



Community Action Plan for Opelousas, Louisiana

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

November 2020

For more information about Local Foods, Local Places visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places>

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Cover photo credit: City of Opelousas Tourism

COMMUNITY STORY

Opelousas, located in South-Central Louisiana on the Gulf Coastal Plain, 20 miles north of Lafayette, is the state's third oldest city. First inhabited by the Opelousas Indians before the arrival of European settlers in 1690, le Poste des Opelousas was eventually established by the French as a trading post. ¹Becoming a popular stop for those traveling from New Orleans to Natchitoches, the post expanded to include approximately 100 families by 1769.

The nutrient rich soil made the region ripe for agricultural endeavors and cattle raising. In addition to settlers moving to the area as part of the Spanish military; immigrants, as well as French-speaking Acadian exiles, made their way to Opelousas to farm on these fertile grounds.

After the United States acquired the territory through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, settlers continued to migrate to the area, including some of the earliest Creole families. In 1805, Opelousas became the seat of the newly formed St. Landry Parish of Louisiana. Opelousas was incorporated by legislative act on February 14, 1821 and was the site of the State Supreme Court until 1898.

The Industrial Revolution spurred development of the local railroad, connecting New York to Opelousas, which paved the way for the city's future growth, modernization and hospitality. Between the mid-1850's through late 1920's, several charity organizations relocated over 2,000 orphaned children from extreme poverty and disease from New York to their new families in Louisiana. ²Later, the city would welcome thousands of refugees from the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927.

Historically economically dependent on cotton and cattle, the city has since expanded its economy to include petroleum and natural gas extraction. Fondly known as the "spice capitol of the world", Opelousas is also home to several large seasoning products and sale facilities, including Tony Chachere's products, Targil Seasons, and many more.



Figure 1 – Historic Downtown Opelousas. Louisiana's third oldest city, many original buildings still stand today. Image credit: Bob Lee



Figure 2 – Known as the "Zydeco Music Capitol of the World", Opelousas's vibrant arts culture is influenced by the distinct and soulful sounds of zydeco music, which originated in the city. Image credit: City of Opelousas Tourism

¹ Opelousas, LA Chamber of Commerce

² Louisiana Orphan Train Museum

Opelousas is also the birthplace of legendary Clifton Chenier, pioneer of zydeco-music indigenous to the Louisiana Creoles and the Native American people of Louisiana. Since 1982, Opelousas has hosted the Original Southwest Louisiana Zydeco Festival, which draws thousands into the downtown annually.

The Le Vieux Village Heritage Park and Tourist Information Center showcases 19th century cottages, Orphan Train exhibit and “Hidden Capitol of Louisiana,” which served as the governor’s mansion during the Civil War.³ Together, these buildings and exhibits provides a peak into past Cajun and Creole folkways still in vibrant evidence around the city today.

Over time, the magnetic draw of big commercial stores has lured businesses and services away from the downtown Main Street area, leaving huge gaps both in the physical fabric and the social activity in the area. A once thriving agriculture parish, this industry has declined throughout the years and the number of farmers and producers have dwindled to only a handful of farmers selling fresh produce at the Farmers Market in Opelousas. However, Opelousas, an accredited Main Street Community, has made great strides towards downtown revitalization. Over the past decade, the City has developed itself into a public art community through vibrant placemaking activities showcasing local and national artists downtown.

Opelousas, serving as the county seat of St. Landry Parish, is home to a diverse population with 75.1% of residents identifying as African American and 22.3% as Caucasian. The median household income is \$21,373.00 and the current population is 16,758. Issues related to health, access to food, and poverty affect many Opelousas residents. In recent years, the community has come together to address these issues and build a healthier, more vibrant city. In 2018, the Healthy St. Landry Alliance, a partnership of Opelousas General Health System Foundation, St. Landry Economic Development, the Office of Public Health Region IV, and the City of Opelousas, was formed to address the social determinants of health in St. Landry parish. Key findings showed that St. Landry Parish ranks 57th out of the 64 parishes for health factors and behaviors, indicating a clear need for improved education and outreach activities. While Opelousas and the St. Landry Parish area are rich in diversity and culture, there are serious problems with



Figure 3 – Le Vieux Village Historical Park and Museum highlights the rich culture in Opelousas. The village offers visitors access to one of the oldest Creole homes in the region, a doctor’s office and country store from the early 19th Century. Image Credit: City of Opelousas Tourism



Figure 4 – A stroll along Landry Street highlights Opelousas’s downtown corridor, containing beautiful tree-lined streets and historic buildings. Image credit: City of Opelousas Tourism

³ Opportunity St. Landry

literacy, connectivity and poverty. The Alliance was awarded a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant to create a strategic plan on addressing these issues.

