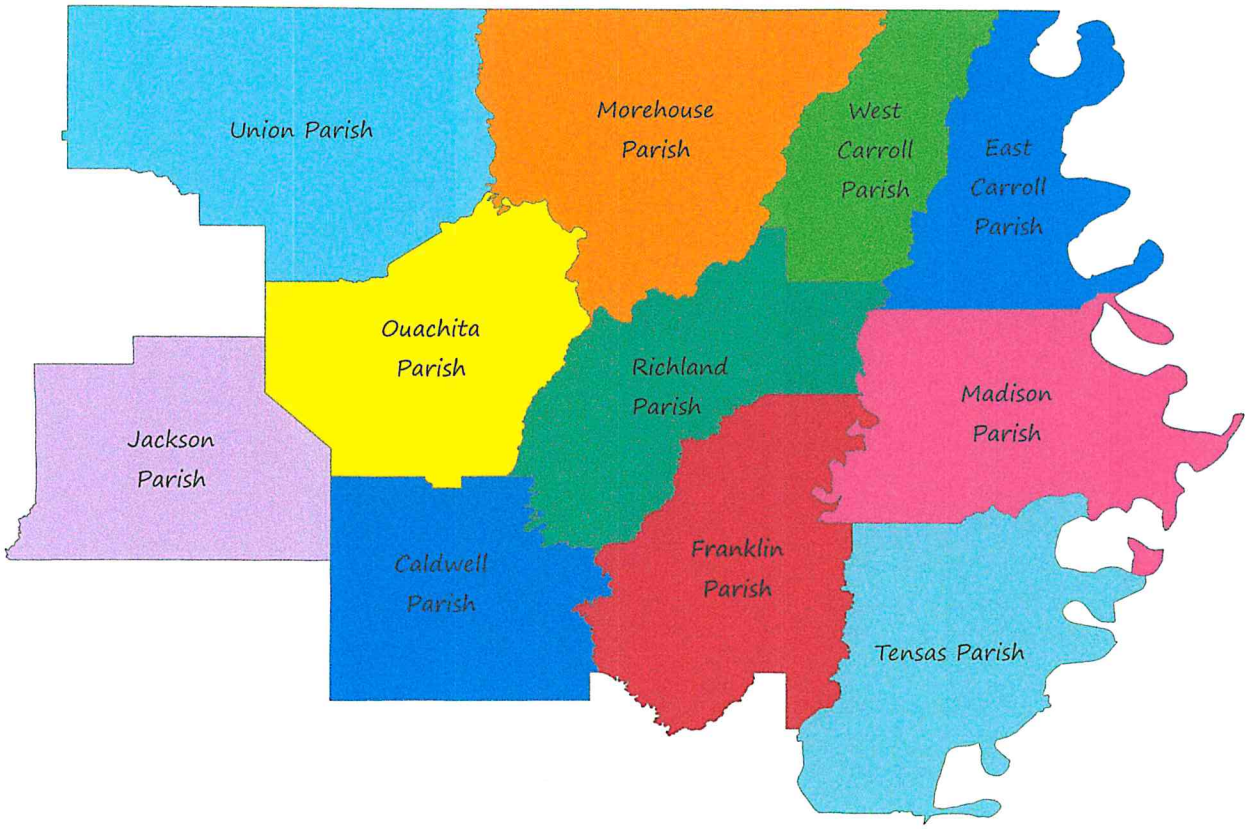
North Delta

Regional Planning & Development District, Inc.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025



Serving the Parishes of:

Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union and West Carroll

With Comprehensive Planning and Technical Assistance

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INTRODUCTION

On April 11, 1968, in Monroe, Louisiana, the North Delta Economic District Council, Inc., representing Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union and West Carroll parishes, was established. It was on this date that the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation were approved by the Council's Board of Directors. The Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation and an Application for Grant were subsequently approved and accepted by the Economic Development Administration on June 13, 1968. The Region is located in Northeastern Louisiana bounded on the east by the State of Mississippi, on the north by the State of Arkansas, on the west by parishes served by the Coordinating and Development District of Northwest Louisiana, and on the south by the Kisatichie-Delta Regional Planning District.

The North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc., was created under Title IV, Part B, Section 403 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. This ACT, as passed by Congress, authorized financial and technical assistance to multi-parish (district) organizations. The North Delta Regional Planning and Development District is specifically designed to overcome economic and social deficiencies by planned, coordinated, and unified local, state, and federal efforts. North Delta consists of eleven parishes: Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union and West Carroll.

North Delta is a nonprofit corporation and operates under its Board of Directors in cooperation with many state and federal agencies whose programs are designed to eliminate economic ills.

To develop a promising and successful economic development program a coordinated and cooperative effort among all agencies in the region is necessary. The North Delta Regional Planning and Development, Inc. staff functions to provide this "teaming" of all of the region's communities in an effort to maximize assets and diminish liabilities.

The North Delta District completed the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy in order to enhance the services provided to meet the needs of the region. It is believed the CEDs will provide the best vehicle to develop the cooperative effort required for economic success in this Northeast Louisiana Region.

BACKGROUND

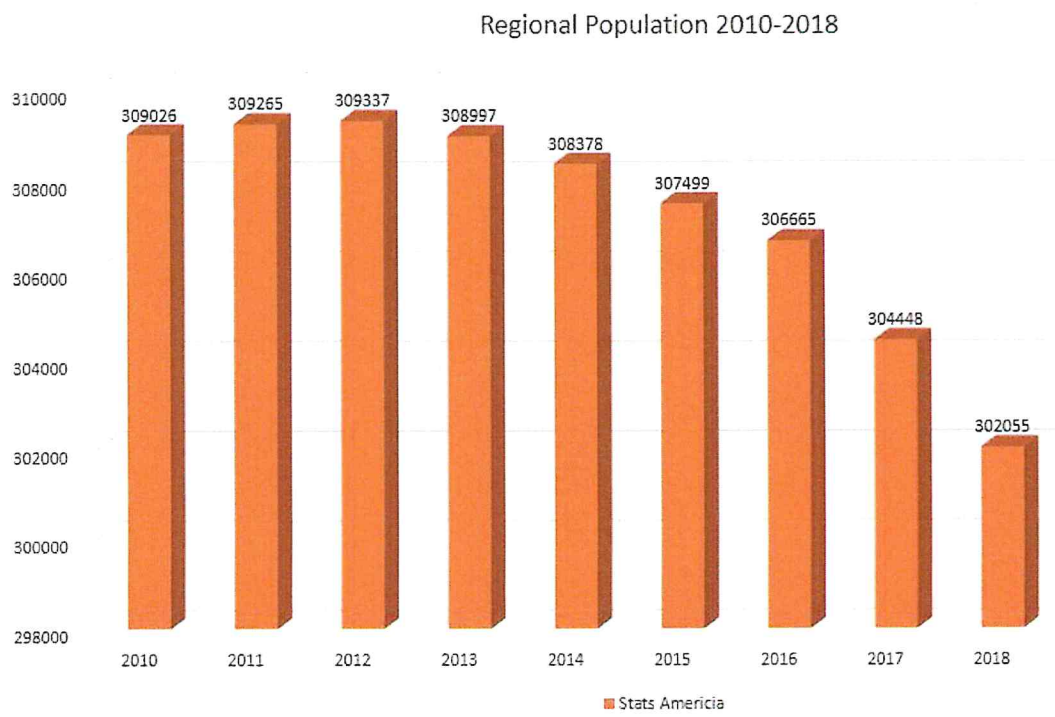
The District is influenced by warm air currents from the Gulf of Mexico creating a humid, sub-tropical climate with an average temperature of 65 degrees. There are approximately 225 days between the last freeze in the spring to the first freeze of the winter. This long period of time makes the region a very profitable place for many commercial agricultural crops.

