



Appendix A: Community Profile

DRAFT FOR PLANNING COMM. CONSIDERATION

The Community Profile provides an understanding of Central's place within the region's demographic, economic and environmental context. It presents baseline data useful for understanding the city and how community issues are interrelated. The baseline data includes the city's demographics, education, housing, economic development, environment, land use, infrastructure, and finances.

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A1. Planning History

Central began planning for its future almost immediately after incorporating in 2005. Plans completed since then, and summarized in this chapter, include:

- Land Use Plan (2010)
- Resiliency Master Plan (2013)
- Transportation Plan (2013)
- Master Plan Update (2018)
- Drainage Master Plan (2019)
- Economic Development Strategy (2023)

Land Use Plan (2010)

After Central incorporated in 2005, city leaders and residents embarked on a multi-year planning process that led to the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan. The purpose of the 2010 Land Use Plan was to serve as a guide for community leaders, residents, and property owners as decisions are made about the growth and development of the city.

The 2010 Land Use Plan had four guiding principles:

- Retain sanctuary feeling
- Make the Central school district even better
- Improve drainage and transportation
- Increase business and shopping opportunities

The 2010 Land Use Plan guided Central in developing new plans and policies, including a:

- Resiliency plan in 2013, one of the first city-wide floodplain management plans in South Louisiana
- Plan for a new City Center



Figure 1. Cover of the 2010 Land Use Plan

- Pattern book/design guidelines to guide and define future development
- Comprehensive Zoning Code, adopted in 2014 after a substantial review and comment process, that was a clean break from the transitional zoning ordinance adopted at incorporation

Why update the 2010 Plan?

The 2010 Land Use Plan served an integral role in guiding the Central through the challenges of being its own City and continued growth, laid the foundation for Central's development over the past 15 years. However, several factors necessitate a comprehensive update of the Master Plan. A few of these factors have already been introduced in the Chapter, and this is a general list with additional context.

Fifteen Years Since Adoption

With over a decade of growth and transformation, an updated plan is required to reflect current realities and future aspirations.

Natural Disasters and Climate Resilience

Central has faced significant weather-related challenges, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure and sustainable development strategies to enhance resilience.

Growth Pressures

The Central community has been growing since the 1980s, and in the years since incorporation, population has continued to increase. Long-time residents are noticing the changes and are supportive of thoughtful planning and development to balance growth with community needs.

New Residential and Commercial Developments

Central is in transition from a largely rural community with pockets of suburban development and a handful of local commercial corridors primarily serving local residents, to a less (but still largely) rural community with a developing mixed-use urban core, significant suburban low-density residential development, and well-defined commercial corridors with significant infrastructure that serves people across the region. Shifting economic and real estate demands for housing and commercial spaces requires adjustments to zoning, land use, infrastructure and economic strategies.

Large-Scale Infrastructure Projects

Major local and regional infrastructure investments, both completed and underway – such as the Central Thruway and the Comite River Diversion Canal – have changed the dynamics of transportation, utilities, and public services in Central.



Figure 2. Central Thruway

Coordination with Updated Development Codes

To maintain consistency, clarity, and alignment of city strategies and goals, an updated Master Plan is needed to align with updated development regulations and to guide future regulatory updates.

Resiliency Master Plan (2013)

In 2013, Central prepared a Resiliency Master Plan to address concerns that flooding was becoming unmanageable and to prevent flooding in major residential areas and along key transportation corridors. This plan has three components:

- Floodplain Management Plan
- City Center Implementation Strategies
- Design Guidelines and Pattern Book

City Center Implementation Strategies (2013)

During the planning process for the 2010 Land Use Plan, one of the key goals identified by the community was the creation of a city center, a space in the public realm that would help establish

Service	Service	Mechanism	Scope of Effect
Floodplain Management Plan	Reduces flood risk, preserves ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and enhances air and water quality	Reduces flood risk, preserves open space, and adds "eco-value"	Reduces flood risk and provides recreation space and connectivity
Design Guidelines and Pattern Book	Provides protection of sensitive areas and density incentives for open space conservation	Provides clarity and appropriate market predictability	Preserves community character and reinforces community values
City Center Implementation Strategies	Provides for appropriate placement of intense development and encourages context-sensitive design	Provides for expansion of revenue generating businesses with a good opportunity for long term success	Provides community space for social interaction and sense of ownership and community pride

Figure 3. Components of the Resiliency Master Plan

an identity for the community and set a tone for future development that portrays the character and values of Central.

As part of the Resiliency Master Plan, Central developed the City Center Implementation Strategies with the goal of improving:

- Economic resilience, by diversifying commercial activity and attracting new retail, office, service and job creation in the city.
- Social resiliency, by creating a signature public space conducive to public gatherings, community interaction, and integration with other existing public facilities including schools, parks, and public service outlets.
- Environmental resilience, by demonstrating innovative development and best practices in compact development patterns, density, and design guidelines.

Implementation would result in the development of a City Center that would leverage public investment to build a City Hall to stimulate private investment in high-quality commercial and residential development.

These implementation strategies did not immediately result in plans for a City Center, but this planning effort laid the foundation for what would become **Main Street 2030**.



Figure 4. Example of City Center Activity Node

Transportation Plan (2013)

Based on recommendations from the 2010 Land Use Plan, Central developed a Transportation Plan in 2013. The Transportation Plan includes an assessment of the infrastructure, visioning and community engagement sessions, and a set of goals for increasing the efficiency of the transportation network.