Building on past success, Opelousas requested assistance through the Local Foods, Local Places program to identify best practices for fostering a healthy community and vibrant downtown. The Healthy St. Landry Alliance plans to bridge the gap in developing a healthier community and revitalization to the downtown area by looking at healthy alternatives to cultural eating.

The Local Foods, Local Places program is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Opelousas was one of 16 communities across the United States selected to participate in the program in 2020 from more than 70 applications.

The goals of the Local Foods, Local Places program are to create:

- More economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses.
- Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- Revitalized downtowns, main streets, and neighborhoods.

A Local Foods, Local Places steering committee formed in Opelousas in preparation for this technical assistance award comprised of a variety of community partners (see Figure 5). A technical assistance team of consultants and multiple federal and state agency partners supported the effort (Figure 6). The steering committee decided to focus its technical assistance on continuing to promote healthy eating, growing connections to underserved communities, and growing Opelousas's farmers market.

The remainder of this report and appendices document the technical assistance engagement process, the workshop activities, and most importantly, the outcome: a community action plan to achieve Opelousas's goals.

Local Foods, Local Places Steering Committee

- **Tracey Antee**, OGHS, Director of Foundation
- **Melanie Lee-Lebouf**, City of Opelousas Tourism, Main Street
- **D'Anna Hooks**, OGHS, Foundation Assistant
- **Taylor Lormand**, St. Landry Economic Development, Economic Development Strategist
- **Tim Marks**, OGHS, Chief Population Health & Clinical Integration Officer
- **Thurman Johnson**, Arpeggios and Business Manager Pediatric Office, Co-owner
- **Chad LaComb**, Acadiana Planning Commission
- **Perry Frontenot III**, LA Dept. of Environmental Quality, Environmental Scientist

Figure 5 - Steering committee members.

Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Team

- **Lauryn Coombs**, EPA HQ Office of Community Revitalization
- **John Foster**, EPA HQ Office of Community Revitalization
- **Michael Kennedy**, EPA Region 6
- **Gloria Vaughn**, EPA Region 6
- **Ron Batcher**, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Sasha Pokrovskaya**, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Yvette Garcia**, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Karl Hacker**, Economist, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Rebecca Otte**, LDEQ Brownfields
- **Kyla Fleming**, Loan Specialist, USDA RD (Lafayette Office)
- **Majorie Ball**, Small Business Administration

Figure 6 - Technical assistance team.

ENGAGEMENT

The technical assistance engagement process for Local Foods, Local Places has three phases, illustrated in Figure 7 below. The plan phase consists of three preparation conference calls with the steering committee and technical assistance team to clarify goals and arrange workshop logistics. The convene phase includes the effort's capstone event—a three-day intensive workshop. The act phase includes three follow up conference calls to finalize a community action plan and strategize on maintaining momentum generated during the workshop.

The Opelousas workshop was held as an interactive virtual workshop with six videoconferencing sessions over three days from November 18th to 20th, 2020. 37 individuals representing the Opelousas community and various local or regional organizations and 13 federal partners participated in one or more workshop sessions. Figure 8 shows a screenshot of some of the workshop participants. The activities from these sessions are described below. Workshop exercise results are summarized in **Appendix A**, a list of workshop attendees is provided in **Appendix B**, a data profile in **Appendix C**, funding resources in **Appendix D**, and general references in **Appendix E**.

