WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

DEL CAMBRE, LOUISIANA

Revitalizing through adaptive reuse to reflect and maintain the identity and features of this small town community

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INTRODUCTION

The town of Delcambre is located in southwestern Louisiana along Highway 14 and is divided between Vermilion and Iberia Parishes. The community of Delcambre, south of Lafayette and 12 miles east of Abbeville, is known for its shrimping and fishing industries, based on the inlet of the Delcambre Canal (or Bayou Canal) to the bayous leading to the Gulf of Mexico. The community also hosts the annual Delcambre Shrimp Festival, making it a major Louisiana tourist attraction.

On September 24, 2005, as Hurricane Rita made landfall, the Delcambre Canal began flowing north—opposite its usual direction—and started to top its banks into the town of Delcambre, causing a flood that would inevitably drive out many longtime residents and businesses. Now this small town on the Delcambre Canal has the opportunity to overcome this disaster by providing a model for resiliency and growth.

The mission of these studies and resulting proposals is generating options for revitalization by creating vibrant settings for business and leisure while keeping alive the spirit of this small shrimping town. Delcambre's strategic location along LA Highways 14 and 89 offers potential as a regional center and serves as a strong connector between Abbeville, New Iberia and Lafayette. The ultimate goal of the Delcambre project is to foster economic growth and bring back businesses, residents and visitors to this prominent shrimping town.
PROPOSAL ONE

The goal of Proposal One is to focus on properties that are currently available for the town to purchase—due to damage, abandonment or FEMA buyout—and develop around remaining properties by using surgical design decisions. The land recovered from newly designed canals is also used to raise the surrounding elevation.

Waterfront Peninsula

A new urbanized boardwalk on the Delcambre Canal will encourage commercial development along the waterfront and attract outside businesses and residents from around the region. The ground level of the boardwalk contains open air spaces, such as a seafood market and restaurant seating areas. Enclosed kitchens, commercial businesses and residences are placed on the upper levels, above the new FEMA base flood elevation. The edge of the boardwalk steps down gradually to the water to help separate those walking and shopping from those who wish to watch the canal traffic.

The waterfront will also border the new "safe-harbor" marina, where visitors arriving by boat may dock and visit the waterfront. The pedestrian bridge connects the residential part of the town with the boardwalk while restricting small and medium craft to the marina. Vehicular traffic is kept away from the waterfront by utilizing parallel parking and a parking lot next to the interior plaza of the boardwalk.

Shrimp Festival

The new Shrimp Festival pavilion will extend the festival to the waterfront and allow for a larger public space for the blessing of the fleet and other activities throughout the year. A connecting path allows access to the remaining festival grounds and the ice house. Redeveloped green space on the festival grounds will encourage use throughout the year.

Shrimp Industry

The shrimp industry will be relocated to the south, adjacent to the current ice house. This will help decloggest marine traffic and make it more appealing to visitors. The public boat launch will also be moved just south of the new marina.
PROPOSAL ONE

Waterfront Development

This plan involves creating a retail waterfront with a raised boardwalk along the canal offering a series of plazas to serve as boat launches, fishing spots and other gathering spaces. The bottom floor of these areas are open-air structures (in accordance with the new flood restrictions) that can be used for restaurant seating, retail outlets and extensions of ground level plazas that will also give visual access to the festival grounds, the canal and the marina. The new Marina Pier from the canal features a civic area, including a monumental town hall building at its end. A large pedestrian path at the corner of the marina provides an outlook over the canal, while banners, trees and lights around the boardwalk provide pedestrians with a sense of place. A new grand hotel will also be built to the south on the bayou area.

PROPOSAL TWO

The main goals of Proposal Two are the adaptive reuse of existing facilities and strategic commercial placement to draw back economic and residential development. The land excavated from newly designed canals is also used to raise the surrounding elevation.

Land Development

A system of water inlets will branch off from the canal and out into the rear of residential properties, rating land values.

These inlets can parallel the system of existing roads to create a system of transportation for each residential unit. By allowing boat parking directly under homes, owners will have convenient access, fostering a recreational boating community and helping town street traffic. Houses will be pulled to the street edge, allowing a larger backyard gathering space along the water. All canals will have bulkheads, culverts will connect all dead ends to allow for continuous flow of water. The elevation of canals will slope down from the furthest canal towards the river to avoid dead zones within the waterway system.

Structures along the canal that have unique character and/or historical significance to the town will be preserved and commercially renovated to allow visitors to experience these contexts in new ways, while maintaining the spirit of the community.

A new Shrimp Festival building on the grounds will double as a public park that connects with the marina and as an urban billboard to advertise upcoming activities and events.

Quick sketch from the channel of the second proposed plan

Perspective of waterfront development boardwalk
View of residential waterfront properties: new water inlets allow boat parking directly under homes.

Sections through new residential waterfront (top) and proposed marketplace at the new Delcambre public marina (below).
**PROPOSAL THREE**

The main goals of Proposal Three are to create a new gateway to mark the entrance of the town and to introduce a new “safe harbor” marina to encourage commercial and residential growth. The land excavated from newly designed canals is also used to raise the surrounding elevation.

**Gateway**

A new entryway, placed on an expanded site for the Shrimp Festival, will mark the town of Delcambre from LA Highway 14. This will create a visual gateway from the highway through the festival to the street market.

The street market is the centerpiece of the proposal for shopping, eating, and gatherings. It will also be utilized as a main area for the Shrimp Festival.

**Marina**

In conjunction with the Army Corps bypass project, which will involve moving several properties north of LA Hwy 14, a new safe harbor marina will be dug connecting with the canal. This marina will encourage new commercial and residential development by increasing waterfront property and will attract regional visitors by creating docking points that connect with the street market island. Visitors can come in for the day or dock their boat at the hotel and spend a weekend. Public piers will also line the marina. A series of vehicular pedestrian bridges and access ways will help alleviate traffic congestion by restricting parts of the marina, separating small- and medium-size public watercraft from the large shrimp boats.

The new public boat launch is located further southwest, inside the marina off Railroad St. near Ferry Landry Park, providing a larger parking area for trailers.

This proposal will also take advantage of new flood restrictions by placing porches, parking and other open space areas on the bottom floor of new developments. This will allow the enclosed residences and businesses to be placed above the new FEMA base flood elevation.
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IMAGE REFERENCES