

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
for Regional Planning Commission (RPC) EDA region: Orleans, Jefferson, St Bernard, Plaquemines & St Tammany Parishes

FINAL: SEPTEMBER 2014

SWOT Analysis

SWOT - ATTRIBUTES WITHIN THE REGION

	Internal Strengths	Internal Weaknesses	Opportunities for Action - to Build on Internal Strengths & Address
	<i>What makes the region unique, special: it's competitive advantages</i>	<i>Challenges that present themselves from within the region; its competitive disadvantages</i>	<i>Current or future initiatives and promising practices that can address each attribute</i>
Industry Clusters	ECONOMIC DIVERSITY - The economy is now more diversified amongst industry clusters. The region has several emerging regional "export" industries such as law firms with expertise in the oil and gas industry.	ECONOMIC DIVERSITY - some dependency on certain "legacy" industries persists (tourism, oil & gas and shipping).	Building New Orleans' "export" specializations can have a positive impact on wages and economic diversity.
	INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP - The culture of innovation post-Katrina has fueled an entrepreneurial renaissance in the region. Compared to Pre-Katrina, the rate of entrepreneurship in the New Orleans Metro has increased 129%, and outpaces the national average.		We need to understand this surge in entrepreneurship better in order to properly support entrepreneurs and keep the trend increasing.
	TOURISM - The City of New Orleans is a tourist destination for its food, culture, arts, and convention facilitation.	TOURISM - The industry has low wages, and seasonal fluctuations in employment. Many jobs in the tourism industry lack of benefits for employees.	Most tourist activity occurs in Orleans Parish, but there are opportunities for neighboring parishes to build on this tourist traffic, especially in the field of eco-tourism.
	MEDICAL DISTRICT - A large investment in downtown New Orleans in the construction of a new VA hospital and a new state hospital will greatly enhance the quality of facilities, and expand medical services. Coordinated efforts to build on these new hospitals incorporate cancer research, BioInnovation, a MediFund to attract talent and specialized research and other initiatives located within the BioMedical District.	MEDICAL DISTRICT - Funding for the New Orleans BioDistrict economic development organization has ceased.	The mission of the BioMedical District and management of the BioDistrict is currently being explored. This transition could mean that the district's development is better integrated into the City's economic development efforts.
Assets	PORTS - The Mississippi River and the networks of ports facilitates international trade and puts New Orleans region on trade routes	PORTS - Increased competition likely as other ports across the country invest to prepare for Panamex;	The Region is working to increase international trade and can build on exports to expand value-added manufacturing on import/export commodities in the region
	NATURAL RESOURCES - Proximity to off shore oil shelf and all the drilling and processing activities occurring there. Also the region's commercial fishing industries and tourism take advantage of the regions unique waterways and wildlife.	NATURAL RESOURCES - While the natural resources provide job and investment opportunities, when not managed properly they contribute to coastal deterioration and make our region vulnerable.	The Energy Boom is coming (described below). Eco-tourism can be expanded. Resources for Wetlands Restoration could come from the carbon off set exchange markets.
	HIGHER EDUCATION - The region hosts many institutions of higher education with excellent reputations and national recognition	HIGHER EDUCATION - State funding for the region's educational institutions has been severely reduced and some schools are not yet back at pre-Katrina enrollment levels.	Establishing the New Orleans Regional Innovation Alliance (NORIA), a consortium of universities, industry and economic development organizations will enable the region to demonstrate scale of research, attract investment, obtain research funding and prepare the workforce.
Reputation	REPUTATION - The region's rich arts and culture and historical nature have developed an international reputation	REPUTATION - The region's reputation is tied to perceptions of the City of New Orleans which is known it's "Laissez les bon temps rouler" attitude and for having fun. Changing perceptions and improving the business perception of the New Orleans region is needed.	Engaging in branding and promotional campaigns can help change the perceptions of the region within the nation and the world. Messaging New Orleans as a "knowledge town" with its collection of universities and as a "great place to live" highlighting our high quality of life will attract investments, businesses and people (the workforce).
Partnerships and Tools	EDOS - The network of economic development organizations has expanded with the creation of the New Orleans Business Alliance. Significant alignment among EDOs at local, regional and state level is occurring.	EDOs - There are many types of organizations working in economic development and workforce development each with their own approach and programs. Coordination is key to avoid duplication of efforts.	Regional organizations like GNO Inc. and the RPC work together on initiatives and together with the parish level EDOs. Greater collaboration and coordination can happen between workforce development initiatives and economic development organizations.
	INCENTIVES - Competitive State-Wide Tax incentives have helped the region grow a burgeoning film production and digital arts industry.		Evaluating, maintaining and improving incentive packages can enhance the region's competitiveness and continue the diversification of the economy into new industries.

