

Baton Rouge Area Foundation



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NeighborWorks provides sizable grant for Old South BR

Funding will trigger redevelopment in key areas, continue revival of historic neighborhood

Baton Rouge, La. - With a plan for restoration and the resources to implement it, things are looking up for Old South Baton Rouge.

NeighborWorks America, a national community development corporation, has given a \$675,000 grant to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to revitalize Old South Baton Rouge.

Redevelopment of OSBR, a neighborhood between downtown and LSU, is one of the Foundation's top projects. "The NeighborWorks grant lets us continue reviving a neighborhood that is home to more than 10,000 people," said Gwen Hamilton, Foundation director of civic leadership initiatives.

"This grant will help OSBR take a big step towards becoming a place where people want to invest again," adds Mark Goodson, planner with the Center for Planning Excellence, a Foundation offshoot.

The NeighborWorks grant will accelerate existing efforts in OSBR. The federal government has already allotted \$18.6 million to build 126 housing units in the area. The Foundation has created a strategic plan for the community and helped launch the Neighborhood Partnership Board. Moreover, the state this year approved the creation of the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority, which will allow for quicker movement of abandoned properties to market.

The Foundation will use the NeighborWorks grant to spark redevelopment of areas that are key to creating economic ripples throughout Old South Baton Rouge.

About \$600,000 of the grant will help to clear a big hurdle to redevelopment – clearing property titles so that land can be assembled for return to commerce. The neighborhoods comprising Old South Baton Rouge have hundreds of properties with no known heirs, holding back redevelopment because developers are uncertain about ownership.

Another \$50,000 of the grant will aid in development of the Neighborhood Partnership Board. And \$25,000 will go toward training people to guide prospective homeowners.

“We are extremely excited about this new partnership, and the fact that residents who will ultimately benefit have been included from the beginning makes this venture more meaningful,” said James Ross, NeighborWorks America representative for Louisiana. “We look forward to a long-lasting relationship.”

About NeighborWorks: NeighborWorks provides financial and technical support for community revitalization projects throughout the country. The organization works with a network of more than 240 national and local partners to improve neighborhoods. In the last five years, NeighborWorks organizations have generated more than \$12.4 billion in reinvestment in these communities. NeighborWorks America is the nation’s leading trainer of community and affordable housing professionals.

About the Baton Rouge Area Foundation: The nonprofit, with \$540 million in assets, is the community foundation for the capital region of Louisiana. The Foundation connects philanthropists with worthwhile nonprofits to insure that the needs of the communities are met. Our donors support arts, health and medical organizations, human service groups, education programs and environmental programs. We also invest in and manage pivotal projects that change the community. Our projects include the Shaw Center for the Arts, the Plan Baton Rouge initiative that spearheaded downtown revitalization and is working to help revitalize the Old South Baton Rouge neighborhood. Our real estate asset restored the historic but abandoned Capitol House Hotel and is working on other significant revitalization projects. For more, visit BRAAF.org.

About Old South Baton Rouge: A neighborhood between downtown and LSU, Old South Baton Rouge is recovering after 40 years of disinvestment. With the HOPE VI grant, the housing authority is building 126 new affordable housing units in Old South Baton Rouge. Other key projects include a new library, a new middle magnet school, a Head Start center, the former McKinley High turned into a community center, new condos and a remaking of City Park. For more, visit OSBR.org.