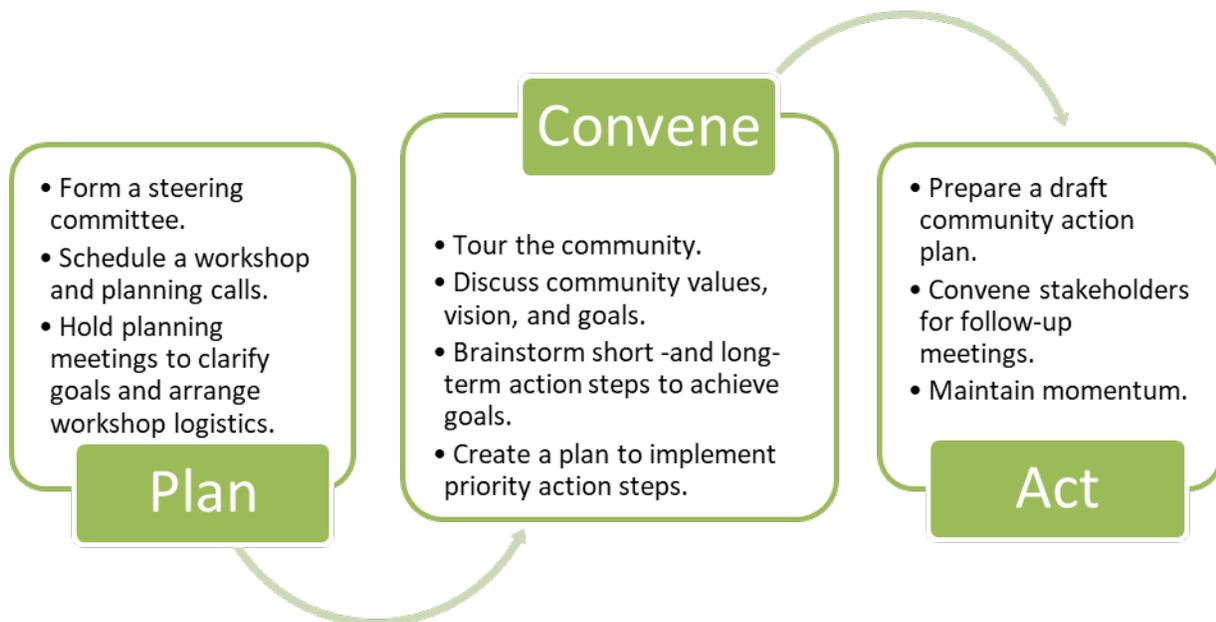


Figure 7 - Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance process diagram.



Figure 8 – Workshop participants were connected virtually through six videoconferencing sessions.

BACKGROUND AND CASE STORIES

The virtual workshop's opening session focused on identifying a vision and articulating values for local foods in Opelousas, and on sharing examples of other communities that successfully pursued goals like Opelousas's. 33 participants attended the opening session, representing various local food, public health, and community service organizations.

Tracey Antee, LFLP local contact and Director of Foundation for Opelousas General Health System, welcomed participants. After recognizing community partners in producing the workshop and general introductions, Lauryn Coombs with the EPA Office of Community Revitalization gave a short presentation on the background and benefits of the Local Foods, Local Places program. The technical assistance team then gave an overview of places, programs, and issues in Opelousas as raised by the local committee through the city's initial application to the LFLP program, the community self-assessment, and three pre-workshop conference calls. The overview highlighted Opelousas's existing farmers market, previous and current health initiatives, and the city's history and culture of vibrancy. Demographic and regional data that provides baseline measurements of food access, health, and economic well-being about Opelousas can be found in **Appendix C**.

Another objectives of the opening workshop session was to hear from residents and other stakeholders about their vision for food system improvements in Opelousas. The technical assistance team led attendees through a group exercise called "This I believe...", designed to surface core values of the community (Figure 9). The complete results from each of the exercises are available in **Appendix A**.

This I Believe...

I believe my community...

- ...has everything it needs to be a vibrant, sustainable community!
- ...is deserving!
- ...has the potential to rally around a robust market concept to create one of the best markets in the region
- ...has amazing assets, people, and resources
-is unique and authentic
- ...can come together to collaboratively make things better
- ...is poised for property as we continue to collaborate

I believe local food...

- ...is a way of life.
- ...can be the life blood of our community.
- ...can create tourism driver for our community.
- ...is a sustainable way to support our local economy while healing our bodies
- ...is what helps introduce families to other local families
- ...tastes better and is healthier!!!

