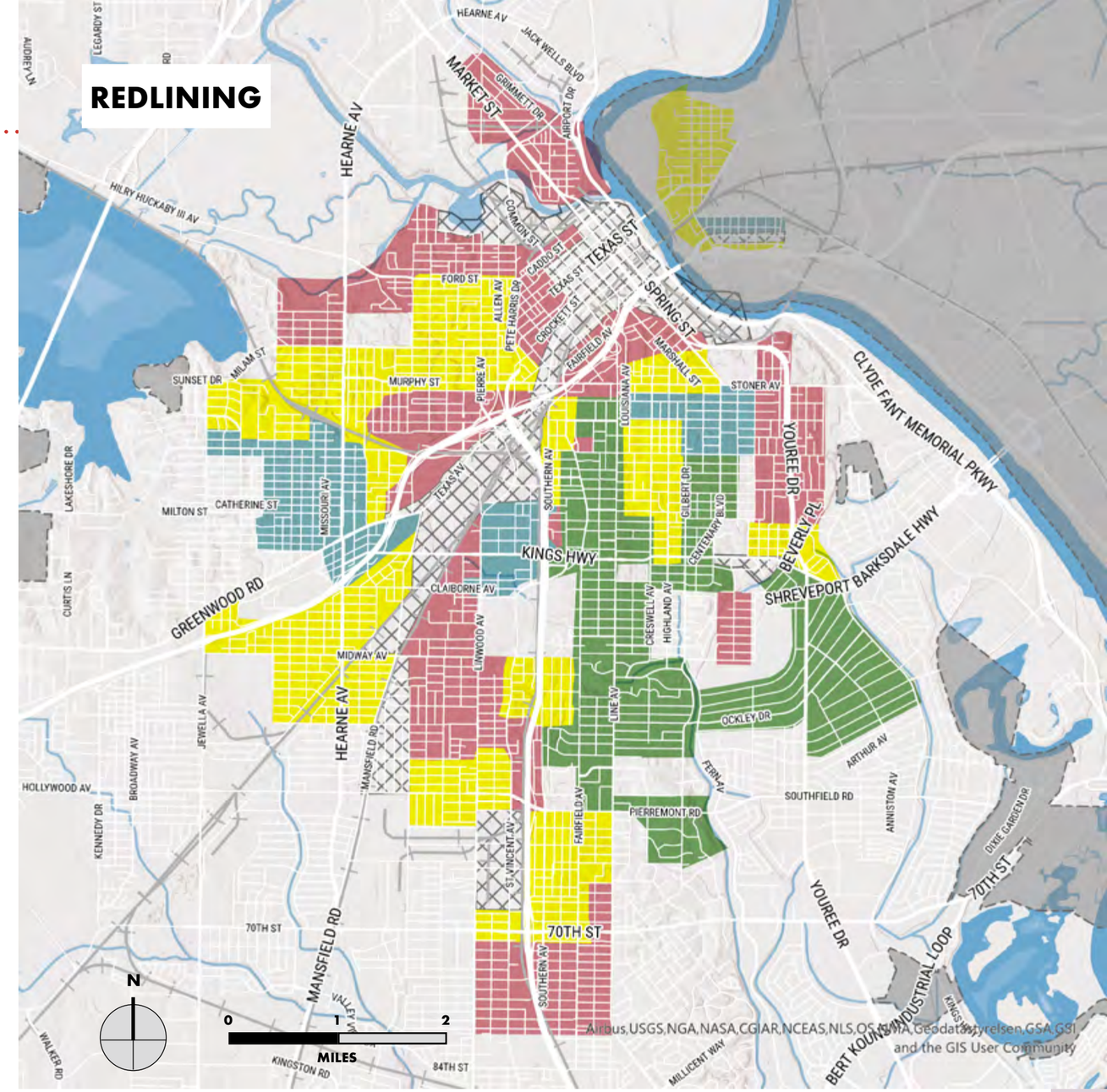
While the true impact of redlining is subject to debate and difficult to quantify, its clear relationship to neighborhoods, race, and wealth through real estate provides a frame to help understand the prevailing public and private attitudes towards race and neighborhood development.

One notable incident took place during the drafting of Shreveport's first Master Plan, with the proposed development of a subdivision for Black residents off Jewella Avenue in 1953 and 1954. The resulting controversy and court case, Stewart v. Clarke Terrace Unit No. 1, involved private development backed by FHA mortgages. Though Clarke Terrace did not develop as a Black subdivision and the property was later developed as the rebranded "West Morningside", a similar development eventually moved forward in the Eden Gardens area.

White Flight

As new housing developed near the outskirts of the city, "white flight" became a term used to describe the movement of white residents from established, urban areas to the suburban periphery. Coinciding changes in infrastructure and local services such as highways and school attendance zones also shaped mobile residents' decisions to "vote with their feet" and move. While difficult to quantify locally, Shreveport is not unique in experiencing this trend.

Collectively, these processes have created a geographic, economic, and quality of life gap that persists. Today, Shreveport residents in redlined neighborhoods have lower life expectancies and incomes and are more exposed to natural disasters, extreme heat, and air pollution. An analysis by the Social Science Research Council compared the current conditions in redlined, "high-risk" Caddo Heights and "low-risk" South Highlands, finding that the life expectancy is 12.5 years fewer in Caddo Heights, and residents in South Highlands make nearly four times as much as those residing in Caddo Heights.



HOLC AREA GRADES

- A: "Best"
- B: "Still Desirable"
- C: "Definitely Declining"
- D: "Hazardous"
- Commercial and Industrial Areas

Source: Nelson, Robert K., LaDale Winling, et al. "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America." Edited by Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers. American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History, 2023. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining.

Blight and Urban Renewal

Blight is a persistent, structural issue in Shreveport, with efforts to address blight and dilapidated housing captured as early as the 1956 Master Plan.

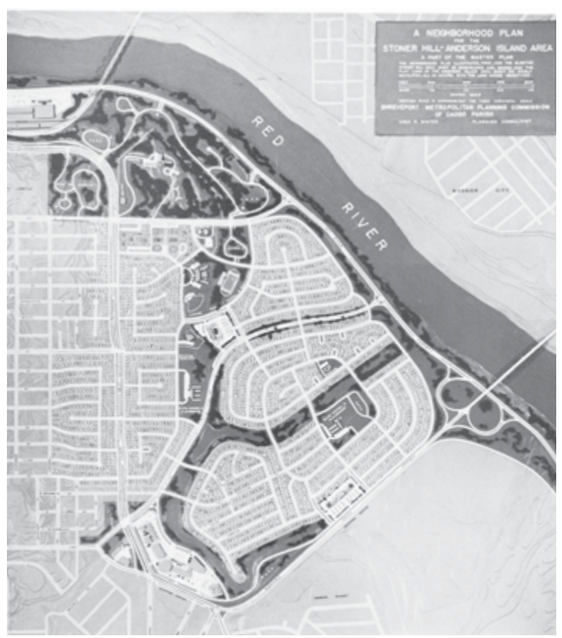
The Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 launched programs of "slum clearance" and federally supported public housing as part of an overall program of urban renewal. These midcentury approaches focused primarily on physical planning rather than the entrenched, systemic issues that create blight, though in later decades a community development paradigm would focus on a more holistic solutions.

The 1956 Master Plan identified blight based on "the absence of sanitary facilities, lack of public improvements such as parks and playgrounds, utilities and paved streets, depreciating effects of alien land uses, and overcrowding of the land." It also discusses strategies to "reclaim" the districts through "wholesale clearance and redevelopment", rehabilitation efforts where possible, and the use of zoning and building controls to prevent future blight.

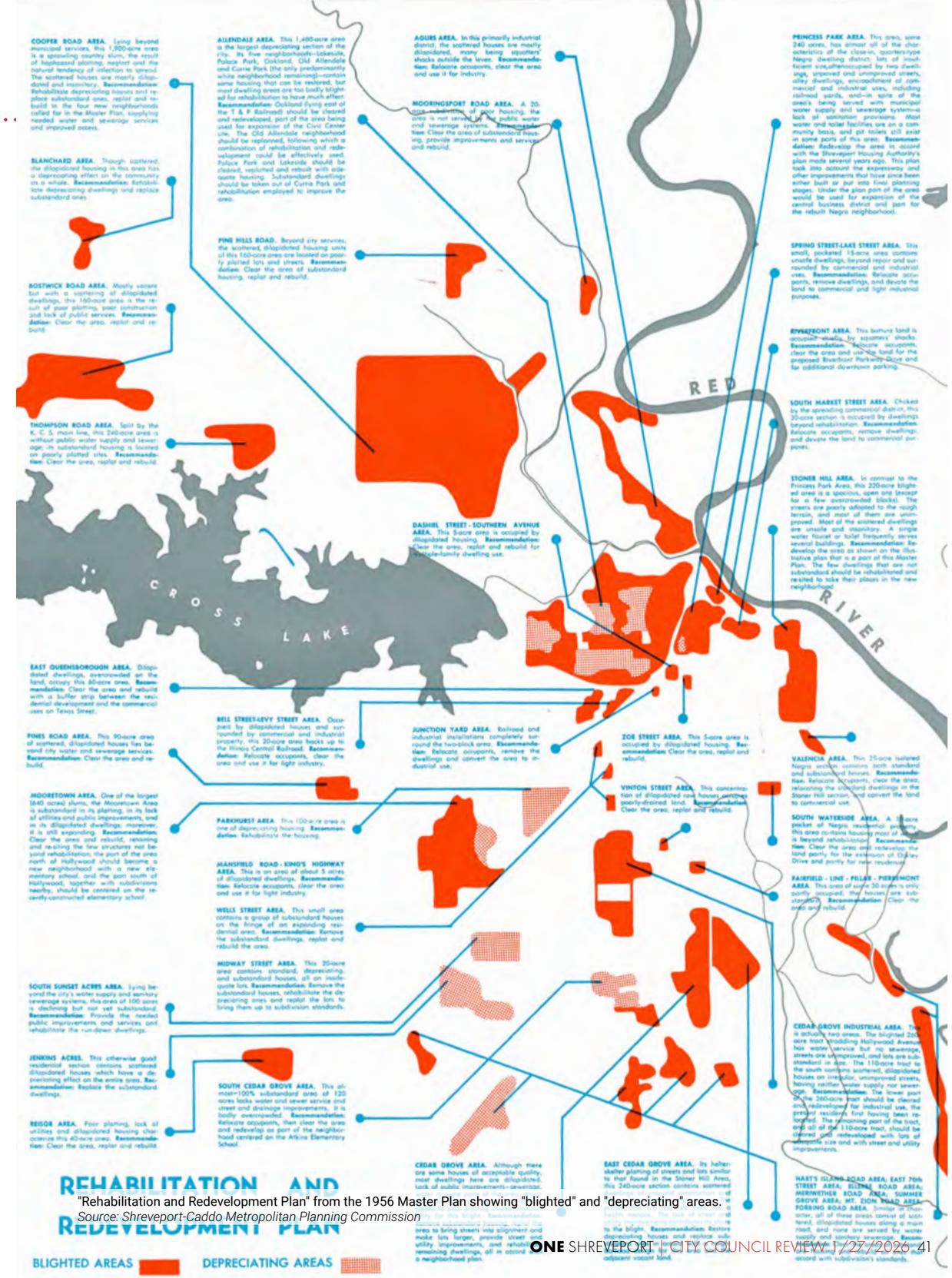
Supercharged by the city's postwar boom and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, major infrastructure and highway projects were used to implement clearance and demolition projects, such as the construction of Interstate 20 in Crosstown. However, a lack of serious relocation and planning strategy resulted in the displacement of residents. Today, many areas identified in the 1956 Master Plan face persisting challenges with blight and vacant property nearly 70 years later.