In 2013, transportation infrastructure challenges included higher than capacity demands on some major corridors during peak periods and limited transportation options, with both contributing to moderate congestion-induced travel-time delays during peak periods. At the time, input from community engagement highlighted that residents were most dissatisfied with traffic flow, interconnectivity of streets, and street condition. When asked where they would apply transportation funds, the majority would fund improving intersections and traffic flow. Residents ranked improving crosswalks across major streets and an increase of sidewalks and multi-use trails to connect residential areas and retail destinations as the most desired improvement for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

The 2013 Transportation Plan identified key transportation infrastructure challenges for Central including congestion during peak periods along major corridors and limited transportation options and highlights an interest from residents in improving connectivity and offering additional transportation options.

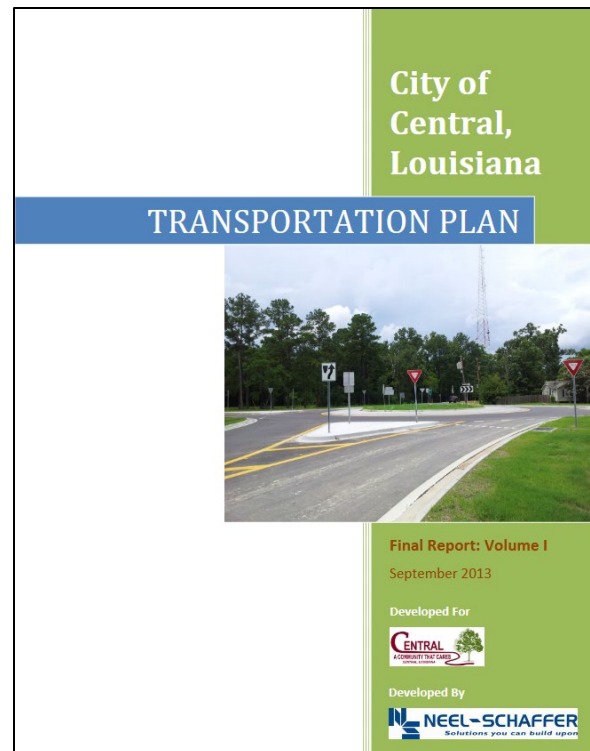


Figure 5. Cover of the Transportation Plan

Master Plan Update (2018)

As Central recovered from the 2016 floods, community leaders began plans to create a more resilient city. While resiliency – the ability or capacity to rebound from adversity, trauma, crisis, or disaster – is a critical concept for addressing disasters, it can also apply to strengthening all aspects of a community including the economy, health and well-being of residents, and general quality of life.

In 2017, Central began a planning process to update the 2010 Land Use Plan. The 2016 floods, along with several localized rain events resulting in minor flooding, were fresh in the minds of residents, and questions and concerns about flood protection and

infrastructure dominated public outreach and meetings. In addition to flood protection, community engagement identified several themes that were extremely important to the Central community. These themes were supported by the data and research conducted by the planning team, and they align with both short-term and long-term priorities identified by the city. These themes included:

- Flood protection
- Resiliency and Infrastructure investments
- Economic growth
- Building for the future of Central

This planning effort resulted in a plan draft submitted to the Planning Commission that was not voted on. However, the planning work, data, and community information collected is woven into *Central 2045*.

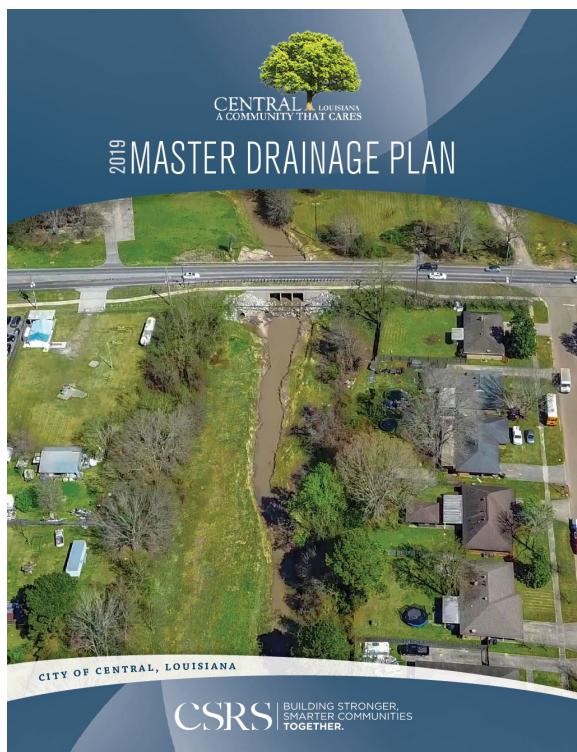


Figure 6. Cover of the Master Drainage Plan

Drainage Master Plan (2019)

Central adopted its first Master Drainage Plan (MDP) in 2019. The MDP's primary purpose is establishing existing conditions, identifying deficiencies, and creating a summary of improvements that should be implemented to mitigate damage from future flood events. The MDP generated a wealth of information for the city's use in developing and managing its drainage system in the most efficient manner possible.

