

# 5

## MCNEESE AREA RESILIENCE DISTRICT

McNeese is a valuable asset for both parishes — its students, faculty, programs, and campus investment anchor the region.

### OVERVIEW

#### Project Description

McNeese State University is a valuable anchor for SWLA. The Contraband Bayou project under construction will enhance resilience and provide access to the water as the first phase of the Bayou Greenbelt. The LNG Center of Excellence, retail center renovations, new student housing, and a road diet for Common Street would have economic development benefits while enlivening the edges of the campus. A Resilience District would tie multiple projects together and target available funding.

**HIGH**  
priority



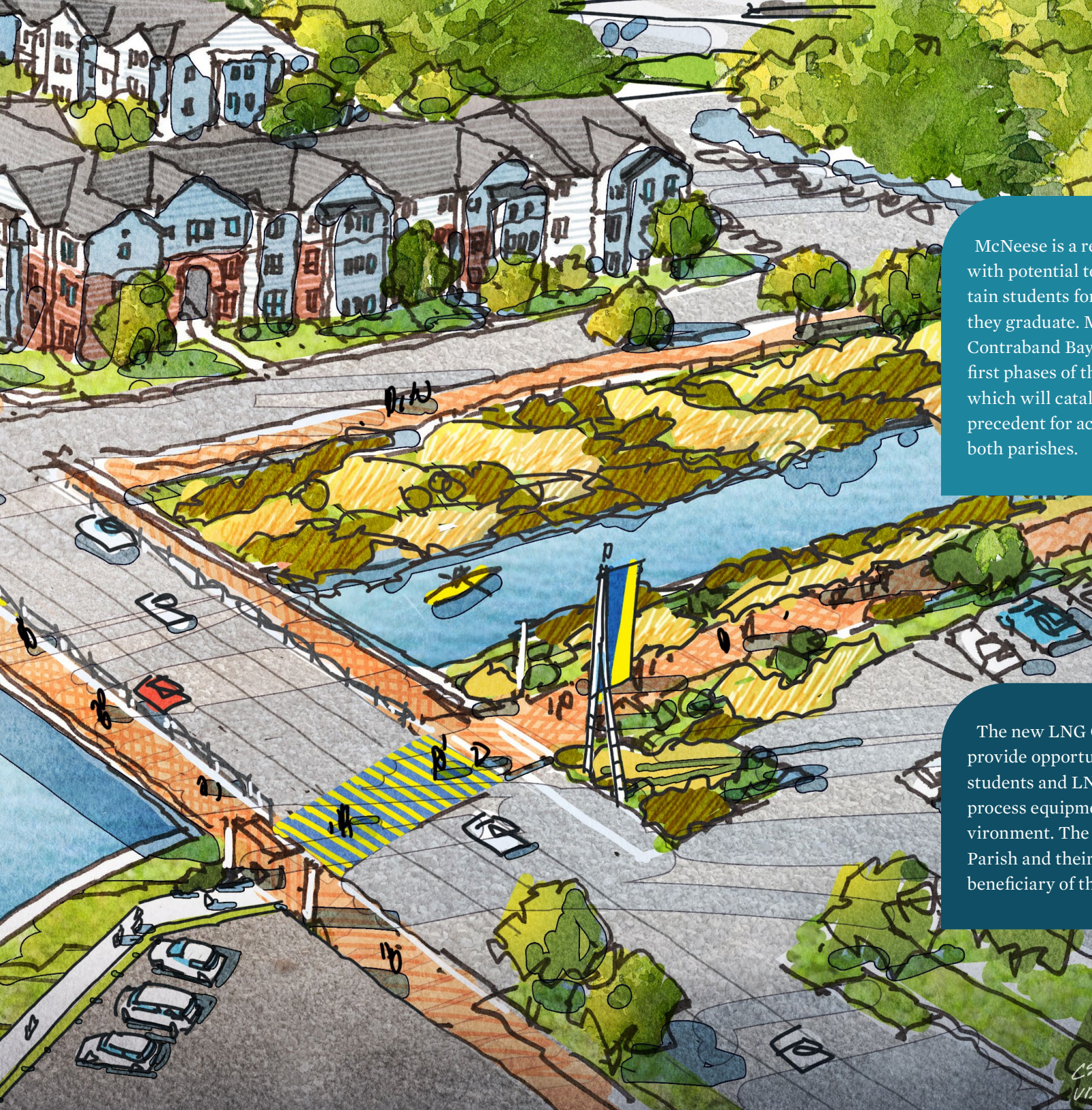
**2-10**  
years



**TBD**  
million







## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CALCASIEU PARISH?

McNeese is a regional anchor institution, with potential to grow its presence and retain students for the local job market after they graduate. McNeese State University's Contraband Bayou project will be one of the first phases of the Bayou Greenbelt project, which will catalyze opportunities and set precedent for accessing waterways across both parishes.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CAMERON PARISH?

The new LNG Center of Excellence will provide opportunities for both McNeese students and LNG employees to operate process equipment in a safe, controlled environment. The LNG facilities in Cameron Parish and their employees will be a direct beneficiary of this investment.





## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- The land around McNeese State University is low and the area is at risk of flooding.
- Flood mitigation would be the backbone of the district, with quality of life and complete street benefits to the surrounding community.
- There are projects planned around the perimeter of the campus that should be tied together — the LNG Center of Excellence, retail center renovations, new student housing, and other university-related buildings.
- Contraband Bayou is the first phase of the Bayou Greenbelt, and that investment that can be leveraged and continued to the east and west.

As an alumna of McNeese  
I like that this focuses on  
improving the campus and  
making the campus feel like  
a more distinguishing factor  
of the community.

- ① Site-specific vegetation filters and transpires stormwater while enhancing the streetscape