The entrenched nature of poverty and blight, as well as the disruptions caused by the displacement of residents, makes urban renewal a challenging topic to redress locally and nationally. Future strategies to address blight - beyond demolition - should take care to learn from the mistakes of the past.

Homes in the Bottoms - now Ledbetter Heights.
Source: Library of Congress.



Conceptual plan illustrating redevelopment of the Stoner Hill - Anderson Island area from the 1956 Master Plan.
Source: Shreveport-Caddo Metropolitan Planning Commission



"Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Plan" from the 1956 Master Plan showing "blighted" and "depreciating" areas.
Source: Shreveport-Caddo Metropolitan Planning Commission

Continued Transitions Through 2000

Shreveport rebounded in the 1970s, with the 1973 OPEC oil embargo boosting local oil production and Western Electric growing its manufacturing employment. However, structural changes in the national and global economies would challenge this continued trajectory in the early 1980s.

The early 1980s oil glut and the resulting bust would devastate American oil prices and the economies of cities like Shreveport and Houston. At the same time, the antitrust breakup of the Bell System and Western Electric's monopoly in the 1980s provided new competition for Western Electric, leading to layoffs.

At the same time, the rise of the automobile challenged the city's privately-owned trolleybus system. Trolleybus ridership peaked in the late 1940s in line with the beginning of the post-World War II population influx, but by 1970 ridership had decreased to the point of being unprofitable. The City of Shreveport purchased the system in 1972 and established SporTran.

Economic Diversification

In response to crashing oil prices, the Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce commissioned an economic development study that resulted in an expanded focus on medical professions, building on the regional medical presence and the siting of LSU Health Shreveport in the 1960s.

The Biomedical Research Foundation of Northwest Louisiana (BRF) was founded in 1986 as an extension of this effort. Since then, BRF is a regional leader for economic development with partners such as LSU Health, and its InterTech Science Park campus is an anchor of the city's Medical District. Additionally, BRF leads recruitment for small-to-mid-sized businesses to locate in the Shreveport-Bossier area.

In recent decades, the City, the North Louisiana Economic Partnership and the Port of Caddo-Bossier have sought to capitalize on Shreveport's locational assets by encouraging logistics growth at the Port of Caddo-Bossier, the ShrevePark Industrial Campus, and other sites with highway and rail access. These regional employment centers also guided the development of new housing and commercial areas within the region: as employment ebbs and flows, so does housing demand in that area.

Suburbanization

As Shreveport grew outward, the city government sought to capture new development through annexation, expanding the city's tax base and extending city services and utilities to these areas.

Between 1950 and 2000, Shreveport quadrupled its land area, annexing new subdivisions and commercial areas as it began to reach towards industrial areas at the edges of the city. The city primarily annexed newly-built, high-value, predominantly White neighborhoods constructed during the era of school desegregation while older and poorer neighborhoods were often left just outside the city limits.

While Shreveport had a much larger land area, its residents were more spread out. The city had roughly 5,000 people per square mile in the 1940s and 1950s, its peak in terms of population density and urbanization. The housing paradigm shifted from dense housing (such as shotgun houses and small lots) located near the center of the city and streetcar lines to larger-lot suburban housing accessed primarily by the automobile.

As the city grew outwards, the city had to provide full services in newly annexed areas, such as water and sewer lines and police and fire protection. Serving lower-density areas took more infrastructure, with more pavement and more pipe per person. Service provision was uneven across the city, with reinvestment in older, poorer neighborhoods often lagging behind, and city taxes became a frequent political sticking point.

SHREVEPORT'S INDUSTRIES, 1940-PRESENT.

Left to Right: Western Electric (AT&T), General Motors, Bally's (Casino/Tourism)

1960 - 1980

Telecommunications

The Western Electric Company (AT&T), set up their telephone equipment manufacturing facility in Shreveport during the 1960s. It prospered as one of the pioneers of telecommunication technology and at its height, employed 7,500 people. In the 1980s, however, AT&T began to transfer manufacturing operations to Asia, leading to the plant's eventual closure.

Automobile

The General Motors Shreveport Assembly plant was built in 1981. At its height, it was one of Louisiana's largest manufacturing employers, and employed over 3,000 people. Due to decrease in manufacturing demands, however, the plant closed in 2012. Today, there are ongoing conversations on how to repurpose the plant and grow Shreveport's economy and job offerings.

1990 - Today

Tourism

Along with museums and historic landmarks and sites, Shreveport's casinos have continued to attract tourism since 1994, with the opening of Harrah's (now Sam's Town), as well as newer additions such as Margaritaville in 2013. The casino industry, though weakened in more recent times, has brought entertainment and employment opportunities to the city.

Transportation and Logistics

Shreveport's strategic location at the intersection of major transportation routes has positioned it as a vital transportation and logistics hub. Companies such as Amazon have opted to build facilities here, further supporting economic growth in the city.

Education

Caddo Parish Schools accounts for approximately 5,000 jobs, making them one of the largest employers for the city. Louisiana State University - Shreveport, Centenary College, Southern University in Shreveport, and other higher education institutions also account for employment in education.

HUMAN CONTEXT

Among Shreveport's greatest assets are its people: the city's diverse population and cultural heritage distinguish it from its peers in the region.

This human, social, and cultural capital is cultivated - and provides the foundation for the city's economic health.

Heritage and Cultural Capital

Shreveport's prime location for trade and economy fostered the growth of a population representing diverse heritages. Active commercial corridors such as Texas Street, also known as "The Avenue", were melting pots of successful restaurants and mercantile businesses owned by African American, Jewish, Asian, Arabic, and other European families. Shreveport's nature of acceptance over the years have helped shape the city we know today, with some fragments of history highlighted below.

Black and African American Heritage

African American communities in Shreveport have been, and still are, fierce advocates of their heritage through faith, culture, and advocacy, withstanding the adversities and impacts of slavery and segregation.

Religious institutions were crucial and historically, one of the few gathering spaces that were for and embraced Black communities. Churches nurtured faith, educated Black youth, and fostered community-led activism. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at the Old Galilee Baptist Church (#4) in 1958 and 1962 during the Civil Rights Movement, and many churches were active centers for NAACP and CORE meetings.

Allendale, Ledbetter Heights, and Cooper Road are some of Shreveport's historic African American neighborhoods that have supported Black businesses and culture over the years. Black owned businesses such as Orlandeaux's Café (#3, originally Old Freeman and Harris Café on Pete Harris Dr.) and J.S. Williams Funeral Home (#1) are some of Shreveport's and the United States' oldest Black-owned businesses. Neighborhoods such as St. Paul's Bottoms or places like KOKA Radio Station created space for and uplifted Black blues, gospel, and R&B artists over the years as well.

Jewish Heritage

Shreveport welcomed Jewish migrants during the rise of antisemitism in the United States. By 1900, there were over 100 Jewish families residing in Shreveport, many actively engaged in public and commercial life. The Jewish community were some of the largest property owners in Shreveport. Some notable developments that still exist today include residential subdivisions, such as Werner Park and Cooper Road, B'Nai Zion Temple (#5, 700 Cotton St), and commercial buildings such as the former Feibelman's (624 Texas Ave) and Strand Theatre (#2, 619 Louisiana Ave).

Italian Heritage

Sicilian families migrated to Shreveport through New Orleans beginning around late 1800s, many escaping civil strife and poor economy in Italy. Many of these families started businesses related to food such as distribution, corner stores, and restaurants all over the city, such as Fertitta's (#8).

Women's History

Both black and white women established spaces for advocacy in the advancement and equal rights for women in Shreveport. The Woman's Department Club (#11), a historically white organization, was organized in 1919 followed by the completion of the two-story clubhouse at 802 Margaret Place in 1925. Black women also formed their organizations to meet their social and professional needs. The four-story Calanthean Temple (#9) on the 1000 Block of Texas Avenue was built in 1923 to host events such as rooftop concerts, and housed offices of black professionals in Shreveport.

Gay and LGBTQ Rights

LGBTQ+ activism and community building have been vibrant in Shreveport since the early 1980s. Pride events and spaces such as the Korner Lounge and Central Station (#7) have provided spaces for self-expression, celebration, and belonging for the LGBTQ+ community.

Appreciation for Diverse Cultures

Shreveport continues to be a melting pot for the Ark-La-Tex region, and today is home to organizations such as The Multicultural Center of the South (MCCS), who provided services and outreach to various cultural groups in the Shreveport-Bossier area.

The small but growing Asian and Hispanic communities have created spaces and stores that reflect their heritage. The ASEANA Asian Gardens (#10) in Downtown Shreveport is representative of several Asian countries and host myriads of cultural festivals celebrating Asian Heritage. Filipino and Chinese students, families, and professionals have found communities through church, student organizations, and more.

The presence of Latino businesses and communities have also grown in recent years offering Shreveport residents the flavors and cultures of Latin and South America. Events such as the Hispanic Heritage Festival (#6) also offer a glimpse of Hispanic heritage for all families throughout the city.

Collage of Historic Buildings that reflect Shreveport's Diverse heritages.

The Sounds of Shreveport

"I'm goin down in old Blue Goose, even if I lose
When you go to Shreveport town
You can find Blue Goose and they'll car' you down
I'm goin' down in old Blue Goose, I don't care if I lose"

Jesse Thomas, Blue Goose Blues, 1929

Shreveport Blues

Perhaps the most iconic figures in music history to have called Shreveport home is the incomparable Lead Belly, born Huddie Ledbetter, one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. With a tale as tall as the Red River is long, Lead Belly was an American blues icon - born to sharecroppers in the late 20th century, Lead Belly's captivating musicianship and larger than life voice took songs from the fields and prisons he spent his early life persevering and developed a range of music staples that still find frequent home on the airwaves today.

From the haunting depths of "Where Did You Sleep Last Night" (later covered by Nirvana) to the traditional folk arrangement "In New Orleans (House of the Rising Sun)," which would later become a perennial 60s classic thanks to The Animals, the legacy of Lead Belly's music has yet to tarnish.

Alongside Lead Belly, Shreveport was home to a wide range of blues musicians of the pre-war period that would position Shreveport as a critical component of blues history. Unfolding in the Blue Goose Neighborhood and a stretch of Texas Avenue between Milam Street and I-20 (referred to as "The Avenue" at the time), Shreveport was fundamental for blues music in the 20s and 30s.

From Lead Belly to other foundational blues musicians like Blind Lemon Jefferson and Jesse Thomas, the history of the blues flows deeply through the streets of Shreveport.