Economic Development Strategy (2023)

In 2023, Central commissioned a 5-year economic development strategy. It laid out Central's current economic situation and included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis (Figure 8), and a strategic plan.

The SWOT analysis took numerous factors into consideration that affect economic development potential including politics, land use, infrastructure, and community attitudes. Three specific issues connected to land use and planning included:

- Restrictive zoning codes;
- Lack of a distinct downtown commercial district; and
- Lack of adequate transportation infrastructure.

This SWOT analysis was then used to create an economic development strategy with 16 different strategic areas, including:

- Distinguish the City of Central from the Region of Central Louisiana and enhance name recognition
- Develop business attraction and retention programs
- Enhance City of Central's transportation infrastructure
- Attract housing development



Figure 7. Economic Development Strategy SWOT analysis

A2. People

Population

Central has seen consistent population growth throughout its history (Figure 9). Between 2010 and 2020, the population of the City of Central increased 8.8% from 26,864 to 29,235. Between 2020 and 2024, the population increased by 1.8%, suggesting that the trend of population growth seen in the Central has slowed down in recent years.

Age

Most people living in Central are middle-aged adults (ages 35 to 64; nearly 40% of the population) and youth under 20 (27%). Older adults (65 years and older) are 20% of the population and younger adults (20-34 years old) are 16% (Table 1).

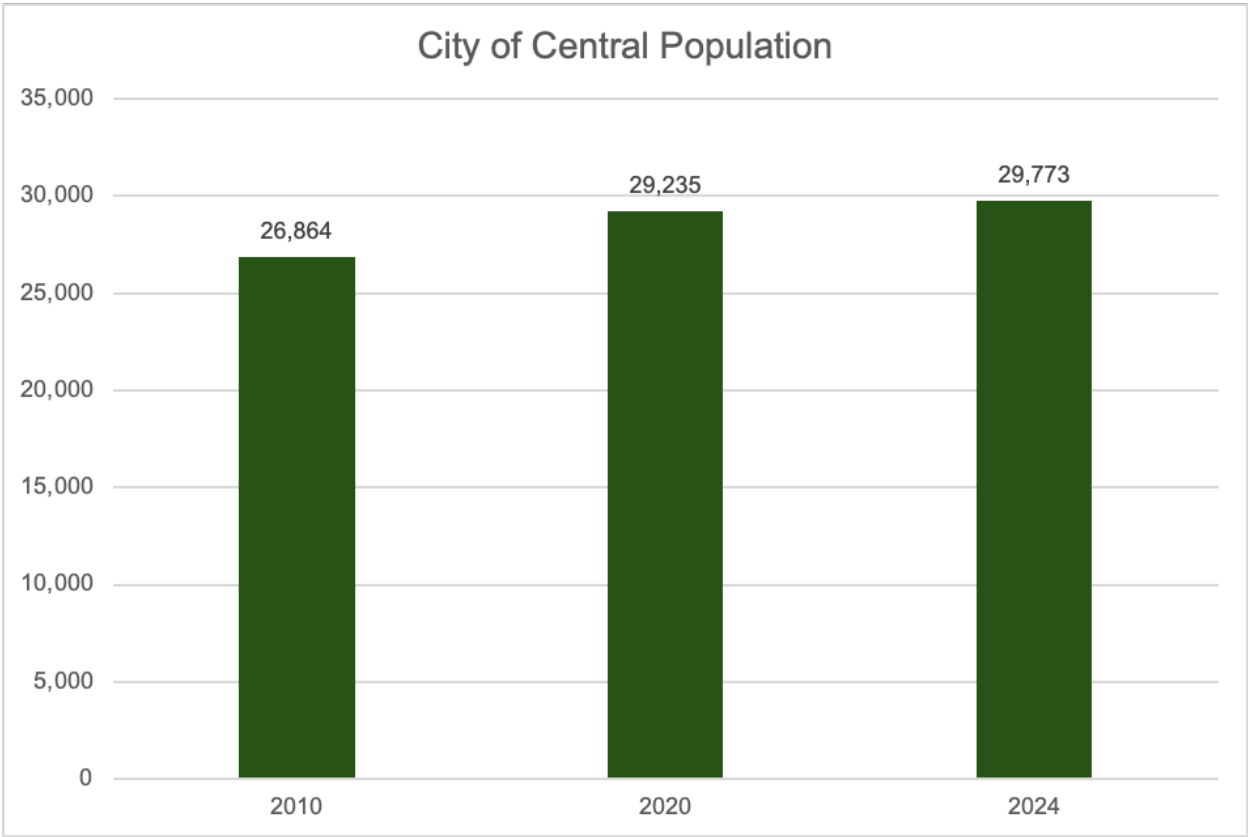


Figure 8. Population in the City of Central, 2010-2024

Table 1. Age of Residents in the City of Central, 2024

Age (Years)	Number	Percent of Total
Under 5	1,737	5.8
5 to 9	2,023	6.8
10 to 14	2,194	7.4
15 to 19	1,996	6.7
20 to 24	1,581	5.3
25 to 29	1,402	4.7
30 to 34	1,640	5.5
35 to 39	1,943	6.5
40 to 44	2,167	7.3
45 to 49	1,780	6.0
50 to 54	1,666	5.6
55 to 59	1,720	5.8
60 to 64	1,934	6.5
65 to 69	1,926	6.5
70 to 74	1,544	5.2
75 to 79	1,227	4.1
80 to 84s	716	2.4
85 and over	577	1.9

ESRI 2024 Population Estimates

Race and Ethnicity

Since 2010, the population of Central is becoming more diverse. From 2010 to 2024, the percentage of white residents went from 88.2% to 77.4%, while the percentage of Black or African American residents increased from 8.3% to 13.5%, and residents of two or more races increased from 0.9% to 5.8%. During the same time, the Hispanic population in Central increased from 1.6% in 2010 to 5% in 2024 (Table 2).

