Bayou Road was laid along the historic portage route from Bayou Saint John to the Mississippi River. The portage permitted travelers to land up river of New Orleans along the bayou and then journey down to the river for trade. The route was shown to European settlers by Native Americans who had established a trading ground at the location of the historic LeBreton Market - halfway between the bayou and the French Quarter.

As plantations were divided and developed in the area, much of the historic road was incorporated into other streets, but the distinctive diagonal section of the brick road survived. Cutting across the regular street grid, Bayou Road connects several neighborhoods – Treme, the Seventh Ward, Bayou Saint John, and the Fairgrounds.

Urban out-migration and disinvestment in the mid-20th century plagued Bayou Road - St Rose de Lima School closed, the market shut down, and many shops went out of business. Reggae music filled in some of the empty space along Bayou Road in the 1980s and ’90s and a few street vendors catering to the reggae crowd decided to lease or buy their own storefronts in the area. The neighborhood naturally took on an Afro-Caribbean vibe.

By 2000, a significant group of African-American women owned property and businesses along the corridor, establishing a community of women entrepreneurs. Since Hurricane Katrina, music and art have gained a stronger foothold in the area through shops, artist support programs, and the presence of culture bearers. Several notable rehabilitation projects are currently in the works to revive the resources and legacies that have defined this particularly historic section of New Orleans.

Guide created in collaboration with:

1. Community Book Center
   2523 Bayou Road | 504.948.7323
   In 1983 Vera Warren-Williams started Community Book Center (CBC), with a $300.00 investment and a dream, from her parents’ home in the Lower Ninth Ward. As a substitute teacher, Vera shared books by and about people of African descent from her personal library with interested students and teachers. Since its inception, “Community” is (has been) “more than a book store”... Mama Jennifer has a wealth of knowledge and will welcome you along with the “unusual” cast of characters. A literary hub and cultural resource center for locals and visitors alike; where Black History is proudly celebrated 365 days a year! Come by and help them celebrate their 30th Anniversary and chart the course for the next generation.

2. King and Queen Emporium
   2545 Bayou Road
   Sula Janet Evans and Andaiyé Alimayu occupy a sacred site on Bayou Road; the grounds where their business stands served as a Native American trading center. The open air LeBreton Market was built on the site in 1867 and the market structure was improved and enclosed as part of a WPA project in the 1930s. One of the building’s many incarnations since being a market was the Church of I Am that I Am. Their space is now a laboratory and shop for their homemade oils, candles, soaps, and incense varieties.

3. Duchesne Volunteer House
   2545 Bayou Road
   In 2007, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, a service missionary order of the Catholic Church, established a presence in New Orleans and took over the rectory of the former Saint Rose de Lima Church. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart were called to help New Orleans rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, and, in particular, to provide a place for rebuilding volunteers to stay. The half dozen sisters who live in the large historic house on Bayou Road provide lodging, as well as counsel to volunteer groups, and they continue to serve in this unique capacity for the area and for New Orleans.

4. Domino Sound Record Shack
   2557 Bayou Road | 504.309.0871
   “Domino Sound” is how some reggae lovers know Matt Knowles, owner of Domino Sound Record Shack. The record store is a tangible mark of his evolution from a reggae DJ and vinyl collector to a business owner. Drawn to the Caribbean feel of Bayou Road, Matt opened his record (and cassette tape) shop on the corridor in 2007. The store has been recognized as one of the top record stores in the U.S. and is a charming, intimate space to browse through the built-in record bins and listen to the eclectic tunes spun by DJ Matt and his staff.
Food gotta be fresh. Nothing is fried except the plantains. Everything is cut by hand... and grilled, stewed, or baked. —Pam “Mother Nature” Thompson, Coco Hut

After Katrina, people encouraged me to go somewhere else, but I said I’ve got a good location. Bayou Road has always been known for Reggae... I can’t see the club being anywhere else but here. —Al Reece, Club Carribean

I’m four generations of the Mardi Gras Indian... I am a cultural ambassador... I’m a storyteller. I can tell you stories about stuff in this city. —Big Chief David Montana