Stan's Record Shop

Born in Shreveport, Stan Lewis begin his music career with his first record shop, Stan's Music Shop, in 1948. Lewis' music shop was a regional staple for rhythm and blues records, advertising its mail order services all the way to Nashville and providing R&B records for radio stations across the region.

In a turn of events that would reverberate through the walls of numerous halls of fame, future rock and roll legend Dale Hawkins was working at Stan's Music Shop as Lewis was beginning to launch his music recording business. Inspired by Lewis' daughter, Dale and his bandmate Robert Chaisson wrote a song that would shape the sounds of rock and roll - "Suzie Q." With Lewis as producer and accompaniment by Shreveport-born James Burton, one of the most legendary guitarists in music history, "Suzie Q." steams with the swamp tinged sound of southern blues rock that would later become a national music standard through the sounds of Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Not to be content with one hit, Lewis would go on to form Jewel records. Lewis recorded and produced for some of the most prolific blues and R&B musicians of all time, from Houston legend Lightning Hopkins and droning delta blues titan John Lee Hooker all the way to the ineffable Tina Turner. At its peak, Jewel Records recorded across the country, including Sound City in Shreveport, and reached a level of production and distribution such that Billboard Magazine claimed they were the "largest freight user, the largest telephone user, and the greater customer of the Post Office Department in that part of the nation" (Billboard Aug 11, 1973).

The Legend of the Louisiana Hayride

No discussion of Shreveport music history would be complete without the Louisiana Hayride. Recorded at the Shreveport Musical Auditorium and airing from 1948 to 1960, the Hayride at its height could be heard around the county on CBS radio and globally through the Far East Network of the Armed Forces Radio Services. The Hayride carved out a niche amongst a bustling southern country performance circuit dominated by the Grand Old Opry in Nashville by providing a platform for relatively unknown acts, which resulted in the Hayride being a critical springboard to stardom for some of the most prolific musicians of the 20th century.

Famously, Elvis Presley got his start on the Hayride, where despite a lackluster first performance he was given a one-year contract in 1954. It would be 2 years later, in 1956 that Elvis would play his final show on the Hayride, prompting producer and announcer Horace Logan to announce that "Elvis had left the building," unintentionally coining one of the most iconic phrases of rock and roll history. Across it's 12 year run, the Hayride became the starting point of not only Elvis, but a wide range of country stars and early rock icons, establishing the show as one of the cornerstones of modern music. Hank Williams Sr., one of the greatest country stars of all time, got his start on the Hayride stage, and would later give birth to another country legend, Hank Williams Jr., in Shreveport during his time in contract with the Hayride.

Ratchet City

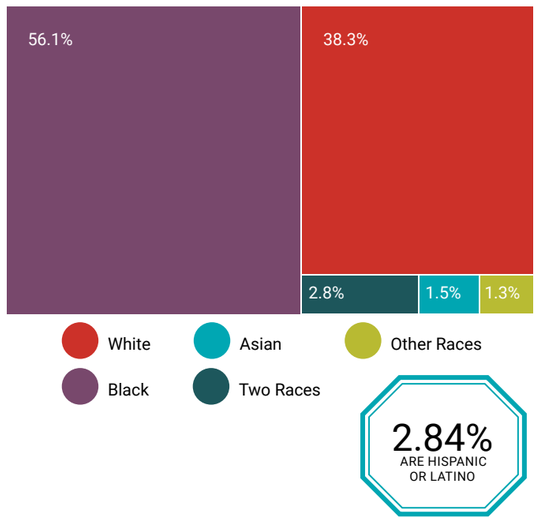
Shreveport continues to leave its mark on music history still today, and there is perhaps no better example than the rise of Ratchet City hip-hop. From the Chopped and Screwed style of Houston's Orleans Bounce style Take Fo' Records, hip hop emerged with ferocity in the South during the 1990s. In Shreveport, this new wave of hip-hop was harnessed by producer Anthony Mandigo and his label Lava House, who pioneered the iconic ratchet style of hip-hop. With its punchy bass, snappy snare, proto-trap hight hats, and southern fried hooks, Ratchet beats continue to pump through the streets of Shreveport today, having definitively claimed its place in the soundtrack of daily life.

Demographics and Health

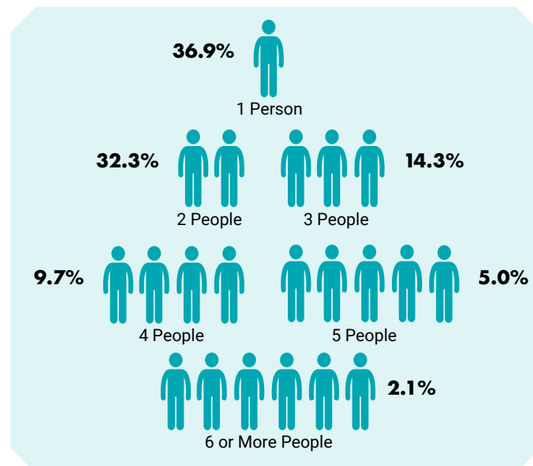
Shreveport is a diverse, multiracial city. A majority of households have two persons or fewer.

A theme that emerged during the planning process was the importance of a "green and healthy community". Health is often connected to demographic and socioeconomic factors, and shapes residents' quality of life.

RACE AND ETHNICITY



HOUSEHOLD SIZE



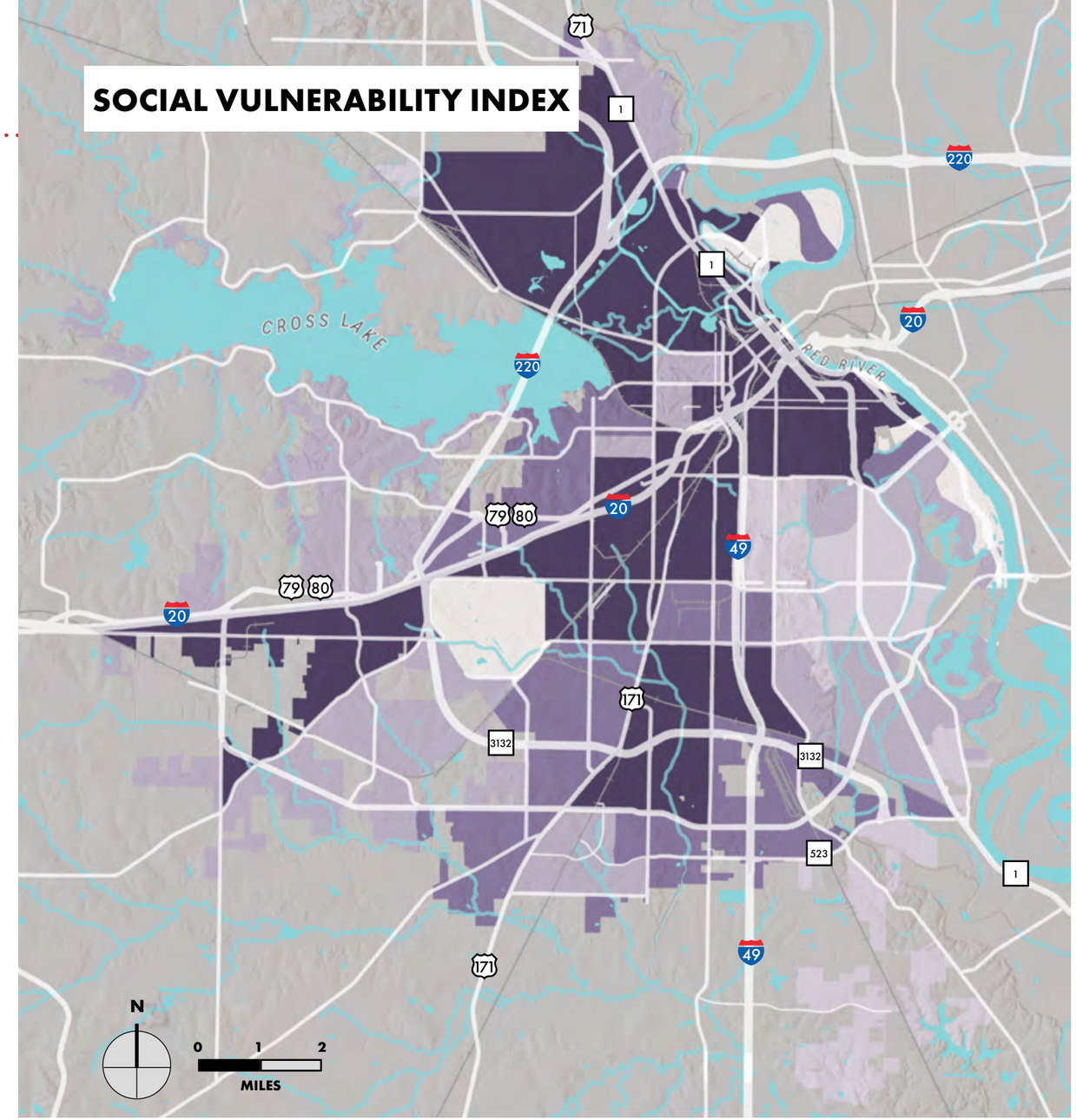
HEALTH OUTCOMES AMONG ADULTS

Have been diagnosed with obesity	47%
Have high blood pressure	46%
Reported poor mental health in previous two weeks	23%

16%
OF PEOPLE HAVE A DISABILITY OF ANY KIND

13%
LACK HEALTH INSURANCE

Sources (L): American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2022 Tables B02001, B15003, B03003, B11016
Sources (L): Centers for Disease Control Places: Local Data for Better Health, 2023



Social vulnerability refers to the demographic and socioeconomic factors (such as poverty, lack of access to transportation, and crowded housing) that adversely affect communities that encounter hazards and other community-level stressors.

The Social Vulnerability Index captures these factors to provide a measure of overall vulnerability, with a higher score indicating a higher potential sensitivity to stressor events.

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX

- Top Quartile (0.75 - 1)
- Third Quartile (0.51 - 0.75)
- Second Quartile (0.26 - 0.5)
- Bottom Quartile (0.01 - 0.25)

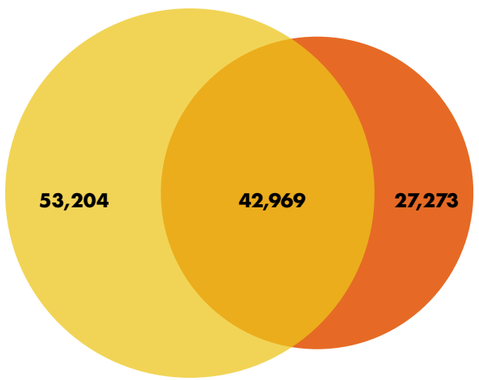
Source: CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index, 2022.

Employment and Economy

As a regional economic center, Shreveport is home to major employers. According to OnTheMap, over 53,000 people live outside Shreveport but work in the city, accounting for a majority (55.3%) of all jobs in the city. Accounting for Shreveport residents who work outside the city, Shreveport grows by nearly 26,000 people during the daytime.