- ② Engineered soil media filters stormwater and provides environment for vegetation to grow
- ③ Stormwater runoff from roadway and sidewalk flows into system through curb cuts, trench drains or catch basins\*
- ④ Overflow limits amount of surface ponding, connected to traditional infrastructure
- ⑤ Underdrain ensures proper drain-down of stormwater runoff, connected to traditional infrastructure
- ⑥ Stormwater infiltrates into subgrade
- ⑦ Leveled subgrade



Potential green infrastructure improvements along a street's curb with site-specific plants

## PLAN TOPIC AREAS

### Plan Topics

The McNeese Area Resilience District focuses on growth in Community Planning, Housing, Economic Development, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Resources. A McNeese Area Resilience District would:

#### Community Planning

- **Improve pedestrian safety and enhance walkability, especially at the edges of campus.** Today, Ryan Street, Common Street, and E McNeese Street are not pedestrian friendly and make McNeese isolated from people living in the adjacent neighborhoods. Providing safer and friendlier pedestrian paths around the edges of campus will activate business and support a greater connection between McNeese and the surrounding community.
- **Provide a safe walking path and crossing from the main campus to the athletic campus.** Expanding Bayou Greenbelt to the east along Contraband Bayou from main campus behind the University Animal Clinic will provide additional, safe access for students, staff, and visitors across E McNeese Street to the athletic complex and university stadiums, while avoiding the intersection at E McNeese and Common streets.

#### Housing

- **Create better connectivity for existing and future student housing.**

#### Economic Development

- **Elevate the visibility of McNeese within the region by exploring a presence in Downtown Lake Charles or along I-10.** A satellite campus for McNeese, either Downtown Lake Charles or along the I-10 corridor, would increase student retention, enhance engagement, and strengthen relationships among Downtown businesses and the labor pipeline.
- **Capitalize on world class investments and partnership with industry, such as the LNG Center of Excellence.** The new LNG Center of Excellence will serve industry employees in both Cameron and Calcasieu parishes with training opportunities, controlled environments for new equipment, and networking with industry outside of Southwest Louisiana.

