



LOUISIANA'S
CAJUN BAYOU
LAFOURCHE PARISH

Strategic Plan 2027

Plan Developed: April – August 2022



Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism
P O Box 340
4484 LA HWY 1
Raceland, LA 70394
www.LaCajunBayou.com

(985) 537-5800

This strategic plan provides direction for the future of tourism promotion and destination management in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana. The plan is research-based including input from Lafourche Parish community, civic and travel industry leaders who participated in the DestinationNext Planning Model.

Destination and Mission

Lafourche Parish is one of the oldest parishes in Louisiana and is located approximately 45 miles southwest of New Orleans. It combines a rural atmosphere with modern technology. It is one of the original nineteen parishes created from the Territory of Orleans on March 31, 1807.

The parish is approximately 100 miles long and 15 miles wide at its widest area. Lafourche Parish has a total area of 865,920 acres of which 84% is land and 16% is lakes, bays and bayous. Lying entirely within the Mississippi River Delta, the main physiographic features of the parish are the natural levees, marshes and sandy ridges.

Lafourche Parish has three incorporated municipalities: Thibodaux (parish seat), Lockport, and Golden Meadow. Louisiana's Cajun Bayou culture stems from its varied heritage, including French, Spanish, English and German speaking families who settled its banks in the early 1700's. In less than 200 years, their descendants, joined by Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia, merged those cultures, customs and heritages as well as those of the into a society known the world over as "Cajun Country."

The name Lafourche, which is French for "the fork" aptly describes the area geographically. From the green fields of sugar cane in the north to the seacoast dotted with offshore platforms, the parish hosts a diversity of industries. Shrimp trawlers roll through the wave troughs, passing charter boats of fishermen and crewboats filled with oil workers, contrasting the old with the new.

Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism is the officially designated destination marketing organization for Lafourche Parish and as such brings tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Lafourche Parish to the nation and the world.



Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism

Mission Statement

Drive year-round visitation to Lafourche Parish to generate the maximum economic impact through overnight stays and visitor spending for the benefit of our residents.

Vision Statement

Lafourche Parish will be known as a top-ten Louisiana destination for outdoor, historic and culinary experiences immersed in Cajun Bayou culture.

Organization Structure

The Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission was created in 1982 by local ordinance Article XVII, Section 34-422 by the Lafourche Parish Government. The Louisiana Legislature at its 1995 Regular Session by adoption Act Number 47, created the Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission as a political subdivision of the State of Louisiana. In 2016, the Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission created and adopted a new brand, Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou. The legal name is still the Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission.

LCBT is governed by a nine-member board of directors. Each member is appointed by one of nine entities within Lafourche Parish and are elected to a three-year term on the board. The mission of the board of directors is to stimulate economic development by marketing Lafourche Parish as a destination for tourists. Daily operations of the DMO are managed by three full-time and two part-time staff members. LCBT is a fully accredited destination marketing and management organizations with the Destination Marketing Accreditation program (DMAP) of Destinations International.

Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou Tourism is a destination marketing/promotions agency that provides business education and support to the local travel industry as well as advocates for issues affecting the travel economy in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

This plan outlines the Board’s strategic direction for the years 2023 – 2027 and assigns project work to staff and Board-led Task Forces. Progress will be tracked regularly at LCBT board meetings.

Strategic Direction

Marketing an expanding tourism economy in Lafourche Parish requires a focused destination marketing effort to drive growth in a competitive region. Lafourche Parish will be marketed as a premier destination with the highest skilled and most dynamic sales and marketing team under the leadership of an engaged and well-informed Board of Directors.

Expanding & Enhancing the Visitor Experience Lafourche Parish must continue to grow and improve the breadth and quality of the year-round visitor experience to fulfill the vision of being a Louisiana top-ten destination. Lafourche Parish is the heart of the Cajun country and will expand access to outdoor and cultural activities that are in demand among travelers and residents alike.