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Infra-structure	FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION - Links to national transportation network of rail, road & water uniquely positions the region for logistics.	FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION - Inter-modal freight planning and coordination is in its early stages.	Coordinated freight planning can enhance the logistics industry and improve congestion.
	MOVING PEOPLE - The region has improved pedestrian and bicycle safety and access with bike lanes extended into and connecting between parishes.	MOVING PEOPLE - Public transportation options are limited, especially outside of Orleans Parish. Inter-parish transit and super regional transit are virtually non-existent. Though roadway connections are improving, significant expansion is occurring along I12 corridor and more infrastructure is needed there. Congestion is increasing as commuting and settlement patterns shift within the region and "job sprawl" is occurring. MSY airport services consistently presents challenges to attracting new business to the market due to lack of direct flights and lack of international flights.	Improving connections and increasing service of public transportation systems will aid the regions workforce commuting. Encouraging alternative modes of transportation (e.g. bicycle) and employer specific transportation solutions can also improve congestion and address job sprawl. Attracting a direct flight to London from MSY can great increase the economic opportunities for the region by improving connectedness.
	LAND USE - The region offers a variety of settings for economic activity; from large tracts for industrial development, suburban office parks, first ring suburbs, urban and rural main streets, and downtown/central business district, and neighborhood oriented retail.	LAND USE - Some areas in the region still suffer from high prevalence of blighted and abandoned buildings, some from hurricane Katrina damage, some from long term decline and population loss.	Coordinated economic development and transportation planning along the I12 corridor can enhance the regions attractiveness and enable "smart" growth.
Demographics	POPULATION - The population of the region continues to increase. Post Katrina recovery attracted many bright and energetic people to the region, including many young people, changing some "brain drain" trends of the past and the trend continues as people are attracted to the high quality of life in the region.	DISPARITY - Racial disparities persist, with education, health, and employment outcomes for African Americans trailing, sometimes significantly, behind the white population. The Latino population is increasing throughout the region and are experiencing income disparities as well.	Programs that improve minority education, access to jobs for minorities and encourage minority entrepreneurship and small business development can improve the economic outlook for minority households.
	HOUSING - Large investments in resorting and building the regions damaged housing post-Katrina , especially in the City of New Orleans, has greatly improved the housing stock and stabilized the housing market during the Global Financial Crisis.	HOUSING - Insufficient availability of affordable housing is a challenge for many communities in the region and many households in the region are still housing cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their income in housing costs).	More affordable housing, increasing housing options, and strategically locating housing development close to economic activity will improve the region's quality of life and aid the workforce in commuting and access to commercial services.
	POVERTY - Urban poverty is declining. The highest percentage of the population in poverty is still in Orleans Parish, though that percentage remains steady, therefore the decline in the number persons living in poverty is likely due to the smaller population size of the City of New Orleans compared to previous decades.	POVERTY - Suburban poverty is increasing, 56% of the region's poor now live in parishes of the region outside of the City of Orleans.	The coordination in planning and delivery of a variety of social support and human services programs is critical to addressing suburban poverty. The region needs to identify organizations that can do this, work with them to support and encourage more coordination and collaboration.
	INCOME - The Average annual wage in the New Orleans metro is increasing.	WAGE RATES - The average wage in the New Orleans Metro is declining slightly and lags behind the US average. Low wages also attract some businesses to the region.	The continued attraction of high-skilled, high wage tech and professional industries will improve the average wage, and enabling the low-skilled workforce to obtain higher skilled, higher wage jobs in the energy boom will increase take home pay for the region's families.
	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - The region's population has higher rates of educational attainment than it had pre-Katrina.	EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - Low rates of adult literacy persist	Workforce training and certification programs need to incorporate soft skills as well as basic literacy and numeracy training into their curriculum to help low-skilled individuals gain the full suite of skills they need to achieve and maintain employment.
	K-12 EDUCATION - There is a renaissance in the New Orleans K-12 school system that is unique and is at the cutting edge of education reform nationwide. This increasing trend towards charters schools is also found in other parishes in the region.		Many K-12 schools engage in STEM education initiatives and provide other exposure to employment opportunities and career paths to students, but many schools need to be educated about the careers available to students and in-demand in the region.

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Civil Society	<p><u>GOVERNANCE</u> - Post Katrina improvements to governance and transparency have been enacted such as the instatement of an City of New Orleans Inspector General and reduction from 7 down to one assessor for the City of New Orleans. State -level reforms toward greater transparency have also significantly improved the business climate state-wide.</p>		Continued work on policy initiatives by GNO Inc. and the local chambers and business councils can continue the trend of improved governance and transparency in the region making the region more attractive to businesses.
	<p><u>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</u> - Post Katrina the populace has been mobilized in the recovery and in planning the recovery of their communities. A proliferation of non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, civic and neighborhood associations has increased the communities involvement in activities traditionally in the public realm.</p>		Civic organizations, advocates and non-profit organizations are new potential partners to achieve economic development and workforce development outcomes.
	<p><u>CRIME</u> - While actual violent crime rates are declining in Orleans Parish, the high murder rate in Orleans seems to bolster perceptions of region as a dangerous place.</p>	<p><u>CRIME</u> - The perception that crime is prevalent raises significant safety concerns for prospective residents and businesses. This is most true for Orleans Parish, but the perception of the City effects perceptions of the region.</p>	Programs that address youth "disconnected" from school and employment and other high quality youth development programs can reduce juvenile delinquency and increase the economic productivity of young people when they become adults.
		<p><u>JUSTICE</u> - The State of Louisiana continues to have a very high rate of incarceration. Challenges with juvenile and criminal justice system efficiencies and capacity persist. In addition, the population with a criminal record is increasing and they are finding it persistently more difficult to find employment post-prison.</p>	Workforce development programs that develop the skills of incarcerated individuals while still in prison and with ex-offenders when they re-enter society can prevent recidivism and improve the workforce. In addition, working with employers to reduce policies that establish barriers to employment post-prison can reduce recidivism.