

## NELLIE LUTCHER DISTRICT

New and existing dining, entertainment, and cultural uses will attract people traveling along I-10 and residents looking for a creative, vibrant district.

### OVERVIEW

The Nellie Luther District is located in Lake Charles. It is currently recognized as a cultural district at the state level with a wide variety of existing buildings varying in style, age, and use. The district has been described as a microcosm of the City of Lake Charles as a whole, which is fitting given its location as a primary gateway on the I-10 corridor. The district contains Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street; north of Broad was long a key commercial corridor for Black and immigrant communities in Lake Charles. Framing the district as a catalytic project focuses transforming Enterprise and Broad streets to be more walkable and connected, while incentivizing new development of dining, entertainment, and cultural uses. In the future, additional housing can be built and renovated in adjacent neighborhoods, filling out the district as a strong neighborhood.

**HIGH**  
priority



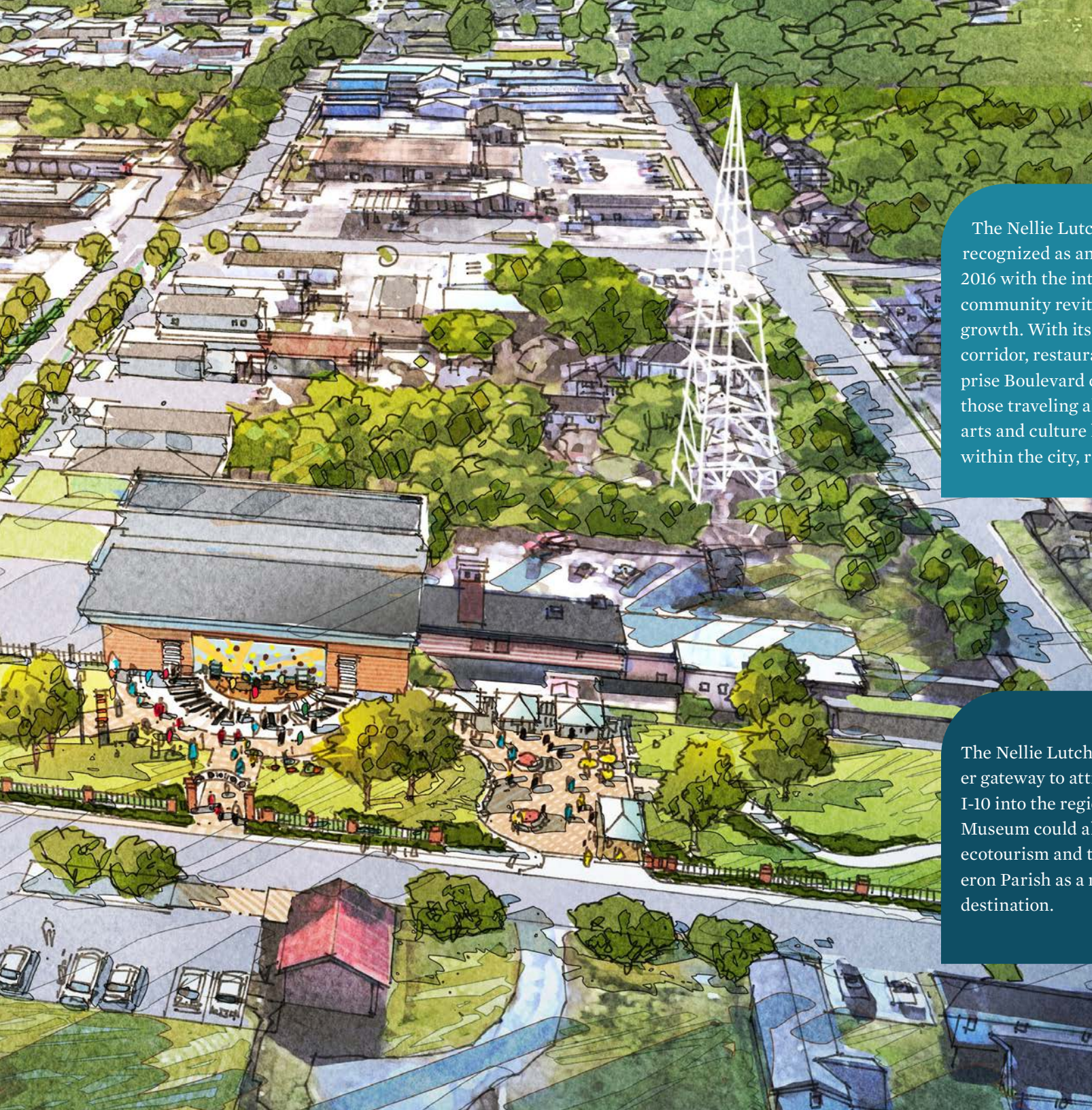
**5-10**  
years



**\$20**  
Million







## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CALCASIEU PARISH?