#### Infrastructure

- **Decrease flood risk for surrounding middle neighborhoods through green infrastructure.** Green infrastructure practices, such as rain gardens, porous pavement, and underground storage cells can contribute to stormwater management, while improving the aesthetics and feel of the street corridors.
- **Bundle various resilience and infrastructure projects together to target funding and increase community strength.** Leverage recent hardening of utilities with future street and community development projects, such as Ryan Street and McNeese Street through LADOTD.

#### Natural and Cultural Resources

- **Implement the first phase of Bayou Greenbelt on Contraband Bayou, and propose a new kayak and boat launch/trailhead.** On the southern edge of McNeese's campus, improvements to the Contraband Bayou will serve as the first phase of Bayou Greenbelt. This will provide university students, faculty, and residents of the surrounding neighborhood access to the water and future opportunities for a kayak and boat launch with a trailhead that would connect into the greater Bayou Greenbelt system.
- **Expand Bayou Greenbelt to the east along Contraband Bayou, improving access to the water and walking paths.**



## ACTION STEPS

### Fund

A Resilience District bundles various resilience projects together to target potential funding sources, improve quality of life, and foster community strength. Potential funding sources for resilience districts can be at the federal and state level, including Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) federal funding and the LA Restore Programs for Resilient Communities Infrastructure and Hometown Revitalization. The key to implementing the McNeese Area Resilience District is a combination of land development controls and funding for infrastructure projects.

#### 1 Designate a Funding District

Establishing a special funding district will allow the City of Lake Charles and the University to combine funding sources, including green infrastructure grants, transportation funding, and tax increment funding (TIF). Similar to the Chenault/SOWELA Resilience District, the McNeese Area Resilience District can use a TIF district to fund infrastructure improvements that promote

### McNeese Area Resilience District

#### Action Steps

- 1 Designate a funding district for the McNeese area
- 2 Complete the construction of Phase 1 of McNeese's Contraband Bayou project, which will be one of the first portions of the Bayou Greenbelt loop
- 3 Design and construct Phases 2 and 3 of McNeese's Contraband Bayou project, including a kayak launch and extended trails
- 4 Extend the Bayou Greenbelt to the east, with a pathway along the southern side of Contraband Bayou, from Common Street to Kirkman Street, and across E McNeese Street to safely connect to the athletic complex and parking lots
- 5 Perform a traffic study on Common Street
- 6 Transform Common Street into a pedestrian-friendly street that is easier to cross and encourages active uses
- 7 Establish a presence for McNeese State University in Downtown Lake Charles or along the I-10 corridor







sustainability and walkability. The district should be eligible for EPA grants that support green infrastructure, smart growth, and brownfield redevelopment. DOTD, the Louisiana Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), CDC, and other agencies have funding programs for complete streets that can help implement the district's vision.

### **Contraband Bayou and Bayou Greenbelt Extension**

#### **2 Complete Construction of Phase 1 of McNeese's Contraband Bayou Project**

Phase 1 of McNeese's Contraband Bayou Project is currently under construction and is located on the southeastern corner of the main campus near E McNeese and Common streets. The project includes: cleaning up the bayou of any debris, building a pedestrian bridge, and enhancing the edges of the bayou so that it provides a beautiful front

door to the university and the student housing that border it on either side. Upon its completion, there will also be a kayak and boat launch with kayak rental for waterway access.

#### **3 Design and Construct Phases 2 and 3 of McNeese's Contraband Bayou Project**

Phases 2 and 3 of the Contraband Bayou Project will extend west to Ryan Street and south to E McNeese Street. Improvements will include: further debris removal and clean-up, the construction of an additional pedestrian bridge, upgraded landscaping and beautification, and waterside gathering space for students, faculty, and visitors to the university.