There are several waterways in the district. The main ones are the Mississippi, Tensas, Beouf and Ouachita Rivers. They all flow from north to south.

Lesser attention has been concentrated on water supply and interest in recharging the Sparta Aquifer, though some communities in the northeast portion of the region continue to loosely explore the concepts of constructing a reservoir to improve water supply. Lower water supply issues have occurred on occasion within a few municipal systems in the past and this fact generates a question of improving conservation of the water supply.

Existing land use of the North Delta District is predominately for agriculture and forest purposes. These two categories of land use classification account for 98.50 percent of the total area of the North Delta District.

- **Population**



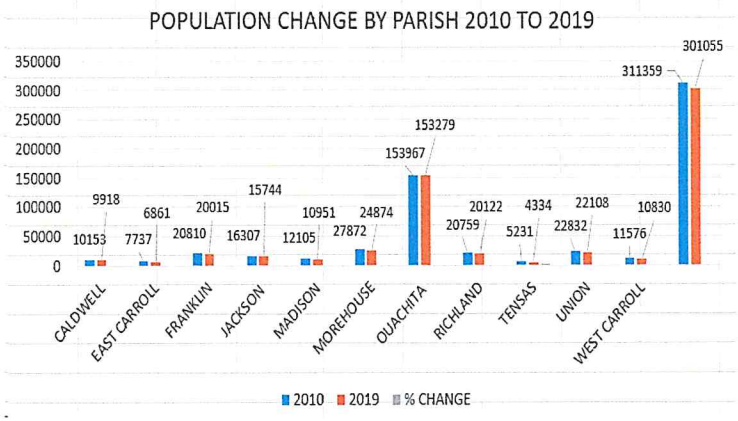
The annual population figures have remained basically constant throughout the region over the past five years, although the change has shown a small negative growth. This failure to increase has been the result of a lack of diversification of economy and a "regionalism" that holds firmly to a "crop production only" economy within the rural parishes. Diversification of the economy appears to be slowly developing, but a much greater rate would be beneficial.

• POPULATION TRENDS

Based on the 2010 U.S. Census, the regional population for North Delta's 11 parish District was 311,359 people. In 2019, the Region had a population of 301,055. People over the course of nine (9) years the District population declined 10,304 people. This trend in outmigration equates to approximately 1,145 people leaving Northeast Louisiana per year.

POPULATION CHANGE BY PARISH

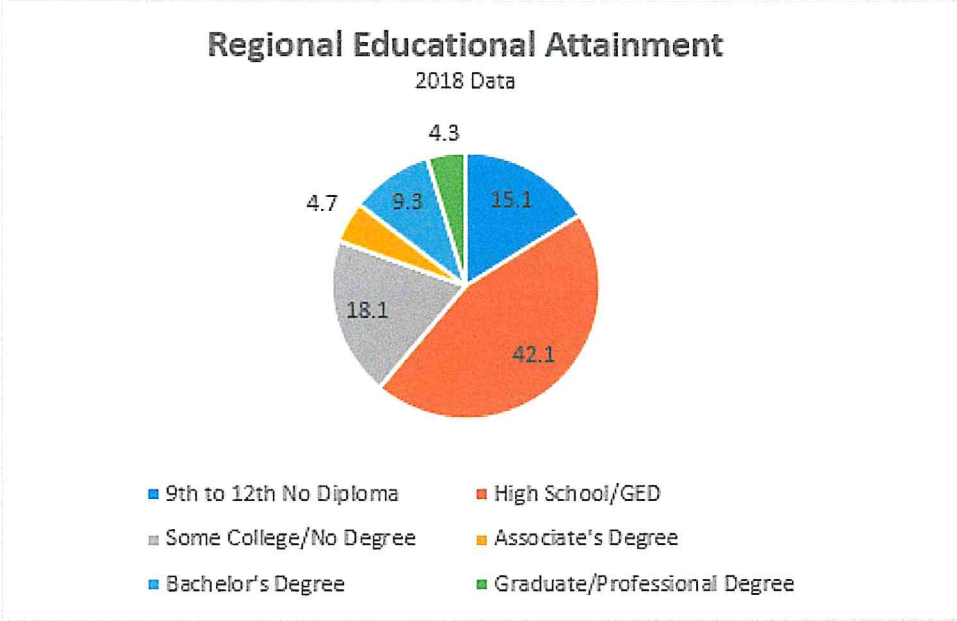
	2010	2019	% CHANGE	
CALDWELL	10153	9918	0.023146	235
EAST CARROLL	7737	6861	0.113222	876
FRANKLIN	20810	20015	0.038203	795
JACKSON	16307	15744	0.034525	563
MADISON	12105	10951	0.095333	1154
MOREHOUSE	27872	24874	0.107563	2998
OUACHITA	153967	153279	0.004468	688
RICHLAND	20759	20122	0.030685	637
TENSAS	5231	4334	0.171478	897
UNION	22832	22108	0.03171	724
WEST CARROLL	11576	10830	0.064444	746
	311359	301055	0.033094	10304



• Education Opportunity

The citizens of the North Delta District have a plethora of education opportunities to prepare for a career. Serving the District are twelve (12) parish and city school districts, twenty-two (22) private, parochial, and charter schools, (1) Community college, Delta Community College (Ouachita Parish) with (7) campuses located in East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita and Union Parishes, one university, University of Louisiana at Monroe, in addition, Louisiana Tech and Grambling State Universities are located within a thirty mile radius, and several proprietary schools.

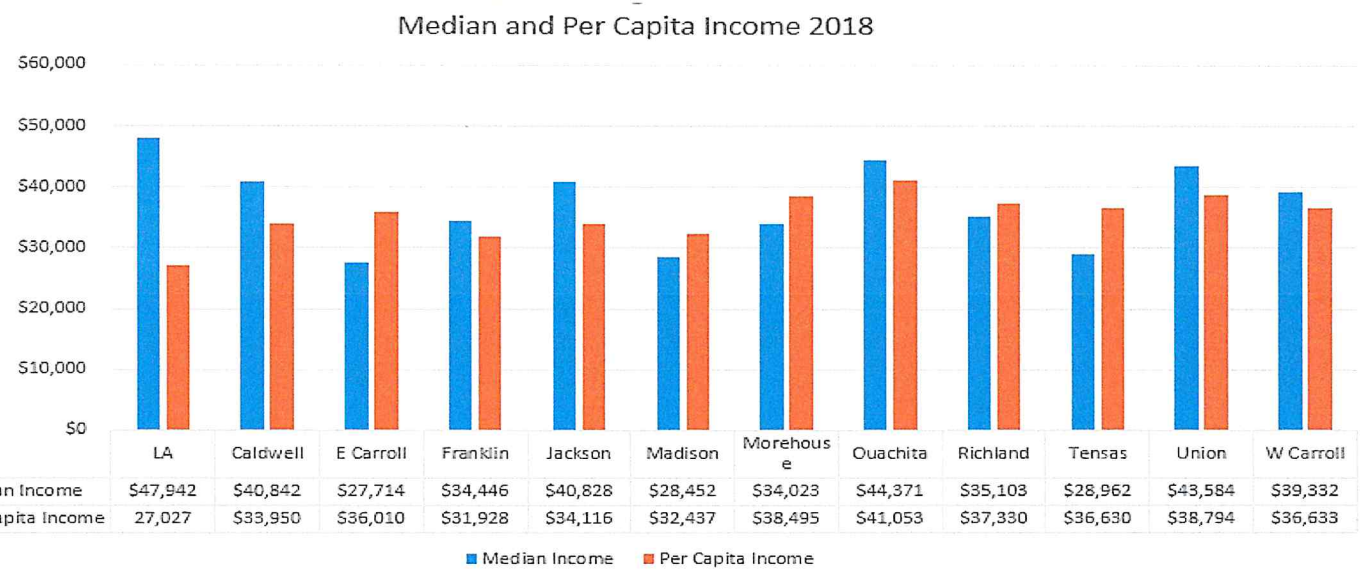
The opportunity to pursue career training across a broad spectrum of choices is a major asset to the citizens of this region. The educational provisions within the District afford the citizens of all ages with the opportunity to attain training from technical to academic levels. There is a strong collaboration among all educational providers, and there is a common goal to strengthen this coordination continuously.



