

Jefferson EDGE 2020

CRIME ABATEMENT

Status Report 1: March, 2009

Prepared by JEDCO and GCR & Associates, Inc.

JEDCO
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission



Crime Abatement

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 seven "strategic implementation plans" to date 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 crime prevention (CP) and anti-blight (AB) action items.

CP = Crime Prevention AB= Anti-Blight

Action ID #	Action Item	Progress as of March 2009		
		Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
CP1	Seek additional local resources to support the JPSO, District Attorney's Office, and municipal police departments			
CP2	Work with the State to design and implement an overhaul of the corrections system			
CP3	Work with the State to provide additional funding for juvenile justice reform, after care programs, and truancy intervention			
CP4	Work with the State to secure additional resources for Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) for non-violent offenders and juveniles			
CP5	Initiate a major public outreach campaign to inform the public about new anti-crime initiatives and crime fighting successes			
AB1	Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code			
AB2	Adopt state legislation to enact more severe penalties for certain code violations			
AB3	Adopt state legislation to direct minor building code violations to administrative adjudication rather than to the court system			
AB4	Adopt stronger local ordinances to limit illegal activities in motels			
AB5	Appoint a conviction verification officer to assist apartment owners in obtaining background information on tenants			
AB6	Work with the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority to conduct more stringent pre-occupancy inspections of Section 8 housing units			
AB7	Secure additional administrative staff for the Parish Attorney's Office			
AB8	Develop a comprehensive redevelopment strategy and secure funding for the revitalization of certain areas			

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					Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
CP1	Seek additional local resources to support the JPSO, District Attorney's Office, and municipal police departments	Identify surplus resources or submit ballot proposal in 2008	<p>On December 10, 2008, the Jefferson Parish Council approved Resolution #111458 authorizing placement of a one-fourth of one percent (.25%) sales and use tax on the April 4th special election ballot. According to the proposition, were the levy to pass, Jefferson Parish could reasonably expect to collect \$17,500,000 per year. Tax income would be used to supplement the revenues of the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, municipal police agencies, and the District Attorney's Office as well as for miscellaneous other crime and anti-blight activities.</p> <p>In February 2009, the Jefferson Parish Council removed the sales tax increase referendum from the April 4th special election due to an error in the ballot language which did not exempt food and drug purchases from the tax. The next available election date is May 2nd.</p>	Sales tax increase passage during an upcoming (possibly May 2, 2009) election			
CP2	Work with the State to design and implement an overhaul of the corrections system	Assemble State committee/task force in 2008; pass legislation in 2009	<p>The Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and the Community Justice Agency are in the planning phase of creating the State legislative committee that will be responsible for formulating specific policies. During 2009, the Parish entities will contact the State legislators to initiate the formation of the committee. Once formed, the committee will advise and assist as to the most efficient methods of utilizing available funds, identify additional funding sources, develop cost effective policy alternatives, explore pertinent existing legislation, devise implementation methods, and craft new legislation that will support this initiative.</p> <p>Additionally, in March 2009, Governor Jindal announced the state's plan to expand pre-release services to state inmates held in local or parish jails. The program, designed to curb recidivism, will provide local sheriffs with an additional \$7 per inmate per day to provide training in the skills necessary to acquire jobs and housing once released.</p> <p>The state will pilot the program in Shreveport and then expand to Orleans Parish later in the year. The state's goal is to expand the program to ten regional re-entry points that would serve each of the nearly 18,000 state inmates. Jindal's 2009-10 budget recommendations included \$1.1 million for the program and an additional \$900,000 is incorporated in the Louisiana Department of Corrections' budget for 2010 for early-intervention services.</p>	Assemble State committee/task force in 2009; identify policy(ies) and pass legislation in 2010			

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CP3	Work with the State to provide additional funding for juvenile justice reform, after care programs, and truancy intervention	Secure supplemental funding for TASC in 2008; secure increased funding and recurring State appropriation in 2009	In August 2008, Jefferson Parish's truancy intervention program (the TASC initiative) received base funding of \$367,000 together with an additional State supplemental appropriation of \$150,000. This funding will carry the program through June 30, 2009.	Secure increased funding and recurring State appropriation beyond June 30, 2009 to fully support these initiatives				
CP4	Work with the State to secure additional resources for Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) for non-violent offenders and juveniles	Secure designation in 2008-2009	In October 2008, the State approved the State Plan Amendment allowing for Medicaid reimbursement of MST.	No further action required				
CP5	Initiate a major public outreach campaign to inform the public about new anti-crime initiatives and crime fighting successes	Unveil website and issue newsletter in 2008	Jefferson Parish has made significant progress with the public outreach campaign. JEDCO launched its first commercial, "Jefferson Parish: Opportunity Lives Here", on January 19, 2009 and will release its second on March 9th. Over the coming year, the commercials will air over 3,000 times. JEDCO has also scheduled approximately 2,000 public service announcements that will run on WWL, WDSU, WGNO, FOX and COX. Additionally, JEDCO unveiled the www.opportunityliveshere.com website in February 2009. In place of the newsletter previously planned, JEDCO is producing a custom publication, "Jefferson Life Magazine", which will highlight a different quality of life initiative every issue and will include information updates for all the initiatives. "Jefferson Life Magazine" will be mailed to select households and will be made available at multiple pick-up points around Jefferson Parish. The first edition of "Jefferson Life Magazine" will highlight beautification and is scheduled to be released in April 2009 with two additional magazines following later in the year.	Release the first edition of "Jefferson Parish Magazine" in late April 2009 and two subsequent issues later in the year				

