

Chapter 6

SWOT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Based on information gathered throughout the planning process, a summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (a.k.a. a SWOT Analysis) is presented in this chapter. This information was obtained from participating citizens and observations of the consultant. As information was collected and assessed, it was continuously offered for review and feedback at several community meetings as well as at meetings of public officials. The findings of the SWOT analysis are valuable when prioritizing implementation near- and long-term implementation measures found in the next chapter.

Strengths

Breaux Bridge attributes that offer positive, sustained support for activity, growth, and development in the future are as follows.

1. **Character and “Cultural Identity”** – Known for its cultural flair, Breaux Bridge can capitalize by expanding its “brand.” Communities throughout south Louisiana have gained notoriety by branding themselves, particularly because the Cajun cultural appeal continues to gain strength throughout the U.S.
2. **Friendly Festive Atmosphere** – The city has an already proven record of success with festivals and events. When festivals are not occurring, the people of Breaux Bridge carry their festive nature to the restaurants, homes, and workplace. This attribute is evident by visiting the community and observing how its residents interact with each other. Seldom does one engage in conversation without future events being discussed; whether a citywide event or a backyard crawfish boil, residents exude their own unique *joie de vivre* (joy of living).
3. **Sense of Community, Togetherness** – Diverse, smaller communities have a tendency to unite for common causes. Breaux Bridge is no exception. The administration and citizens work together to sponsor community events that support both national and local causes. This ranges from local donations at convenience stores to *The American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life* honoring cancer survivors.
4. **Unique Sense of Place** – The community spirit is reflected in its citizens’ desires to preserve the Cajun culture upon which it was founded. This gives Breaux Bridge a unique sense of place that other communities



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strive to attain. The cultural preservation efforts include the establishment of the Cajun Creole Cultural District that was designed to preserve and expand the Downtown area and other Cajun iconography such as the *fleur de lis* decorating local homes.

5. **Proximity to Lafayette** – Its geographic location makes Breaux Bridge a prime candidate for further establishing itself as a bedroom community to Lafayette. Commuters can access both communities with ease on Interstate 10.
6. **Local Entrepreneurship** – Breaux Bridge is thriving with local entrepreneurs. The Downtown area is full of small businesses that are owned by community residents. Further establishment of the district will welcome more of the same.
7. **Community Inclusiveness** – The community is rich in Cajun culture, and Cajun people are known for their friendly, welcoming nature. Breaux Bridge has the reputation, both locally and statewide, for being a community who welcomes outsiders whether for business or other interest.
8. **I-10 Proximity & Exit 109** – Interstate 10 creates a vein of revenue into Breaux Bridge. The interstate allows resident commuters swift access to both Baton Rouge and Lafayette for work and play. Exit 109 allows travelers the opportunity for unimpeded ingress to and egress from the community. Since completion, the exit has spawned commerce stretching the entire length of Rees Street. For tourists, it allows ease of access to the numerous festivals and events hosted in Breaux Bridge.
9. **Bedroom Community to Lafayette and Baton Rouge** – Its geographic location makes Breaux Bridge a prime candidate for furthering itself as a bedroom community to Lafayette. Commuters can access both communities with ease on Interstate 10. This enables Breaux Bridge residents to take advantage of Lafayette’s amenities and also to reside in a community which maintains its small town character. Also, Baton Rouge lies less than an hour away on the east side of the Atchafalaya basin.
10. **Size, Controlled Growth** – Breaux Bridge has made reasonable efforts to central its growth, thereby utilizing its existing infrastructure. Growth has been concentrated around Downtown, Grand Point Highway, north of Interstate 10, and on either side of Bayou Teche. There has not been a major influx of population since the 1960s and Breaux Bridge has made successful efforts to provide services to its residents.
11. **Family Entertainment** – Part of the appeal of this community is its ability to entertain residents and visitors of all ages. The festivals are an attraction that welcome both children and adults alike and Downtown has shops coupled with live entertainment and dining that are child friendly.
12. **City, Parish, State, and Federal Cooperation** – Breaux Bridge has shown its willingness to develop plans by engaging in cooperative endeavors with the parish, state and federal governments.



Weaknesses

Each weakness noted below is recognized as a potential constraint to future development. Each is predictable with reasonable certainty and is not necessarily affected by national or international matters. A brief discussion of each of Breaux Bridge's weaknesses follows.