Figure 9 – In a group exercise designed to capture the community's vision and values, participants were asked to complete the statements "I believe my community..." and "I believe local food...". The above figure represents select responses and all can be found in Appendix A.

Finally, in the initial workshop session the technical assistance team shared examples of other communities and projects that successfully pursued goals like Opelousas's. The technical assistance team invited a previous Local Foods, Local Places community, Bessemer, Alabama, to join the workshop session and share more about their experience and progress since their workshop.

Bessemer, Alabama is located just over six hours from Opelousas, Louisiana, but both communities experienced similar challenges when considering local foods in their community. Joe Openshaw, current Bessemer Farmers Market manager, was able to join us on Wednesday evening to share their community story with those in attendance. Bessemer's mission to strength their farmers market closely aligns with Opelousas's, which aims to expand and promote the green farmers market to create new opportunities for collaboration. Since Bessemer's workshop in 2016, they have relocated their market to the new Bessemer Recreation Center, which offers reasonable membership fees for residents. At the market, they offer a Senior Nutrition Voucher Program, free yoga and programming on the nearby lawn, and provide healthy and tasty recipes on their community website. The City of Bessemer continues to collaborate with their newly established food and health non-profits, the city of Bessemer Mayor's Office and local universities.

Due to the rich discussion between both communities, the technical assistance team chose to forgo their additional case study to continue peer-to-peer community sharing offering insights into next steps approaching the workshop.

Workshop participants expressed interest in the idea of a community or demonstration kitchen within the downtown as a place for both residents and visitors to learn about healthy and local cooking and eating. Some participants were interested in establishing a community garden near downtown to provide fresh, local food to a nearby group of diverse residents. Others were interested encouraging greater use by farmers and producers of the existing Opelousas Farmers Market.



Figure 10 – The technical assistance team invited Bessemer, Alabama, a previous Local Food, Local Places recipient, to share more about their activated farmers market space outside the Recreation Center. Image source: Bessemer Farmers Market.



Figure 12 – Among other topics, the workshop considered Opelousas's existing farmers market as a source of local food and community building. Image source: City of Opelousas Tourism

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

In the second session, attendees identified key assets and critical challenges on an interactive online map. Participants identified assets and challenges for each of the four community goals under the following topics: Favorite Things & Places, Needs Fixing, Opportunity, Food System-Supply, Food System- Access, and Food System- Knowledge.

Participants saw current programs and initiatives including the Southern University Agricultural Center’s satellite campus and Agromen agricultural organization as assets or opportunities for producing, distributing, and educating community member about healthy, local foods. The Boys and Girls Club of Acadiana, and Bellevue Street Baptist Church property next door were seen as an opportunity to increase the accessibility of local food in the downtown. The Le Vieux Village Heritage Park and Tourist Information Center was cited for its potential to involve more residents and tourists in the downtown by providing a new home for the city’s farmers market and offering a pop-up demonstration kitchen to teach healthy and local food traditions.

The existing lack of knowledge about healthy eating and cooking with healthy, local ingredients was mentioned as a challenge. While the city already has a farmer’s market, participants noted that there continues to be a need to involve more farmers and producers in this space. Finally, while Opelousas has a variety of existing programs and initiatives, informing residents about opportunities and encouraging participation is a challenge. A full list of results from this exercise is provided in **Appendix A**.

Participants identified further assets and opportunities on an interactive online map. The completed map shows potential linkages between downtown and South Park walking path, along with opportunities for additional community gardening in spaces in and near downtown. Additionally, participants identified existing food system elements such as restaurants and the location of the existing farmers market and community garden. The full mapping results are provided in **Appendix A**.

