

# Office of Community Development

## Disaster Recovery Unit

State of Louisiana

Division of Administration

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## STATE OF LOUISIANA BUYS LAND FOR ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES RESETTLEMENT

The Louisiana Land Trust on behalf of the Office of Community Development is purchasing 515 acres of farmland in the Schriever area of Terrebonne Parish to serve as the resettlement site for the residents of Isle de Jean Charles.

The \$11.7 million purchase continues the resettlement of the residents from their island community in lower Terrebonne Parish to a resilient and historically contextual community about 40 miles north—a move necessitated by ongoing coastal land loss and increasingly high flood risk.

“Today marks an important milestone, as we are one step closer to assisting those residents interested in moving out of harm’s way and into a new community that will provide an improved quality of life,” Pat Forbes, executive director of the Office of Community Development, said. “We look forward to building the community, improving economic opportunities for its residents, facilitating preservation and revitalization of the islanders’ diverse cultural identities and traditions, and establishing a model of successful resettlement that can be replicated elsewhere.”

The site selection involved extensive research, including more than 20 separate site evaluations, technical analysis and input from island residents and other potential participants, who overwhelmingly preferred this site. OCD received environmental clearance for the

acquisition under the regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and signed the purchase agreement in March 2018.

The Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project is a federally funded, first-of-its kind initiative that will offer resettlement options to current and former residents of Isle de Jean Charles, a small settlement on the coast of Louisiana, to a safer and more sustainable community. Connected to the mainland by a two-lane road that regularly floods, since 1955 the island has lost 98 percent of its land due to several environmental factors.

The resettlement focuses on developing a safer home for the Isle de Jean Charles community that reflects its unique culture, history and diversity, which consists mostly of people of American Indian heritage.

For example, the island wetlands, houses and spaces under the homes shape the way people relate to their surroundings and each other. Consequently, the design of the resettlement aims to recreate these spaces in ways that encourage these relationships to continue, in addition to accommodating the varied and changing needs of a multigenerational community.

The homes are designed to provide privacy for residents and reinforce the community's deep connection to nature by using forms appropriate for south Louisiana's climate, as well as quality materials that will endure. Every home is planned above the 500-year floodplain on a pier and beam foundation, is fully ADA compliant, includes a screen porch and covered outdoor space, and is located within a five-minute walk of a park or natural space.

The resettlement offer will first be made available to those who currently live on the island and those who have been displaced since Hurricane Isaac's landfall in 2012. Subsequently, those displaced prior to Isaac will be provided an opportunity to rejoin the Isle de Jean Charles community. Participation is voluntary. The state will not force anyone to leave the island and will ensure that all residents make their own, independent decisions.

The formal application process for interested participants will launch in early 2019. During this time, resettlement team members will host a series of outreach events to provide additional information and answer questions. Dates and locations of the outreach events are yet to be determined.

In the coming months, the state will release a master plan for the new site and anticipates breaking ground in late 2019. For more information, visit [IsleDeJeanCharles.la.gov](http://IsleDeJeanCharles.la.gov).