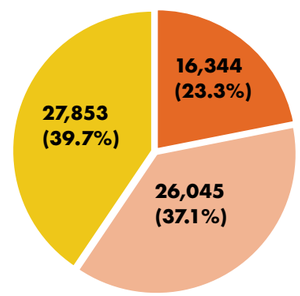
The quality of jobs that are available to Shreveport's residents also shape residents' lives and economic opportunities. Over 60% of Shreveport residents make less than $3,333 per month, and 56.9% of Shreveport residents are rent burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

INFLOW/OUTFLOW JOB COUNTS IN 2022



Works in city but lives outside
Lives in city but works outside
Works and lives in city

RESIDENT JOBS PER EARNINGS CATEGORY



$1,250 per month or less
$1,251 to $3,333 per month
More than $3,333 per month

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES BY RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT

Health Care & Social Assistance	16,775	23.9%
Retail Trade	9,444	13.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	8,203	11.7%
Admin & Support, Waste Management & Remediation	5,818	8.3%
Educational Services	5,510	7.8%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

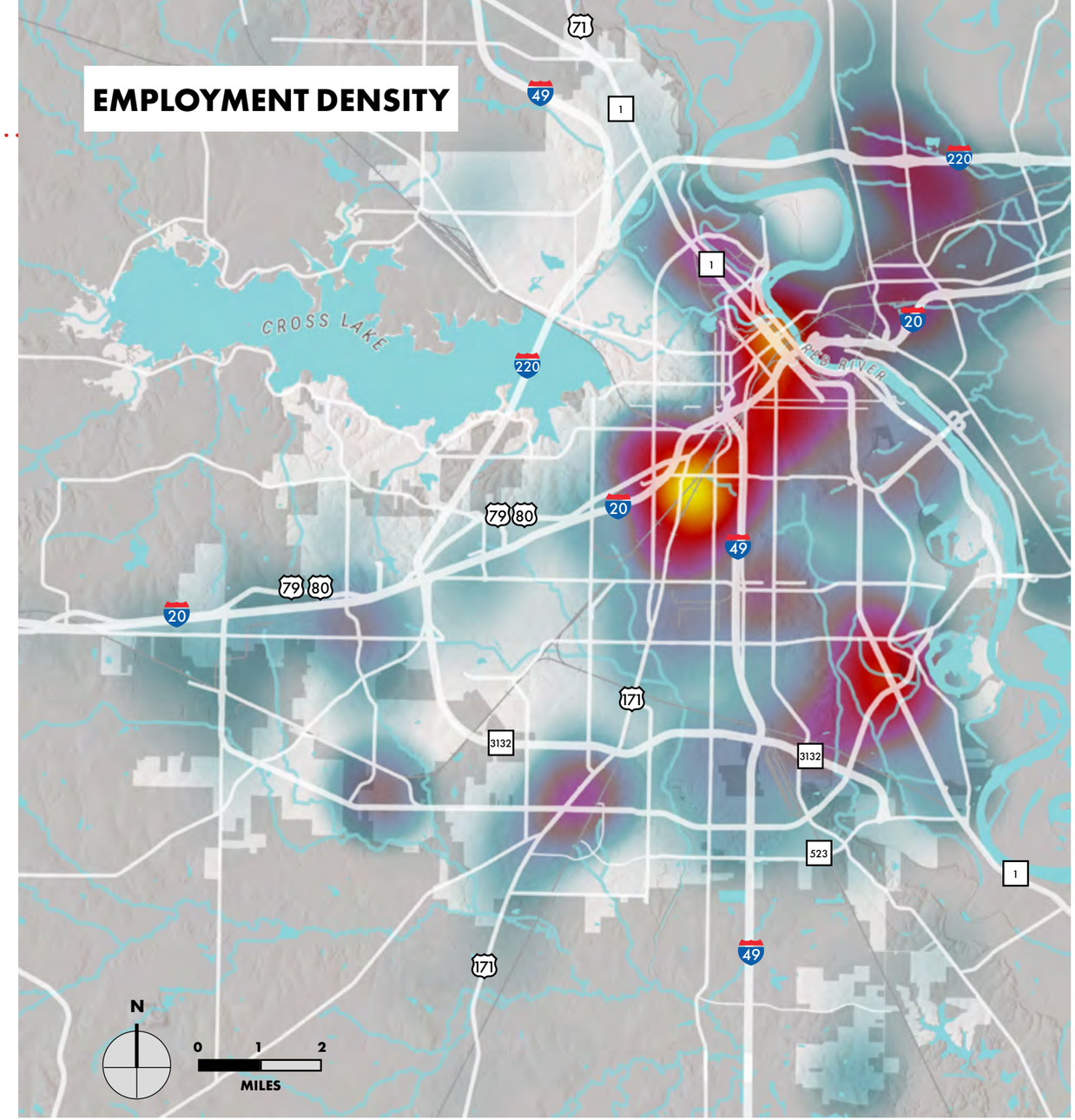
Less Than High School	13%
High School Graduate	54%
Associates Degree	7%
Bachelor's Degree and Above	26%

ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Below Poverty Line	23.4%
Rent Burdened	56.9%
Unemployed	8.3%

Sources: US Census Bureau OntheMap LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2023 data; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2022 Tables B23025, B17010, and B25140.

✶ Rent burden refers to when a person spends more than 30% of their income on housing costs.



Employment Density is measured by the quantity of jobs in a given place, where higher job density refers to a higher concentration of jobs in that location.

Major centers such as Downtown Shreveport, the Medical District, and the Youree Drive commercial area have high density. These are important destinations for regional commuters and customers.

EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

Dense
Sparse

Source: 2022 Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) via OnTheMap.

POPULATION TRENDS

Jobs and housing are the foundations of a local economy.

As Shreveport's economy has shifted, its population has shifted.

These changes affect resident quality of life as well as the city's fiscal health.

Shreveport and the Region

Shreveport's local economy is impacted by changes at the federal, state, and regional levels. Regional trends also provide important context to help understand the city's trajectory.

Regional Growth and Change

Shreveport is the principal city of the Shreveport-Bossier City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), a geographic region used to evaluate population and economic trends. The MSA includes the entirety of Caddo, Bossier, and DeSoto parishes and reflects the region's close economic ties. As the center of a regional economy, Shreveport's employers draw their workforce from the Ark-La-Tex region, with most employees residing in the MSA.

The City of Shreveport's population peaked in 1980 with a population of 206,989. It declined through 1990, rebounded slightly into 2000, and has again continued to decline after 2000. On the other hand, the MSA continued to grow consistently through 2010 before shrinking between 2010 and 2020. Regional population loss between 2010 and 2020 was driven by Shreveport and the remainder of Caddo Parish, offsetting modest population growth in Bossier and DeSoto parishes.

Commuter Suburbs and Bedroom Communities

When Shreveport's population peaked in 1980, it also peaked as a proportion of Caddo Parish and the MSA's overall population, with 82% of Caddo Parish residents and 58% of all MSA residents living in Shreveport. Since this time, Shreveport has steadily seen its overall share of the MSA's population decline, with an estimated 48% of MSA residents living in Shreveport in 2020.

During this time, Bossier City and DeSoto Parish's shares of the region's population have remained generally steady, with about 14-16% of the MSA's residents calling Bossier City home and 7% calling DeSoto Parish home. The area that has generally gained population share since 1980 are unincorporated areas and smaller cities in Bossier Parish, which went from 8% of MSA residents to around 17% in 2020.

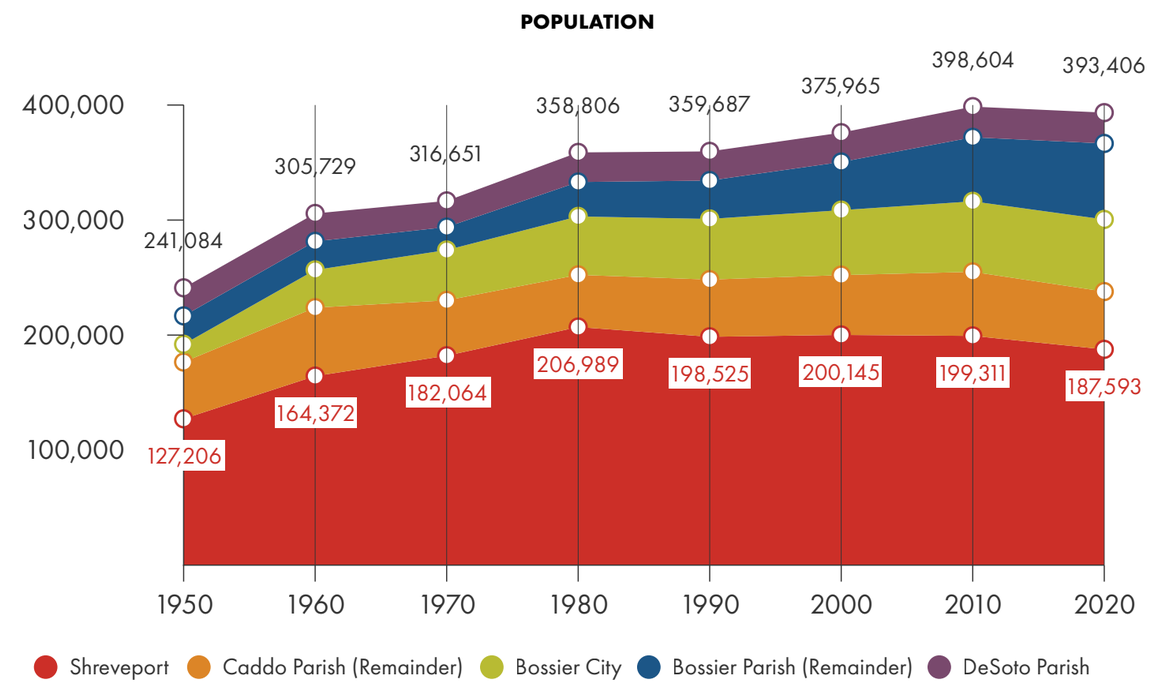
Where Workers Live - And Why It Matters

In a regional economy, Shreveport has an important advantage as its employment center. Every day, Shreveport grows as workers travel into the city for their jobs.

Individuals' decisions where to live are shaped by factors such as proximity to their places of work, school quality, quality of life and amenities, housing costs and quality, and social ties. However, these decisions also shape the health of the city's finances.

The primary source of revenue for the City's of Shreveport's General Fund is a local sales tax, which provides nearly two-thirds of the General Fund's revenues. The General Fund houses most basic city services and covers costs such as police, fire, and parks. The second largest source of revenue is the local property tax, which is shaped by property values. Places in high demand generally drive higher land values, and more development results in higher improvement values. More dense, urbanized areas generally create more tax revenue for the city on a per-acre basis.

When workers live and shop outside Shreveport, the money they spend on housing and goods does not benefit the City of Shreveport in terms of tax revenue, though they may contribute to jobs elsewhere in the economy. They may live and shop in other principal cities, such as Bossier City, or in smaller "bedroom communities" and unincorporated areas. Shreveport still bears some costs, such as maintaining public safety services in employment areas, but it is unable to recoup funds to cover services and expenses, like the additional wear and tear on city streets and air pollution caused by commuter traffic.