1. **Truck Traffic** – Weigh scales located on Interstate 10 cause truckers to by-pass the scales by detouring thru Breaux Bridge. The local streets of Breaux Bridge are not rated to carry heavy truck traffic and are being damaged by the trucks. Also, the added truck traffic has resulted in traffic congestion.
2. **Traffic** – Most growing communities have traffic issues, and Breaux Bridge is no exception. As noted earlier, the traffic entering and exiting Interstate 10 creates congestion during extended peak periods. The intersection of Rees Street and Bridge Street creates a unique situation where the through traffic has to enter onto Bridge Street, for a brief period, before continuing onto La. Hwy. 347. A similar situation exists on La. Hwy. 31 (Main Hwy.) where the through traffic is stopped and exits onto Bridge Street before entering or exiting Breaux Bridge. A considerable amount of congestion stalls traffic on La. Hwy. 94 (Mills Avenue). This occurs due to commuter traffic re-entering from Lafayette. West of Bayou Teche and south of Bridge Street, La. Hwy. 31 traffic is often slowed by residents entering and exiting their homes thereby creating hazardous driving situations.
3. **Unserved Utility Areas** – The city does not provide natural gas services to all of the community. A large percentage has to receive services from Atmos Energy. Also, the water service north of Interstate 10 is inadequate and often has to be supplemented by the community of Cecelia.
4. **Overhead Utility Lines** – Aerial power lines are not only unsightly but are a risk to the health and safety of the community. Aerial power lines require constant maintenance and cause interruption in power service when damaged, particularly important for Breaux Bridge during hurricane events. Efforts should be made to eliminate the overhead lines power and relocate them underground.
5. **Lack of Affordable Housing** – Though the Breaux Bridge Housing Authority has as presence in the community, its 98 units are not adequate to meet the needs of the community. In 2009, it was reported that 24.8 percent of the families living in the community were below the poverty line.
6. **City Divided by Tracks** – The abandoned railroad right-of-way serves as an economic divide. A large number of homes that are located on the west side of the right-of-way are not well maintained. Those that are maintained are affected by competing signs of blight and disinvestment.
7. **Proprietary Telecommunications** – The community expressed a desire to allow more competition in telecommunication services. They are limited to two providers that supply quality services, but many residents stated additional competition could lend more affordable service rates to the community.

8. **Street Lighting** – Insufficient street lighting is a threat to public safety. Often times, criminals use dimly lit streets as target areas to commit crimes, both violent and non-violent, such as drug crimes, robbery, assault, vandalism, and car theft.
9. **Downtown Parking** – Breaux Bridge is known for its appeal to tourists. Though the Downtown area has created a district that accommodates foot traffic, limited near-by on- or off-street parking is a deterrent for people needing to park their vehicle. This problem is not isolated to tourists; the local public is also affected by the deficiency in parking.
10. **Lack of Public Restroom in Downtown** – A substantial amount of foot traffic flows through Downtown, and the only restroom facilities are those of the store owners. It is at the shop owner’s discretion to allow the public to use their facilities. It is often the case that the local owners do not wish to provide these services to the public thereby creating additional burden on the shop owners who do allow public usage of their facilities.
11. **Code Enforcement** – Code enforcement is intended to ensure the public safety. Breaux Bridge is an older community, and many of the buildings were constructed before the International Building Code (IBC) was established or strongly enforced. The IBC ensures that the buildings are structurally and mechanically sound and are in no way a danger to the public. Adequate code enforcement ensures that the building remains in that condition for the life of the building.
12. **Lack of Sidewalk Availability/Connectivity** – Field assessments of the residential areas determined that most of the existing neighborhoods lack sidewalks, and those that are equipped with sidewalks do not have properly posted street crossings for pedestrian traffic. Furthermore, the neighborhood sidewalks do not connect to the sidewalks that parallel some collector streets. This intermittent sidewalk installation creates hazards between pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

Threats

Threats are external conditions that may limit the City’s ability for long-term development. For the most part, threats relate to conditions often considered beyond the control of the City. However, in this case, opportunities based on Breaux Bridge’s strengths may offer potential to minimizing and, in some cases, alleviating these threats. Potential threats to the city are as follows.