Per Capita and Median Income

Northeast Louisiana, the North Delta District, is situated completely in the Louisiana Delta. This is one of the poorest areas in the United States. With the exception of one parish, Ouachita, the region is largely supported by agriculture with limited employment opportunities.

As would be expected in an area of these demographics, total personal income is low. While there has been an increase in per capita personal income when compared to the United States Per Capita Personal Income in each parish, the increase has been relatively slow.

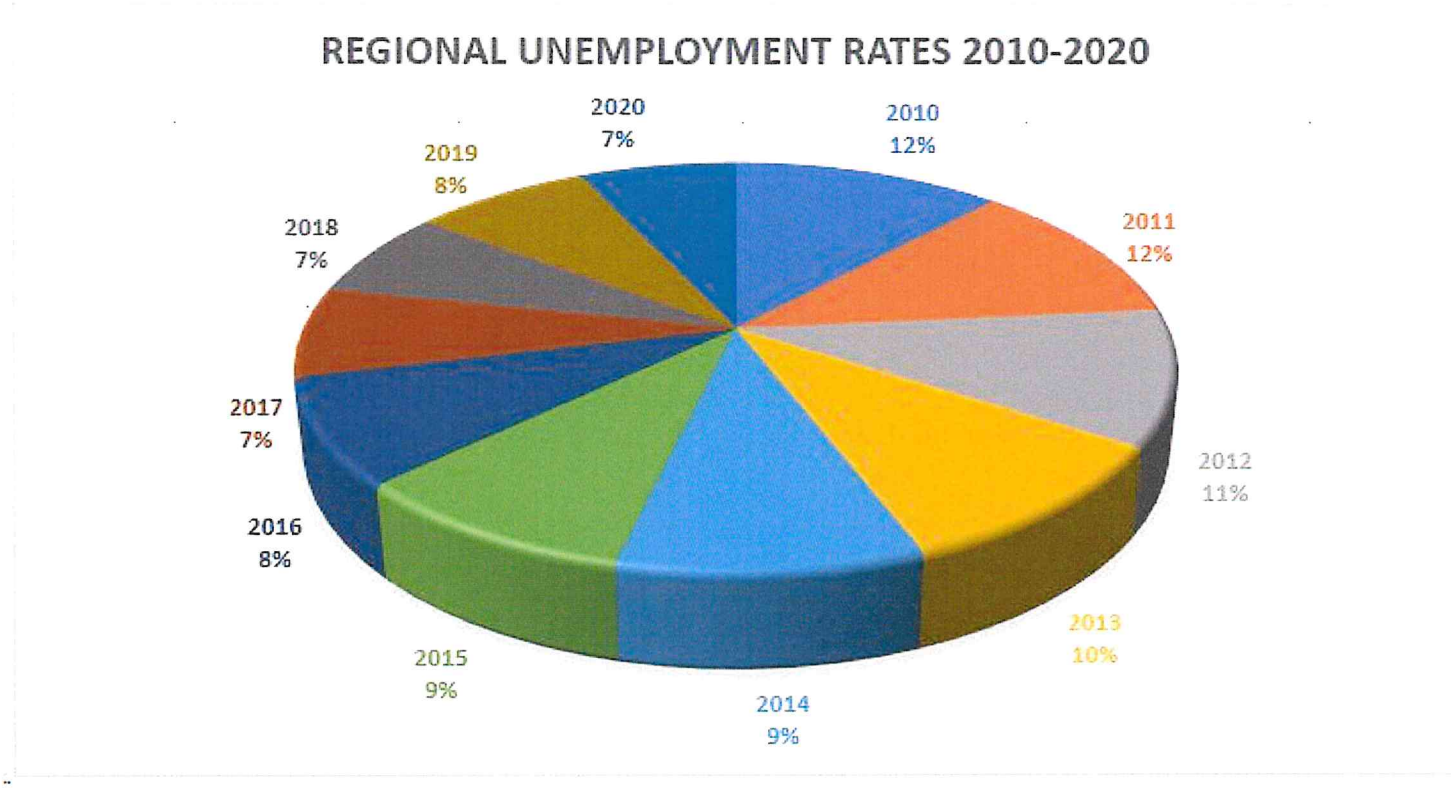


	LA	Caldwell	E Carroll	Franklin	Jackson	Madison	Morehouse	Ouachita	Richland	Tensas	Union	W Carroll
Median Income	$47,942	$40,842	$27,714	$34,446	$40,828	$28,452	$34,023	$44,371	$35,103	$28,962	$43,584	$39,332
Per Capita Income	27,027	$33,950	$36,010	$31,928	$34,116	$32,437	$38,495	$41,053	$37,330	$36,630	$38,794	$36,633

Transportation

Businesses and the over-all economic well-being of this region benefit because the transportation modes to move materials and products are varied and numerous. The North Delta District businesses are served by four major highways, three traveling north and south (US 165, US 137 and US 65), one interstate thoroughfare traveling east and west, (I-20), two navigable rivers, (Mississippi River and Ouachita River) with four functioning ports (Lake Providence, Madison Columbia and Greater Ouachita) and one under development (Tensas), three Class 1 Railroads (Arkansas and Louisiana Mississippi (ALM), Kansas City Railroad (KCS), and Union Pacific (UP), and there are several airports in the rural areas and one newly renovated airport in Ouachita Parish (Monroe Regional Airport). This region is blessed with access to many transportation modes ready to serve the businesses and citizens.

- **Employment**



The pie chart above details that the unemployment rates have remained somewhat constant from 2010-2020, and remain so today. These figures are an indication of a lack of industrial development in the rural areas of the District.