ANNUAL GROWTH RATES BY DECADE

	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
CITY OF SHREVEPORT	1.03%	1.29%	-0.42%	0.08%	-0.04%	-0.60%
CADDO PARISH (UNINCORPORATED AREAS AND OTHER CITIES)	-2.10%	-0.59%	0.92%	0.45%	0.68%	-1.02%
BOSSIER CITY	2.93%	1.50%	0.37%	0.69%	0.83%	0.22%
BOSSIER PARISH (UNINCORPORATED AREAS AND OTHER CITIES)	-2.18%	4.14%	1.10%	2.29%	2.89%	1.72%
DESOTO PARISH	-0.63%	1.23%	-0.15%	0.06%	0.45%	0.06%
SHREVEPORT MSA	0.35%	1.26%	0.02%	0.44%	0.59%	-0.13%
LOUISIANA	1.12%	1.45%	0.03%	0.57%	0.14%	0.27%
UNITED STATES	1.27%	1.08%	0.94%	1.24%	0.93%	0.71%

Sources: Decennial Census

Migration and Growth Patterns

The American Community Survey provides estimates of migration between different geographic areas, including at the metropolitan area and parish/county levels. While the ACS methods are estimates and should be carefully used due to their margins of error, a review of Caddo Parish migration patterns indicates the following trends:

Where Are New Residents Coming From?

Caddo Parish appears to be gaining residents from rural communities and residents already in the region. Its largest single origin of new residents appears to be Bossier Parish (414), though the margin of error (895) exceeds the estimate. This is generally in line with national trends, which are seeing migration from rural areas, to smaller cities, to larger cities.

The Shreveport metro area's top metros for in-migration appear to be aligned with military communities, with two top sources of new residents including:

- Wichita Falls, TX Metro Area (Sheppard AFB)
- Gulfport-Biloxi-Pascagoula, MS Metro Area (Keesler AFB)

Where Are Current Residents Going?

Generally, Caddo Parish is losing residents to localities that are experiencing economic growth, though some nearby communities are included. The top ten parish/county destinations include:

- The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, with three of the top 10 parish/county destinations, including Tarrant County (Fort Worth), Denton County (Denton), and Dallas County (Dallas).
- Louisiana parishes in the top 10 destinations included nearby DeSoto and Webster as well as East Baton Rouge, Calcasieu, and Ascension.
- Smith County, Texas (Tyler) was another destination.

In terms of scale, the Shreveport metro area is losing an estimated 500+ residents to each of these areas:

- Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area (1,670)
- Baton Rouge, LA Metro Area (536)
- Lake Charles, LA Metro Area (527)

Economic Resilience

The global and national economy heavily shape local business decisions. Macroeconomic issues range from fiscal and trade policy (e.g. interest rates and tariffs), commodity prices, and technical changes and productivity gains. Collectively, these influence Shreveport's economy: rising natural gas prices and improved drilling technology may stimulate local natural gas production, while automation may reduce the number of workers employed in routine or lower-skilled manufacturing jobs. This changing demand for labor impacts the quantity and quality of jobs available in the local market and its attractiveness to workers.

Disasters can also be a major catalyst for migration as residents are displaced. Perhaps the most well-known cause of displacement in Louisiana is extreme weather such as hurricanes. After making landfall in 2005, Hurricane Katrina displaced significant numbers of New Orleans residents to other metropolitan areas across the Gulf Coast, including Texas and Louisiana. While many residents returned, many did not. The state of Louisiana's growth rate dipped significantly between 2000 and 2010 as a result of Katrina and the resulting economic hardship and migration from the state. Yet, many other metros in Louisiana experienced growth while New Orleans shrank during this period.

The COVID-19 pandemic also reshaped regional markets as a pivot to remote work allowed many workers to move from high cost-of-living areas to lower-cost areas, often in search of larger or higher-quality housing or improved amenities. However, the rise of remote work and return-to-office policies have also had strong impacts on local office markets.

A resilient economy is better able to respond to macroeconomic shifts and other hazards. Though global trade and natural hazards are outside Shreveport's control, preparedness is a local responsibility and an important opportunity.

POPULATION AND ANNUAL GROWTH RATES BY DECADE

	POPULATION				ANNUAL GROWTH RATES		
	1990	2000	2010	2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
UNITED STATES	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	1.24%	0.93%	0.71%
LOUISIANA	4,219,973	4,468,976	4,533,372	4,657,757	0.57%	0.14%	0.27%
TEXAS	16,986,510	20,851,820	25,145,561	29,145,505	2.07%	1.89%	1.49%
ARKANSAS	2,350,725	2,673,400	2,915,918	3,011,524	1.29%	0.87%	0.32%
NEW ORLEANS MSA	1,285,270	1,337,726	1,189,166	1,271,845	0.40%	-1.17%	0.67%
BATON ROUGE MSA	623,853	705,973	802,484	870,569	1.24%	1.29%	0.82%
LAFAYETTE MSA	382,974	425,020	466,750	478,384	1.05%	0.94%	0.25%
SHREVEPORT MSA	359,687	375,965	398,604	393,406	0.44%	0.59%	-0.13%
LAKE CHARLES MSA	168,134	183,577	199,607	222,402	0.88%	0.84%	1.09%
ALEXANDRIA MSA	131,556	126,337	153,922	152,192	-0.40%	1.99%	-0.11%
HOUSTON MSA	3,731,131	4,669,571	5,946,800	7,122,240	2.27%	2.45%	1.82%
DALLAS MSA	4,037,282	5,221,801	6,371,773	7,637,387	2.61%	2.01%	1.83%
AUSTIN MSA	846,227	1,249,763	1,716,289	2,283,371	3.98%	3.22%	2.90%

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Sources: Decennial Census, American Community Survey

Neighborhood Conditions

The project team analyzed population changes in Shreveport neighborhoods from 1990-2010 and 2010-2020 to understand growth patterns before and after the adoption of the Great Expectations Master Plan. These periods were selected for three reasons:

- Shreveport's overall population remained fairly stable between 1990-2010, making neighborhood-level changes especially pronounced. Population increases due to new growth at the edges of the city were generally offset by population losses in established neighborhoods.
- The Great Expectations Master Plan was developed in 2009-2010. 2010 Census data provides a baseline for evaluating conditions through the current Master Plan's lifespan.
- 2010-2020 was a period of significant population loss in Shreveport following the Great Recession but preceding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Annual growth rate (AGR) was used to generalize growth trends to an annual rate that would allow for comparison across different time periods. Neighborhood AGRs were used to assign one of three descriptions for each period:

- Growing: Above 0.5% AGR
- Stagnating: Between -0.5% and 0.5% AGR
- Shrinking: Below -0.5% AGR

The "stagnating" range was used since neighborhoods may experience periods of minor population growth or decline due to demographic factors such as changing household sizes (e.g. young families and empty-nesters) and limited infill construction or demolition. The combination of the 1990-2010 and 2010-2020 growth trends were used to define 9 different neighborhood trajectories that can be used to generalize trends and context across neighborhoods and inform planning strategies.

"Growing" Categories

"Growing" (growing-growing) neighborhoods have experienced long-term population growth that has continued since 2010. These areas have generally not been impacted by demographic and economic trends since 2010 and generally include rural and exurban development areas that were largely undeveloped in 1990.

"Maturing" (growing-stagnating) neighborhoods experienced long-term population growth that has slowed / tapered since 2010, potentially reflecting slowing development or building after a period of growth from 1990-2010. They may possess areas with more recent housing stock, though not the newest.

"Settling" (growing-shrinking) neighborhoods have experienced long-term population growth but have seen some population loss since 2010. This change may be a result of demographic and economic factors (such as empty-nest or aging households) or may be seeing residential areas transitioning to other uses.

"Stagnating" Categories

"Restarting" (stagnating-growing) neighborhoods experienced low rates of population growth or change over the long-term but have seen new growth occurring in recent years. These may be areas to monitor for future gentrification or displacement pressures.

"Stagnating" (stagnating-stagnating) neighborhoods have remained fairly stable over the long-term, with low rates of population growth or loss. They have not experienced major change since 2010 and generally have low amounts of adjudicated property.

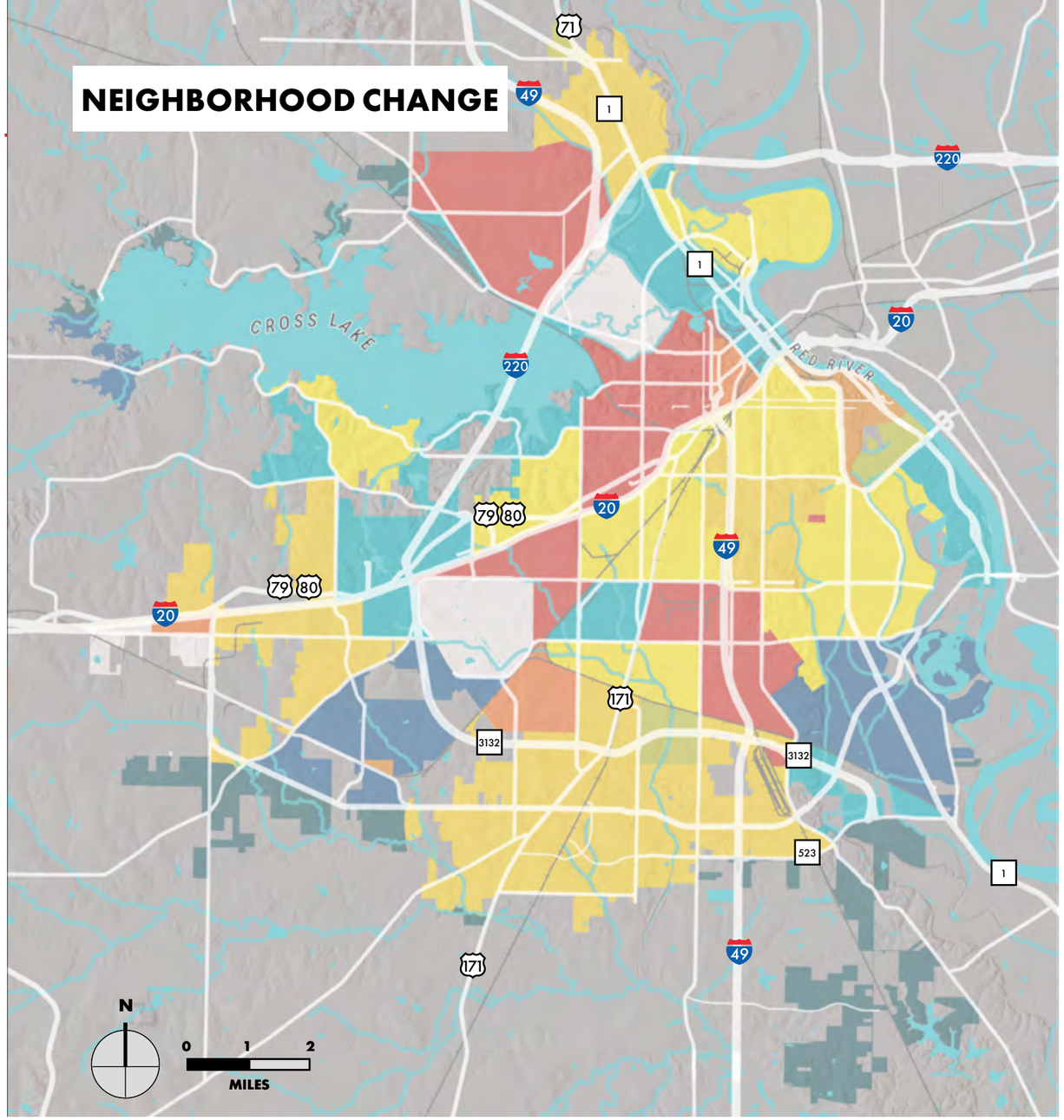
"Shrinking (10-year)" (stagnating-shrinking) neighborhoods have experienced low rates of long-term population growth or loss, generally reflecting mature neighborhoods that are past their period of growth and development, but have experienced population loss since 2010. These neighborhoods may warrant special attention to understand roots of population loss beyond smaller household sizes or outmigration that may be attributable to economic shifts.