Education

Over 95% of Central residents have at least a high school degree (or equivalent) or higher, and 40% have an advanced degree (an associate's degree or higher) (Table 3). School enrollment data from the 2023 Census data estimates indicate that 4,075 children are enrolled in elementary school, approximately 48.2 percent of students enrolled in the City of Central.

Household Size

In 2010, Central had an average household size of 2.65 people. This increased to an average of 2.95 per household in 2020 before falling to an average of 2.61 in 2024 (Figure 10). Despite this decrease, Central still has a larger average household size than the country as a whole (2.5).

The age distribution in Central aligns with the percentage of households considered family households and the percentage of family households shifted little between 2010 and 2024. The percentage of family households in Central only decreased by 2.6% over 14 years, from 75.9% in 2010 to 73.9% in 2024.

Table 2. Race and Ethnicity of Residents in the City of Central, 2024

	Number	Percent of Total
Race		
White alone	23,046	77.4
Black or African American alone	4014	13.5
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	97	0.3
Asian alone	255	0.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	6	0.0
Some Other Race alone	615	2.1
Population of two or more races:	1,740	5.0
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	1,501	5.0
Not Hispanic or Latino:	28,272	95.0

ESRI 2024 Population Estimates

Table 3. Educational Attainment of Residents in the City of Central, 2023

Educational Attainment of Population Aged 25+ Years	Number	Percent of Total
Less than 9th grade	160	0.8
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	661	3.3
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	6,759	29.4
Some college, no degree	4,525	22.4
Associate's degree	1,607	7.9
Bachelor's degree	4,616	22.8
Graduate or professional degree	1,913	9.5
Summary		
High school graduate or higher	19,420	95.9
Associate's degree or higher	6759	40.2

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2023: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

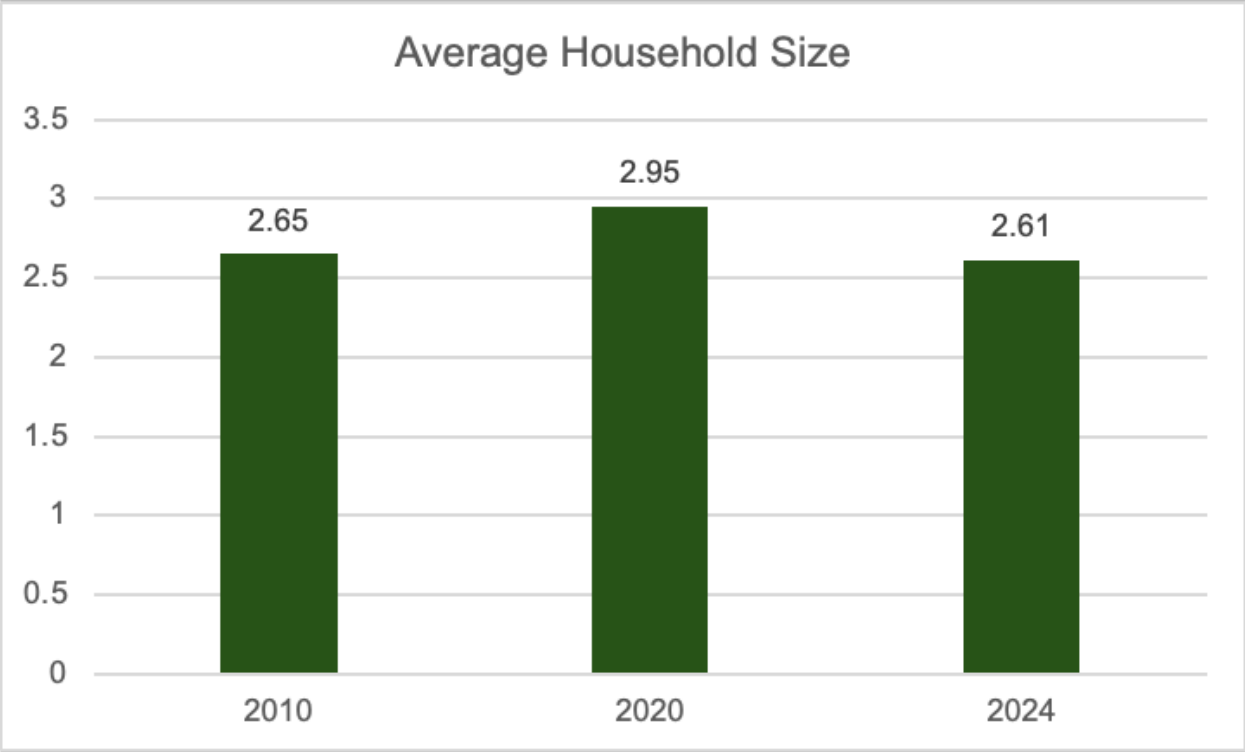


Figure 9. Average Household Size in the City of Central, 2010-2024

Income and Employment

In 2024, most households in Central were middle or upper class (Table 4). The median income was \$88,020 (\$60,023 for the state) and the mean income was \$115,297. Since 2010, median and mean income levels increased in Central, however, current data indicate a peak median income level in 2023 at \$90,091 while mean income levels are rising.