Advocacy, Sustainability, Image and Awareness Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou Tourism will convene travel industry businesses and serve as a connector to listen, communicate and identify strategies to address those issues that are holding the travel industry back. The Board will lead advocacy efforts on travel industry issues. An active committee structure will provide focus with board members actively engaging on all strategic initiatives.



1. Marketing an expanding tourism economy in Lafourche Parish requires a focused destination marketing effort to drive growth in a competitive region. Lafourche Parish will be marketed as a premier destination with the highest skilled and most dynamic sales and marketing team under the leadership of an engaged and well-informed Board of Directors. The LCBT staff share responsibility for three primary disciplines. **A) Brand Marketing** including all visitor outreach external and internal; **B) Business & Destination Development** involves group and leisure market sales as well as in-parish efforts to support our travel industry partners; **C) Visitor Engagement** starts when the visitor arrives and involves all methods of driving increased visitor engagement and spending.

Action Items – detailed tactics provided in annual marketing plans

A. Brand Management, External Marketing & Business Development (outreach to visitors):

- 1-Update research and marketing strategy continually as part of an annual promotion plan supported by the local travel industry.
- 2-Build brand awareness of Louisiana’s Cajun Bayou based on the ever-changing visitor experience.
- 3-Drive visitor growth by focusing on the “need periods” when hotels have vacancies.
- 4-The LCBT team will focus on brand marketing using multiple channels in traditional, digital and social to connect with new/repeat visitors.
- 5-The LCBT team will focus on business development by seeking-out group/event business and curate events to drive demand during low demand periods for all group facilities with emphasis on Lafourche Pavilion (new agreement with Parish Gov't in 2022).
- 6-Tracking and accountability to demonstrate highest possible Return-on-Investment (ROI) – Lodging market segmentation research of key performance metrics (KPIs) and lodging revenue tracking/analysis.

B. Internal Marketing (in-reach to visitors in-market and residents):

- 1-Provide leadership to the Lafourche Parish travel industry through training programs, co-op sales/marketing programs, workshops, marketing updates and workforce development.
- 2-Provide dynamic, digital visitor information services for individual, group and event visitors to drive increased spending in-market and increased visitor satisfaction.
- 3-Deliver annual economic impact/ROI updates to leaders & elected officials.
- 4-Place advertising and messaging in-market for citizens to see what LCBT does to attract visitors.

C. Visitor Engagement

- 1-Maximize engagement in the temporary facility by promoting "we are open" through marketing channels, provide up-to-date local information, distribute area information to local hotels and attractions, and keep the visitor center open 6 days per week (excl. holidays)
- 2-Special Projects Committee oversees development of new state-of-the-art visitor center that will showcase the areas unapologetically Cajun culture and brand while driving visitors to attractions, restaurants, lodging and events in Lafourche Parish.

2. Expanding & Enhancing the Visitor Experience Lafourche Parish must continue to grow and improve the breadth and quality of the year-round visitor experience to be known as a world-class destination. Lafourche Parish is the heart of Cajun country and will expand access to outdoor and cultural activities that are in demand among travelers and residents alike. Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism partners with all government and economic development agencies to support and encourage the development of activities that will enhance the visitor and resident experience.