#### **4 Extend Bayou Greenbelt to the East along Contraband Bayou from Common Street to Kirkman Street**

As a continuation of the work being done on McNeese's campus, Bayou Greenbelt can extend

### **What's already happening?**

## **CONTRABAND BAYOU PHASE 1**

A community-led project for long-term recovery, Bayou Greenbelt seeks to improve the quality of life in Calcasieu Parish while promoting flood mitigation. The first phase of Bayou Greenbelt are the improvements to Contraband Bayou, located on the southern edge of McNeese State University. The Just Imagine SWLA Resilience Master Plan builds on this work through proposed extensions of Bayou Greenbelt to the east of McNeese's campus along the Contraband Bayou. As Bayou Greenbelt grows throughout the region, McNeese will be anchored to blue and green trails across Lake Charles and will benefit from the long-term, positive economic impact of this investment in infrastructure and access to nature.



Improvements to the Contraband Bayou at McNeese

east along Contraband Bayou and then south to E McNeese Street. A partnership with the University Animal Clinic and other businesses just east of the university would make waterway access continuous off campus, and would also open up the opportunity for a boardwalk trail along the southern edge of the bayou.



## What's already happening?

# DEVELOPMENT ON CAMPUS AND AROUND MCNEESE

Several projects are currently taking place in and around McNeese's campus, which serve as anchors for the McNeese Area Resilience District. Those projects include:

### ON-CAMPUS

- Contraband Bayou Phases 1-3
- New Farrar Hall, Police Building, Student Union, and student housing
- Renovation of existing facility for new bookstore

### OFF-CAMPUS

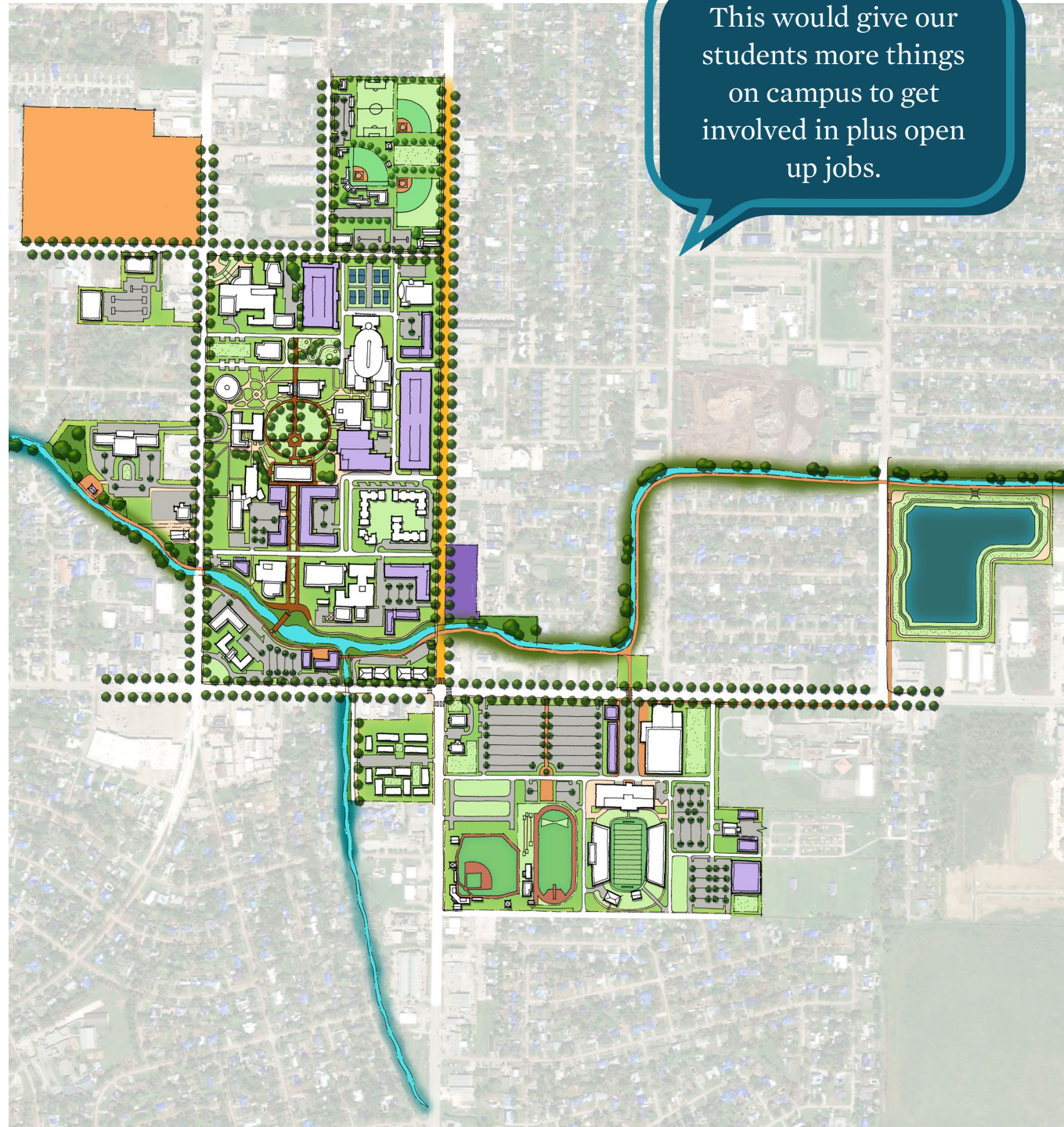
- Student housing on east side of Common Street
- McNeese Autism Program at the former police station
- KMart Shopping Center Redevelopment
- New LNG Center of Excellence
- Construction of the Louisiana Avenue Detention Pond