The unemployment rate in Central is 1.7% (Table 5). Almost a quarter of employed civilian residents in Central have Business/Financial or Office/Admin occupations. The next highest occupation groups are Transportation/Moving (9.1%), Sales (8.9%), and Management (8.5%).

Table 4. Household Income in the City of Central, 2023

Income by Household	Percent of Total
Less than \$15,000	4.4
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2.9
\$25,000 to \$34,999	4.2
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10.2
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.1
\$75,000 to \$99,999	15.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22.6
\$150,000 to \$199,999	9.4
\$200,000 or more	11.7
Summary	
Median income (dollars)	\$88,020
Mean income (dollars)	\$115,297

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2023: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

**Table 5. Employment, Civilian Labor Force, of Population 16+ Years Old
in the City of Central, 2023**

	Number	Percent of Total
Employment Status		
Employed	15,493	98.3
Unemployed	273	1.7%
Employment Industry		
Accommodation/Food Services	850	5.5
Admin/Waste Management	511	3.3
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	12	0.1
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	263	1.7
Construction	1,339	8.6
Educational services	1,265	8.2
Finance and insurance	875	5.6
Health Care	1,482	9.6
Information	228	1.5
Management	40	0.3
Manufacturing	2,084	13.5
Mining	58	0.4
Other services	886	5.7
Professional/Tech Services	1,079	7.0
Public administration	1,450	9.4
Real estate	116	0.7
Retail trade	1,798	11.6
Transportation	662	4.3
Utilities	133	0.9
Wholesale trade	363	2.3

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2023; ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

A3. Places

Central, like many rural communities, developed around scattered pockets of “suburban” residential areas surrounded by large family land holdings and homesteads, large swathes of land used for agriculture, cattle and forestry, and undeveloped natural areas. For decades, limited public sewer service, reliance on wells and septic systems, and a road network designed for rural traffic did not support the development of large residential subdivisions or commercial developments. This does not mean that Central was not a community, Central was a quiet, bedroom residential community, where many residents commuted to the City of Baton Rouge and/or the industrial developments on the Mississippi River.

By the 1990s and early 2000s unincorporated and sleepy Central was experiencing significant growth, the development of larger subdivisions, and even the development of small commercial centers. However, since Central did not have a “traditional” downtown area with an historic town hall, courthouse or school that would

serve as a natural anchor for development and services, new development in the Central community generally located in a scattershot fashion along a few corridors. After Central incorporated and community leaders began exploring the idea of a civic complex that could serve as a community anchor, the city struggled to make this idea a reality. A combination of lack of available property, environmentally sensitive areas and limited transportation access made the idea of a community downtown hard to envision for many residents. Additionally, since Central did not have a municipal complex, public agencies and institutions scattered throughout the city in various locations, most renting spaces in vacant commercial storefronts.

Housing Units

In 2024, Central had an estimated 11,400 housing units, with approximately 84% owner-occupied (Table 6). This is a significantly higher percentage than the 2024 estimate of owner-occupied housing in the country as whole (60%).

Table 6. Housing Tenure in the City of Central, 2024

Housing Tenure of Occupied Housing Units	Number	Percent of Total
Owner-occupied	9,582	84.1
Renter-occupied	1,818	15.9

ESRI 2024 Population Estimates

Environment

2016 Flood Event

In August 2016, areas of south and southeast Louisiana saw massive rainfall, overwhelming many stormwater protections and inundating residences, roads, and community facilities with several feet of water (Figure 12).

The devastating flooding impacted many communities in the region, but Central saw some of the worst of these impacts. Over several days, rain overwhelmed rivers, bayous, and drainage systems, inundating thousands of homes, displacing residents, and causing widespread damage to public infrastructure and local businesses.

The flood exposed long-standing vulnerabilities related to drainage, development patterns, and emergency preparedness, while also testing the resilience and cohesion of the Central community. The disaster left lasting economic and emotional impacts, with many families struggling to rebuild amid extensive property damage and financial loss. The aftermath of the floods uncovered the need for improved flood mitigation, emergency preparedness, and inter-jurisdictional cooperation.



Figure 10. Gurney Road, just east of Centerra Court (looking west) during the 2016 Flood Event

Flood Preparedness

Central is a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) participating community. NFIP is a federal program that makes flood insurance available for purchase by property owners and provides tools to assist communities in reducing flood risk. Additionally, Central participates in the NFIP's Community Rating System (CRS), which rewards communities who voluntarily exceed minimum floodplain management requirements with lower flood insurance premium for policies in the community. Central is currently a Class 5 CRS community, which earns a 25% discount on NFIP flood insurance premiums.