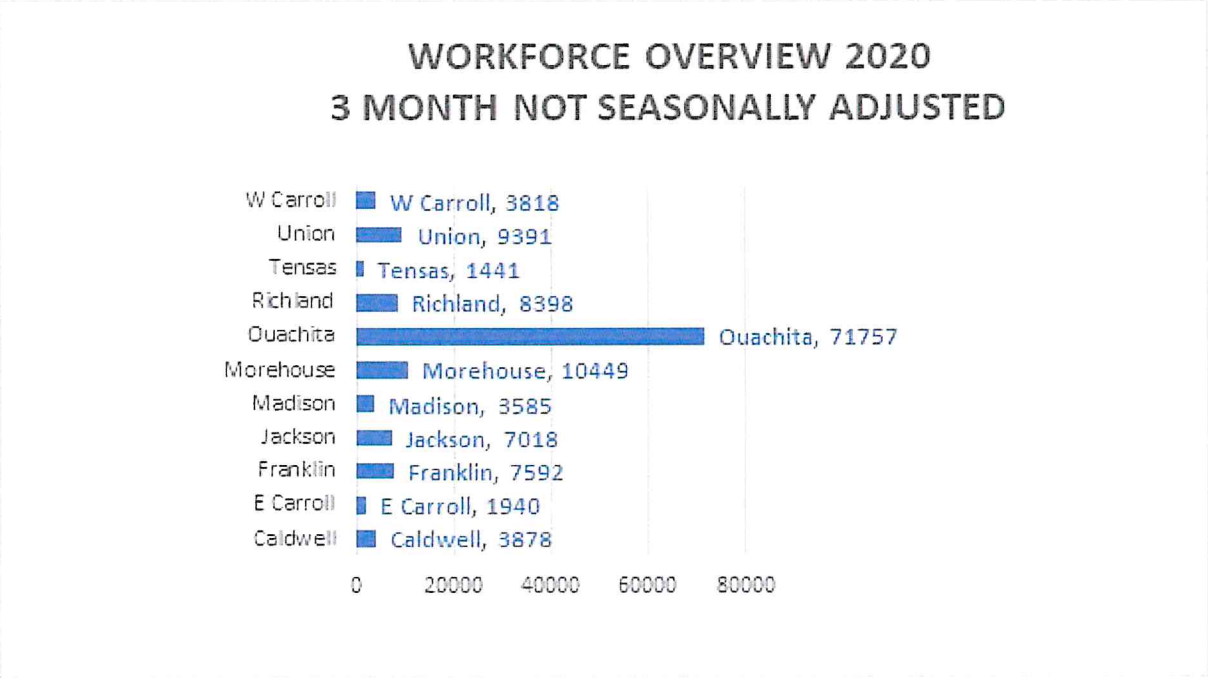
It is apparent that the District population suffers from a lack of economic opportunity. The transition from a rural economic society has been slow and sometimes painful for District residents. Further industrial development in the District should reverse population decline, out-migration, unemployment, and should result in an increase of the family median income. Analysis of the potentials indicates that one of the greatest possibilities for employment will come from value added agri-business initiatives, endeavors which by nature are labor intensive.

Economic Overview

- ### Workforce

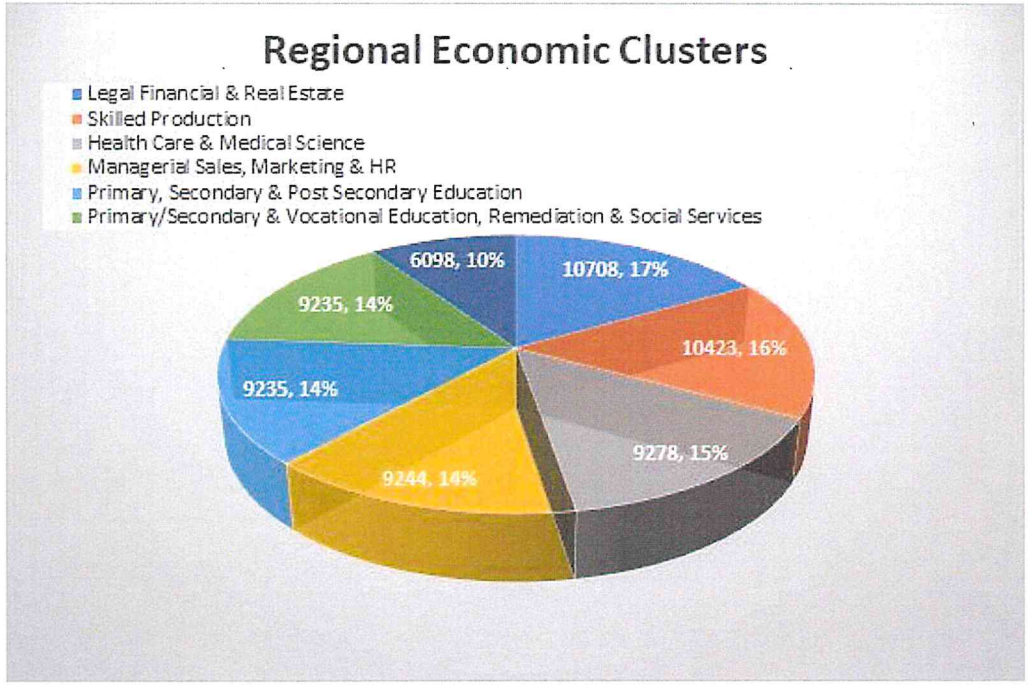
The human resources of the North Delta District are its greatest asset and a major challenge. The number of available workers is sufficient to support major business/industrial development as many workers are unemployed. While offering a bountiful labor supply, the area does not offer a highly skilled labor force; However, the work ethic of the people is considered to be a very positive factor by industry.

Educational programs designed to meet the needs of industry are essential if the District is to take advantage of its greatest resource. The U.S. economy, with its growing dependency on high technology and service industries, demands skilled labor. Without a competent, literate workforce, there is little reason to expect the District to become a vital part of the state or national economies. However, the District has great resources to confront this challenge to train its labor force. The educational institutions that provide these critical assets to the District were identified earlier in this document. In addition, it is important to note that the North Delta District is served by two Workforce Development Boards WDB 83, serves Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morehouse, Richland, Tensas, Union and West Carroll Parishes and WDB 81 serves Ouachita Parish, which provide a vast array of training programs. The State of Louisiana has placed a major emphasis on training throughout the state, and Northeast Louisiana has benefitted greatly from this effort.



- **Economic Clusters**
  The top six (6) clusters identified by employment numbers are shown in the chart. These six clusters account for thirty-seven (37) percent of the total population in the region. The economic impact of Ouachita Parish upon the region is dramatically shown by the fact that fifty-six (56) percent of the total employment is located within this parish.

- **Legal, Finance & Real Estate Services**
  Legal, Finance & Real Estate services comprise the largest economic cluster in this region. This cluster contains 10,708 jobs. Five years ago this cluster was not noted within the top five (5). While there is without doubt an increase in the number of people involved in this market, it is possible that the grouping of this data into a cluster this broad may have skewed the numbers.



- **Skilled Production Workers**
  Over the last decade, the employment numbers in manufacturing have decreased, a trend common to many communities in America. However, the manufacturing industry has continued to provide employment for skilled workers at a fairly stable rate. This is due in partially to the locations of Graphic Packaging, West Rock Paper Mill, Lamb Weston, Foster Farms and Hydro Way just to name a few of the businesses within the region. This cluster contains 10,423 jobs.

- **Primary, Secondary & Post Secondary Education**
  There are twelve (12) public and one (1) city (Monroe) public school systems providing educational services to approximately 60,000 students in the North Delta Region. In addition to these twelve (12) public school systems, there are twenty-two parochial/private/charter schools throughout the district serving additional students.