"Shrinking" Categories

"Rebounding" (shrinking-growing) neighborhoods have experienced long-term population loss but have seen growth since 2010. Reviewing specific projects or trends may provide insights as to effective revitalization strategies. They may also be impacted by major development projects depending on their size.

"Stabilizing" (shrinking-stagnating) neighborhoods have experienced long-term population loss but their rate of loss has slowed or reversed since 2010. These neighborhoods may be subject to ongoing revitalization efforts that have contributed to this slowing rate.

"Shrinking (30-year)" (shrinking-shrinking) neighborhoods are characterized by long-term population loss that has continued since 2010. They often have large amounts of adjudicated and blighted property that are distributed throughout neighborhoods, contributing to challenges sustaining future growth.



"GROWING" TRAJECTORIES

- Growing (growing-growing)
- Maturing (growing-stagnating)
- Settling (growing-shrinking)

"STAGNATING" TRAJECTORIES

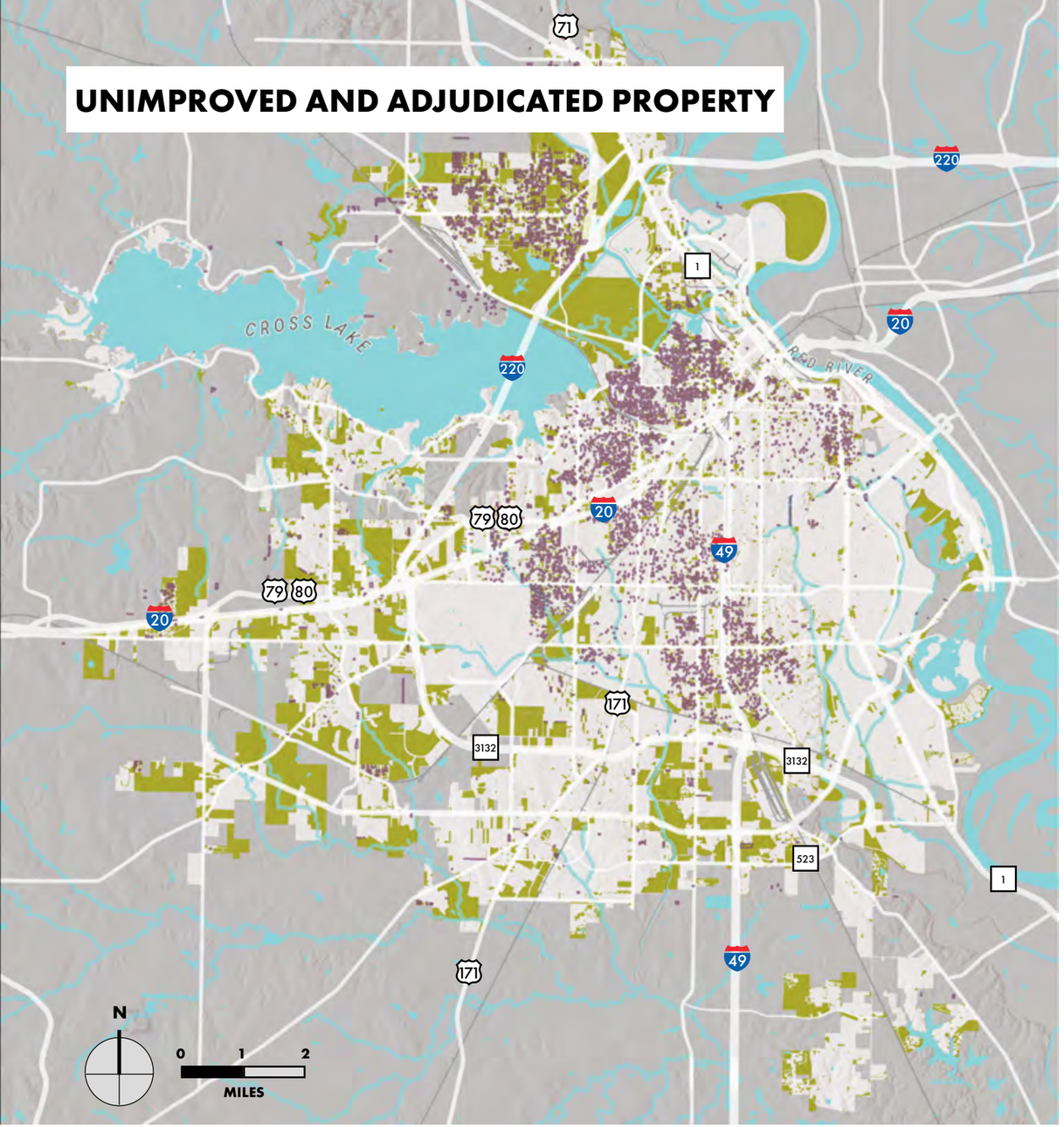
- Restarting (stagnating-growing)
- Stagnating (stagnating-stagnating)
- Shinking (10-year) (stagnating-shrinking)

"SHRINKING" TRAJECTORIES

- Rebounding (shrinking-growing)
- Stabilizing (shrinking-stagnating)
- Shrinking (30-year) (shrinking-shrinking)

Each trajectory's desciption refers to their population change trend from 1990 to 2010, and from 2010 to 2020. For example, a neighborhood that was Growing from 1990 to 2010 but Shrinking from 2010 to 2020 would be Settling (growing-shrinking). A table containing each neighborhood's statistics is available at Neighborhood Trajectories, see pg. 274.

Source: 1990, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census via National Historical Geographic Information System (NHGIS).



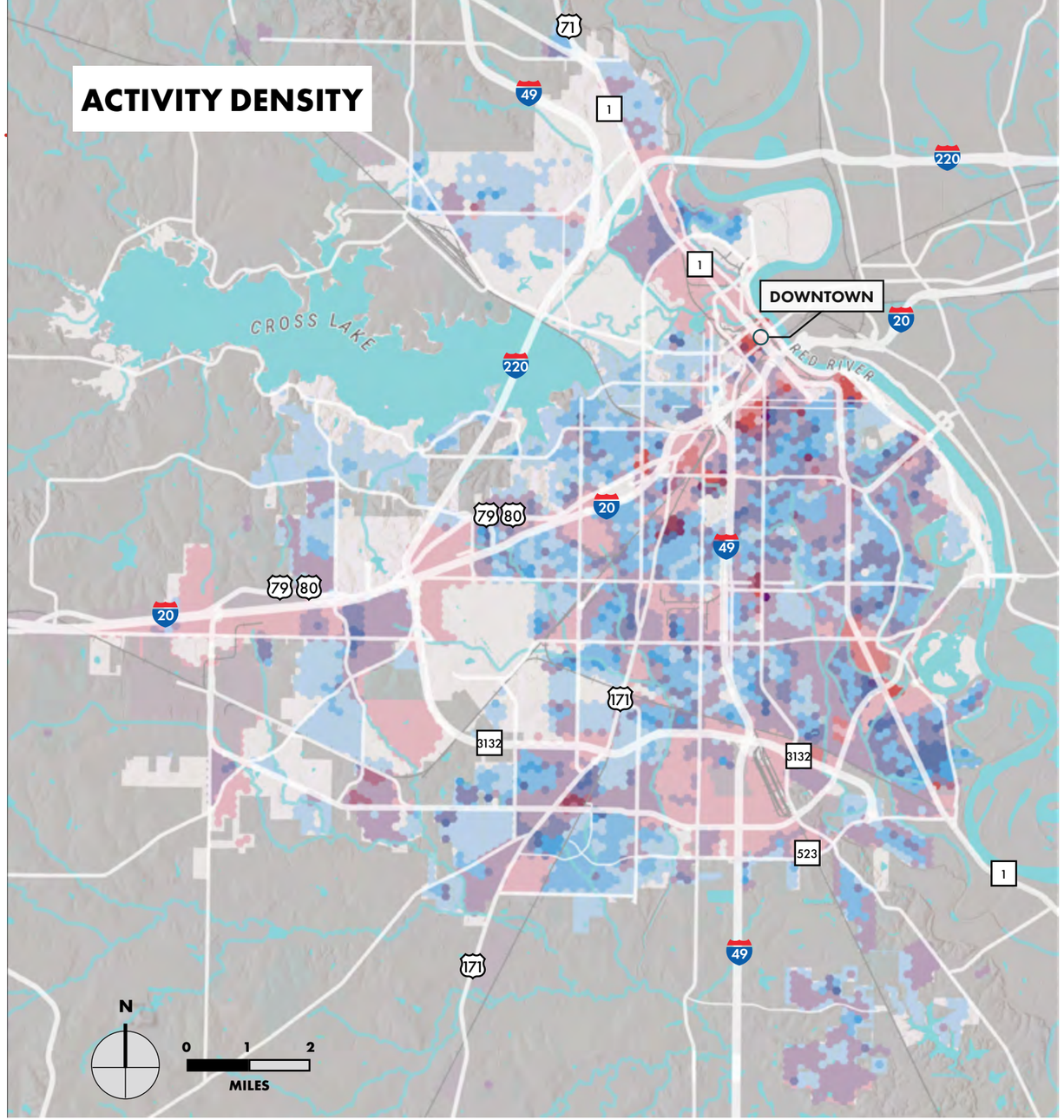
Vacancy and Adjudication

As residents leave Shreveport, properties may be abandoned or left vacant due to a reduced demand for housing. Without upkeep, these properties may become deteriorated or blighted. Over the long term, demolition by neglect or through city blight abatement efforts has resulted in vacant property in developed areas, and tax-adjudicated property also challenges inner neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Vacant or Unimproved Properties
(Properties with $0 improvement value per assessment records)

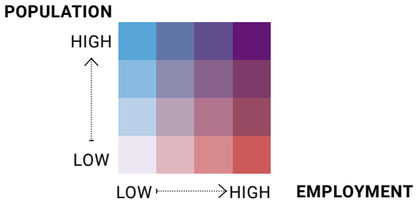
Adjudicated Properties

Source: Caddo Parish parcel data, 2024.