Concept Plan for LNG Center of Excellence



Rendering of Proposed New McNeese Student Union





## Common Street

Common Street is located on the eastern side of McNeese State's main campus. Although a major thoroughfare for the City of Lake Charles, Common Street is vastly oversized and creates a huge barrier between the university and the neighborhoods to the east.

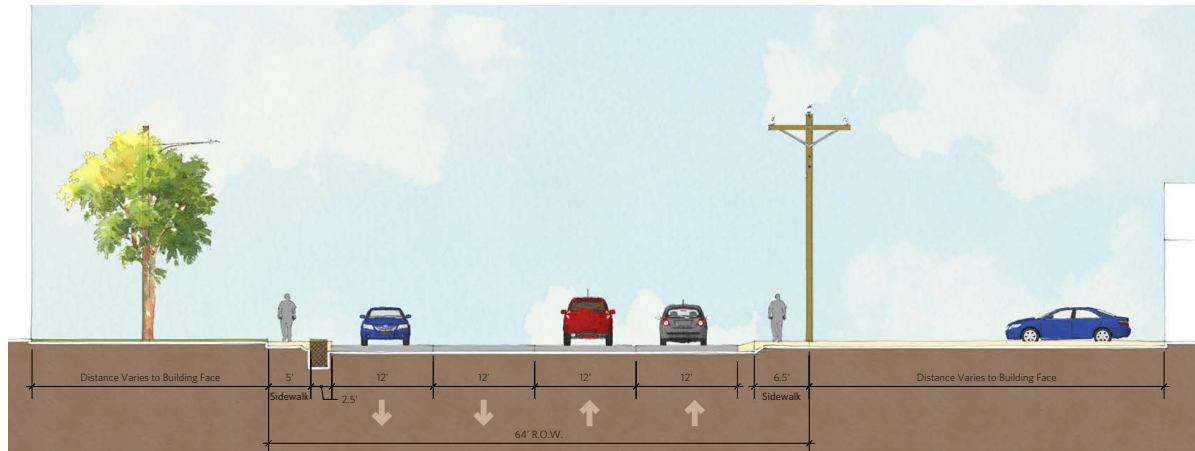
### 5 Perform a Traffic Study on Common Street