1. **Regional Competition** – The community is under constant competition with the cities of Rayne, Scott and Duson; these communities strive to entice new residents as well as encourage initiatives to generate commerce. Breaux Bridge will have to be diligent in its efforts to stay at the cusp of prosperity.
2. **Resistance to Change** – Regions that are rich in culture are subject to diverse and sometime opposing perspectives. Often, all parties desire nothing more than prosperity in the community, yet some are resist



unfamiliar views. Given Breaux Bridge's cultural diversity, new and different ideas will attempt to reshape what is an already appealing community. Alternately, failure to entertain new and different ideas may be detrimental to the long-term prosperity of the community.

3. **Other Strong Community Growth in Parish** – To the west, Lafayette continues to encroach upon the vacant lands that divide itself from Breaux Bridge, thus instilling fear that those vacant lands will not be available for foreseeable future growth.
4. **Land Grabbing** – Care must be taken not to exceed the city's ability to provide for all residents. There is constant pressure for a community to grow in size; terrestrial growth is often synonymous with prosperity. Breaux Bridge has an abundance of land within the city limits that is available for in-fill and future development. Annexation requires that city services be provided to the additional properties that are annexed. Adhering to in-fill first approach will allow for a logical and cost-effective extension of services without burdening the municipality to provide and maintain unnecessary new infrastructure.
5. **Hurricane Damage to Utilities** – Hurricanes are an annual seasonal threat to the state of Louisiana. Though Breaux Bridge is beyond the latitude that usually receives storm surge flooding, it's still subject to the high winds accompanying hurricanes and tropical storms. Aerial power lines are often the incidental victim of falling trees located in their proximity. This scenario causes interruption in services from the downed power lines.
6. **Overgrowth of Current Infrastructure** – Some areas in the community are not served by city utilities. Lack of services in these areas allows competitors to step in and collect revenue that would otherwise be collected by the city.
7. **Levee Failure** – Protected from storm event flooding by the West Atchafalaya Levee structure, the majority of Breaux Bridge is safe from flooding. However, if this levee failed, it would inundate the community with floodwaters.

Opportunities

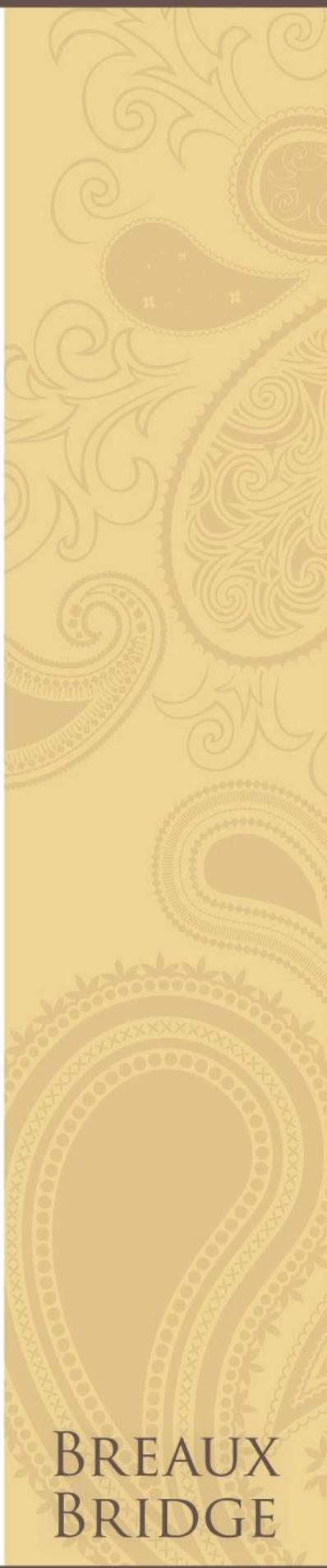
Opportunities consist of external circumstances that have the potential to promote economic growth (e.g., business development that generates jobs, revenue, and investment options), environmental improvements, or social upgrades. A brief discussion of each of Breaux Bridge's opportunities follows.