The Nellie Luther Cultural District was recognized as an official cultural district in 2016 with the intention of generating local community revitalization and economic growth. With its key location along the I-10 corridor, restaurants and venues on Enterprise Boulevard can become a destination for those traveling along the interstate. A vibrant arts and culture hub will draw people from within the city, region, and beyond.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CAMERON PARISH?

The Nellie Luther District provides another gateway to attract people traveling along I-10 into the region. The new Mardi Gras Museum could also share information about ecotourism and the unique offerings of Cameron Parish as a natural and family-friendly destination.







Infill commercial shops on Enterprise Boulevard

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Enterprise Boulevard can become a new destination district and gateway for economic development along the I-10 corridor.
- Enhancements would improve connections between Downtown, the lakefront, and North Lake Charles
- Dining, entertainment, and cultural uses will attract people who are traveling along I-10 as well as local residents looking for a creative and vibrant district
- The district has a rich musical history, not only as the home of Nellie Luther, but as the location of Gold Band Records, the first studio where Dolly Parton recorded music.

We have a rich history that could and should be highlighted and embraced. Creating this district provides a home for that.

It brings life to an area that needs a chance to revive.



## PLAN TOPIC AREAS

### Plan Topics

The Nellie Lutch Cultural District focuses on growth in Community Planning, Economic Development, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Resources. A Nellie Lutch Cultural District:

#### Community Planning

- **Promotes walkability and bikeability by enhancing pedestrian infrastructure on Enterprise Boulevard** Enterprise Boulevard is a primary street through the Nellie Lutch District. Promoting walkability and bikeability on this key connection would help to better connect the district to other parts of the city, while making the district more enjoyable for art and cultural destinations, restaurants, businesses, and other visitor attractions.

#### Housing

- **Stabilizes housing in adjacent neighborhoods** The neighborhoods east and west of the Nellie Lutch Cultural District have housing stock that is important to the city, but needs investment. A coordinated strategy includes homeowner renovation grants and new construction infill housing.

#### Economic Development

- **Supports growth of the creative industries through promotion and development of a vibrant, arts hub** Creative industries are key to the future economic growth of SWLA. A cohesive district focused on arts and creative innovation is simpler to support while creating natural synergies between creatives.

- **Attracts employers and businesses by increasing the number of restaurants and attractions in the area** Development attracts more development. An increase in restaurants, entertainment, and the ability to walk and bike to those new entertainment options will attract additional employers and businesses.
- **Promotes adaptive reuse of buildings to provide economic growth in close proximity to I-10** Current examples include the Cash & Carry Grocery which is now an event center and the former Dimmick Auto Parts that is now the regional training center of Acadian Ambulance. Economic development incentives by the City of Lake Charles make this area attractive for future development.

#### Infrastructure

- **Transforms Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street** The transformation of Enterprise Boulevard and Broad street help create a stronger pedestrian environment with wider sidewalks, pedestrian scaled street lighting, and on-street parking. Enterprise Boulevard would also see dedicated bike infrastructure.
- **Improves drainage and stormwater infrastructure** The new street infrastructure would also better manage stormwater, as would new development along the corridors.

#### Natural and Cultural Resources

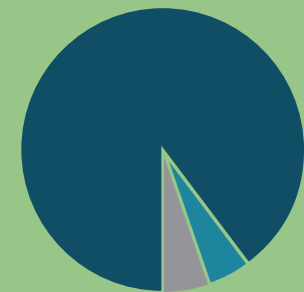
- **Celebrates the rich culture and history of the region and provides a central location for residents and tourists to gather around that history** Art celebrates the history and culture of a region in the way that little else can. Supporting a cultural district with a focus on arts and entertainment can help celebrate the unique culture and history of the region.

## HIGHLIGHTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

I would visit a Nellie Lutch District with food, gathering, and entertainment options.




I think this project will benefit SWLA.