Common Street is currently a four-lane roadway that experiences a moderate amount of traffic annually. It is potentially underutilized due to its lack of direct interstate access and low-traffic generating development along the eastern side of the corridor. Due to the highly residential land

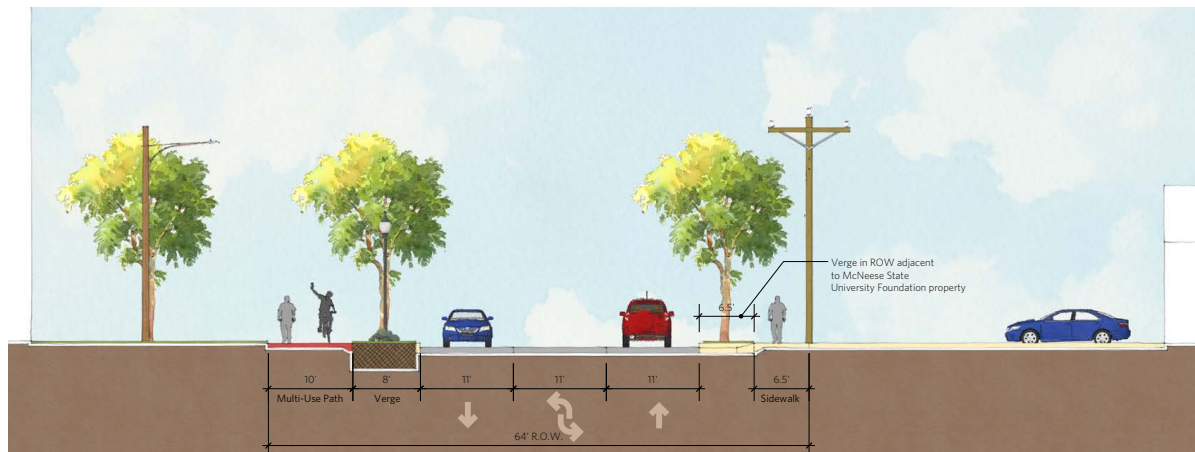
use on the east side of this road and the McNeese State campus to the west, we recommend that this corridor be studied between East Sale Road and McNeese Street to determine if the existing infrastructure provides more lanes than is truly needed in this area.

### 6 Transform Common Street

North of East Sale Road, a road diet treatment has already been implemented on Common Street. The existing road has been restriped to be one lane in each direction and a center turn lane is provided to accommodate access to the commercial development that fronts this roadway. This configuration could potentially be carried all the way to the McNeese Street intersection as well, creating opportunities to make access to and from campus more walkable and bikeable, while also providing a more community-friendly environment for the surrounding neighborhoods. Traffic calming and access management strategies could be implemented to better influence lower operating speeds, and wider sidewalks and/or trails could be implemented for all modes of transportation.



Common Street — Existing



Common Street — Proposed

Massachusetts Avenue, Indianapolis





## A Good Example

### GENTILLY RESILIENCE DISTRICT

- City of New Orleans Gentilly Resilience District (GRD)
- A resilience district bundles various resilience projects together to target funding to improve quality of life and community strength
- GRD received a \$141 million HUD National Disaster Grant to enhance resilience throughout Gentilly
- The GRD addresses social and environmental equity within a low middle income (LMI) community



Flood control becomes a community amenity



Vegetated swales used for stormwater collection/treatment

### Grow and Expand McNeese

McNeese State University is an important asset to the region. Its growth and prosperity anchors the region's higher education identity and provides deep connections to the local job market. The continuation of this growth and prosperity is imperative both for the university's success and drawing regional interest.

#### 07 Establish a Presence for McNeese State University in Downtown Lake Charles or Along the I-10 Corridor

Currently, there is a disconnection between Downtown Lake Charles and McNeese State University. In the short-term, this gap could be resolved through providing a shuttle service that would take students and faculty between McNeese and Downtown Lake Charles. The increased presence of college students and faculty members in Downtown Lake Charles would result in the stimulation of Downtown activity, residential, retail, and entertainment. In addition, Port Wonder is offering a gallery space for McNeese students and faculty.