Action Items

- A. TIP Committee/BOD and staff** oversee Tourism Investment Program which expands the visitor experience and enhances local communities
- B. Support and encourage expansion of the experience and product development at “attractors” and attractions that bring visitors to the Cajun Bayou** – outdoor activities, events, Cajun dining, etc. inspire visitation to Lafourche Parish and are at the core of the brand.
 - 1- Help preserve Cajun Culture (the core of LCBT branding) by conducting at least two meetings per year with ATTRACTORS leaders to identify future planning and development opportunities (Cajun culture, musicians, artists, chefs, swamp tour owners, Jean Lafitte Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center, Laurel Valley Village, etc.) involved in preserving the Cajun culture.
 - 2-Conduct at least two meetings per year with ATTRACTIONS leaders to review future planning and development opportunities (charter fisherman, swamp operators) and share current travel trends
 - 3-Seek out opportunities to fund a grant writer to apply for grants that support redevelopment of existing attractions/activities
 - 4-Continue to build and leverage cultural partnerships/programs with Acadian provinces of Nova Scotia which tie directly to the destination history and culture.
- C. Support and encourage expansion and improvement of team sports facilities based on competitive market assessment** – team sports is a very competitive market segment requiring a focused, strategic approach to development
 - 1-Conduct competitive sports facility assessment among regional parishes and identify key areas for future development
 - 2-Build, publish and maintain comprehensive listings of all sports facilities/venues in Lafourche Parish
 - 3-Maintain membership in Team Louisiana and obtain qualified leads through membership and appropriate tradeshow opportunities
 - 4-Build and leverage partnerships with local parks and rec districts/departments, venue owners/operators in order to promote facilities to rights holders and sporting event organizers
- D. Expand individual outdoor experiences and improve, expand, connect existing trail networks on water and land** – travelers seek-out active outdoor engagement when visiting destinations. Identify opportunities to provide increased access to cycling, hiking/walking/running, paddling, fishing, hunting, etc.
 - 1-inventory and map existing trails (water), identify opportunities for connectivity, develop guide/maps
 - 2-Work with local waterway organizations and tourism partners to develop a Cajun Bayou Paddling Trail
 - 3-Work with Port Fourchon for further promotion and development of Coastal Wetlands Park and outdoor activities in south Lafourche

2. Expanding & Enhancing the Visitor Experience - Continued

Action Items

- E. **Encourage, market and support existing outfitters** that rent kayaks, fishing (individual & charter) and other outdoor equipment. Equipment rental and guide services are essential for visitors who want to get outside.
 - 1-Develop/maintain inventory of all outfitters that provide guide services and rent equipment that make the outdoors more accessible
 - 2-Develop brochures/content related to outdoor services/rentals and ways that visitors can use/enjoy them

- F. **Support more engaging/walkable towns** - more unique local shopping, providing that which visitors want & shipping purchases; unique local dining experiences, expanded shaded sidewalks with seating and accessible curbs at intersections. Goal: no vacant/dilapidated store fronts.
 - 1-Maintain active working partnership with Thibodaux Main Street, economic development and chambers of commerce along with city and parish officials/agencies.
 - 2-Encourage LCBT Board members to also serve on community/Parish development boards.
 - 3-Support the execution of the revised Lafourche Parish Master Plan, Louisiana Development Ready Community Strategic Plan and other regional plans as related to Lafourche Parish and its tourism economy.

- G. **Emphasize the expansion and development of unique Cajun Bayou dining** to establish the Parish as a destination for unique dining.
 - 1-Refresh and expand the Cajun Bayou Food Trail that features unique local dining.
 - 2-Create an annual dining week event that celebrates Lafourche Parish Cajun dining experiences that support the brand.
 - 3-Work with local Parish chefs to create culinary ambassadors for the destination to participate in media opportunities and culinary related events.
 - 4-Work with the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute on ways to partner and develop culinary related offerings for visitors.

- H. **New lodging development will be sought based on long-term demand growth** for overnight accommodations and to fill gaps not currently met by existing lodging.
 - 1-Allocate funding for updated feasibility studies (as-needed) related to all types of lodging/rentals.
 - 2-Maintain funding for parish lodging and rental data and market intelligence as well as lodging research.
 - 3-Work with local, regional and state economic development organizations to identify lodging developers.
 - 4-Provide research data and market intelligence on demand to lodging developers.
 - 5-Identify and track lost business/missed opportunities to show accommodation and destination needs.