 **90%**  
of respondents said **YES**

 **5%**  
of respondents said **NO**

 **5%**  
of respondents said **I'M NOT SURE**



## A Good Example

# RIVER ARTS DISTRICT: ASHEVILLE, NC

### WHAT?

- Funky arts district with galleries, artist work/live spaces, brew pubs, restaurants, and shops
- Tourist destination
- Tied into trails and open space

### HOW?

- Adaptive Reuse of Existing Industrial Building Stock
- Utilized federal funding and grants, hotel tax funds, and city contributions for improvements
- Constant activity enlivens the space with demonstrations, walking tours, live music, and workshops



Adaptive Reuse of Existing Buildings



Vibrant Streetscape utilizing Industrial Materials

## DEFINING THE DISTRICT

The Nellie Luther Cultural District is a key gateway along the I-10 corridor. Visual cues could give travelers along the interstate a better understanding of what is available for them in Lake Charles and is a critical first impression.

The first step in defining the Nellie Luther Cultural District for the future is the transformation of Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street. Emphasizing these streets as walkable corridors helps make the district more than just a place to pass through, but instead makes it a destination.

The transformation of these streets also helps connect the future of the district to what is already happening. Investments such as the Mardi Gras Museum and a community performing arts center theater will show support for and progress toward arts and culture within the district.

Highlighting those cultural icons and others such as the Clifton House help provide an anchor on which to hang the idea of additional investment from businesses, restaurants, and other creative industries.

Incentives must be provided to attract businesses and employers along the corridor, such as facade grants and other encouragement to renovate and expand existing buildings. Remaining parcels should be assembled and returned into productive use by a redevelopment entity or authority, focusing on RFPs, funding, or donation of the land that prioritizes arts and cultural forward uses.

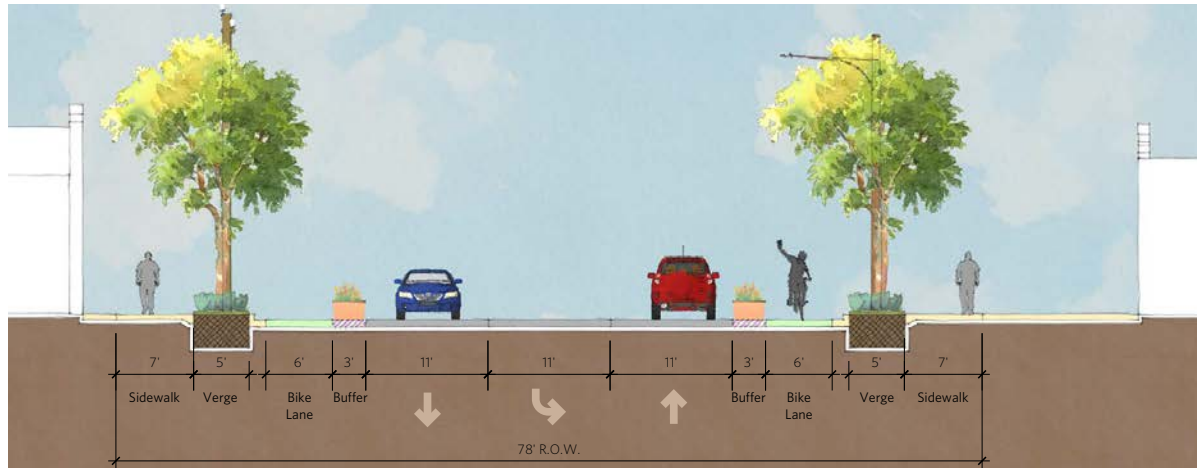
## An Important Note

# WHO IS NELLIE LUTCHER?

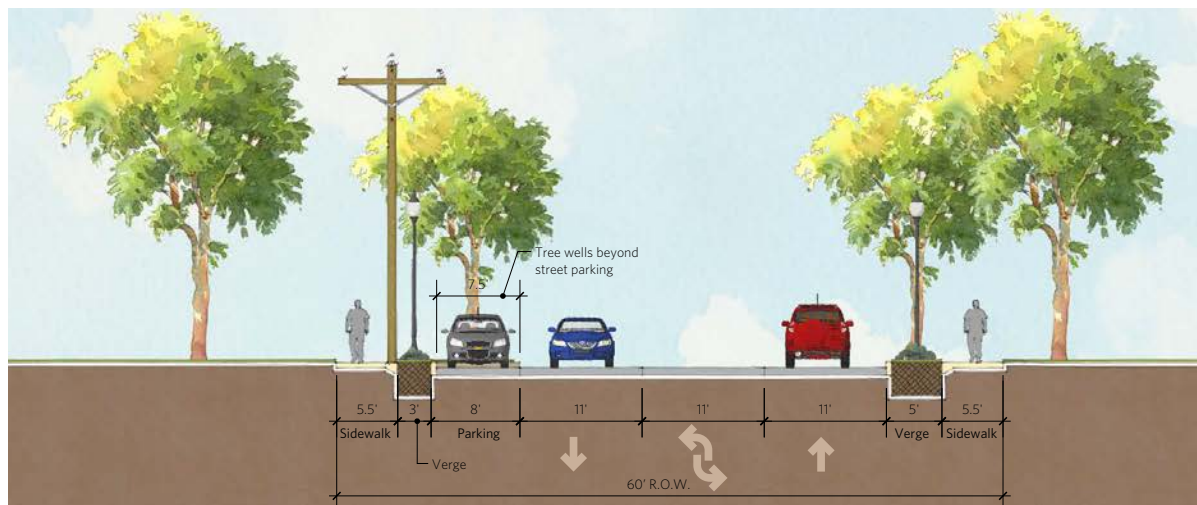
Nellie Luther was an internationally known jazz and blues artist born in Lake Charles. Growing up, Nellie lived along Enterprise Boulevard (now named the "Nellie Luther Parkway") and attended New Sunlight Baptist Church. The church is still in existence and located within the district on V.E. Washington Avenue.



