

Jefferson EDGE 2020

CRIME ABATEMENT

Status Report 2: October, 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 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 crime prevention (CP) and anti-blight (AB) action items.

CP = Crime Prevention AB= Anti-Blight

Action ID #	Action Item	Progress as of October 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CP1	Seek additional local resources to support the JPSO, District Attorney's Office, and municipal police departments	No longer applicable.		
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 ID #	Action Item	Original Timeline	Accomplishments/Benchmarks Met	Next Steps	Progress as of October 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	Identify surplus resources or submit ballot proposal in 2008	<p>At the end of 2008, the Jefferson Parish Council approved a resolution authorizing placement of a one-fourth of one percent (.25%) sales and use tax on the April 4th special election ballot. However, in February 2009, the Council removed the sales tax increase referendum from the ballot due to an error in the ballot language.</p> <p>Demand for stable employment in a down economy has partially addressed JPSO's post-Katrina personnel shortages, resulting in fewer job vacancies. Additionally, the political/ economic climate is unfavorable for a new revenue source at this time.</p>	No further action at this time. Continue to monitor the personnel needs of local law enforcement agencies and evaluate the need for a revenue measure of this kind in the future.	No longer applicable and removed from crime abatement action items.		
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>Planning for the establishment of a state committee to study the issue of criminal justice reform and issue recommendations is still underway. Once formed the committee will be the primary vehicle for effecting comprehensive changes to the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Additionally, a pilot program has been initiated to expand pre-release services to state inmates held in local or parish jails. Currently the state only has secured funding for two parishes: Caddo and Orleans Parish.</p>	Assemble State committee/task force; formulate recommendations and pass legislation. Evaluate the impact of the pre-release pilot program in Caddo and Orleans parishes and advocate for its expansion if it has been successful.			
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 2009, Jefferson Parish's truancy intervention program (the TASC initiative) received base funding of \$336,783 together with an additional State supplemental appropriation of \$62,500. This amount will fund the program through June 30, 2010, but this total represents a 23% cut from the FY2009 appropriation. Additionally, no secure, long-term funding for this program has been identified.	Secure increased funding for FY2011 and recurring State appropriation beyond June 30, 2010 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	Action complete. For more information, refer to March, 2009 status update.	No further action required.			

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Progress as of October 2009							
Action ID #	Action Item	Original Timeline	Accomplishments/Benchmarks Met	Next Steps	Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
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	<p>JEDCO is spearheading the production of a custom publication, "Jefferson Life Magazine", which highlights a different quality of life initiative every issue. "Jefferson Life Magazine" is mailed to select households and is available at multiple pick-up points around Jefferson Parish.</p> <p>Although crime abatement has not been a headlining topic and is not scheduled to be for the next several issues, it has been featured prominently in the two issues of Jefferson Life that have been released. The Sheriff's Office has purchased five pages of editorial space in the first four issues of the magazine, providing an opportunity to highlight gains in crime abatement. In the fall issue of Jefferson Life, there was also a story on the new crime lab being built by JPSO. The Opportunity Lives Here campaign also sent out an e-mail blast highlighting the purchase of new vehicles for code enforcement.</p> <p>Another medium for disseminating information about crime abatement efforts is the new West Bank Beacon newspaper, which is covering the entire quality of life initiative in Jefferson. Before the end of the year, the newspaper will feature an article on crime abatement efforts.</p> <p>This action item is not marked as complete because continued public outreach is essential throughout the life of the Jefferson EDGE initiative.</p>	Determine a schedule and preferred media for continued outreach on crime abatement in the coming years. Also, determine whether a headlining story on crime abatement would be appropriate in Jefferson Life magazine.			

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Action ID #	Action Item	Original Timeline	Accomplishments/Benchmarks Met	Next Steps	Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress	
AB1	Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code	Adopt code in 2008-2009 depending on enforcement capacity	Action complete. For more information, refer to March, 2009 status update.	No further action required				
AB2	Adopt state legislation to enact more severe penalties for certain code violations	Adopt legislation in 2008	During the State's 2008 Regular Session, a number of bills were signed into law that strengthened penalties and the Parish's ability to enforce code violations. During the 2009 Regular Session, HB 644 was signed into law by Governor Jindal (Act 515) to further strengthen the enforcement of code violations in Jefferson. Fines associated with a failure to repair or demolish derelict structures can now be placed on ad valorem tax bills, as can fines associated with zoning, property maintenance, or other violations. The Parish now has the ability to pursue payment of these violations in the same way that it can pursue non-payment of property (ad valorem) taxes.	No further action required.				
AB3	Adopt state legislation to direct minor building code violations to administrative adjudication rather than to the court system	Adopt legislation in 2008	Action complete. For more information, refer to March, 2009 status update.	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	A hotel/motel ordinance to increase hotel/motel standards in Jefferson Parish and reduce illegal activities (summary no. 22819) was approved unanimously by the Parish Council on October 14, 2009. This ordinance amends Chapter 20 and enacts Chapter 17.5 of the Parish Code of Ordinances. It enacts criminal penalties for renting out rooms by the hour—up to six months in jail and a \$500 fine. The Parish now also has the authority to rescind an occupational license on the basis of code violations and/or drug and prostitution arrests on the property.	Pass ordinance and aggressively enforce new standards.				

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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>Within the last two years, JPSO has worked closely with the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority to insure that criminal background checks are being conducted on those enrolled in the Section 8 housing voucher program. Preliminary indications are that the program has been successfully in identifying prospective tenants with extensive criminal histories. The Parish also hired a Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator in spring, 2009 to further address issues of crime and neighborhood quality.</p> <p>As originally conceived, this action item would provide a more accessible resource for market rate landlords as well as those participating in the Section 8 program. A criminal background check liaison has yet to be provided for market rate landlords/tenants, and there are questions about the legality of providing such a service as there is no existing law permitting this service.</p>	Investigate the legal feasibility of establishing a liaison to market rate landlords for performing criminal background checks on prospective tenants. If legally feasible, pass an ordinance to begin this program.				
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	According to the Crime Prevention and Quality of Life Coordinator for Jefferson Parish, the Parish Government is working closely with the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority to establish closer coordination and more rigid pre-occupancy/pre-qualifying inspections for Section 8 units. This program has yet to be formally initiated, but discussions are underway between the Housing Authority and Parish Government.	Finalize collaborative agreement between Parish Government and the Housing Authority for conducting more rigorous inspections.				
AB7	Secure additional administrative staff for the Parish Attorney's Office	Hire additional staff in 2008	Action complete. For more information, refer to March, 2009 status update.	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 action item is largely contingent on the passage of the revenue measure discussed above (CP1). Through the Community Development Department, Jefferson has also applied for \$10 million in federal Neighborhood Stabilization grants. This funding could go toward the implementation of this action item, but this one-time funding source would likely not be sufficient to address the full range of redevelopment needs.	Identify a potential date and a strategy for putting a sales tax proposal to Jefferson voters to fund this and other crime abatement initiatives. Monitor the status of the Neighborhood Stabilization grant application. Investigate other potential revenue sources.				

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