- I. **Support the development of wayfinding signage (Phase 2) and installation (Phase 3) throughout the Parish.** LCBT will continue partnership with Parish and local governments to install and maintain signage that connects travelers to experiences.
 - 1-Maintain signage budget in annual financial plans (initial cost, plus annual construction/implementation).
 - 2-Partner with Parish, City and DOTD for installation and maintenance of signs.
 - 3-Once installed, schedule annual signage inventory to identify replacement/repairs.

3. Advocacy, Sustainability, Image and Awareness Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism will maintain accreditation with Destinations International meeting the highest standards of accountability and performance. LCBT Board and CEO will convene travel industry businesses and serve as a connector to listen, communicate and identify strategies to address those issues that can propel the destination forward. The Board will lead advocacy efforts on travel industry issues forming collaborative relationships with other agencies, organizations, businesses working on the same issues within Lafourche Parish.



Action Items

- A. LCBT Board of Directors provides leadership** to travel industry leaders and conduct regular listening sessions and staff implements surveys with travel industry leaders to identify issues that affect their growth and success.
 - 1-Board maintains a prioritized list of issues with actions on each that are supported by staff
 - 2-BOD Chair and CEO conduct listening sessions 1-2 times a year with travel industry leaders
- B. Budget/Funding** – advocate for maximum ROI and long-term competitive funding for Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism.
 - 1-LCBT staff prepare annual budget and maintain day-to-financials for the organization, LCBT BOD provides fiduciary oversight
 - 2-LCBT BOD Chair and CEO make regular Tourism Impact/ROI presentations to elected officials & civic clubs
 - 3-Monitor trends in DMO funding and identify opportunities for LCBT to remain competitively funded (ex: grants)
 - 4-Advocate for the protection of statutorily enabled revenues that are relied upon for the organization's operations
 - 5-Ensure compliance with statewide agreed upon procedures and budgetary/purchasing laws as required to receive a clean audit
- C. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility** – LCBT will promote a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility through its marketing efforts, hiring practices, vendor opportunities & visitor experiences while displaying a passion for the travel & tourism industry.
 - 1-LCBT Board/staff maintains a prioritized list of issues with actions on each
 - 2-Staff support DEIA initiatives in producing regular programs throughout the Parish to foster maximum inclusivity
 - 3-Staff will guide Board on best practices related to policies and standards within the industry related to inclusion and fairness.
 - 4-Employee Relations Committee to work with staff and board to review LCBT policies to insure it is maintaining and adhering to DEIA best practices
 - 5-BOD/Staff to insure compliance with Destinations International DMAP accreditation code of ethics
- D. Destination image/beautification** – LCBT Board will coalesce local groups to address beautification and litter abatement as this has a direct impact on visitor perception as does the perception of crime and safety.
 - 1-Staff to partner with other local organizations to coordinate quarterly (max) clean-up Saturdays, Arbor Day Event, Intersection/roadway adoption programs "spots-of-pride" for year-round clean-ups and beautification

3. Advocacy, Sustainability, Image and Awareness (Continued)

Action Items

- E. Foster and support an abundant and well-trained workforce for hospitality businesses** – LCBT will coalesce the travel industry businesses with schools, governments and workforce organizations on a long-term plan to inspire younger generations to seek out careers in hospitality, to provide training/education for those entering the workforce and to address competitive pay and benefits to retain a qualified workforce.
1. Create a Lafourche Parish travel industry employment index to identify the number of open full-time and part-time positions with local businesses
 2. Partner with secondary, vocational schools & Nicholls State University – programs should be offered to 1) generate interest in hospitality industry careers and 2) provide training and skills for careers in hospitality
 3. Partner with state employment services to identify potential hospitality workers, provide training, conduct job fairs, provide transportation, etc. to move people into full-time employment
 4. Monitor the residence location of hospitality industry workforce to determine the availability of affordable housing and short-term housing within Lafourche Parish
 5. Identify and address transportation issues of hospitality workers to move them from home to work and back