Assets and Opportunities

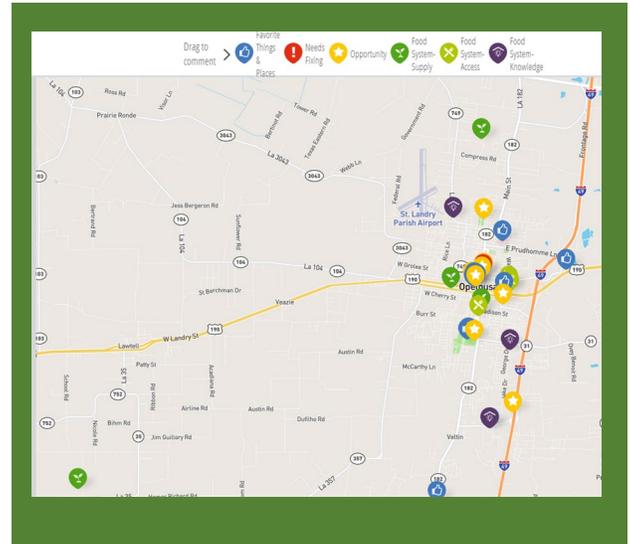


Figure 13 – A sampling of assets and opportunities identified during the workshop exercises.

ACTION PLAN

After brainstorming potential actions to help Opelousas achieve the workshop's four stated goals in session 3, the majority of days two and three of the workshop was dedicated to prioritizing and detailing these actions by specifying critical information including the importance of the action, how completion of the action will be assessed or measured, projected timeframe, people or organizations who will lead or support the initiative, what resources will be needed, and how funding or other needs will be met. Following the workshop proposed actions were further clarified and revised by the local committee, resulting in the action tables included below.

- **Goal 1 – Expand green farmers market that create opportunities for new and existing community collaboration around healthy eating/living and supporting local growers**
 - *Action 1.1 - Convene team to think through consumer/vendor survey, ideal market location youth engagement, etc*
 - *Action 1.2 - Develop marketing strategies for the market (rebrand), connect with downtown arts, music to market, retail, and restaurant opportunities.*
- **Goal 2 – Addressing food insecurity through greater resiliency and a more equitable and accessible local food system.**
 - *Action 2.1: Identify communities that are in food deserts.*
 - *Action 2.2: Establish a mobile farmers market (pop-up model) with SNAP benefits to have available for low SES neighborhood with limited transportation*
- **Goal 3 – Form connections between next-generation farmers and local growers, restaurant owners through engaging youth via programming and mentorship.**
 - *Action 3.1 - Add business entrepreneurship and/or value added food processing (canning) culinary component to existing high and elementary school programs by offering support to Antonio (Tony) Harris.*
 - *Action 3.2 - Implement WellSpot Restaurant program in Opelousas*
- **Goal 4 – Establish a good hub/commercial kitchen and educational center to improve access to healthy local foods via nutrition and cooking classes, training center and community space.**
 - *Action 4.1 - Identify either pop-up model or locate brick and mortar space for classes. Inventory all assets/spaces available VS brick and mortar spaces*
 - *Action 4.2 - Identify would-be food entrepreneurs who might use/rent commercial kitchen- plan for what the center offers*
 - *Action 4.3 - Collaborate with universities to teach nutrition classes (LSU AgCenter nutrition programs)*
 - *Action 4.4 - Create a community non-profit farm that's open to youth residents to learn and participate in growing & selling food*

GOAL 1: Expand green farmers market that create opportunities for new and existing community collaboration around healthy eating/living and supporting local growers.

Agriculture has long been an economic driver in the region surrounding Opelousas, but the number of current growers and farmers at the market has decreased over time. Opelousas would like to expand development of the green farmers market in order to produce more of what is locally consumed in homes, restaurants, and institutions. The actions prioritized by the community during the workshop reflect the importance of establishing and enhancing the existing market to strengthen the direct to consumer marketplace for local growers, increasing awareness of and enthusiasm for locally grown product and healthy living, and facilitating supplier/buyer connections.

Action 1.1: Convene team to think through consumer/vendor survey, ideal market location youth engagement, etc

What this is and why it is important	Need for a coordinated effort to think through supply and demand issues affecting the success of the farmers market. Low amount of vendors. Unclear communication with umbrella organization who runs market. Entice vendors as much as we entice buyers.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of team/committee • Meeting
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 31, 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracey Antee, Director of Foundation, Opelousas General Health System
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryan Mercer, Opelousas Resident • Lee Hampton, St. Landry Farmers Market (reach out to find current POC) • LFLP Steering Committee members • Vendors • Growers • Ag Organizations • Restaurants (contacts via Chamber of Commerce) • Small Businesses • Tracey Antee, Healthy St. Landry
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing (Funding via USDA-FMPP)

Action 1.2: Develop marketing strategies for the market (rebrand), connect with downtown arts, music to market, retail, and restaurant opportunities.