Housing and Employment Centers

This visualization shows the density and mix of population and employment across Shreveport using Census block-level data. Areas that are purple have more housing and jobs, and may be important centers to connect with improved mobility options.



Source: 2020 Decennial Census,
2022 Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) via OnTheMap.

Regional Economy

Key Sectors

Goods-Producing Industries

Goods-producing industries have been the historic bedrock of Shreveport's economy, from cotton and timber to oil and gas to electronics and automobile manufacturing. However, Shreveport has generally seen its manufacturing economy shrink since 2000 with the closure of major manufacturers and ongoing automation. Oil and gas extraction activity fluctuates based on demand and technology factors, with an initial peak in Haynesville shale production around 2011 before declining through 2016. Since 2017, gas activity has rallied due to increased prices and improved technology, driving some new production in the region.

Service-Providing Industries

In addition to the goods-producing base industries, Shreveport has provided services for its residential and regional population. Examples include local and state government employment, as well as tourism, hospitality, and gaming.

Healthcare and education have become increasingly important cornerstones of Shreveport's economy: between 1990 and 2010, education and health services overtook manufacturing in terms of employment.

Employment and Labor Force

Unemployment rates in the region appear to have settled following the COVID-19 pandemic and are hovering between 3 and 5%, lower than the 4-9% range from 2010 to 2020 but generally in line with the national unemployment rate.

Unemployment rates do not necessarily mean that all residents have found employment, as residents who were previously looking for work may have migrated from the city, or are no longer looking for work / participating in the labor force.

One related measurement for "disconnected youth" includes young people ages 14-24 who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution. Caddo Parish saw a spike in disconnected youth following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wealth, Income and GDP

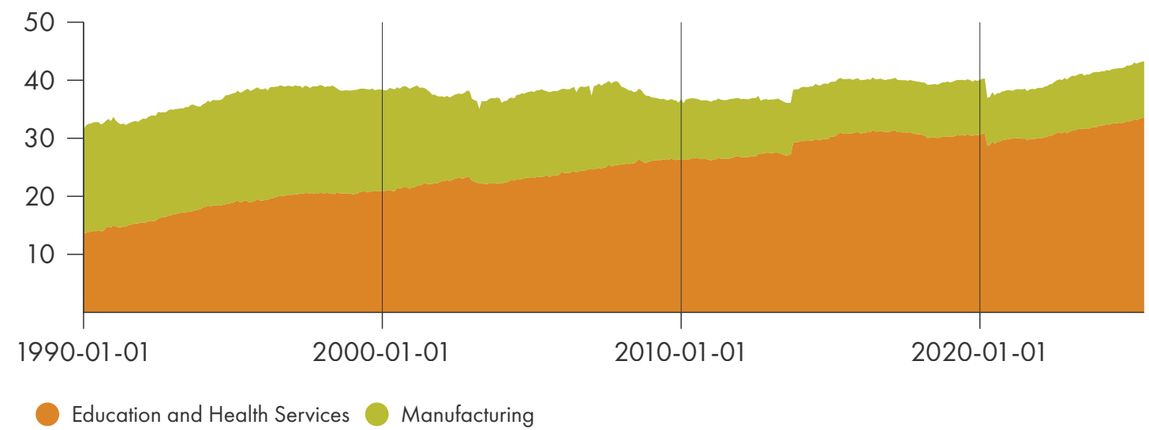
Gross domestic product (GDP) is an indicator of local wealth and productivity. Generally, businesses in Caddo Parish (and Shreveport) drive the region's economy.

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, the Shreveport economy saw growing GDP through a peak in 2011 before contracting through 2014, in line with the Haynesville shale boom and the effects of the closure of the the GM assembly plant in August 2012. This hit continued to be felt through the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 before finally exceeding the 2011 level in 2023.

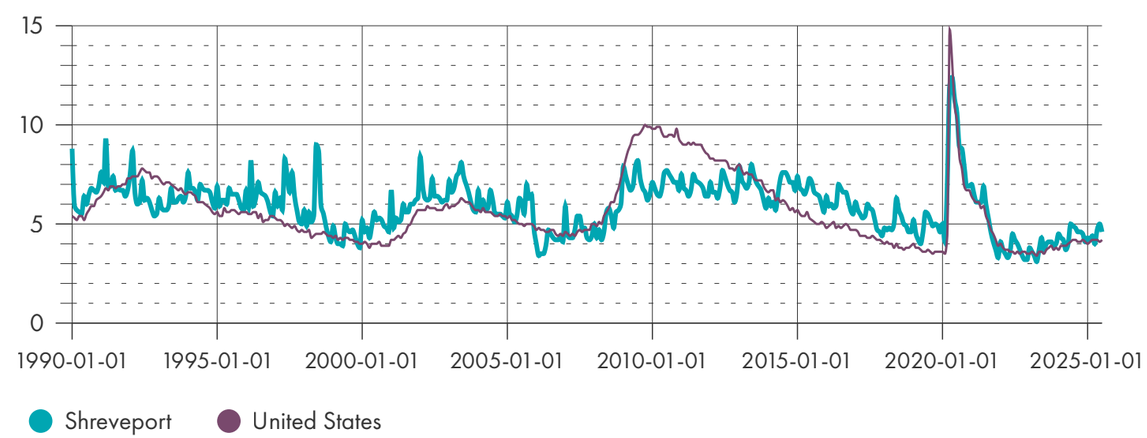
While GDP is recovering, mean wages appear to be relatively stagnant relative to cost of living increases driven by post-pandemic inflation. Housing starts remain relatively low, having never rebounded from pre-Great Recession peak. An excess inventory and weak demand due to out-migration and the local economy challenge the local housing and residential construction market.

Economic data appears to suggest the area's economy may be improving somewhat. However, it is not clear who is benefitting from these gains.

MANUFACTURING AND HEALTHCARE EMPLOYMENT (IN THOUSANDS OF JOBS)



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)



Sources: US Census Bureau OntheMap LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), 2023 data; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2022 Tables B23025, B17010, and B25140.

Recent Trends and Projections

Trends Since 2020

Population estimates indicate that Shreveport has likely continued to lose population since 2020, with modest growth occurring in other communities. Based on year-to-year changes, it appears loss may potentially be slowing.

- ◊ The area's economy seems to be improving somewhat relative to pre-2010 and pre-COVID conditions in terms of unemployment and GDP.
- ◊ Wages appear to be stagnating somewhat, though there are gaps in data.
- ◊ Demand for new housing remains low relative to previous peaks due to low demand and outmigration.

Projections

Population projections are typically prepared at the national or state level.

State Projections

The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia released 2030-2050 state-level projections in July 2024. These projections showed Louisiana's population growing through 2030 before lowering through 2040 and 2050.

Parish-Level Projections

Two parish-level population projections were reviewed to provide local context. Caddo Parish projections were scaled to the City of Shreveport using a step-down method, which assumes the ratio between the City and Parish population remains stable over time. A ratio of 78.5% was selected after a review of recent population trends.

The state of Louisiana has provided 2010-2030 parish-level population projections, which utilize 2005 base year data and five-year intervals. Low, middle, and high scenarios are provided. The low and high terminology refers to net migration assumptions: Low migration assumes 0.5x the 2000-2005 migration rate, while high migration assumes 1.5x this rate. In this case, net migration was negative, resulting in a "high migration" scenario that actually results in the lowest population projection - but the closest to Shreveport's estimated population in 2024.

Additionally, the Louisiana 2023 Coastal Master Plan (CMP) prepared parish-level population projections for multiple scenarios through 2100. These estimates used 2018 base data for a cohort-component analysis and included scenarios based on three Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs).

Considerations for Growth Scenarios

- ◊ Every population projection shows long-term population decline, and given trends since 2010, it is reasonable for Shreveport to expect continued out-migration and population loss in the near term. Recent annual estimates show that Shreveport's annual rate of population change appears to be increasing somewhat, though it is still negative and below -1%.
- ◊ The regional economy appears to be recovering from the recession that began in 2012. Economic data indicates that unemployment is stable and GDP is increasing, while Bossier and DeSoto parishes are experiencing population increases.
- ◊ Louisiana may be beginning to see a reversal of its population loss trend based on changes from 2022 to 2023, however it is unknown whether this trend has continued. While the state may expect some growth in the next five years, most projections show Louisiana losing population beyond 2030.

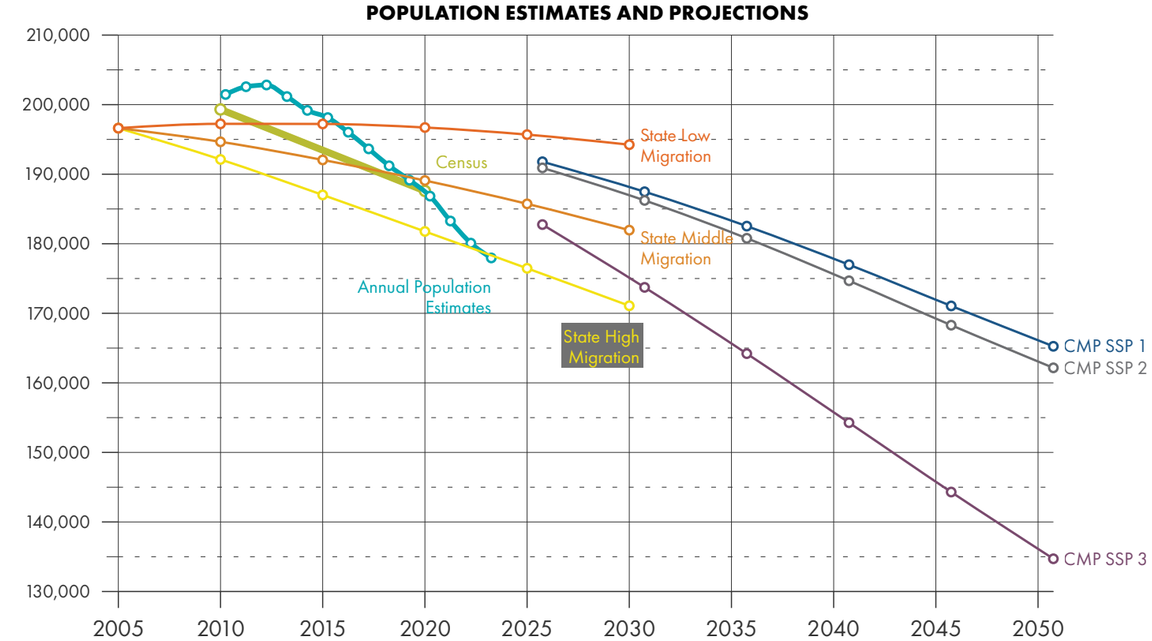
Implications for Planning

- ◊ Shreveport is the center of the region - and drives its demographic and economic future.
- ◊ Shreveport has to retain its residents in order to stem out-migration, particularly from its inner neighborhoods.
- ◊ Shreveport has to be a community of choice to capture the limited growth that is occurring in the region, and to compete for new economic opportunities with other metropolitan areas.
- ◊ Shreveport will likely have fewer people in 2050 than it did in 1980 or even 1970, but it will have much more land area: the city must "right-size" and coordinate its services and fiscal strategies in order to evolve in a sustainable manner.

