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## **Civic Leaders Launch Next Phase for Revitalizing Downtown Baton Rouge**

*Responses to RFP for new master plan due by October 25*

**Baton Rouge, LA** – Baton Rouge civic leaders have announced they are partnering to launch a new planning process aimed at revitalizing and enhancing downtown Baton Rouge. A request for proposals has been released to identify a consultant team tasked with developing the plan.

Community champions, the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge, Downtown Development District, Visit Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, and Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) have joined together to sponsor Plan Baton Rouge III, an update to downtown’s master planning efforts. This new, forward-looking plan will focus on placemaking, developing new residential opportunities, enhancing the riverfront, improving infrastructure and connectivity, attracting new restaurants and businesses, and highlighting downtown Baton Rouge’s unique arts and cultural potential.

The partners have convened a core steering committee and a broad, diverse set of community advisors to help guide the work of a master planning team. The steering committee is co-chaired by Helena Cunningham (National Housing Consultant Services), Eric Dexter (BRAAF), Marty Engquist, Todd Graves (Raising Cane’s Chicken Fingers), and Mike Wampold (Wampold Companies).

The RFP seeks proposals from a multidisciplinary consultant team experienced in community planning, placemaking, development, outreach and engagement, and economic analysis. They will bring the skills and expertise required to formulate an innovative process and vision for downtown Baton Rouge. The consultant team is anticipated to be selected in late 2024 with work beginning in early 2025.

The new effort was inspired, in part, by the work of the post-trip downtown task force following BRAC’s 2022 Canvas Benchmarking trip to Greenville, South Carolina, where over 100 community leaders traveled to learn about innovative policies and strategic investments that contributed to the vibrancy of that city.

“One of the big takeaways from the Greenville trip was that their downtown is a cultural and economic driver, not only for the city itself, but for the entire region of upstate South Carolina.

Likewise for our Capital City, our downtown represents an important identity for the entire capital region and should reflect the best our community offers,” said Eric Dexter, Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s vice president of civic leadership initiatives. “We also recognize that Greenville’s success was not earned overnight but is a result of multiple downtown planning efforts spanning decades.”

"Plan Baton Rouge III is a crucial step in our ongoing efforts to maximize the potential of downtown Baton Rouge, perfectly aligning with my vision for our community’s future. We must redevelop our riverfront, enhance connectivity, and attract new businesses and housing” said Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome. “A new master plan will be important to further our efforts to reimagine the River Center, construct an LSU Arena, and revitalize Memorial Stadium. We aim to create a dynamic and welcoming downtown that highlights the best of Baton Rouge."

“The prior master plans, Plan Baton Rouge I and II, have guided our work and are the drivers for the revitalization efforts we have seen, but there is significant potential for new and exciting development. Initiating Plan Baton Rouge III is the catalyst to continued growth and prosperity not only for downtown, but our entire region” said Whitney Hoffman-Sayal, director of the Downtown Development District. “We are thrilled to begin this transformative process.”

“We know vibrant cities always have a thriving downtown city center attracting visitors, businesses, and investment. Downtown Baton Rouge is especially fortunate as it sits on the Mississippi River, and we intend to take advantage of that. With Plan BR III, we can make these areas even more welcoming, boosting tourism and local pride,” said Jill Kidder, president and CEO of Visit Baton Rouge.

The new Master Plan will build on previous plans for downtown, including Plan Baton Rouge Phase I, launched in 1998, and Plan Baton Rouge Phase II, completed in 2009. These earlier plans established a framework for coordinated actions that have fostered public and private partnerships, resulting in over \$3 billion in new investments downtown within the last two decades.

The new plan will present visionary ideas and a framework to guide comprehensive growth and investment over the next decade, with an implementation plan and accountability structures to ensure the plan is fully implemented.

To access the full RFP, visit [downtownbatonrouge.org/do-business/development/pbriii](https://downtownbatonrouge.org/do-business/development/pbriii).