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop marketing strategies for the market (rebrand), connect with downtown arts, music to market, retail, and restaurant opportunities
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to change perception/narrative of existing farmers market. • Aim to create energy around and support existing market. • Document increase in cultural tourism at Vieux Village

Action 1.2: Develop marketing strategies for the market (rebrand), connect with downtown arts, music to market, retail, and restaurant opportunities.

Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting – Jan 31, 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracey Antee, Director of Foundation, Opelousas General Health System
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lee Hampton, St. Landry Farmers Market (reach out to find current POC) Taylor Lormand, Economic Development Specialist, St. Landry Economic Development George Marks, Place Making Task Force, St. Landry Economic Development Mavis Fruge, Place Making Task Force, St. Landry Economic Development Sam Oliver, Director, Acadiana Center for the Arts Rebecca Henry, Creole Museum Melanie Lee, Vieux Village Leadership Tracey Antee, Healthy St. Landry
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of EBT equipment (FMPP paid for it through a grant until FNS stepped in) Survey for vendors or consumers State cultural district data (applications/annual reports/business inventories)

Goal 2: Addressing food insecurity through greater resiliency and a more equitable and accessible local food system.

With the help of Healthy St. Landry, Opelousas is working tirelessly to increase overall health in their community and improve their Robert Wood Johnson score (currently ranked 56th out of 64 in the state of Louisiana). GIS technology will assist the community in mapping out greatest community needs, assets, and barriers needed to address local food insecurity in Opelousas.

Action 2.1: Identify communities that are in food deserts.	
What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize greatest need. Office of Public Health pilot survey highlighted this concern. Brainstorm additional elements you'd like to see on map (ex: parks, potential future pop-up sites, etc)
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete map (deliverable)
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chad LaComb, Acadia Planning Commission
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Tina Stefanski, Community Care Connect, Office of Public Health pilot • Tracey Antee, Healthy St. Landry Coalition Rep
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Food Desert shapefile

Action 2.2: Establish a mobile farmers market (pop-up model) with SNAP benefits to have available for low SES neighborhood with limited transportation	
What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to meet people where they are at and answered second biggest need in community 1) Food 2) Transportation barrier to fresh and local foods
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Robert Wood Johnson outcome score (currently 56th out of 64).
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2022 (2 years)
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antonio (Tony) Harris, Agromen & Southern University Agricultural Center
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers Market (maybe take 1 day/wk to go mobile) • Perry Fontenot, Louisiana Dept of Environmental Quality • Tim Marks, Opelousas General Health System Hospital • Stacie Mayeaux, Opelousas General Health System Hospital • Louisiana State University Agricultural Extension • Tracey Antee, Healthy St. Landry Coalition rep • Marsha Gautheir, Opelousas General Health System • Taffy Morrison, Well Ahead, Louisiana Funding • Other Stakeholders

Action 2.2: Establish a mobile farmers market (pop-up model) with SNAP benefits to have available for low SES neighborhood with limited transportation

Needed resources and possible sources

- Mobile Model - <https://urbangrowerscollective.org/fresh-moves-mobile-market/>
- Combine with health screenings
- Research healthy Rx model (Perry suggests monthly theme)

Goal 3: Form connections between next-generation farmers and local growers, restaurant owners through engaging youth via programming and mentorship.

There is a wealth of agricultural knowledge in Opelousas that is vital to pass down to future generations of aspiring growers and vendors. Opelousas will partner with Agromen to continue to establish and strengthen the networks between current and next-generation farmers, especially among the African American community. In order to ensure availability of agricultural products in Opelousas and create economic opportunities in agriculture, the community would like to partner with existing and aspiring farmers, growers, and restaurant owners to grow crops that meet the demand in the region and utilize approaches that can capitalize on the region’s interest in local foods.

Action 3.1: Add business entrepreneurship and/or value added food processing (canning) culinary component to existing high and elementary school programs by offering support to Antonio (Tony) Harris.