POPULATION ESTIMATES 2020-2023

	2020 (CENSUS)	POPULATION ESTIMATES				YEAR-TO-YEAR CHANGE		
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
CITY OF SHREVEPORT	187,601	186,848	183,269	180,086	177,959	-1.92%	-1.74%	-1.18%
CADDO PARISH (UNINCORPORATED AREAS AND OTHER CITIES)	53,157	52,983	52,259	51,676	51,248	-1.37%	-1.12%	-0.83%
BOSSIER CITY	62,716	62,704	62,919	62,563	62,738	0.34%	-0.57%	0.28%
BOSSIER PARISH (UNINCORPORATED AREAS AND OTHER CITIES)	63,123	63,131	63,534	63,762	64,236	0.64%	0.36%	0.74%
DESOTO PARISH	26,812	26,845	26,949	26,856	27,114	0.39%	-0.35%	0.96%
SHREVEPORT METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA	393,409	392,511	388,930	384,943	383,295	-0.91%	-1.03%	-0.43%

POPULATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS



Sources: American Community Survey, Decennial Census, Louisiana 2023 Coastal Master Plan

Towards One Shreveport

Throughout its history, Shreveport has made bold ventures, shared its talents with the world, and worked tirelessly towards its great expectations for its residents' shared future.

Shreveport today reflects the various stages of its historic development: from the founding of Shreve Town at the head of navigation on the Red River, to the construction of railroads and streetcars that connected residents to jobs and to the nation, and finally through suburban expansion, economic transition, and population loss.

Throughout history, these bold projects addressed the challenges and opportunities of their time, with some successes and failures. This mixed legacy has also impacted neighborhoods differently: quality of life and opportunity varies depending on where you live, and neighborhood conditions have been heavily shaped by past decisions about housing and transportation. The city's economic transition has compounded long-term issues with blight, property standards, and vacant land, with its most notable impacts in its inner neighborhoods.

The structural challenges that Shreveport faces are formidable, but Shreveport is not alone, and it has the historic, cultural, logistical, and environmental assets that prepare the city for a future rebirth and revitalization.

Shreveport has an opportunity to address its future through a collaborative approach that brings together its government leaders, its residents and communities, its businesses and institutions, and its philanthropic sector to create a better Shreveport - as One Shreveport.

Photo Credit: City of Shreveport

The Planning Process

The One Shreveport process was an update to the 2010 Great Expectations master plan. While not a wholesale rewrite of Great Expectations, it provided an important opportunity for Shreveport to critically evaluate its progress and the continued relevance of the Great Expectations plan's vision and execution.

The planning process began in February 2024 with a staff and consultant team onboarding and kickoff meeting, as the project team conducted initial research and developed an engagement strategy.

In April 2024, the project team launched a call for applications for community members to serve as members of an appointed Steering Committee and as Community Ambassadors, finalizing selection in July 2024.

The Steering Committee served as an advisory and oversight body for the One Shreveport process, bringing together stakeholders from each of the City Council districts as well as key planning stakeholders and interests. The committee met four times through fall 2024 and spring 2025 to provide guidance to the project team.

During fall 2024, thirteen Community Ambassadors served as citizen planners and an extension of the project team, raising awareness through their community connections and supporting facilitation at 3 public workshops held in Fall 2024.

Three community workshops and accompanying online engagement were key milestones in the engagement process, with themes such as "Understand", "Envision", and "Act" guiding the content and questions asked at each workshop.

Additionally, the project team frequently engaged with decision-makers including the Shreveport City Council, the Mayor of Shreveport, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission Board to update them on progress, receive input on key priorities, and guide the engagement process.

Community Workshops

Community workshops were high-touch, high-turnout events intended to gather broad community feedback and spur dialogue among participants, with interactive activities to solicit feedback and share information about the plan with the community.

Online Engagement

Online workshops were held simultaneously with the public workshops to broaden the reach of engagement efforts and provide additional opportunities for engagement.

Community Ambassadors

Community Ambassadors took meeting materials out all across Shreveport to gather feedback through pop-up events, individual and organizational outreach, and informal listening sessions.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee met throughout the planning process to provide oversight and direction to the planning team, with its members representing Shreveport's seven City Council districts and important areas of expertise.

Feedback Themes

Participants provided feedback on a variety of subjects and geographies, from neighborhood conditions, property maintenance, and street safety to the city's economy and culture. This spectrum between citywide and neighborhood needs shaped the design of the city's overall plan as well as the need for neighborhood planning.

Youth perspectives were also shared throughout the process with support from the Community Ambassadors, many of whom engaged local students and youth through their outreach. Across all age groups, safety and the hope of a growing, vibrant future were consistent themes.

Major Themes	Key Subtopics
PEOPLE/ COMMUNITY	Social Connectedness and Engagement
	Cultural and Economic Inclusivity
SAFETY	Crime Prevention and Policing
	Public Safety Infrastructure
INFRASTRUCTURE	Housing and Property Maintenance
	Public Spaces and Walkability

Building Community

"Fairness and opportunity for all looks like treating everyone like a loved one and creating a community that can lean on each other."
-Community Ambassador Participant

Resource Access

"Improving our bike/pedestrian infrastructure especially in neighborhoods [close to] major job centers and services such as grocery stores will have a huge impact on persons near the bottom of the wage scale who have few transportation options."
-Online Participant

Increase Safety

"As I've grown over the years it became more of my parents telling me to 'be safe' when going [out] rather than 'Have fun.' "
-Online Participant

Affordable Living

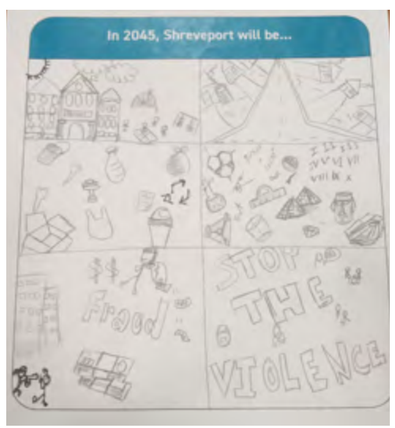
"To restore the quality of life, we must invest in maintaining infrastructure, ensuring homes are well-kept, and creating safe spaces for families"
-Online Participant

Culture & Economy

"Strengthening our community bonds and fostering economic growth could bring back the sense of security and joy that I once knew."
-Online Participant

Quality Environment

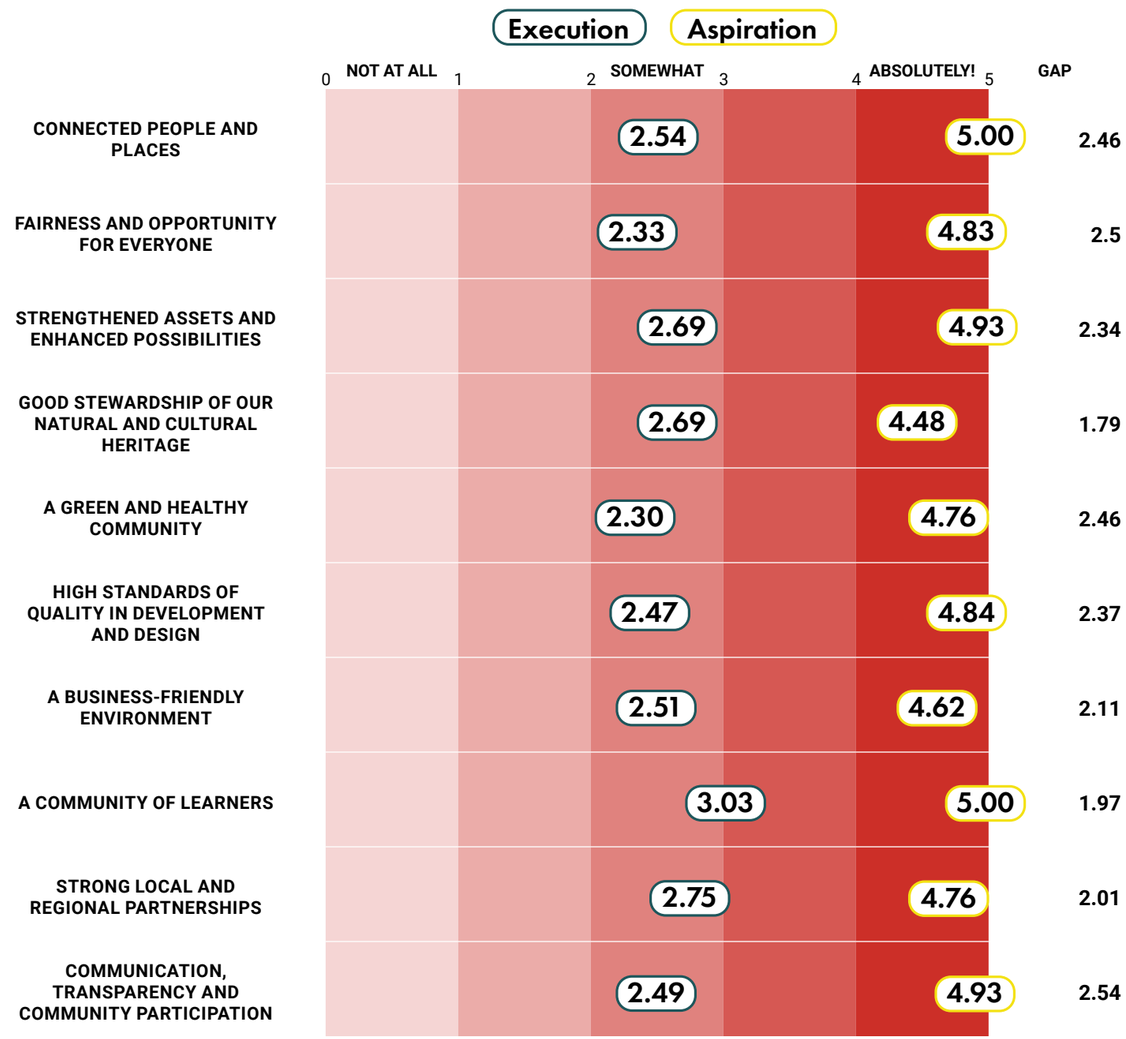
"The use of parks and older parks being restored and rebuilt for future children to play..."
-Community Ambassador Participant



In this exercise from the first Community Workshop, participants were asked to review the Great Expectation's ten Vision themes and rate them based on two questions:

- Is This Vision Still Important? (Aspiration)
- Is This Vision Seen Today? (Execution)

The feedback from this exercise revealed the enduring strength of the Great Expectations plan's vision and aspirations, but also areas where Shreveport is not fully realizing this vision.

The project team used the gaps between Aspiration and Execution - the areas with the biggest difference between their relative importance and performance - to focus implementation efforts for the updated One Shreveport plan. The four themes with the largest gaps included:

- Communication, Transparency, and Community Participation
- Fairness and Opportunity for Everyone
- Connected People and Places
- A Green and Healthy Community