The North Delta District is served beyond K-12 by the University of Louisiana Monroe, Louisiana Delta Community Colleges and its seven (7) branches in the rural areas. In addition, Louisiana Tech University and Grambling State University are located within a thirty (30) mile radius of the district and provide educational services to traditional students and adult learners throughout the district.

The State of Louisiana has made a major effort to promote a seamless education transition from K-12 to college, whether at the university level or community college. Dual enrollment of high school students into classes at the universities and community colleges has increased dramatically over the past several years, and these numbers are expected to continue to grow. This cluster contains 9,868 jobs.

- **Health Care & Medical Service**

  Health Care has maintained a steady presence in the district despite the major changes that have and continue to occur in the industry. Recognizing the aging of America, the three universities serving this region of Louisiana, ULM, La Tech, and Grambling, all have nationally accredited nursing programs. ULM also has the Edward Via School of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM). In addition, the LSU Medical School is located in Shreveport, a short trip down I-20. ULM has the only pharmacy school in Louisiana and now a medical school is located on its campus. Presently, there are eighteen (18) hospitals and medical centers in the district, with each parish having a minimum of one with the exception of Tensas. This cluster contains 9,278 jobs.

- **Managerial Sales, Marketing & HR**

  Retail sales remain a strong employment opportunity for the citizens throughout Northeast Louisiana. Ouachita Parish, the trade hub of the district, has experienced a growth in retail development over the past several years. This trend is continuing as several new commercial tracts are presently under planning and development consideration. The construction permits in the Monroe Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was up 43.6% from 2009 to 2018. Non-automotive retail sales in Ouachita Parish were up 3% from 2012 to 2013. This cluster contains 9,244 jobs.

- **Technology Based Knowledge**

  An encouraging fact derived from the data is the emergence of the Technology-Based Knowledge cluster as one of the top six in the district. Five years ago this cluster barely registered, perhaps did not exist. However, with the continued and growing commitment of Lumen Technologies, formerly CenturyLink, in the District, this cluster has rapidly increased in employment and economic influence. Lumen Technologies and IBM have recently announced the expected development of a large scaled planned community and commercial tract adjacent to the Lumen Technologies site. Approximately 1,000 new jobs are expected from this development. It is apparent that the Technology-Based Knowledge Cluster is expected to grow and impact the local economy dramatically in the near future. This cluster contain 6,098 jobs.

Conclusion

The North Delta District is comprised of one primarily urban area, Ouachita Parish. The remaining ten parishes, with few exceptions, depend primarily upon agri-business for economic life.

Diversification of the business community in the urban area is well established. Diversification of the economic plan for the rural area beyond crop production only is greatly needed. Development of businesses that can add value to the agri-product to create wage paying jobs is of paramount importance. The very recent construction of a potato processing plant and a rice drying mill in Richland and Morehouse Parishes respectively are prime examples of the type of industrial recruitment needed throughout the District.

The North Delta District very often suffers natural disasters, normally hurricanes and flooding caused by the Mississippi and Ouachita Rivers. Economic disaster can occur as a result of these natural disasters, particularly when the economy is based on agriculture. Economic Resiliency is a theme of the CEDS and is particularly important to the people of the region. This fact also points out the necessity of economic diversification and of the use of technology among the businesses of the region. To this point, this CEDS will strive to empower commerce using technology throughout the District. One major development in this regard is the recent acquisition of a North Delta Innovation and Technology Disaster Recovery Center funded by EDA and North Delta. This center will provide office space and internet access to dislocated businesses, and technology training to businesses across the region.

There is more than adequate and varied transportation resources and modes to support industrial development throughout the District. Four major highways, including an interstate highway (I-20), two navigable rivers with five functioning ports, railroads, numerous airports, one newly constructed and expanded, provide a plethora of transportation resources. These modes of transportation provide access to local, state, national and world markets for any product or crop manufactured or produced in this area.

The North Delta District is in need of a unified effort by all communities to maximize collaboration and eliminate competition among communities, particularly in the rural areas. Successful economic development in these areas can occur only when the communities understand that cooperation multiplies assets and diminishes the negatives. In order for this environment of regional economic growth to come to fruition, there must be a systemic plan developed with all communities accepting that product as “their own”.

There is strong common agreement among all stakeholders that unification is a necessity. The challenge is now to provide the leadership necessary to move this agreement from a philosophical belief to a plan of action.

SWOT Analysis

The CEDS Committee has agreed that the following information presents a true view of the North Delta Region. Using this information and a collaborative process, goals and objectives accompanied by implementation and performance measures with timelines were developed and confirmed.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Strengths	Weaknesses
• I-20 Economic Corridor • Educational Institutions • Industrial Transportation Modes • Stakeholders promoting economic development • Lumen Technologies • Louisiana Watershed Initiative	• Rural vs. Urban divides • Education equity • Lack of broadband access in rural areas • Rural isolation discourages industrial investment • Lack of economic diversity • Sparta Aquifer • Aging Water/Wastewater Infrastructure
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Harmonize development efforts in the region • Diversify economy by developing clusters adjacent and/or relevant to Lumen • Promote workforce training among education providers • Develop a spirit of collaboration among communities	• Traditional dependence upon "crop production" only • Spirit of competition rather than cooperation • Lack of financial capital • Lack of technical training • COVID-19

STRENGTHS

The region is fortunate to have many stakeholders whose primary function is economic development. All groups are pro-active and work energetically to locate and place industry in the region. This economic development is aided by the fact that diverse modes of transportation are readily available; air, rail, highway and water all assessable throughout most of the area. In addition, a diversity of educational institutions are available to train the workforce needed.

This region is also blessed with the location of Lumen Technologies, formerly CenturyLink, in the area. Lumen Technologies is a major employer in Northeast Louisiana. IBM is located very near

Strengths

- I-20 Economic Corridor
- Educational Institutions
- Industrial Transportation Mode
- Stakeholders promoting economic development
- Lumen Technologies
- Louisiana Watershed Initiative

Lumen Technologies and together they are developing a "planned community of business and homes adjacent to their operations." The watershed initiative is working to reduce flood risk throughout Louisiana therefore making not only North Delta's District more resilient but the entire state.

This region is ideally positioned by geography and circumstances to believe that the strengths noted above provide hope for greater economic development.

WEAKNESSES

Though the region has many strengths, its does have competitive disadvantages or weaknesses as they are termed here. There is a major divide between the urban area (Ouachita) and all of the rural parishes. This is true in practically all aspects, social, economic development, poverty rate and educational access and achievements. These issues are greatly affected by the isolation of the rural area that discourages economic investment, thus resulting in a diminished local tax base. Educational attainment outcomes are very uneven along racial lines as a whole. This poses a workforce challenge for the region. Also, rural areas have less internet access, fewer educational institutions, more hospital closures and experience less economic growth.

Weaknesses

- Rural vs. Urban divides
- Education equity
- Lack of broadband access in rural areas
- Rural isolation discourages industrial investment
- Lack of economic diversity
- Sparta Aquifer
- Aging Water/Wastewater Infrastructure

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities

- Harmonize development efforts in the region
- Diversify economy by developing clusters adjacent and/or relevant to Lumen Technologies
- Promote workforce training among education providers
- Develop technology/internet commerce

It is important that the groups which promote economic development in the area work in harmony and in a collaborative effort. As in all endeavors, a united effort produces greater success. Equally important is the development of a spirit of collaboration rather than competition among the rural communities as industry is recruited.

