



# 2023 Louisiana Brownfields Conference Wrap-up! Thank you to the City of Alexandria for Hosting!

**The 2023 Louisiana Brownfield Conference was a success thanks to all of our conference partners and everyone who came from across the state to participate!**

The City of Alexandria did a fantastic job hosting the 2023 Louisiana Brownfields Conference presented by LDEQ, the Louisiana Brownfields Association, LaMATS, KSU TAB and EPA, held on October 25th and 26th at Alexandria’s downtown Convention Hall. Participants were welcomed by Roger Gingles, LDEQ Secretary, Mayor Jacques M, Roy, City of Alexandria, and Mayor Rich Dupree, City of Pineville. Participants heard about Alexandria’s dynamic Brownfield Program (including a pre-conference trolley tour); tips for building their Brownfield Site Inventories and prioritizing sites for assessment; how to attract development to their communities; and how to navigate and leverage Brownfield funding and resources. Local real estate experts and experienced Brownfield grant writers also provided their insights to help facilitate the reuse of vacant and underutilized properties. During the conference, EPA recognized four new EPA Brownfield grant recipients in Louisiana from the cities of Alexandria (Assessment), Tallulah (Assessment), New Orleans (Cleanup), and Monroe (Cleanup). The City of Alexandria’s Community Reception on Day 1 of the conference at the beautiful Alexandria Riverfront Amphitheater provided attendees with the opportunity to network and socialize as well as sample local food trucks and sing karaoke! We

hope the 2023 Louisiana Brownfield Conference was able to provide our Brownfield partners throughout the state with knowledge, tools, and connections to continue to make positive changes in their communities. If you missed the conference, or would like a refresher on the presentations, you can find them [HERE](#) under “Past Events and Recordings”.



**“You all really helped communicate the transformative potential of the brownfield grants to my partners in the region, which helps me connect with great projects to work.” -Adam Tatar, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission**



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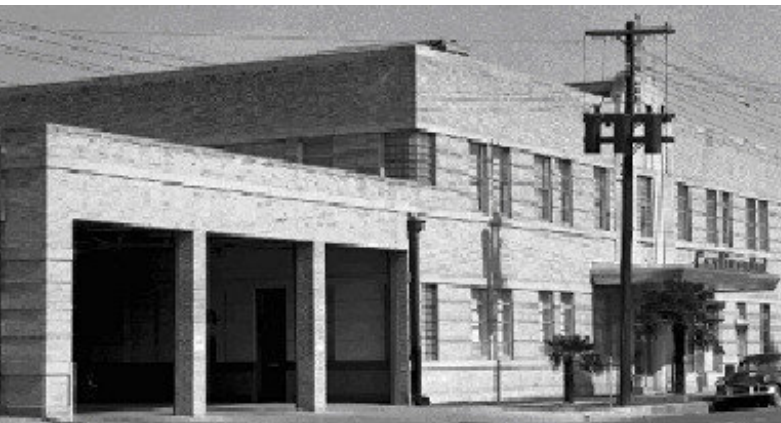


## From Planned Demolition to Rehabilitation:

How Red Cross Transformed a Historical Alexandria Building Into Their New Headquarters



If you pass 425 Bolton Avenue in downtown Alexandria today, you'll find a striking art-deco style two-story brick building once listed as one of the top ten most endangered state historic properties that now serves the surrounding community as the American Red Cross of Central Louisiana (Red Cross) chapter headquarters.



The site was originally residential developments until around 1932, when the historic Cotton Brothers Bakery building was constructed onsite. The family bakery served the community from the original location for 25 years before relocating in 1957. The building was then expanded and used as the headquarters for the Continental Southern Bus Lines and later for Greyhound Bus Lines. The building's decline began around the 1970s and 1980s when bus line operations weren't as utilized due to factors including urban sprawl and increased air travel. Initial environmental assessments conducted in the 1990s identified environmental concerns including historical underground storage tanks, historical bus maintenance operations onsite, and concerns from fueling station and dry-cleaning operations on nearby properties, making the property and the historical building unattractive to potential developers for reuse. Around 2007, the property fell into the hands of a local demolition contractor. After hearing the news of the new owner, the Alexandria Historic Preservation Commission (AHPC) responded quickly to stop demolition plans and save the historical Cotton Brothers Bakery building.



Top: Completed renovation of the new Red Cross headquarters  
Middle: Historical photo of the building as a bus line operator  
Bottom: Historical Trailways bus.  
Photo Credit: Top - Google Earth Middle and Bottom: Leann Murphy



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The AHPC and many members of the community understood that the redevelopment of the building was vital to spur revitalization of the Bolton Avenue Corridor and downtown area. The AHPC partnered with the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation (LTHP) to name the site as one of the top ten endangered buildings in the state in 2007, raising community awareness and involvement and delaying demolition plans. The AHPC then raced to find a purchaser and complete a restoration plan for the building. As the AHPC searched for good candidates to purchase and occupy the building, the local Red Cross chapter was outgrowing their facility and came to the City for help finding a new space. The City recommended the Cotton Brothers Bakery Building, but Red Cross was hesitant to move forward on the property due to environmental concerns. Despite the environmental hurdles, the AHPC and a local corporation, Petron LLC, asked the Red Cross to reconsider the building and helped identify different resources available to make the project feasible, including a generous offer from Petron to renovate the



Top: Pre-renovation photo of the historical building's interior.  
Bottom: Pre-renovation photo of the historical building's exterior.  
Photo Credit: Leann Murphy

building at cost-plus-zero. Additional generous partners, Magna International, Inc. and the Canadian Red Cross, who the Red Cross had developed strong relationships with over years of working together, offered almost \$1 million towards the development of the new headquarters. To address environmental concerns, the site was enrolled into LDEQ's Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) program, which funded Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (valued at \$91,000) to provide liability protection to the Red Cross and assess environmental concerns, which included petroleum contamination previously identified in groundwater, as well as asbestos and lead-based paint in building materials.