1. **Bypass to/from Lafayette** – Travelers seeking to by-pass traffic in Lafayette often use Breaux Bridge as an alternative route. This generates the opportunity for additional revenue to local businesses.
2. **Old Railroad Right-of-Way** – As a Lafayette MPO project, parts of the abandoned railroad right-of-way have been proposed for use as a future bike trail connecting to Lafayette.
3. **Roadway Improvements** – The existing transportation network, though mildly congested, accommodates current needs. However, the projected growth for the area will soon make the current system obsolete and in

- need of roadway extensions and widening. Improvements will allow new opportunities for commerce and land development.
4. **Telecommunication Improvements** – Stakeholder accounts suggests that additional buried fiber telecommunications lines paralleling Interstate 10 exist. The potential to splice into the lines and trench additional fiber to the community thereby allowing additional providers to compete with service providers currently servicing the area is highly recommended to serve the community.
 5. **Gateway/Through Traffic** – La. Hwy. 328 (Exit 109) is the main entryway to all of northern St. Martin Parish via Interstate 10. La. Hwy. 31 and La. Hwy. 347 parallel the banks of Bayou Teche and continue southward to St. Martinville into Iberia Parish. Currently, these thoroughfares carry the majority of the westbound traffic from Interstate 10 entering southern St. Martin Parish. Capturing the economic benefit from this pass through traffic is a long-term opportunity for the city.
 6. **Branding** – To date, the community has done an exceptional job at branding itself the “*Crawfish Capital of the World.*” The community has the opportunity to further its appeal by expanding upon the renowned reputation through more marketing.
 7. **Developable Land** – Concentrations of development are located on the banks of Bayou Teche and Grand Point Highway. More recently, Rees Street has seen a rise in commercial development yet the east side of Breaux Bridge has had minimal development. The majority of properties on the east side of Bayou Teche are still comprised of agricultural land. This land is suitable for future urban growth and development. However, the properties that make the western boundary of the city limits receive a substantial amount of the city’s drainage and are subject to flooding.
 8. **Complete Street Improvements** – In 2010, The State of Louisiana adopted a Complete Street policy. The policy states that future transportation design will ensure a fully integrated transportation system that balances access and mobility to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Local adherence to these principles is both encouraged and recommended.
 9. **Bike Trail between Lafayette and Breaux Bridge** – As indicated in the 2035 MPO Bikeway Plan, a bike path is proposed connecting Lafayette and Breaux Bridge. The bike path will help to fuse the two community’s eco-tourism opportunities and expand health and recreation opportunities. This bike way is proposed to connect to a loop around the community and segments that extend to Lake Martin and St. Martinville.
 10. **Bayou and Eco-tourism** – Eco-tourism is a growing trend in the United States. This industry promotes tourism that focuses on promoting education as to the natural flora and fauna of the sites visited while being environmentally conscious visitors.
 11. **Public Interaction on Bayou Teche** – The *Parc Des Pontes De Pont Breaux* is located north of Bridge Street on the west Bank of Bayou Teche. It is host to community and statewide events. Some of the more notable

hosted events include *Walk 4 a Kid*, *Relay for Life*, and numerous musical events; it also serves as a stop-over for the *Tour du Teche* canoe race.

12. **Bayou Teche; I-10 Crossing** – With the exception of a short bridge and small road sign, travelers are usually unaware that they are crossing Bayou Teche. This area is well suited as a gateway.
13. **Growth Potential** – The area is primed for growth. Being a bedroom community to Lafayette allows residents to not only take advantage of employment inside the community but also commute to Lafayette further expanding employment and recreation options.
14. **Proximity to Lafayette and Baton Rouge** – The Lafayette metropolitan area lends jobs, education, healthcare and retail opportunities to Breaux Bridge. Situated across the Atchafalaya River Basin, Baton Rouge lends similar benefits. This serendipitous positioning makes Breaux Bridge ideally suitable as a bedroom community to Lafayette and a suitable location for commuting workers and students in Baton Rouge. Interstate 10 fuses the three cities and allows residents of Breaux Bridge access to both cities.
15. **Beautification, Aesthetics** – The Downtown area exemplifies the aesthetic appearance Breaux Bridge feels is attractive and appealing to tourists. Expanding the quality of appearance evident in Downtown to other areas of the community (e.g., Rees Street), could help to increase the both the quality of life in the community and spur economic development.
16. **Frontage Roads for I-10** – Plans have been introduced to extend the frontage roads between Sawmill Highway and Rees Street. This area is suitable to commercial development and also offers greater visibility of Breaux Bridge from Interstate 10.



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