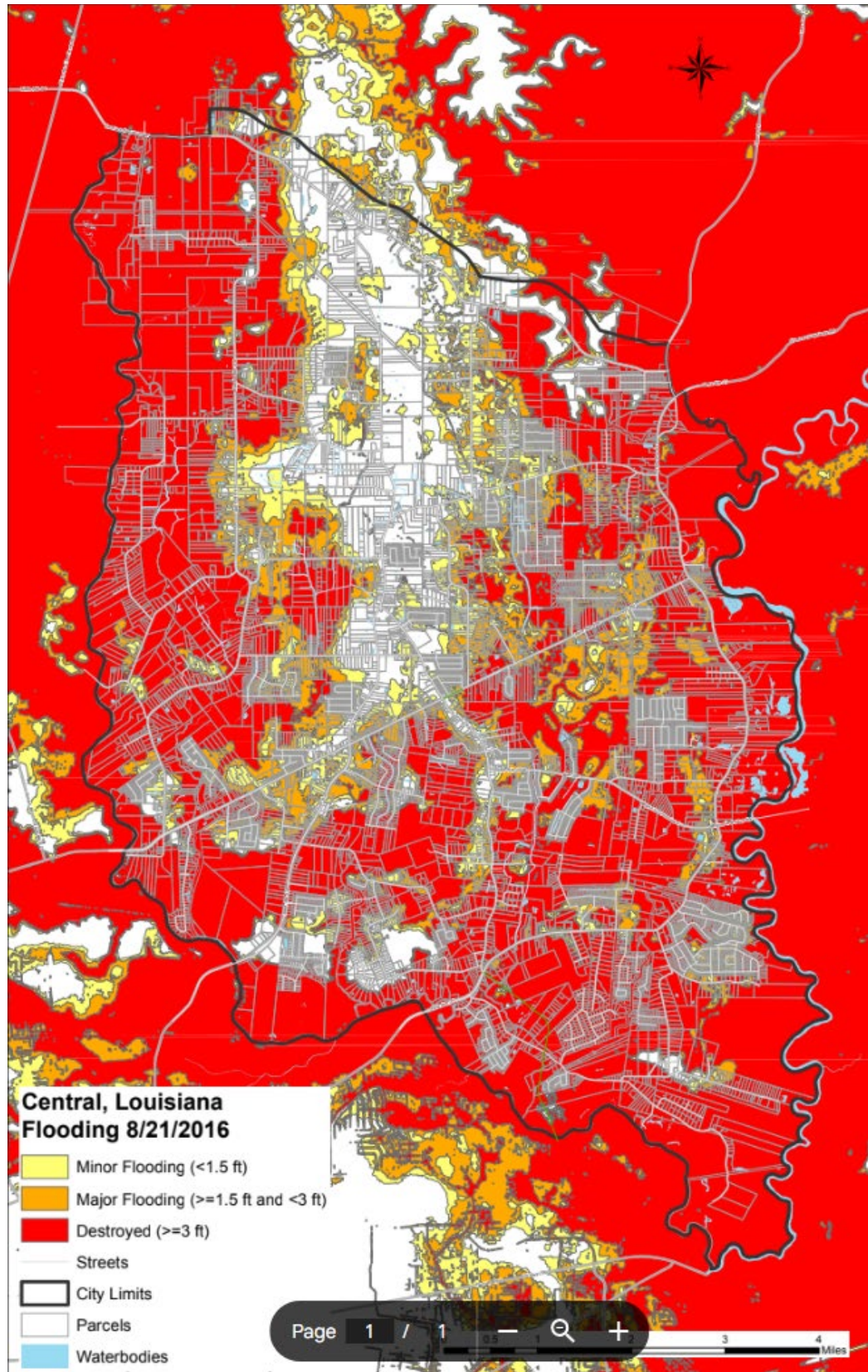
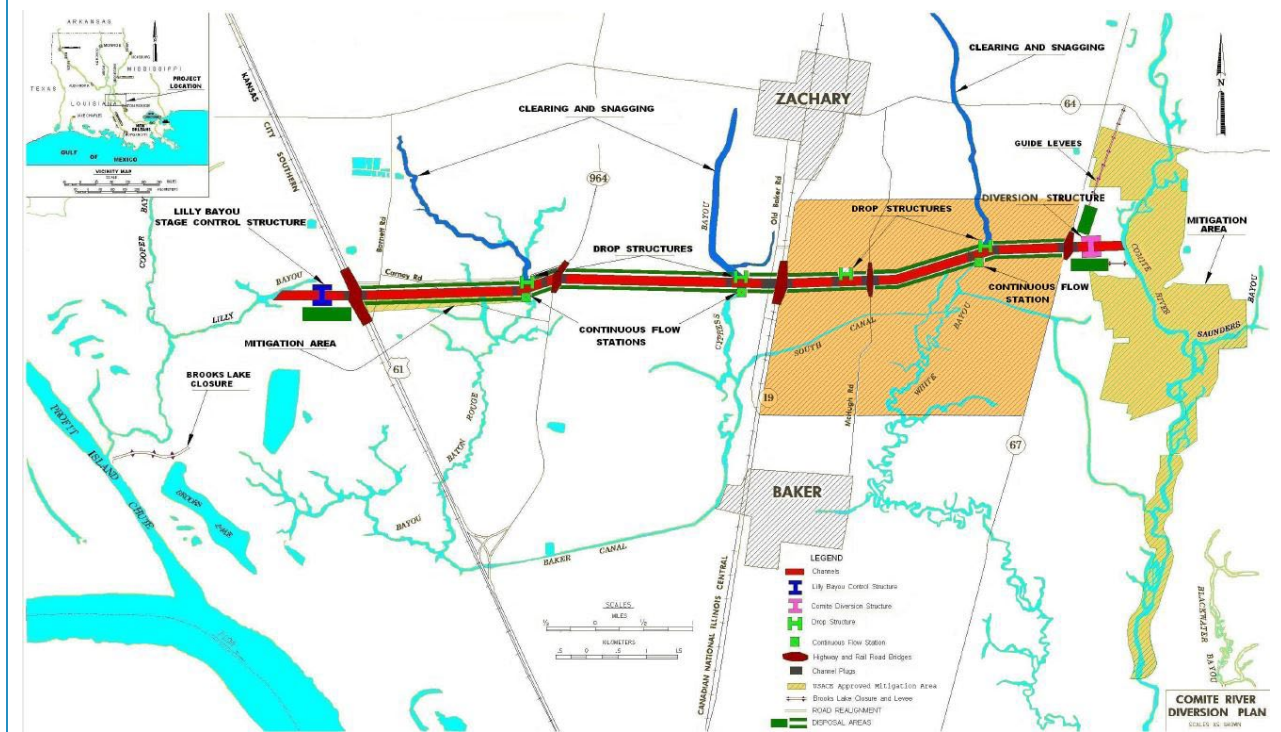