## Did you know?

**LDEQ's Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) assistance can be layered with other resources, and environmental assessments can be conducted concurrently with redevelopment planning and operations? Reach out to us at [Brownfields@la.gov](mailto:Brownfields@la.gov) if you have a site whose reuse is being hindered by environmental concerns.**



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The site was also enrolled in LDEQ's Voluntary Remediation Program, which provided a release of liability for past contamination to the Red Cross and all future site owners. The Red Cross was also able to utilize the 25% Louisiana Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which can be sold for as much as 80 to 90 cents on the dollar raising more than \$250,000 to be reinvested back into the building project. Redevelopment began in January 2009 and was completed in early 2011. With community support, strong public and private partnerships, and smart layering of available resources, a pillar of Alexandria's history was able to not only be preserved but reused as a vital resource in the face of emergencies throughout Central Louisiana.



Construction sign during renovation Photo Credit: Leann Murphy

## Project Acknowledgments

### Major Donors

Canadian Red Cross  
 American Red Cross  
 Coughlin Saunders Foundation  
 Huie Dellmon Foundation  
 Martin Foundation  
 GAEDA  
 Virginia Howard Martin Foundation  
 Rotary of Alexandria  
 David and Glenda Stock  
 Petron Corporation

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**LOUISIANA TRUST**  
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

To find out more about the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation and their available resources, visit their website at [lthp.org](http://lthp.org)



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## A Look Into the City of Alexandria’s Revitalization Master Plan

**Planning activities are cornerstones of the Brownfields program and are typically the beginning of the long road to reuse. These activities allow communities to start the essential process of taking inventory of their Brownfield sites and researching what kind of types of reuses would work best for their community as well as the best routes and resources available to make these plans happen.**

After successfully competing for an EPA Brownfield Community-Wide Assessment Grant in October of 2020, the City of Alexandria wanted to create a roadmap for their Brownfield revitalization goals to be intentional about where grant funds would make the most impact. The City also sought to ensure inclusive community involvement that would help shape redevelopment plans. The City worked with their environmental consultant partner Terracon, and Terracon’s planning strategist, Arnett Muldrow and Associates, to prepare a Revitalization Master Plan. Development of the Master Plan included a three-day planning session with community stakeholders including property owners, business owners, citizens, and local officials.

A sustainable landscape architecture company, Studio Main, also provided input for design planning. In addition to the community stakeholder planning session, development of the Master Plan included a market analysis to assess retail potential, branding and marketing planning to develop and implement a Citywide branding campaign, and design and planning recommendations based on data and information collected throughout the planning processes to target areas with the largest opportunities for growth and revitalization. With the help of community stakeholders, the City of Alexandria identified what was unique about their City and found ways to build on these features to fill community needs and create a more vibrant City.



*Connectivity Improvement Plans included in the Maneuver Grerenway project. All images throughout the article are from the City of Alexandria’s Revitalization Master Plan provided by the City of Alexandria and Terracon.*





Development of Alexandria's Master Plan has provided actionable steps with timeframes, action leaders, and funding sources for carrying out the City's revitalization goals including:

- Divest city owned property to increase tax revenue for the City and encourage business and visitors downtown
- Create and utilize smart partnerships with civic organizations and local colleges to promote the downtown area
- Prepare a City brand/marketing package including a wayfinding signage plan and gateway signage to create a cohesive community and provide guidance to City districts, landmarks, and amenities
- Initiate funding and plans for public improvements including lighting, crosswalks, landscape design, additional connections, and infrastructure improvements
- Improve and expand connectivity of the City through the existing trail system that connects all aspects of Historic Downtown Alexandria including the Red River, park amenities, healthcare, neighborhoods, and brownfield sites with redevelopment plans
- Promote the new public and connectivity improvements with events, festivals, art, benches, signage, and maps to encourage walking/biking as part of working, living or visiting downtown

The City of Alexandria is currently working to implement these action items and has already completed and made headway on multiple environmental assessments for sites within their target areas. The Revitalization Master Plan will continue to serve as a guide to the City as they work to make impactful changes throughout their community.

## Brownfield Site Reuse Goals

### Bolton Ave MOBILITY HUB

**A Mobility Hub within the Bolton Avenue Corridor, bringing food and transit services to an area where it is difficult to buy affordable food and many residents do not have vehicle access**



**Senior housing within walking distance of downtown providing easy access to medical services, community events, and social services**



**A park and gateway into downtown, which can be used for outdoor gatherings, events, and festivals and connects to adjacent communities**



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## Upcoming Events and Trainings

**Event:** Louisiana Municipal Association Mid -Winter Conference

**Dates:** February 27-28, 2024

**Location:** Paragon Casino Resort, 711 Paragon Place, Marksville, LA

The Louisiana Municipal Association will hold their mid-winter conference with presentations geared towards tools and resources for local governments and municipalities.

**Event:** Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference

**Dates and Times:** October 9-11, 2024

**Location:** Hyatt Regency, St. Louis, MO

Join the Center for Community Progress to learn about how to transform vacant properties in your communities into vibrant places. The RVP Conference uplifts innovative solutions that disrupt the cycle of vacancy to advance community revitalization.

