



November 2, 2020

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

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Renoir District Earns Cultural District Designation from State

The Renoir Arts and Cultural District in North Baton Rouge has been certified as a “Louisiana Cultural District” by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

The new district includes the encompassing communities of East Fairfield, Smiley Heights and Melrose East (bordered by Florida to the south, Choctaw to the north, Lobdell to the east and Foster to the west) that has long-established creative assets who collectively provide vital cultural access throughout the community.

The community is also integrating the arts into its transformation efforts, to enhance civic engagement, reduce crime, stimulate economic growth, eradicate blight and establish the cultural identity of the area. In the Fall of 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the city of East Baton Rouge and the East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority a \$29.5 million Choice Neighborhood Initiative grant, to implement its “BR Choice” transformation plan, that overlays the cultural district.

The Renoir District joins eight new cultural districts in Louisiana approved by the Lt. Governor last week. The certification allows the Renoir District to benefit from state historic tax credits and makes the sale of qualifying works of original art within the district exempt from local sales tax.

A Louisiana Cultural District designation places a focus on revitalizing communities by creating a hub of cultural activities. This is in line with the BR Choice transformation plan that highlighted the unique characteristics of these neighborhoods through a three-part approach of Resiliency, Placemaking and Innovation.

“As a focal point in the Placemaking theme, we highlighted the numerous arts and cultural assets (and partners) throughout the neighborhood. Ironically (and fortuitously), we coined the area “Renoir Arts and Cultural District” on the maps depicting the redevelopment areas. This opportunity truly fulfills the intent of the transformation and completely aligns with the investment by HUD and our local partners”, said EBRPHA CEO J. Wesley Daniels, Jr.

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Renoir Cultural District
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The Cultural District application was made by the East Baton Rouge Housing Authority which has joined forces with the city of Baton Rouge, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Build Baton Rouge and others to transform the once downtrodden area into a mixed-income, mixed-use redevelopment offering access to education, economic opportunity and health and wellness.

“This area is blessed with an abundance of public art, cultural assets and opportunities for artists to learn and perform”, said Janelle Brown, EBRPHA Choice Neighborhood Director. “The planned transformation will draw people from throughout the greater Baton Rouge area and help create an even stronger sense of community pride”.

Among the arts and cultural icons in the community is the Red Stick Project which has given the Renoir District its identity through murals recreating the works of French impressionists such as Monet, Renoir, Van Gogh and others. Existing musical treasures such as the Zeagler Music Store (now Music & Arts), the Chorum Hall Jazz Club, the Baton Rouge Little Theatre, Tipitina’s Music Office Co-Op, the Texas Club and Club Excalibur.

Baton Rouge Community College adds further credence to the region with classes in music, film, theater, and art. BRCC also hosts plays, musicals, stage shows, and live performances at its first-class Magnolia Theatre and boasts several original paintings and renderings at the McKay Automotive Technology Center.

“The Louisiana Cultural District designation from the state lets us know that others are taking note of our efforts to restore pride, purpose and passion in Baton Rouge communities through the arts,” said Evelyn Ware, Board Chair of the Red Stick Project.

“We were delighted to learn that the Renoir District has been recognized as a Louisiana Cultural District,” added Renee Chatelain, President & CEO of the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge. “There are many artistic treasures in the area and this exciting news will help us to not only preserve but also expand the creative capacity of the region”.

“Louisiana’s Cultural Districts, with 115 Districts in 71 towns and 41 parishes, are the embodiment of what makes our state unique,” added Kelsea McCrary, Director, Civic Design & Cultural Districts Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism.

“The mosaic they create are a wonderful example of what occurs when arts and culture are organically embedded into community development. These Districts spark revitalization through tax incentives and connections to the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the Office of Cultural Development and are part of a statewide network seeking to grow and enhance the cultural economy.”

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