

Jefferson EDGE 2020 **BEAUTIFICATION** Status Report 3: October 2010

Prepared by JEDCO and GCR & Associates, Inc.

JEDCO
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission



Beautification

In response to concerns about quality of life in Jefferson Parish and its impact upon the community's economic competitiveness, JEDCO initiated the Jefferson Edge 2020 Quality of Life initiative. This initiative has produced eight "strategic implementation plans" which include a series of action items to address particular quality of life issues. Implementing the action items requires the total cooperation and keen interest of all involved, including JEDCO, the Jefferson Parish government, numerous other entities, and frequently State and Federal agencies. In 2008, JEDCO retained GCR & Associates, Inc. to prepare semiannual reports outlining the status of each of these action items and overall progress toward implementation.

The following table summarizes the progress made toward each of the beautification (B) action items.

B = Beautification

		Progress as of August 2010		
Action ID #	Action Item	Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
B1. BOULEVARDS INITIATIVE				
B1a	Devise detailed cost estimates, a financing strategy, and an implementation schedule for boulevards initiative			
B1b	Systematically upgrade infrastructure along the Parish's major boulevards			
B1c	Implement a gateway improvement program with a principal emphasis on the corridors abutting the airport			
B1d	Create a small grant program to fund landscape improvements to older commercial properties			
B1e	Sponsor a design and engineering competition to devise interim aesthetic improvements to open drainage canals			
B1f	Work with utility providers to screen major utility infrastructure throughout the Parish			
B2. ENHANCE LAND USE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS				
B2a	Revise the Envision Jefferson 2020 Comprehensive Plan to include an urban design element	No longer applicable.		
B2b	Incrementally re-write the Parish's zoning ordinance			
B2c	Enact interim improvements to Parish codes and land use regulations	No longer applicable.		
B2d	Ensure the even application and vigorous enforcement of existing zoning regulations	No longer applicable.		
B3. INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF AND INVOLVEMENT IN BEAUTIFICATION				
B3a	Formalize a lasting public partnership with civic groups and other non-profits to plant additional trees in residential neighborhoods			
B3b	Initiate a public outreach campaign to inform residents of on-going beautification initiatives			
B4. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PUBLIC ART				
B4a	Develop a formal program for incorporating public art into public works projects			
B4b	Coordinate with the state and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to install decorative lighting on the Huey P. Long Bridge			

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B1 Implement a comprehensive "boulevards initiative" to systematically upgrade major thoroughfares								
B1a	Devise detailed cost estimates, a financing strategy, and an implementation schedule for boulevards initiative	Issue RFP in late 2008, early 2009; complete project in 2009	<p>The major obstacle to the completion of this study continues to be the absence of an identified funding source. The concept of an independent governing authority to oversee such an initiative has been raised, but this concept lacks a political champion.</p> <p>A potential jumping off point, however, is a set of grants recently issued jointly by HUD, the federal Department of Transportation, and the EPA to support "livability" and "sustainability." JEDCO and Jefferson Parish have been involved in the preparation of a regional grant application for the maximum amount of \$3,000,000. This grant would support efforts to improve transportation alternatives and the overall quality of the Judge Perez/ Claiborne/ Jefferson Highway corridor in St. Bernard, Orleans, and Jefferson parishes. This grant will be submitted in the fall of 2010.</p>	Monitor the progress of the regional grant applications submitted to HUD/DOT/ EPA. If the application is successful, ensure that the resulting project addresses many of the objectives outlined in the Boulevards Initiative.				

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B1b	Systematically upgrade infrastructure along the Parish's major boulevards	Secure local funding and pursue external funding in 2009; secure interagency agreements in 2009; issue bids and initiate project in 2010; complete phase one by 2015	<p>While the Parish has not secured funding for a comprehensive boulevards study and a Parish-wide boulevards initiative, Jefferson is not waiting for these measures to embark on improvements to its major streets. While the Parish was unsuccessful in securing a \$1.4 million grant from the State to upgrade Jefferson Highway, a number of other improvements are in the works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two Parish-wide beautification non-profits, Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful and Jefferson Beautification, Inc. have donated approximately \$50,000 worth of trees to be planted along Jefferson Highway from Causeway to the Parish line. Greg Cantrell has completed design work for landscape upgrades to Jefferson Highway; these landscape improvements will be implemented when funding is dedicated. Greg Cantrell is also finalizing design work for similar landscape improvements to Lapalco from Brooklyn to Berkeley Drive. Greg Cantrell has also completed design work for Bonnabel Blvd. from Metairie Road to the Lake. The two beautification non-profits have pledged a donation of \$30,000 – \$40,000 in trees to implement these landscape improvements. Veterans CPZ funding has been bonded out for \$3 million worth of landscape improvements, which will be funded simultaneously. Phase IV of the Veterans beautification project (phases I – III are largely complete) will begin in October of 2010; phases V and VI will be put out to bid in the subsequent months. All phases should be completed by the middle of 2012. The Parish is already looking at the next phase of corridor improvements. Dickory Street will likely be one of the next targets for beautification upgrades. <p>Jefferson has received recognition for these efforts. Jefferson recently was named a winner of the 2009 Quality Vegetation Management Habitat Award for its work in maintaining turf and trees, applying herbicide in a sensitive manner, and restoring canal banks.</p>	Monitor the progress of landscape, streetscape, and public art projects underway. Secure funding to transition projects currently in the design stage into the construction stage. Continue to seek funding for a comprehensive boulevards study to set the stage for further capital improvements.				