Once upon a time this area was thriving...It can be and should be once again. Having a place where we can get cultural entertainment and dining and not have to leave Lake Charles is a great thing.



Enterprise Boulevard would be transformed with bike lanes, shade trees, and wider sidewalks



Broad Street would be transformed with wider sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and on-street parking

## What's already happening? MARDI GRAS MUSEUM

The EDA has granted \$1.6 million in American Rescue Plan funds to build a new Mardi Gras Museum in the Nellie Lutchter District along Enterprise Boulevard. To maximize the economic impact and diversity of the project, the museum should include spaces for related small businesses that will increase the draw.



The Mardi Gras Museum



## ACTION STEPS

### Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street

#### 1 Transform Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street

Transformation of existing infrastructure is the most critical aspect of defining the cultural district. Focusing on key streets, Enterprise and Broad, allow for meaningful change along well used corridors focused on pedestrians and cyclists.

### Culture on Enterprise Boulevard

#### 2 Develop the new Mardi Gras Museum on Enterprise Boulevard/Nellie Lutchter Parkway

Planning for the new Mardi Gras Museum is already underway and implementation can continue while the infrastructure transformation gets started. Starting with an early, culture focused win allows the tone to be set for what new development can look like in the district.

#### 3 Develop a community performing arts theater on Nellie Lutchter Parkway/Enterprise Boulevard

## Mid-City Neighborhood Transformation

### Action Steps

- 1 Transform Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street into streets that balance all modes of transportation, including cars, bikes, and pedestrians. Reduce these streets to one moving lane in each direction with a center turn lane, wider sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking, and possibly buffered bike lanes.
- 2 Develop the new Mardi Gras Museum on Enterprise Boulevard/Nellie Lutchter Parkway (to include a king cake bakery and small retail spaces)
- 3 Develop the new Louisiana Volunteers in Action performing and visual arts center on Nellie Lutchter Parkway/Enterprise Boulevard
- 4 Attract employers and new development along the Enterprise Boulevard corridor and in the Nellie Lutchter Cultural District
- 5 Work with public entities, like a redevelopment authority, to assemble and acquire parcels for the development of new restaurants and cultural destinations
- 6 Prioritize facade renovation grants for homes in the adjacent neighborhoods
- 7 Use the Resilient Housing Toolkit for SWLA to build infill housing in adjacent neighborhoods

The Nellie Lutchter District continues to grow and be an attractive view of Lake Charles from I-10



A community performing arts theater would create a shared amenity that would house multiple performance organizations. A community theater will require existing and new organizations to work together. Cultural and performing arts organizations should co-locate into the Nellie Luther District to leverage funding and to maximize visitors. The community theater should be planned in coordination with the Mardi Gras Museum to set the visual and cultural tone for the district.

### Attract Investment

#### 4 Attract employers and new development along Enterprise Boulevard and in the District

Investment in new cultural and historic uses will help increase the attractiveness of the area to new investors, but other incentives such as facade grants for renovating existing properties, additional support for infill development, and other ideas should be explored, especially for arts and culture forward enterprises.

#### 5 Work with public entities to assemble and acquire development parcels

While infill development and redevelopment of existing buildings should be encouraged, public entities should also work to acquire and assemble potential development parcels as additional incentive for redevelopment.

### Improve and Add Housing

#### 6 Prioritize facade renovation grants for homes in the adjacent neighborhoods

Much like facade improvement grants should be awarded to those looking to renovate commercial properties in the district, residential facade grants should also be given to those looking to renovate

residential properties in neighborhoods adjacent to the district. Additional housing will help support the businesses in the district and the wider city and region as a whole.

