



Economic/Environmental Research Section Implements Strategic Plan

The Economic/Environmental Research Section helps the Planning Commission in meeting several economic development goals outlined in the Horizon Plan – a 20-year “Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan.” A major accomplishment of the Section was the development of a “Strategic Plan for Economic Development” for East Baton Rouge Parish. The Strategic Plan specifically addresses the Horizon Plan Action Item to “develop a detailed long-range economic development strategy for the City-Parish.”

The main duties of the Economic/Environmental Research Section are to implement the economic development goals contained in the Horizon Plan, to implement the Strategic Plan for Economic Development, and to administer the City-Parish Enterprise Zone Program. The Economic/Environmental Research Section also provides economic development information to agencies and the general public and participates in the Horizon Plan Growth Center Community Planning Process.

Purpose of the Strategic Plan

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to establish a comprehensive program to serve as a guide for Parishwide economic development efforts. The program includes the formulation of strategies (“Action Items”) that address unemployment and underemployment, and build capacity in economically distressed neighborhoods throughout the Parish. Utilizing a strong public input process, the Strategic Plan defines goals, objectives and Action Items specifically related to economic development.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan contains: (1) detailed inventory and analysis of current conditions in targeted economically distressed neighborhoods; (2) a profile of the labor force, education, major employers, community problems and opportunities; (3) projected needs; (4) goals and objectives; (5) policies; (6) the action plan; (7) implementation strategies; and (8) conclusions. The Strategic Plan addresses the creation of employment opportunities; labor force preparedness as an attraction for business; business needs in relationship to job training; career advancement for the underemployed; transportation and infrastructure improvements to meet employee and business needs; community image and appearance; and socio-economic issues.

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan was formulated to address the needs and issues uncovered in the inventory and analysis. The plan includes six broad goals, which are further divided into objectives and Action Items (strategies) for achieving the goals. The six goals are:

- (1) Increase employment opportunities to lower the community’s unemployment rate and to expand the Parish’s economic base;
- (2) Develop a skilled workforce to reduce unemployment;
- (3) Encourage career advancement and career options for the underemployed;
- (4) Improve public transportation and infrastructure to support economic development;
- (5) Support and encourage Parishwide efforts to improve the community; and
- (6) Promote a healthful community.

Strategic Plan Action Items

Priorities were identified for and assigned to the various Action Items of the plan. “Lead Agencies” were selected for the initiation, coordination, completion and continuation of each designated Action Item. The Economic/Environmental Research Section Staff visited with Lead Agencies and obtained commitments to the Strategic Plan. “High” priority Action Items will be initiated by the end of 1995; “Middle” priority Action Items will be initiated between November 1995 and October 1997; and “Low” priority Action Items will be initiated before October 1998. There are a total of 75 Action Items that will be implemented by 25 Lead Agencies, including the Planning Commission.

The Strategic Plan assigned the following seven Action Items to the Planning Commission:

- Action Item 1.1.2 -- Collect information on state, city and local economic development programs.
- Action Item 1.1.6 -- Process, review and evaluate Economic Development District and Enterprise Zone applications.
- Action Item 1.1.7 -- Provide community and economic development information to existing community centers.

Action Item 2.1.1 -- Collect and compile information on job training programs and services for the unemployed.

Action Item 2.1.2 -- Provide a directory of job training programs and services to the unemployment network.

Action Item 5.1.2 -- Guide growth and development to encourage infill development in established urban areas and coordinate with the Horizon Plan's "2010 Land Use Plan."

Action Item 5.1.6 -- Promote better coordination of the building permit process for commercial and residential development.

The Economic/Environmental Research Section has completed work on several of these Action Items. In response to Action Item 1.1.7, the Section helped to establish a computer network at five community centers and two adult continuing education centers in the parish. The computer network provides free access to job listings and job information from Job Service's Internet site. The Section also compiled job reference materials from Job Service, the Louisiana Occupational Information Coordinating Committee and the East Baton Rouge Parish Library for placement at each computer network site. This material included an "Employment Services Directory" which contains information on job training programs and services. As a result of Action Item 1.1.2, the Section prepared an "Economic Development Agencies Directory" which contains information on community groups,

nonprofit organizations, business groups and state and local agencies involved in economic development efforts. Both of these directories can be viewed and downloaded from the Planning Commission's internet site:

<http://www.brgov.com/dept/planning/>

Growth Center Community Planning Process

The Economic/Environmental Research Section is assisted with the Planning Commission's Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process called for in the Horizon Plan. (The Horizon Plan divides East Baton Rouge Parish into 16 Planning Districts, and the Planning Districts have been subdivided into smaller units called Subareas.) This process included more detailed planning at the Subarea and neighborhood level and citizen input.

The Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process will allow the Planning Commission Staff to meet with residents and discuss issues and aesthetics of development within a Subarea and neighborhood context. Public Meetings, intended to improve communication channels with concerned residents as to the quality of life within their neighborhoods, are planned. The Economic/Environmental Research Section updated Planning District Subarea Profiles that contain land use and descriptive information on each Subarea. The Section prepared data on existing and projected population, existing and projected employment, and new residential building permits for each Subarea, as well as updating other demographic and land use information.

Enterprise Zone Program

The Enterprise Zone Program is a package of tax credits and sales tax rebates available to businesses locating in officially designated Enterprise Zones and Economic Development Zones (EDZ). These are areas of high unemployment, low income and/or where a large number of residents are receiving some form of public assistance, or areas designated as Economic Development Zones.

The City-Parish Planning Commission is the local government agency that processes applications under the Louisiana Enterprise Zone Program. There are 91 designated Enterprise Zones in East Baton Rouge Parish and four Economic Development Zones, namely the Downtown Development District, Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, Research Park Corporation and the Port of Greater Baton Rouge.

Program benefits include: a \$2,500 tax credit for each new job created during the first five years; a rebate of state sales/use taxes on project construction materials and equipment; and a rebate of local sales taxes on project construction materials and equipment for those taxes not dedicated to the School Board or repayment of bond issues.

For additional information contact:

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