The economy of the region needs diversification. Developing economic clusters adjacent and/or relevant to Lumen Technologies is already bearing fruit and holds great promise for further success. This is an opportunity that must be maximized.

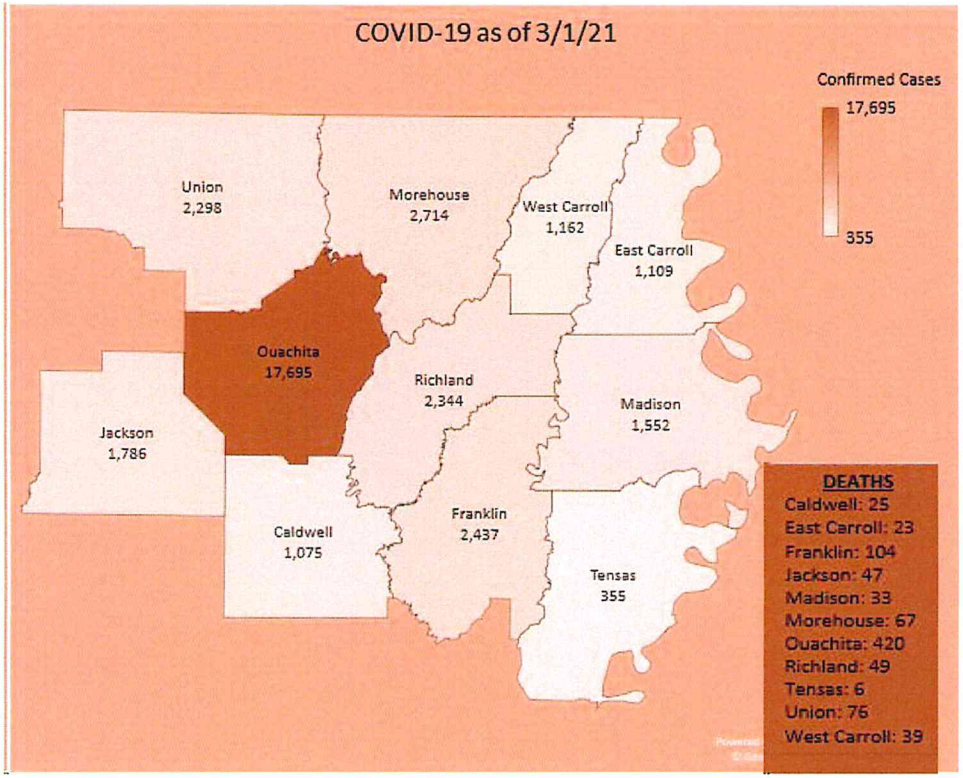
The region can also become more economically resilient by working to develop the industry cluster adjacent to its existing strengths. Developing industry clusters in the region would also benefit from further development of middle-skills labor in the region. A greater focus and more resources committed to developing middle-skill employees would enhance economic development in the region. The rural region in particular, is open to expanding the use of technology and the internet to grow businesses. The internet can help diversify, grow and assist in the economic resiliency effort.

THREATS

For too long "crop production only" has been the major business plan for the vast rural area of the region. An economy that adds value to the bountiful crops produced in this area needs to be developed. This value added economy will without argument require workers highly trained in technical skills. As efforts are made in this regard, sources for investment capital must be secured. A major concern, primarily in the rural area, is the need for workforce training and the necessity of leadership in the area in order to accomplish this objective. Along with the workforce training, all levels of business organization are threatened by a lack of technical knowledge. There is also a lack of access to technology, specifically high-speed internet, that is limiting or denying internet commerce. North Delta is working to alleviate this threat, but much more effort and assistance from other groups are needed.

Threats

- Traditional dependence upon "crop production" only
- Spirit of competition rather than cooperation
- Lack of financial capital
- Lack of technical training
- COVID-19



2020's COVID-19 has borne unprecedented disruption and uncertainty, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, with no clear identified timeline for solutions.

According to Louisiana Department of Health, Coronavirus spreads from an infected person to others through:

- Respiratory droplets produced when coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, noise, or eyes

At the time of this report Louisiana Health Department has 562 vaccine providers in all 64 parishes.

Strategic Direction, Implementation Plan, Evaluation Framework

Directed by the SWOT Analysis of the District, North Delta proposes the following strategic direction and action plan for this region of Louisiana. The direction is presented as a series of development themes and goals. A plan for North Delta's role in the implementation of the strategic direction follows an evaluation framework utilizing a chart format. This chart format will detail themes, goals, objectives, performance measures and timelines of the CEDS implementation.

- **Strategic Direction**
  - **Themes**
    - **Economic Diversification**
      Goal: Unite the region to attract and expand industry and entrepreneurship throughout the District.
    - **Infrastructure Renewals and Rehabilitation**
      Goal: Promote the renewal and rehabilitation of the infrastructure throughout the District via a collaborative effort with political bodies to obtain funding to accomplish needs.
    - **Resiliency**
      Goal: Develop a plan to prepare businesses to become resilient to economic and natural disasters.
      Northeast Louisiana natural and manmade disasters are primarily restricted to tornados, flooding and potential hazardous spills. Thanks to the Statewide Emergency Response Plan developed by the Louisiana Fire Service, in conjunction with the Louisiana Fire Service Emergency Response Committee, and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, local communities have a well-developed network available in the event of natural or manmade disasters.
    - **Leadership Development and Cooperative Planning**
      Goal: Take a proactive role in promoting the development of leadership and cooperative planning among the political and economic development officials in the District.

- **Implementation Plan**

  North Delta, as a result of its many years of service, has developed many regional stakeholders who will assist in the implementation of this CEDS. The North Delta Board comprises a broad representation of interested citizens and officials who will serve as the catalyst to provide unity, direction and counsel as the CEDS is implemented in each community and throughout the District.

- **Evaluation Framework/Performance Measures**

  Ultimately, a CEDS is only useful to the extent it is successfully implemented. Any successful implementation requires not only a plan, but a systemic monitoring of the plan to gauge the rate of installation progress and its timelines. The following chart will function to provide a quick review of the CEDS themes, goals, objectives, performance measures, responsible parties and timelines.

Vision Statement

- **Vision Statement:** The North Delta District will experience growth in all areas of the region through a diversified business plan and cooperative alliances.

The North Delta Regional Planning and Development District's Comprehensive Economic Strategy Committee approved the following goals and objectives of a plan designed to make this vision a reality. This plan focuses on the following themes: Economic Diversification, Infrastructure Renewal and Rehabilitation, Resiliency, and Leadership Development and Cooperative Planning. An overarching principle of this plan is the creation and promotion of collaborative partnerships among all stakeholders in each parish individually and region/district as a whole.

On page 19 of the CEDS the long range goals and objectives developed by the governing board of North Delta are provided. These goals and objectives approved by the CEDS Committee closely parallel those of the North Delta governing board.

Themes, Goals, Objectives & Implementation Plan

- ### Economic Diversification

Goal: Unite region to attract and expand industry and entrepreneurship throughout the district.

OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPLEMENTATION GROUPS	TIMELINE
Assist small communities in implementing strategies that attract and grow businesses in targeted area	Systemic process is implemented	Workforce Development Boards (WDB), industry leaders, education leaders at all levels, LED	Years 1-5
Assist small communities in developing micro-clusters that capitalizes on unique assets and broaden local economy	Systemic process is implemented	WDBs, industry leaders, education leaders at all levels, LED	
Promote initiatives and businesses that foster growth in export industries that utilize all modes of transportation, broaden local economy, and add value and wealth for the district.	Systemic process is implemented	WDBs, industry leaders, education leaders at all levels, LED	Years 1-5

- ### Infrastructure Renewal and Rehabilitation

Goal: Promote the renewal and rehabilitation of the infrastructure throughout the district via a collaborative effort with political bodies to obtain funding to accomplish needs.

OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPLEMENTATION GROUPS	TIMELINE
Obtain staff development for public entities to develop and implement effective grantsmanship skills	Staff development	North Delta's Staff	Years 1-5
Coordinate applications for state and federal loans and grants that can provide infrastructure improvements to promote economic development	Quarterly/yearly application process	North Delta's staff, public and government entity staff	Years 1-5

- ## Resiliency

Goal: Develop plan to prepare businesses to become resilient to economic and natural disasters.

OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPLEMENTATION GROUPS	TIMELINE
Assist business leaders to develop a plan to diversity the local regional economy	Plan development	Regional Economic Development groups, Universities, WDBs, political bodies, LED	Years 1-5
Assist businesses to fully utilize the advantages of the internet	Increase the number of businesses using internet commerce	North Delta, Universities, WDBs, LED	Years 1-5
Promote development of knowledge based economic clusters that are less impacted economically by natural disasters	Number of businesses/clusters available	Universities, Regional Economic Development groups, WDBs, LED	Years 1-5

- ## Leadership Development & Cooperative Planning

Goal: Take a proactive role in promoting the development of leadership and cooperative planning among the political and economic development officials in the district.

OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPLEMENTATION GROUPS	TIMELINE
Take a proactive role in obtaining resources to assess, plan and implement district economic development plan	Plan development	WDBs, LED, elected officials, industry leaders, Economic Development Districts	Years 1-5
Provide leadership to promote collaborative economic development strategies among local economic development district	Process developed and initiated	Economic Development District, LED, elected officials	Years 1-5
promote the provision of needed workforce development and training to workforce officials and education leaders	Plan developed and implemented	Public officials, education leaders, WDBs, LED industry leader, EDD	Years 1-5

North Delta Goals and Objectives: (Governing Body)

I. Goal: To stimulate the creation of private sector jobs through the attraction of industry as well as the retention and expansion of existing businesses in economically distressed areas.

- A. Objective: To construct or expand infrastructure facilities that offer substantial employment potential and improve the capacity for economic growth through the establishment, retention or expansion of commercial, industrial and other enterprises.
- B. Objective: To overcome specific capital market gaps and encourage greater private sector participation in economic development activities by establishing or expanding revolving loan funds in economically distressed areas.
- C. Objective: To develop area resources/assets on which the strategy is to build are defined in this CEDS and the State of Louisiana's Vision 2020, which outlines cluster strategies for Louisiana's Economic Development.

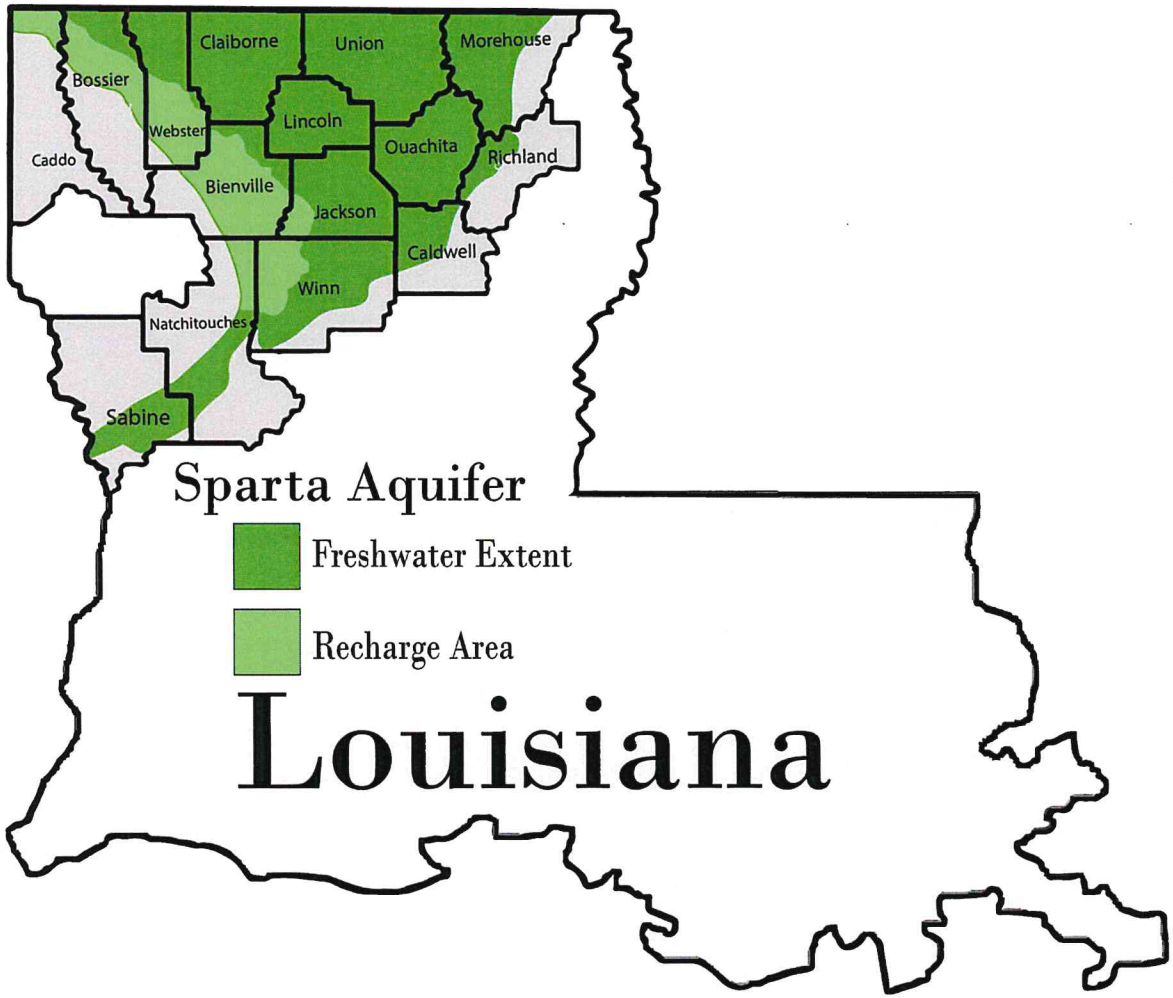
II. Goal: To help distressed communities build their capacity to stimulate, maintain or expand economic growth.

- A. Objective: To promote comprehensive, inclusive planning in distressed communities to identify economic problems, assess the availability of local and non-local resources, and formulate and implement realistic development strategies.
- B. Objective: To promote the Renewal Community Initiative a new kind of partnership among Federal, State, and local governments; local businesses, and community organizations to stimulate economic development in the North Delta Region.

III. Goal: To provide new knowledge, analysis and technical information, which serve both to assess economic development problems and to seek out non-Federal resources for their solutions at the local level.