Figure 11. Floodwater depths in Central during the 2016 Flood Event

The **Comite River Diversion Canal** is partnership between the State of Louisiana, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and several other regional partners. The project is designed to improve flood and stormwater protections in the region, particularly in response to the loss of natural barriers associated with the rapid metropolitan expansion of recent years. The project will provide significant flood protection benefits for Central by diverting excess water from the Comite River directly to the Mississippi River, reducing the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall events. It will help protect homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure, enhancing public safety and supporting long-term economic resilience. It is currently under construction.



Infrastructure

Transportation

Central is well served by roadways that connect the community to the rest of the region. The Central Thruway is a north-south road that provides convenient access to U.S. 190 and I-12. Hooper Road or LA 408 is an important east-west roadway with many commercial destinations. Hooper Road also continues west where it connects with I-110 providing access to North

Baton Rouge and other places north on U.S. 61. Greenwell Springs Road connects with Airline Highway in Baton Rouge before passing through the southern areas of Central and following the Amite River North connecting Central with St. Helena Parish. Finally, Magnolia Bridge Road connects Central with Livingston Parish with a crossing of the Amite River.

Public Utilities

Electricity

Electricity is provided by two utilities, Entergy and DEMCO.

Sewer

Generally, public sewer service parallels major roads in Central and serves numerous residential areas close to Hooper Road, Sullivan Road and Joor Road, and areas south of Hooper Road (Figure 14).

The majority of the city's land area is not served by public sewer treatment.

Water

Baton Rouge Water Company is the primary public water utility serving East Baton Rouge Parish, including Central. Baton Rouge Water Company draws groundwater from a network of wells at depths ranging from 600 to 2,800 feet and treats and distributes that water throughout its service area in Central and greater Baton Rouge.



Figure 12. Central High School

Public Services

Emergency Response

Central operates Police and Fire Departments. The Central Police Department is located at 13505 Hooper Road near Central City Hall. The Central Fire Department has five stations:

- Station 31, 11646 Sullivan Road
- Station 32, 4864 Monticello Boulevard
- Station 33, 7019 Donnybrook Avenue (currently undergoing replacement)
- Station 34, 15341 E Beaver Drive
- Station 35, 10626 Lovett Road

Library

Central is home to a branch of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library – Central Branch Library, located at 11260 Joor Road. The current library building opened in 2002.

Public Parks

Central has 16 public parks comprising 495 acres, all operated by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) which operates parks throughout East Baton Rouge Parish. The parks include conservation areas and walking, hiking, and bike trails. Notable BREC parks in Central include:

- Central Sports Park
- Frenchtown Conservation Area
- Blackwater Conservation Area
- Jacob Kornmeyer Nature Reserve
- Jackson Community Park