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AB1	Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code	Adopt code in 2008-2009 depending on enforcement capacity	Following extensive meetings between the Jefferson Parish Inspection and Code Enforcement Department, the Homebuilder's Association and the Realtors' Association, consensus was reached on the proposed Property Maintenance Code which includes many features of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC). On October 8, 2008, the Jefferson Parish Council adopted Ordinance #23405 which amended the previous Property Maintenance Code to include maintenance requirements for the exterior of structures. Supplemental requirements within the ordinance include: a consolidated section of property owners' requirements for property maintenance, additional language to a grass and weed violation, prohibition of the use of metal panels as exterior facades for residential use principal structures, language clarification to the requirement that all structures, whether vacant or occupied, must post an official municipal address, and finally, to allow minor building violations to be deemed "nuisances" and to be brought before the Property Maintenance Section and the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication (BAA) rather than through the Building Inspector, Parish Attorney's Office, and the Parish Court and/or the 24th Judicial District Court.	No further action required			

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AB2	Adopt state legislation to enact more severe penalties for certain code violations	Adopt legislation in 2008	During the State's 2008 Regular Session, the Louisiana Legislature passed House Bill #1093 (HB1093) authorizing parish governing authorities to place on the ad valorem tax bill, the contempt fines, other fines, and court costs charged to property owners who fail to repair or demolish derelict structures. Governor Jindal signed HB1093 into law on July 1, 2008 as Act 653. Also passed during the same legislative session was House Bill #157 (HB157) which includes provisions for parish governing authorities to include the demolition of property for failure to comply with court orders. Governor Jindal signed HB157 into law on July 1, 2008 as Act 627. On August 20, 2008, the Jefferson Parish Council adopted Ordinance #23373 thus amending Chapter 19 of the Jefferson Parish Code of Ordinances to allow the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication (BAA) to preside over minor building violation cases. Additionally, the Ordinance permits the demolition of structures that have been vacant for more than six months. Jefferson Parish has drafted legislation (proposed bill and Jefferson Parish Council Resolution) that will allow the Parish to place judgments related to zoning and building on the ad valorem tax rolls.	Adopt building and zoning violation legislation in 2009			
AB3	Adopt state legislation to direct minor building code violations to administrative adjudication rather than to the court system	Adopt legislation in 2008	Ordinance #23373 passed by Jefferson Parish Council on August 20, 2008 (see above).	No further action required			
AB4	Adopt stronger local ordinances to limit illegal activities in motels	Research best practices in 2008; adopt ordinance(s) in 2008-2009	Jefferson Parish is currently accepting applications for a Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Enforcement Coordinator. One of the responsibilities of the person filling this position will be to consult with other jurisdictions to determine additional regulations the Parish can adopt to alleviate illegal activities in hotels.	Hire Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator, research best practices, and adopt local ordinance(s) in 2009			

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AB5	Appoint a conviction verification officer to assist apartment owners in obtaining background information on tenants	Create position and hire officer in 2008	<p>In general, the level of collaboration among the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office (JPSO), Housing Authority (JPHA), the Criminal Justice Agency (JPCJA), and the Inspections and Code Enforcement Department has increased significantly. A JPHA representative attends each Crime Prevention and Reduction Task Force meeting with the aforementioned Parish departments and agencies in addition to many others. These groups share information on prospective and current tenants and work to ensure that criminal background checks continue to be performed expeditiously. Moreover, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Department has assigned an officer to the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority to routinely perform criminal history checks on tenants enrolled in the Section 8 low-income housing voucher program. All Section 8 applicants are required, as part of the program's eligibility requirements, to sign criminal history releases. Additionally, the JPSO conducts background checks on prospective tenants in the private market, although in this instance, it is the prospective leasee's responsibility to request the investigation.</p> <p>Once the Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator is hired, he or she may assist with the criminal history checks as well as act as a liaison among the JPSO, Housing Authority, Criminal Justice Agency, Inspections and Code Enforcement, and the property owners wherein information will be more readily available for all parties.</p>	Hire Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator to work more closely with landlords in acquiring criminal background information on both prospective and current tenants			
AB6	Work with the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority to conduct more stringent pre-occupancy inspections of Section 8 housing units	Improve inspection protocols and formalize relationship with Inspection and Code Enforcement in 2008-2009	<p>As mentioned previously (AB5), communications and coordination among the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority and many other Parish departments and agencies including the Inspection and Code Enforcement Department have increased considerably. This has resulted in more rigid pre-occupancy inspections of Section 8 housing units.</p> <p>Additionally, the Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator may also assist with this initiative by acting as a liaison or information conduit for the Housing Authority, Code Enforcement, JPSO, and Section 8 landlords.</p>	Continued collaboration resulting in more frequent and stringent pre-occupancy inspections. Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator may also be utilized to aide in the coordination efforts			

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AB7	Secure additional administrative staff for the Parish Attorney's Office	Hire additional staff in 2008	In order to deal with the increased volume of work, the Jefferson Parish Attorney's Office hired two additional lawyers in May and a paralegal in December of 2008.	No further action required			
AB8	Develop a comprehensive redevelopment strategy and secure funding for the revitalization of certain areas	Issue pilot redevelopment plan RFP in 2008-2009; select developer in 2009-2010; initiate implementation in 2010	The funding required for this project's implementation is contingent on the passage of the sales tax increase to be voted on in an upcoming election (possibly May 2, 2009).	Sales tax increase passage during an upcoming (possibly May 2, 2009) election			