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B1c	Implement a gateway improvement program with a principal emphasis on the corridors abutting the airport	Secure local funding and pursue external funding in 2009; secure interagency agreements in 2009; initiate project in 2010; complete by 2013	<p>There are two major components to Jefferson's gateway improvement program: signage and landscaping at the major entrances to the Parish and major aesthetic improvements to the entrance from the airport. For the first initiative, design work is complete, and the only remaining obstacles are permitting from the State along State roadways and funding to implement the designs.</p> <p>For the second initiative, Jefferson was successful in obtaining a \$1.6 million Transportation Improvement Program grant. Design work is currently underway, and cooperative endeavor agreements with the airport and the City of New Orleans are being finalized to ensure the continued maintenance of landscape improvements. The focus of the improvements will be along the airport access road and along the north side of I-10 from the airport access road to the Veterans Boulevard interchange.</p>	<p>Secure Parish funding to complete signage and landscape improvements at major entrances to the Parish.</p> <p>Finalize cooperative endeavor agreement with the airport and City of New Orleans to implement improvements to the airport approach. Reach out to the East Jefferson Business Association to secure their cooperation and participation in funding these improvements.</p>				
B1d	Create a small grant program to fund landscape improvements to older commercial properties	Complete project design and solicit applications in 2009; initiate matching grant program in 2010 and annually thereafter	The Jefferson Parish Parkways Department began to assemble a list of candidate shopping centers and other commercial properties for this program, but their ultimate conclusion was that this was a Parish-wide problem. Another major obstacle to this program is the absence of a funding source. Enlisting the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and the local garden clubs may be a partial solution to the funding problem and may spur enthusiasm for this kind of initiative.	Focus efforts on the commercial properties that are on the same corridors as those that are undergoing improvements to the rights of way (e.g. Jefferson Highway and Lapalco). Engage the garden clubs and Jefferson Chamber to explore funding possibilities. Engage members of the Parish Council and/or Parish President to gauge their support.				

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B1e	Sponsor a design and engineering competition to devise interim aesthetic improvements to open drainage canals	Issue RFP and award grant in 2009; begin implementing recommendations in 2010	The Jefferson Community Foundation is in the process of finalizing details on a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a design competition to improve the aesthetic appearance of the canals. The Foundation is working with the Regional Planning Commission to identify potential locations and possible impacts to wildlife. The RFP should be released in approximately one to two months.	Complete work on the RFP and issue RFP. Award contract, and initiate design work.			
B1f	Work with utility providers to screen major utility infrastructure throughout the Parish	Identify funds in 2009/2010; secure agreements with utility providers in 2010; initiate improvements in 2011	The Parish has developed a specific list of "candidate" sites where aesthetic improvements to utility infrastructure are needed. However, the Parish has not received a positive response from the utilities who are claiming that they do not have sufficient funds to implement these mitigation measures.	Reach out to the Parish Council and Parish President to apprise them of this issue and to generate political pressure to screen the most egregious infrastructure.			

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B2 Significantly enhance both the content and the enforcement of the Parish's land use policies and regulations								
B2a	Revise the Envision Jefferson 2020 Comprehensive Plan to include an urban design element	Identify funds in 2008; issue RFP and award contract in 2009; complete element in 2009	This item has been removed from the list of beautification action items, based on input from the Jefferson Parish Planning Department. However, incremental work on urban design problems should continue to be monitored.	Incremental work on urban design problems should continue to be monitored.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>			
B2b	Incrementally re-write the Parish's zoning ordinance	Identify funds in 2008; issue RFP and award contract in 2009; adoption of new ordinance by year end 2010, beginning 2011	<p>Jefferson continues to make incremental changes to its zoning regulations. The most high profile change is the recent adoption of three new zoning districts for Fat City (see the EDGE 2020 plan for Fat City for further detail). The districts establish stringent, unprecedented standards for new development that will result in more aesthetically pleasing treatment of signage, parking, and overall building quality. These Districts were approved by the Parish Council and could serve as a template for further revisions parish-wide.</p> <p>The Parish also continues to migrate the zoning ordinance into a "Unified Development Code" in Chapter 33 of the Parish Code of Ordinances.</p> <p>Another major initiative is a forthcoming study by the Planning Department to strengthen zoning regulations along Airline Drive. To be completed no later than December, 2011, the recommendations of this study could be the foundation for changes in zoning to other corridors in the Parish.</p> <p>Meanwhile, other potential changes to the zoning ordinance, such as comprehensive revisions to the Parish's signage regulations, are somewhat dormant at this time.</p>	Monitor implementation of new zoning districts for Fat City. Monitor progress of Airline Drive study, and push for recommendation to strengthen zoning regulations along Airline. Study the applicability of Airline Drive and Fat City regulations to other areas of the Parish. Revive the concept of a comprehensive study of sign regulations to push for stronger, more aesthetically exacting sign regulations.				