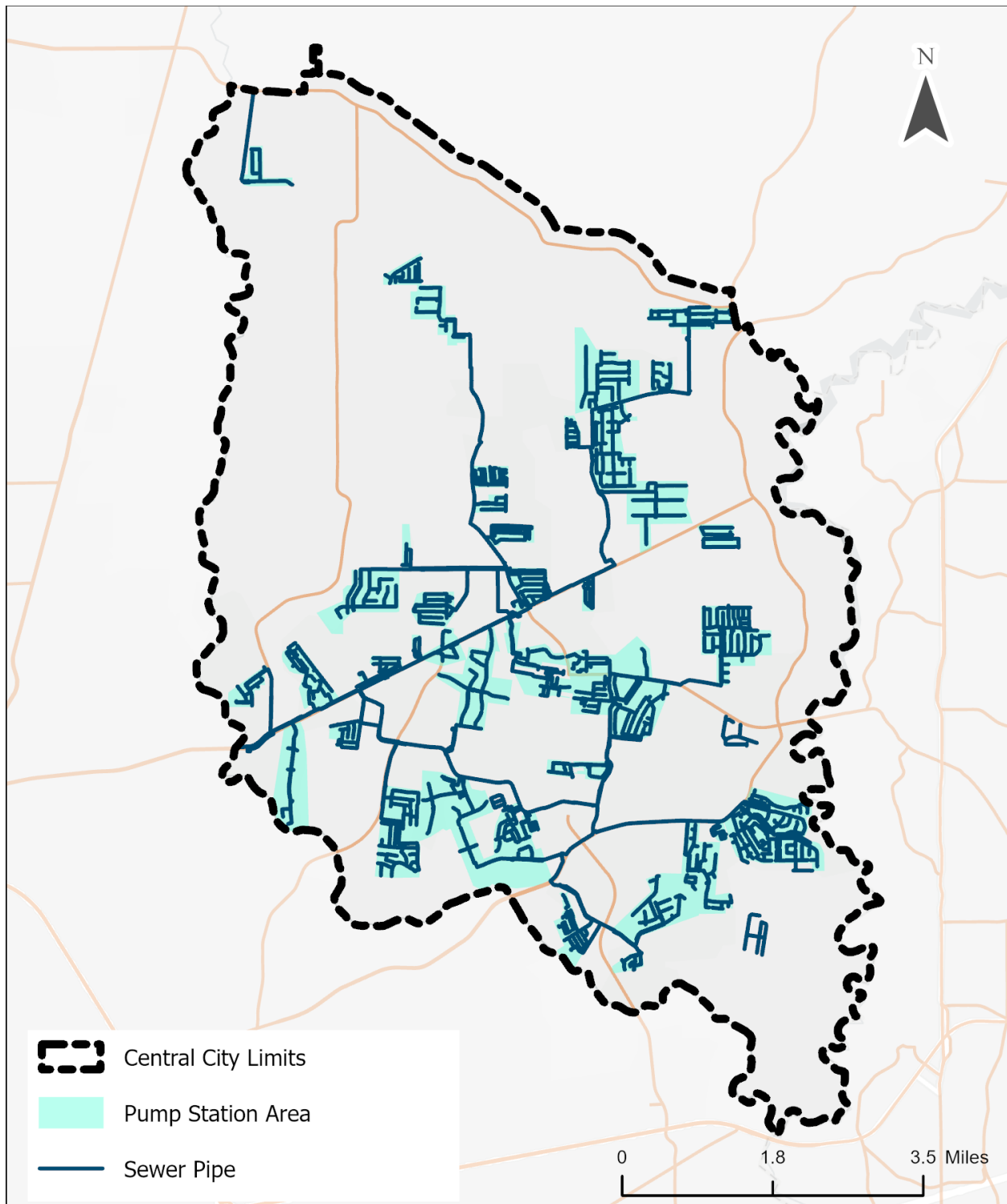


Figure 13. General location of public sewer in Central

Public K-12 Education

In 2006, the Louisiana Legislature approved the creation of the Central Community School District, with its own elected board that is not under the control or oversight of the City of Central. Today, the district operates five public schools with a combined enrollment of over 4,600 students.

Additionally, the Central Community School System (CCSS) operates an Alternative School, offering tailored educational programs for students requiring a non-traditional learning environment.

Since 2010, CCSS has acquired and developed two new education buildings and renovated an elementary school. In 2012 the Central Intermediate School and Central Middle School opened on a shared campus. The new site provided a permanent home for the Central Intermediate School, and a safe and updated, new facility for Central Middle School.

Bellingrath Hills Elementary School (Grades PreK-Kindergarten)

Provides early childhood education with a focus on foundational learning.

Tanglewood Elementary School (Grades 1-2)

Emphasizes literacy and numeracy skills. Underwent significant renovations following flood damage in 2016, reopening in 2017.

Central Intermediate School (Grades 3-5)

Focuses on preparing students for middle school through a curriculum that

balances academics and social development.

Central Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Offers programs that bridge early grade education and high school readiness.

Central High School (Grades 9-12)

Provides comprehensive secondary education, including college preparatory and career and technical education (CTE) programs. The Freshman Academy opened on the campus of Central High School during the 2015-2016 school year. The addition of this facility reduced crowding at the high school and assisted with the transition from middle to high school.

Higher Education

A campus of Baton Rouge Community College is in Central and offers training courses through the Workforce Development Division in addition to degree programs in aviation mechanics, operating processes in manufacturing industries, and construction.

A4. Economy

Situated within East Baton Rouge Parish and part of the Baton Rouge metropolitan area, Central plays a pivotal role in the region's economic landscape. Economic growth not only provides benefits to Central's residents and businesses, but improves the economic health of the entire region.

Jobs

The largest employment category in Central is educational and health services, constituting 19.77% total jobs (Table 7). Central's economy is relatively diverse, with significant employment in agriculture, manufacturing, and professional services. A key sector with low employment in Central is Information, which constitutes only 1.05% of total jobs.

Table 7. Jobs by Industry in the City of Central, 2023

Industry	Number	Percent of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	15	0.82%
Construction	1,032	7.34%
Manufacturing	1,767	12.57%
Wholesale trade	408	2.90%
Retail trade	1,226	8.72%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities:	792	5.64%
Information	147	1.05%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	975	6.94%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	1,477	10.51%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2,779	19.77%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	896	6.38%
Other services, except public administration	915	6.51%
Public administration	1,525	10.85%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Chamber of Commerce

The City of Central Chamber of Commerce helps guide, inspire, and promote business and professional interests to enhance the economic, cultural and recreational opportunities for the citizens of Central.

LED Approved Sites

Central is a member of the Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Development Ready Communities (LDRC).