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This partnership would provide both technical and business assistance to aspiring food entrepreneurs in the local school system. This would help agricultural professionals self-sustain and achieve business success in the future. Currently, these school programs exist at North West/North Central high school and are set to start at Opelousas High, Opelousas Middle, Lawtell Elementary and Washington Elementary. Additionally, Opelousas Elementary school has a food entrepreneurs/Agricultural program curriculum that may be worth exploring. Students may be able to operate a booth at the farmers market.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from Antonio (Tony) Harris/Kayla Fontenot & schools on needs Increased participation from schools
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 months to reach out Next steps 6-month 1 year
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geoffrey Stewart, University of Louisiana at Lafayette LEED Center Antonio (Tony) Harris, Agromen and Southern University Agricultural Center

Action 3.1: Add business entrepreneurship and/or value added food processing (canning) culinary component to existing high and elementary school programs by offering support to Antonio (Tony) Harris.

<p>Supporting cast</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loren Carrier, Hope for Opelousas • Anne Jones, Garden Club Washington • Betty Foret, Garden Club Opelousas • Master Gardeners – Extension Service • Lisa Benoit, 4-H • Katie Guedry, Louisiana State University Ag Center • Adrienne Giron, Boys & Girls Club • Northwest High • North Central High • Yvonne Normand, Rotary Interact, Louisiana Ag in the classroom, Ag literacy program, Home Economics in High School • Denise Cannatella, Louisiana Ag in the classroom, state advocacy • Eva Iford, First community harvest garden • Ricky Julien, Opelousas High School Principal • Raquel Manuel, Chamber of Commerce • Lena Charles, Opelousas, Downtown Development District • Buddy Helton, Central St. Landry Economic Development District • Stacey Nevills, Southern Ag Center • Kayla Fontenot, Southern Ag Center – Agent for School Gardens • Opelousas Main St. – Katie Hoffman • Retirees – to help out at schools/provide information • Church Youth Group as Pilot Project
<p>Needed resources and possible sources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talking Farm (contact) • Buy-in of school leadership • 1890 scholarship grant • Earth Day event • Potentially apply for Workforce Development Grants through DRA • EDA – Economic Development Administration

Action 3.2: Implement WellSpot Restaurant program in Opelousas

<p>What this is and why it is important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To become a Well Spot restaurant owner uses local foods, local farmers, healthy eating options available, connection with local farmers. This is important to connect local restaurant owners with local food growers to provide more of a farm to table option. It also promotes local growers, cultural assets and culinary industry.
<p>Measures of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement program locally through Well-Ahead
<p>Timeframe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months

Action 3.2: Implement WellSpot Restaurant program in Opelousas

Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Julie Lyons, Well-Ahead Louisiana
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farmers• Restaurant Owners
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restaurant owners need to know who to contact• Develop resource directory• Connection between local farmers and Well-Ahead, Julie Lyons

Goal 4: Establish a food hub/commercial kitchen and educational center to improve access to healthy, local foods via nutrition and cooking classes, training center and community space.

This goal focuses on helping consumers access healthy and local food through a mobile, pop-up or brick and mortar space. The main objective is to create a space where the community feels confident and comfortable going to for helpful information regarding food, nutrition/cooking classes, and healthy living. The approaches identified by the community during the workshop include locating an existing space to conduct these classes or hosting a pop-up at Vieux Village.

Action 4.1: Identify either pop-up model or locate brick and mortar space for classes. Inventory all assets/spaces available VS brick and mortar spaces (Airport Rd LSU Ag Extension center- Dual space, or Agromen location)

Potential Vieux Village as space to host pop-ups in tandem to farmers market
North/South city park to house demonstrations Teen Center (owner by city) potential mobile market sites

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyst for food access, need to have permanent space to send people. An opportunity for placemaking with pop-ups in different areas as well as possible adjudicated properties.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing a long-term space • Securing temporary spaces for pop-ups • Implementing a pop-up event
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year- Winter 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melanie Lee, Opelousas Main Street
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Allen, Director, Opelousas Airport • Partnership with for-profits (restaurant) • School Board • Antonio (Tony) Harris, Southern Ag Center Commercial Kitchen • Tracey Antee, Healthy St. Landry • Tax Assessor/Police Jury • Potential property owners • Realtors • Farmers/Vendors • City & Parish – power and water for events
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space (Local school home ed labs), Certified commercial kitchen • Possibility to leverage existing Southern Ag facility • Potential Pop-Up restaurant or Exhibit for downtown Main Street – on abandoned site • EPA Technical Assistance to Brownfields • Main Street Vacant Property List • Research utility hook-up in village (logistics) • Tax Assessors office for tax adjudicated properties in the downtown area

