

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge continues to be a national role model for data-informed governance. Advanced tools developed with support from the City Data Alliance facilitate meaningful, city-wide collaborations and build new capacities to address blighted properties.

Highlights

Created the Division of Data, Analytics, and Performance, whose novel approach to data work was embodied by the digital publication of the city's first [interactive Open Data Annual Report](#).

Conducted the first-ever city-parish wide survey of blighted property and developed advanced tools to share data and grow critical community partnerships.

Introduced two unique high-level data-driven positions which underscore the city's remarkable ability to embed interdepartmental collaboration in their workflow.

Published the city's first [Open Data Annual Report](#), an interactive story map that encourages community engagement with data and city initiatives.

Background

Baton Rouge entered the Bloomberg Philanthropies City Data Alliance in 2021 with What Works Cities Silver certification, a robust data governance framework and committee, and an open data program codified by Executive Order. Although the city was a leader in open data, it faced common data challenges such as siloed data and uneven staff and departmental capacity for high-quality data management and use. At the outset of the city's City Data Alliance engagement, the city team was determined to improve internal data quality, expand access to data, grow their data workforce, and deepen their capacity to engage community members around data.

Mayor Weston Broome charged the senior team participating in the City Data Alliance to:

- Ensure that data is a part of the fabric of what they do across city government.
- Educate departments about shared goals.
- Begin consistently using data to assess performance.

Impact

CDA Lead and Director of Information Services (IS) Eric Romero has led the development and implementation of a citywide data strategy and launched a data-rich performance management routine to accomplish the Mayor's charge.

To support this work, Romero advocated for the creation of a new team in his department, the Division of Data, Analytics, and Performance, which was approved in the 2023 budget. The team expanded the Citizen Data Academy, a free, citizen-focused education and training series that enables residents to access and interpret City-Parish data.

The team committed to embedding interdepartmental collaboration into their process. Warren Kron, GIS Manager and the new division's lead, brought together leadership from the Department of Development and Office of Community Development to collectively leverage ARPA allocations to create a performance management routine to address blight, a major area of concern for Baton Rouge residents.

The new team enables staff and leaders to prioritize resources to ensure safe, clean, and healthy neighborhoods in which residents feel civic pride. “We don’t have the budget to keep up with all the blight that exists,” Romero says. “But there are a lot of nonprofits and community organizations doing things like litter cleanups and helping people maintain their properties. We’re finding those organizations, showing them our data, and saying, ‘This is what the city can do—what can you do?’ It’s more of a collaborative approach to addressing blight.”

Baton Rouge is a recognized leader in using public communication to inspire change and build trust, and they are committed to deepening this work in their citywide data strategy. In concert with mayoral involvement, CDA partnership has enabled Baton Rouge to collect new data, build tools that engage citizens, and enact a number of systems-level changes.

- In supporting the Mayor’s citywide data strategy, the new Division of Data, Analytics, and Performance implemented a community-centered approach to data work that was embodied by the digital publication of the city’s first [Open Data Annual Report](#), an interactive story map that encourages community engagement with data and city initiatives.
- In an effort to mitigate the deleterious effects of vacant and abandoned properties, the newly-created team leveraged ARPA allocations and relationships built across multiple municipal departments to conduct the first-ever city-parish wide survey of blighted property. [Advanced tools to share data and prioritize resources](#) were created in an effort to center community partnerships as safe, clean, and healthy neighborhoods are rebuilt.
- Marlee Pittman was hired to be the city’s first Director of Community Revitalization and Melody Landry was hired as East Baton Rouge City Parish’s first Information Services Outreach Coordinator. The creation of these unique positions further underscores the city’s remarkable ability to embed interdepartmental collaboration in their betterment process.

Speaking on the city’s data accomplishments, Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome said: “My administration is committed to investing time and resources into our open data policies and creating opportunities for us to leverage this data to better serve our community, which includes empowering our residents with the knowledge they need to navigate our comprehensive data assets.”