In the long-term, a Downtown or I-10 satellite campus for McNeese would greatly increase its visibility and standing as a regional institution. Partnerships between the university, the City of Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish, and others should take place to establish what the right programs and opportunities are for promoting the growth both at McNeese and for the region.



### Potential Partners

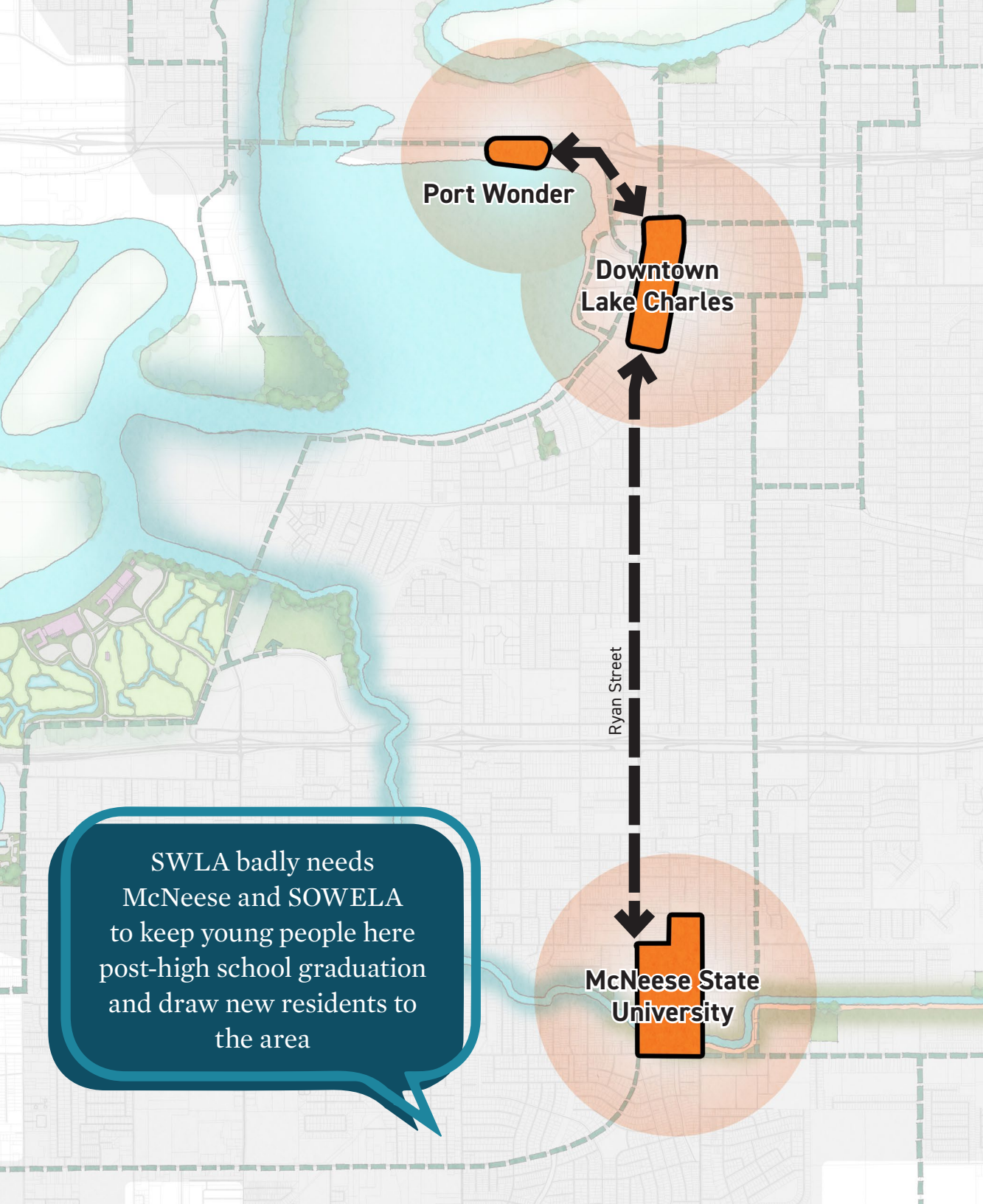
- City of Lake Charles
- McNeese State University
- Calcasieu Parish
- Community Foundation SWLA
- National Park Service
- LNG Center for Excellence