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B2c	Enact interim improvements to Parish codes and land use regulations	Identify gaps and weaknesses in present regulations; adopt amended, interim regulations in 2008 and 2009	This item has been removed from the list of beautification action items, based on the modification to action item B2b, i.e. the decision to pursue incremental rather than comprehensive changes to the Parish's land use regulations.	No further action needed.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>		
B2d	Ensure the even application and vigorous enforcement of existing zoning regulations	Ongoing; strive for Greater predictability starting in 2008 and 2009 as regulations are amended and coordination is enhanced	This action item has been removed from the beautification plan. It represents more of an on-going administrative approach to implementation rather than a unique, singular action.	No further action needed.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>		
B3 Increase community awareness of beautification efforts and elicit further community involvement							
B3a	Formalize a lasting public partnership with civic groups and other non-profits to plant additional trees in residential neighborhoods	Development of Co-operative endeavor in 2008/2009; initiate tree planting program in 2009	In addition to the fact that no funding source has been identified for this program, another impediment is the potentially deleterious effects of street trees upon infrastructure. Care must be given in designing such a program to the types of trees that would be permitted and the desired locations for the trees. As a funding source and a programmatic template are not in place from Parish government, the most likely catalyst for this project will be the non-profit sector.	Reach out to Parkway Partners in New Orleans to generate interest in this kind of public/private initiative in Jefferson Parish. Parkway Partners may have suggestions for the program design and program financing.			
B3b	Initiate a public outreach campaign to inform residents of on-going beautification initiatives	Develop website and newsletter layout in 2008/early 2009. Unveil in 2009	There are two major prongs of Jefferson Parish's ongoing quality of life outreach effort: Jefferson Life magazine and JEDCO's annual marketing budget (approximately \$200,000 for 2010-2011). Jefferson Life is already covering its production costs through advertising revenues and has increased production to six times per year. Twice per year, Jefferson Life will cover each of the quality of life issues addressed by Jefferson EDGE 2020 to update the public on progress underway. Additionally, JEDCO's annual marketing budget goes toward print advertisements, billboards, radio advertisements, and social media efforts. Collectively, these marketing efforts spread news about positive developments in all aspects of quality of life.	Given the fact that Jefferson Life magazine is sustaining itself through advertising revenues and given its expanded production schedule, this action item is effectively complete. The health of Jefferson Life should continue to be monitored, and JEDCO should remain vigilant in pursuing additional marketing funds.			

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Progress as of August 2010

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B4 Provide additional public art installations throughout Jefferson Parish							
B4a	Develop a formal program for incorporating public art into public works projects	Develop program and secure funding in 2008, 2009; Initiate program in 2009, 2010	<p>Artists have been commissioned for a total of 18 public art pieces throughout the Parish; locations have been identified; and the design of foundations and associated amenities is progressing. Preliminary discussions are underway for a second initiative, but no concrete decisions have been made thus far.</p> <p>An original focus of this action item was to set aside a portion of the budget for public works projects to public art. There has been no momentum on this aspect of the public art initiative as no "champion" for this initiative who is in public office has been identified.</p>	Complete the installation of the 18 selected pieces. Determine whether phase II is feasible and whether funding is available. Reach out to the Parish Council and Parish President to build support for the dedication of a portion of the budget of public works projects for public art.			
B4b	Coordinate with the state and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to install decorative lighting on the Huey P. Long Bridge	Initiate outreach in 2008 and 2009; install lighting before completion of bridge widening in 2013	In 2009, a study was completed by APEX Engineering that recommended decorative metal halide lighting for the Huey P. Long Bridge. The study assigned both a capital cost and a maintenance cost for this approach. However, since the completion of the study, no funding source has been forthcoming.	Work with the Jefferson Chamber and other potential private/non-profit funding sources to gauge their interest in pursuing this initiative. Coordinate with the Parish Council and Administration to determine the feasibility of receiving local funding for this project.			

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