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Visionary master plan project initiated for Opelousas Downtown Development District

Plan to focus on inclusive engagement and implementable actions to improve streetscapes and infrastructure.

Opelousas, LA (February 2020) –The Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD), an economic development district in St. Landry Parish, announces a new project. The ODDD is preparing a Downtown Master Plan to guide the future development and design of Opelousas’s downtown. Creation of the plan will be based on the shared vision of Opelousas’s residents and stakeholders. The ODDD would like to encourage all residents and business owners to participate in this important process to shape the community’s future. The nine-month planning process will offer a variety of opportunities to become involved and give input in this important project.

Following an extensive selection process, the ODDD has selected Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX), a statewide nonprofit planning organization, to develop the Master Plan. The development process will center around a robust campaign of community and business engagement. The CPEX team will involve a broad range of community groups and agency representatives to ensure that the vision developed for Opelousas’s future represents the true dreams and desires of the community. At the completion of this planning effort, the ODDD and the Opelousas community will have a comprehensive, visionary document that is focused on implementation. This plan will lay out tangible projects and a timeline for implementing the recommendations to help realize immediate impacts.

Bill Rodier, CEO/Director of the St Landry Economic Development Group, said, “Downtowns are the heart for any community. Downtown Opelousas is no exception to this. In fact, in many ways, Downtown Opelousas serves as a heart for St Landry Parish and beyond. This planning initiative with CPEX will be an important catalyst to bring diverse groups of people together to look at the future of this important resource. We are excited about the ideas and actionable strategies that will come from this work.”

As Louisiana’s third oldest city, Opelousas has a culturally rich and diverse history, but in recent times the city has faced development challenges. New commercial businesses in Opelousas have primarily opened along the interstate and this has provided the inner-city areas with a unique opportunity for infill developments. A collective effort is needed to direct revitalization projects that will combat blighted and aging infrastructure in the ODDD.

“The international economic development trends are shifting and we are starting to see huge success in older cities that prioritize infill and revitalization over large scale recruitment and new developments. We have studied this model and its success and it is truly a perfect fit for the ODDD district. Our focus for this plan is to revitalize downtown Opelousas by creating an accessible, inclusive, vibrant district where businesses and professionals can thrive; where families, citizens and tourists can enjoy all the

historical wonders we have to offer here while dining, shopping and playing. It is also proven that healthier cities are happier cities and we hope to incorporate support for that fact as well,” said Taylor Lormand, Project Director and Economic Development Specialist for St. Landry Parish.

CPEX President & CEO Camille Manning-Broome said, “Our team is passionate about working with the Opelousas community to help develop a shared vision and then lay out a clear road map on how to achieve that vision. When we work with communities, we always meet them where they are and customize our work to their needs. We work with communities to understand their culture and desires, and together develop a process, plan, and implementation guide that helps achieve community goals. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It takes commitment from all community stakeholders to make these bold changes, and it’s part of CPEX’s mission as a nonprofit to help all Louisiana communities enhance the quality of life of all residents.”

The master plan is focused along Highways 190 and 182 and expands outward to the boundaries of the ODDD. Collaboration with the Opelousas Main Street Board and the Opelousas Historic District Board is an important part of ensuring the plan outcomes are aligned with the needs of the ODDD.

Other Master Plan Highlights:

- Designing and installing an interactive community engagement project in the downtown community for 2-weeks to build interest and gain input
- Evaluating the potential for reuse and redevelopment of buildings and properties, as well as the fiscal impacts of potential development
- Incorporating green infrastructure elements into the streetscape and public spaces to help manage stormwater and provide additional community benefits such as visual amenities and native pollinator habitat.

For more information and to follow the progress of the Opelousas Downtown Development District Master Plan, contact Taylor Lormand at St. Landry Parish Economic Development.

About the Opelousas Downtown Development District

The Opelousas Downtown Development District was created by state law in 2018. The DDD in collaboration with other local public and private entities is devoted to building leadership, progressing, and serving as the catalyst for economic growth and development in Downtown Opelousas. The DDD will encourage cooperation and collaboration by advancing a positive image of downtown and to plan and develop the designated commercial district to its potential, through economic development and historic preservation.

About the Center for Planning Excellence

CPEX is a non-profit organization that coordinates urban, rural and regional planning efforts in Louisiana. We provide best-practice planning models, innovative policy ideas, and technical assistance to individual communities that wish to create and enact master plans dealing with transportation and infrastructure needs, environmental issues, and quality design for the built environment. CPEX brings community members and leaders together and provides guidance as they work toward a shared vision for future growth and development. Since our founding in 2006, CPEX has been involved with the planning efforts of more than 30 Louisiana cities, towns and parishes.

About Fregonese Associates

A premier land use planning firm located in Portland, Oregon with an award-winning track record of helping make better cities and regions since 1997, Fregonese Associates employs creative planners, designers and GIS specialists who combine land use expertise with an understanding of transportation, urban design, economics, housing, natural systems and the environment, history, and public policy – all within a mindset of sustainability. Fregonese Associates is a subconsultant to CPEX, assisting with data collection and analysis as well as assisting with identifying development potential within the DDD.

About CARBO Landscape Architecture

An award-winning landscape architecture firm established in 1995, known nationally for innovative and engaging stormwater management and green infrastructure projects, CARBO follows a tenet that interprets and celebrates the historical and cultural context of place. Completed works include residential and estate gardens, regional parks, botanical gardens, nature centers, institutional campuses, and urban streetscapes. CARBO will be a subconsultant to CPEX and will guide the stormwater management recommendations for the Master Plan Process.