IV. Goal: To enable distressed communities to practice and implement sustainable development.

- A. Objective: To help communities develop an integrated approach to economic development that incorporates early planning at the local level, and full participation of stakeholders; and a comprehensive strategy implemented that conserves resources and sustains community and quality of life.
- B. Objective: To help communities redevelop Brownfields.
- C. Objective: To help communities which experience sudden and severe economic distress.



SPARTA AQUIFER

The Sparta Aquifer supplies water to sixteen parishes in North Louisiana. (Covering all of Ouachita, Jackson and Union Parishes and a portion of Morehouse, Richland and Caldwell Parishes). This resource is currently the primary source of water for public and industrial supply. Water is a key resource to ensure a regions economic growth. There is an EDA funded aquifer model study that is underway with the Sparta Groundwater Conservation Commission/Sparta Groundwater Conservation District that is expected to be completed in April 2024. Once this study is completed there should be sufficient data to ensure and understand the condition of this key water supply.

Economic Resiliency

North Delta Regional Planning and Development District believes that a region's economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand and recover from major disruptions as well as developing independent diverse economic components that will not be at risk of collapsing because each component is independent yet a crucial interlocking part of developing a strong and vibrant economy that would continue to support a strong economy. Additionally, the economy would have support of local stakeholders (elected officials, local governments, nonprofits/business leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs). These stakeholders are willing to invest time, energy and capital in components of the local economy because the business community would view the components as secure.

The North Delta believes that the planning effort has to be strategic in order to ensure the District's role in the pre and post incident environment of an economic disaster is effective. First, securing that a large number of people from the community (residents, stakeholders, teachers, etc.) are involved in the planning process. Then, the community will be viewed as independent and said component will enjoy the benefits of local businesses buying from one another and having a foundation for a successful economy rather than investing in a business organization than providing dollars to attract businesses to grow the local economy.

Investing local dollars to become self-reliant can lead to economic diversity in order to meet the needs of area residents; thus, not only growing the local/regional economy but also growing the population, increasing employment and economic opportunities and wealth. Additionally, the stakeholders must utilize the business tools of business incubators, business accelerators and shared space to grow businesses and the regional economy. The District intends to incorporate the following into its framework and work plan:

- Work with local officials, governments and economic partners to engage in comprehensive planning efforts that involve local investment from the community. These efforts will align with other current and future planning efforts such as Hazard Mitigation Plans, and parish emergency plans. Each parish within the District has either an active Hazard Mitigation Plan or is currently working on a plan.

- North Delta has worked to broaden the industrial base of the region through various project since the district's conception. It has been and will continue to be a priority of the District to build on the area's assets and strengths and to provide stability to any industry during economic distress. The State's and federal government's focus and distinction of Opportunity Zones will be prioritized in the recognition of potential cluster development. Undertaking efforts to broaden the industrial base by diversification initiatives, such as the development of emerging clusters or industries that build on the region's unique assets and competitive strengths and provide stability. Utilizing business retention expansion programs that would assist businesses in recovery from economic disruptions.

- The District has worked with various businesses to assist them with retention and expansion programs during the recovery process. Workforce training is an important component to economic resilience. We believe that by supporting workforce in its roll to help dislocated and unemployed workers quickly and effectively shift between jobs and industries the District will maintain a resilient workforce and economy.

- The District works with cities, towns, parishes and entities to ensure that there is an established process for regular communication in the event of an economic disaster. This pre-disaster recover planning ensures that the District will better respond to any type of disaster that may occur. North Delta serves as a point of contact for the northeast region of the state in the event of a disaster and will serve as a point of collaboration between public and private sectors of existing and future tasks.

- Utilize the CEDS to help respond to economic disruptions. The CEDS will help identify economic challenges within the region and encourage collaboration to react to the problem areas. Additionally, the CEDS is the vehicle to approach resiliency in a comprehensive fashion. It often fills an important role in ensuring that disaster mitigation efforts are well coordinated across parish lines to shape more resilient communities/regions.

- Equally important to the framework and work plan is the fact that there must be social equity. Studies have shown that businesses that provide workers with high incomes help to create more equitable communities.

CONCLUSION

In helping our communities build resilience, North Delta will be proactive in planning and mitigation by working with local officials, business leaders, and other community partners to facilitate discussion around issues of economic recovery and resiliency, especially as we continue to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will encourage our partners to incorporate concepts and principles of economic resiliency into existing plans. In planning for recovery from the pandemic and in preparing for future economic or natural disasters, North Delta will establish familiarity with traditional and new economic and community recovery funding sources. We will work to build collaborative relationships with organizations that might provide data, funding, technical expertise, and other resources essential to intermediate and long-term recovery.

Additionally, North Delta will offer technical assistance to regional and local entities in post-disaster recovery efforts, and will also provide technical support to impacted businesses.

Resource Page

U.S. Census Bureau . . . . . www.census.gov

STATS America . . . . . www.statsamerica.org

Louisiana Department of Health . . . . . www.ldh.la.gov

Monroe Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update, State Project No 736-37-0027, 2005

North Delta will assess annually the CEDS to determine the completion of the Evaluation Framework/Performance measures in the Implementation Plan. This assessment will also assure that the achievements of the CEDS are being correlated to Louisiana's economic development priorities and the goals of the North Delta Planning and Development District.

NORTH DELTA'S BOARD 2020

NAME	JURISDICTION	POSITION
Hal Mims, President	Jackson Parish	Elected official/Mayor
Wanda Stowe, 1st Vice President	Caldwell Parish	Retired 40+
Eddie Russell, 2nd Vice President	West Carroll	Elected Official/Police Jury
Staci Mitchell, Executive Secretary	Ouachita Parish	Elected Official/Mayor
Paula Strickland, Treasurer	Union Parish	Police Jury Secretary/Treasurer
Charles Sawyer, Member-at-Large	Union Parish	Private Business
Friday Ellis	Ouachita Parish	Elected Official/Mayor
Dave Wilson	Madison Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Johnny Simms	Madison Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Johnny Hughes	Madison Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Ivory Smith	Morehouse Parish	CEO/Private Business
Terry Matthews	Morehouse Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Maurice Norman	Morehouse Parish	Private Business
Clarence Hawkins	Morehouse Parish	Private Business
Cardell Barnes	Jackson Parish	Retired Workforce Development
James Bradford	Jackson Parish	Retired 40+
Lynn Treadway	Jackson Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Shane Smiley	Ouachita Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Jack Clampit	Ouachita Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Carday Marshall	Ouachita Parish	Monroe City Council/Business
Cecil Reddick	Richland Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Marc Black	Caldwell Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Dianne Childress	Caldwell Parish	Police Jury/Secretary-Treasurer
Robert Rushing	Tensas Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
Pauline Doyle	Tensas Parish	Police Jury/Secretary-Treasurer
Brenda Abercrombie	Union Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury
James Harris	Franklin Parish	Elected Official/Police Jury

NORTH DELTA'S CEDS COMMITTEE 2020-2025

NAME	JURISDICTION	POSITON
Hal Mims	Jackson Parish	Elected Official/Mayor
Paula Strickland	Union Parish	Police Jury Secretary/Treasurer
Maurice Norman	Morehouse Parish	Private Business
Leslie Durham	State of Louisiana	Alternate Federal Co-Woman DRA
Ivory Smith	Morehouse Parish	Retired
Robert Waxman	Northeast Louisiana	Consultant
Wanda Stowe	Caldwell Parish	Retired
Jeff Maxwell	Northeast Louisiana	CPA
Meghan Risinger	Ouachita Parish	Grant Writer