Action 4.2: Identify would-be food entrepreneurs who might use/rent commercial kitchen- plan for what the center offers

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the supply chain that would be feeding into the markets as well as the target audience for pop-ups and/or permanent commercial kitchen facilities.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying who the food entrepreneurs are Attendees at workshops on food entrepreneurship Numbers of new food entrepreneurs or businesses
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years – Winter 2022
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber (buy in from local businesses)/SLEDD (Incubator)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber, Raquel Manuel SLEDD, Taylor Lormand City Permitting, D’Adrea Lyons Parish Permitting, Vickie Collins Vendor based activities/events Opelousas Tourism, Melanie LeBouef, Herman Fusilier Targil Foods, Ted Bellard Sales Tax Office, St Landry Parish School Board, Dana Savant Cultural District Contact, Melanie LeBouef Agromen, Tony Harris
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations from City & Parish offices could be what’s used for workshops Workshop Space, SLEDD/Southern Ag Center Small Business Food Entrepreneur Recruitment Fair – Civic Center/Julius Alsandor USDA – Potential Funding-Value Added Grant Program

Action 4.3: Collaborate with universities to help identify healthy alternatives to cultural eating

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We currently rank 56th out of 64 parishes in health outcomes and it directly correlates with our food ways. This goal will help adjust unhealthy eating habits by adapting recipes to be healthier with ingredient substitutions.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a recipe book of healthy cultural recipes Can be used for tourism promotion
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years, Winter 2022
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melanie LeBoeuf, City Tourism

Action 4.3: Collaborate with universities to help identify healthy alternatives to cultural eating

Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dietician, Chris Warner • Tony Chachere’s food scientist, Cindy Ardoin • Tony Chachere’s chef, Chef Jude Tauzin • LSU, Nutrition/Dietetics Programs • Southern, Nutrition/Dietetics Programs • ULL, Nutrition/Dietetics Programs • Healthy St. Landry, Tracey Antee
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Chachere’s potential sponsor • Atchafalaya Cultural Heritage Area Grant

Action 4.4: Create a community non-profit farm that’s open to youth residents to learn and participate in growing & selling food. Ex: The Talking Farm

What this is and why it is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful for people to see food being grown in their own community – creates curiosity/interest. Increase access to fresh food
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of feasibility study/group
Timeframe	3-4 months – Planning: Spring 2021 Opening: Fall 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryan Mercer, Opelousas Resident
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony, Agromen • Bellview St. Baptist Church (potential property)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LANO Association of Non-profits • Potential Urban farm property-tax adjudicated properties • Soil Scientist (university of LaFayette) – Anna.paltseva@louisiana.edu • Mike Kennedy, EPA R6, EPA Brownfields urban lot funding

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Following the virtual workshop in November, the local committee and technical assistance team conducted three follow-up telephone conferences to review workshop results, finalize the action tables, and construct the action plan document. The first of these calls, held in December, introduced the action tables created during the virtual workshop and began clarifying actions, filling in missing information, and adding detail. This call allowed the local committee to begin further work to refine and finalize the action tables. The second post-workshop call in mid-January introduced remaining elements of the action plan document, including background information, summaries of the virtual workshop, and appendices covering workshop details as well as community data, references, and funding resources. Following this call the local committee completed further review of all action plan information to help the technical assistance team complete the action plan report. A final post-workshop call in early February provided final review of the action plan document.

During the post-workshop period the local committee began early work on the implementation actions contained in the action plan document.

The City of Opelousas continues to pursue funding for local foods, food security, and community-building projects.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Workshop Exercise Results
- Appendix B – Workshop Sign-in Sheets
- Appendix C – Community Data Profile
- Appendix D – Funding Resources
- Appendix E – References