ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH
ROUND 2 MEETINGS SUMMARY
The second round of LA SAFE meetings focused on conversations at the community scale. The team held twenty-one meetings in nineteen towns and cities across the coast. Residents at the first round of meetings chose the round 2 meeting locations. In St. John, meetings were held in Reserve, Wallace, and Pleasure Bend. Meeting at this level allowed the team to present a more in-depth view of the trends in each community, and to gather input at the community level.

In this series of community meetings, residents pinpointed challenges, proposed solutions, and collectively described a future across different types of environments and different levels of risk. The project team combined the residents’ ideas and mapped their proposed strategies. The community recommendations will form the basis for the projects, programs, and policies that LA SAFE pursues going forward. The project team will review the ideas, and take into consideration current and future environmental risk, as well as best practices in planning.
ACTIVITY 1: MAPPING STRATEGIES

The activity included a large table map of the community that illustrated the 2067 flood risk, and a set of related question cards. Residents chose one card from each color category (shown on the right), and discussed a set of questions on the back. A table host facilitated the conversation, and a table scribe recorded it.

Each card had questions that related to three time periods:
1. **Short Term (10 years)**: current needs and opportunities.
2. **Medium Term (20 years)**: ways the community can adapt over time to a changing environment, economy, and population.
3. **Long Term (50 years)**: the long-term vision for the parish.

Each card prompted residents to write and draw on their maps, to show areas in need, or areas with potential for growth. The table hosts encouraged the residents to write, draw, and point out where potential projects and programs would be most successful.
The following pages show what residents added to the maps, and contain summaries of the discussions from each of the meetings in St. John the Baptist Parish. The map below includes the results from each meeting. A larger version of this is available at LASAFE.la.gov.

**WHAT WE HEARD AT MEETING 2**

**ST. JOHN PARISH**

Discussion Summaries

**RESERVE/GARYVILLE/LAPLACE**
- Preserve the population and keep youth in the parish
- Implement a full-time drainage department to maintain drainage systems
- Upgrade pumps
- Divert freshwater from the river to rebuild wetlands
- Implement strict regulations on pollution
- Grow medical facilities
- Build a light rail connection between New Orleans and Baton Rouge
- Build levee bike paths
- Increase and synchronize public transportation
- Increase funding for the public school system
- Implement coastal education and vocational training in schools

**PLEASURE BEND**
- Assist in elevating homes
- Increase construction on bank reinforcement, and rock jetties
- Drain excess lake water southward
- Create more recreation for families and youth

**WALLACE/EDGARD**
- Bring back the public ferry
- Add more public buses and bus stops
- Improve connection between Hwy 18 and Hwy 3127
- Create a zoning plan that separates residential from industrial development
- Invest in trade classes and technical training in school
- Expand entertainment and cultural attractions
- Provide summer programs to engage youth

Each table group chose one card from each of the three categories, if time allowed. In St. John Parish, residents chose Stormwater Management, Local Economic Development, and Property Values & Cost of Living the most frequently.
Reserve meeting participants focused primarily on stormwater management and local economic development. They discussed ways to manage existing infrastructure and drainage issues, provide new career opportunities, and create a more vibrant community with more recreational and educational resources for citizens of all ages. Residents emphasized the need to preserve the population and retain youth.

Most stormwater management issues that residents discussed relate to the upkeep of the parish’s current drainage system, including coordinating responsibility for cleaning culverts between the parish, the state, the railroad, and private industries to ensure that water flows as it should. One challenge the participants expressed was the overlapping responsibilities and funding constraints among the state, parish, and private landowners when it comes to mowing and maintaining ditches. One official stressed the need for a full-time drainage department to maintain the drainage system. Some residents recommended upgrading the pumps and pumping water into the river.

Participants also mentioned the need to diversify the economy. Several residents asked for cleaner industries and higher regulations for pollution. The participants further said that health services, such as medical coding and/or a birthing center, could fill a niche in the area. Residents recommended more retail and commercial options, a light rail connection to New Orleans and Baton Rouge, levee bike paths, improved public transportation, and more programs for youth.

Participants expressed concern about the public school system, stating that it is “in a financial crisis.” They described students who are unable to learn and unmotivated teachers. They recommended several improvements for the school system, including a more engaging curriculum that does not just teach to the test, more competitive teacher pay, additional guidance counselors, coastal education, and vocational training. One table discussed the idea of colleges adding a major or minor related to coastal restoration and water management.
Pleasure Bend meeting participants focused on stormwater issues, property values, and quality of life. As a small community of residents and camp-owners, the topics of discussion diverged from other meetings. With roughly 1 in 10 houses elevated, and all adjacent to water, flooding from Lake des Allemands was the central issue. Residents suggested home elevation assistance, rock jetty construction, bank reinforcement, boat speed limits near homes (to minimize wave action), and draining excess lake water southward.

One participant indicated that the FEMA map divides flood zones along the axis of the road, but the flood risk on either side is equal. Residents said that the area usually floods after a storm as upland water flows into Lake des Allemands.

Some residents expressed the desire for a restaurant or store that would provide a smoke-free place to gather. Currently there is only one business in the community, which is a bar. Many other recommendations related to youth recreation activities, including a splash park that a local landowner offered to donate if the fire station was fully staffed with volunteer firemen. Some participants suggested walking trails, a boat launch or pier, and other amenities. Some community members were torn between bringing more visitors and money into the community - which may support businesses and amenities - and maintaining the peaceful residential setting they have now.

In sum, this community expressed the need to resolve the flooding and cost of living issues, but does not desire any other drastic changes. As a sister community begins construction next door, the area will expand slightly, but growth is limited by wetlands and the lake.
Residents who attended the Wallace/Edgard meeting discussed ways to improve transportation and diversify the economy. Participants envisioned a future with more environmentally-friendly industries and job opportunities. Residents also expressed a need to preserve the population and retain youth. They discussed how to manage existing infrastructure and drainage issues.

Stormwater management was a major issue. Participants recommended increasing maintenance of existing parish drainage systems as well as creating a pumping system to move water south to Lake des Allemands.

Transportation recommendations included bringing back the public ferry, adding more public buses and bus stops, creating bike lanes on the road and levee, and adding sidewalks and street lights for safe travel. Residents discussed the need for a better connection between Highways 18 and 3127.

Participants underlined the need to diversify the economy by expanding light industry, green energy, tourism, retail, and grocery stores. Several residents requested that the government limit industrial pollution. Some desired new subdivisions that can support restaurants, stores, and other amenities. One resident noted the tension between industrial plants and residential subdivisions, describing a failed effort to develop a new subdivision because of the potential that a plant was going to locate nearby.

Participants expressed interest in bringing back trade classes and technical training in schools to connect young people with local job opportunities. They suggested engaging youth with activities and career paths to help keep them in the parish.

They recommended expanding entertainment and cultural attractions, providing summer programs that build skills and empower youth to contribute to coastal issues, and aligning school curriculum with job needs in the parish. Some residents were concerned that the schools have declined in excellence over time, going from 5th in the nation to 50th.
After the second round of LA SAFE meetings, the project team reviewed all of the results and conducted outreach with key stakeholders. The team designed the activities and questions for the third round of meetings based on the projects, programs, and policy recommendations from this round.