#### 7 Use the Resilient Housing for SWLA to build infill housing in adjacent neighborhoods

New homes should be built in the most resilient way possible as the district continues to grow. New construction should utilize the Resilient Housing for SWLA when building and renovating property.



### Potential Partners

- City of Lake Charles
- Visit Lake Charles
- Calcasieu Parish (Natural & Cultural Resources RSF)
- Entrepreneurs and business owners
- Project Build-a-Future
- Churches and other non-profits interested in developing housing
- Private theater groups
- Mardi Gras Museum
- McNeese SEED Center

#### What's already happening?

### NELLIE LUTCHER MEMORIAL PARKWAY PARK

The Nellie Luther Memorial Parkway Park is being built at the Central Fire Station at Enterprise Boulevard and South Division Street and will include a plaza, mural on the fire station wall, stage, and places to eat and gather







## Potential Funding Sources

- State Capital Outlay (road budget)
- DOTD grants (state and federal)
- State Water and Sewer Commission (ARPA funds)
- Restore LA Small Business Loan and Grant Program
- CRT competitive grants
- North Lake Charles Economic Development District
- Restore LA — homeowner assistance
- CDBG and HOME
- LHC Weatherization program
- LHC Homeownership programs
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town (creative placemaking grants program)
- DOTD Safe Routes to Public Places grants
- First Horizon Foundation funding for arts and cultural districts
- EDA Public Works & Economic Assistance Program for broadband
- FEMA HMGP & Mitigation
- L Watershed Initiative
- IIJA grants for drainage, root protection, and pedestrian/bicycle-friendly infrastructure
- LA Office of Culture and Tourism SHPO Historic Tax Credits



## IMPLEMENTATION

HOW?	COST	TIME FRAME
Transform Enterprise Boulevard and Broad Street into streets that balance all modes of transportation, including cars, bikes, and pedestrians by reducing these streets to one moving lane in each direction with a center turn lane, wider sidewalks, street trees, and possibly buffered bike lanes.	\$150–\$300 per linear foot of improved infrastructure	3–6 years
Develop the new Mardi Gras Museum on Enterprise Boulevard/Nellie Lutchter Parkway with potential for a nearby king cake bakery and small retail space.	\$3–5 million	1–3 years
Develop a communal performing and visual arts center (Nellie Lutchter Center for the Performing Arts) on Nellie Lutchter Parkway/Enterprise Boulevard	\$15+ million	2–5 years
Attract employers and new development along the corridor	TBD	0–5 years
Work with the entity designated to address vacant and underutilized property to assemble and acquire parcels for the development of new restaurants and cultural destinations	Dedicated funding for the operation of an entity to address vacant and underutilized property (see Project 10)	2–5 years
Prioritize facade renovation grants for homes in the adjacent neighborhoods	\$1.25 million (50 grants, up to \$25,000 each)	1–5 years
Use the Resilient Housing Toolkit to build infill housing in neighborhoods	See Project 9	1–10 years



POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	LEAD ENTITY	SUPPORTING PARTNERS/ ENTITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Capital Outlay budget for roads</li> <li>DOTD grants (state and federal)</li> <li>State Water and Sewer Commission (ARPA)</li> </ul>	City of Lake Charles	LA DOTD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore LA Small Business Loan and Grant Program</li> <li>CDBG-DR</li> <li>State Capital Outlay</li> <li>CRT competitive grants</li> </ul>	Visit Lake Charles	City of Lake Charles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore LA recovery business grants</li> <li>NEA Our Town grants</li> <li>LA Office of Culture and Tourism grants</li> </ul>	TBD	Lake Charles Little Theater
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit Lake Charles</li> </ul>	Visit Lake Charles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Project 10</li> </ul>	See Project 10	See Project 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore LA — Homeowner Assistance Program</li> <li>HUD CDBG and HOME funds</li> <li>LHC weatherization programs</li> </ul>	City of Lake Charles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore LA — Affordable Homeownership programs</li> <li>LHC homeownership programs</li> </ul>	Non-profits building affordable homeownership housing	

## What's already happening? BLOCK IN A BOX

Working with Better Block in Dallas, Texas, the Nellie Lutchter District was one of the first communities to try Block in a Box. Block in a Box includes elements to make a place more successful, including places for people to sit, string lights, shade, and places to play. The Block in a Box is a shipping container that allows easy delivery and unloading for events. Once the event is finished, the shipping container can be repacked and the elements shipped to the next community.

Volunteers from the community came together to set up the Block in a Box which gave an interactive view of what an outdoor venue could look and feel like.