### Potential Funding Sources

- McNeese Recovery Funds
- State Capital Outlay (road budget)
- State and Federal DOTD grants
- Restore LA funding
- Philanthropy
- CDBG Mitigation Funds (CDBG-MIT)
- FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program
- LA Watershed Initiative
- LA Office of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism CARES Act funding for quality of life open space improvements in low- and moderate income communities





## A Good Example HAGAN-LAFITTE

### HOW?

- Optimized drainage system with mix of grey and green infrastructure
- Strategic storage provided maximum flood reductions
- Reduced heat island, improved pedestrian safety, and beautifies the neighborhood



A completely optimized stormwater system — rain gardens, pervious sidewalks and parking, detention chambers, and a drainage collection system



Rain garden and pervious sidewalk and parking system

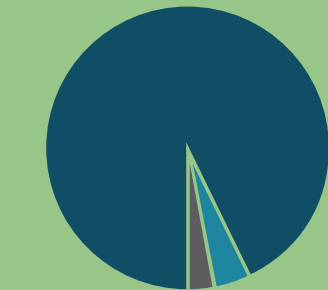


## HIGHLIGHTING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

I would visit this project



I think this project will benefit SWLA.



**93%**  
of respondents said **YES**

**4%**  
of respondents said **NO**

**3%**  
of respondents said **I'M NOT SURE**

It makes us understand  
the importance of  
having McNeese here,  
while also taking action  
to become more resilient



## IMPLEMENTATION

### Economic Impact and Return on Investment

McNeese State University plays a critical role in attracting new businesses, expanding higher education opportunities, and increasing the region's population through its offerings and partnerships within the community. When projecting for long-run growth and diversification of the economy, concrete priorities include:

- Aligning programs, training, and opportunities with the highest potential job growth markets
  - Right now, preliminary gap analyses reveal that post-secondary degrees for business, education, health, and personal/culinary services have the biggest gap when understanding those with degrees versus the jobs that need fulfilled
- Exploring opportunities in the technological sphere that would connect to the region's industrial foothold
- Increasing awareness and workforce development training related to entrepreneurship, small business development, and technology





## IMPLEMENTATION

HOW? (ACTION STEPS)	COST	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	LEAD ENTITY	SUPPORTING PARTNERS/ ENTITIES
Designate a funding district that bundles multiple projects together to target available funding	n/a	1–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n/a</li> </ul>	McNeese State University City of Lake Charles	
Rebuild Common Street to make it more pedestrian friendly and safer for students to cross	\$1 million \$150–\$300 per linear foot of infrastructure improvements	2–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Capital Outlay budget for roads</li> <li>DOTD grants at state and federal levels</li> </ul>	City of Lake Charles	McNeese State University
Plan for the expansion of Bayou Greenbelt, building on the McNeese-led project — first piece heading to the east (new walkway and waterway improvements)	\$5–\$15 million for the expansion of the Contraband Bayou project	2–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LA Watershed Initiative capital funding</li> <li>LA Office of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism CARES Act funding</li> <li>Bayou Greenbelt Fund (SWLA)</li> </ul>	Bayou Greenbelt Fund (Community Foundation SWLA)	McNeese State University City of Lake Charles
Create a presence for McNeese in Downtown Lake Charles or along the I-10 corridor	\$10–\$15 million	3–10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McNeese</li> <li>State Capital Outlay</li> </ul>	McNeese State University	