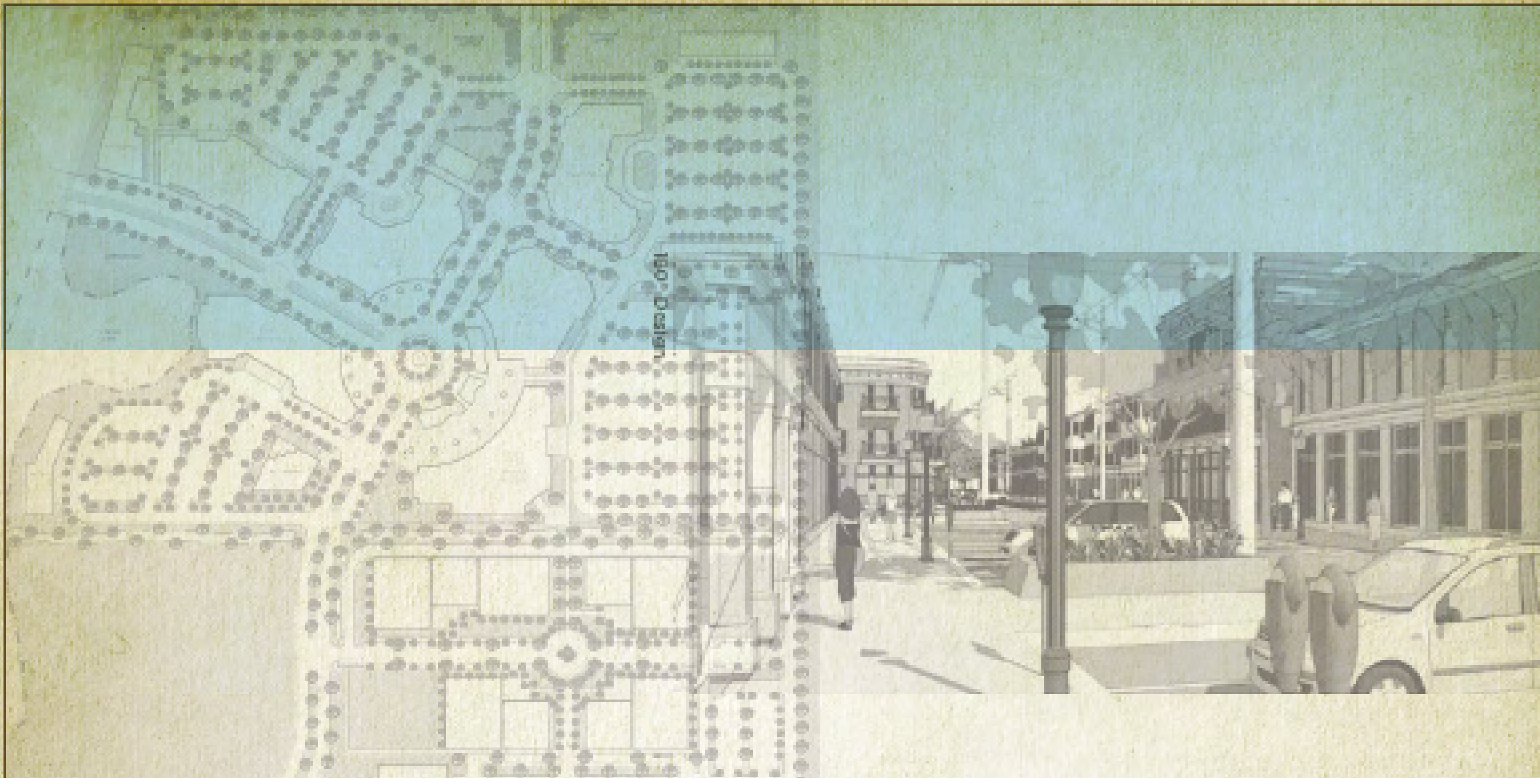


Jefferson EDGE 2020:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

• Current Conditions • Strategic Approach • Action Agenda

Prepared July, 2009

JEDCO

Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission

gcr

JEFFERSON PARISH

Aaron F. Broussard, Parish President

John Young, Councilmember-at-Large, Division A
Tom Capella, Councilmember-at-Large, Division B
Chris Roberts, Councilman, District 1
Elton Lagasse, Councilman, District 2
Byron Lee. Councilman, District 3
Louis Congemi, Councilman, District 4
Cynthia Lee-Sheng, Councilwoman, District 5

JEDCO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

David Martin, Chairman
Joe Ewell, Vice-Chairman
Mark Jacobs, Treasurer
Manny Blanco, Secretary

David Andignac
Jimmy Baum
Tina Dandry-Mayes
Jim Garvey
Paul Hurley
Greg Jordan
Mayor Tim Kerner
Dr. Vinicio Madrigal, M.D.
Lynda Nugent Smith
Bill Peperone
Scott Schellhaas
Ray Seamon
Stacey Shane Schott
Beverly Stuntz
John Tobler
Frank Trapani

Table of Contents

Introduction

The primary impetus for the *Jefferson EDGE 2020* process, which commenced in the summer of 2007, was the growing recognition that the conventional approach to economic development in Jefferson Parish had to be broadened. The combination of pre-Katrina trends and dynamic post-Katrina conditions convinced Parish leaders that a more comprehensive approach to economic development was needed. There was a collective realization that the "basics" of economic development, such as business outreach, marketing, and incentive programs, must be supported by a solid foundation of quality neighborhoods, community safety, strong public schools, and other quality of life attributes. Improving quality of life has subsequently become a cornerstone of the Parish's overall economic development efforts.

This major shift in Jefferson's approach to economic development has resulted in a series of "strategic implementation plans," collectively named *Jefferson EDGE 2020*. To date, *Jefferson EDGE 2020* has focused on seven distinct quality of life issues that are central to retaining the Parish's appeal to businesses and residents. These range from flood protection to the redevelopment of Fat City. Not only have all of the plans been extremely well received by a wide range of key stakeholders, but the implementation of the plans' action items is well underway.

The work that has been done thus far on this ambitious quality of life initiative represents a considerable break from traditional thinking about economic development in Jefferson. The plans plainly acknowledge that economic development and the basic qualities that make for an appealing community are inextricably tied. At the same time, the importance of quality of life to the prosperity of the community does not negate the importance of conventional economic development initiatives. Prosperity and quality of life must be viewed as a two-way street. While quality of life can spur economic activity, a strong economy helps to enhance quality of life. Core economic development initiatives, therefore, must remain a critical component of efforts to make Jefferson a stronger, more prosperous, more appealing community.

Economic development consists of a wide range of activities and strategies. It includes everything from infrastructure investment to workforce development to marketing and business outreach. The purpose of this document is to supplement the ambitious *Jefferson EDGE 2020* quality of life initiative with a core economic development strategy. This includes an updated assessment of current economic conditions, a summary of JEDCO's recent economic development initiatives, and a general overview of future approaches to economic development in Jefferson. Just as critically, this document also enumerates the specific economic development action items that the Parish needs, in concert with quality of life efforts, to build lasting prosperity for its residents and businesses.

Overview – Current Economic Conditions

The bedrock of any strategic planning exercise is a strong understanding of current conditions. This is particularly true in post-Katrina Jefferson Parish, where economic conditions are especially dynamic and where the economy is inextricably tied to the community's recovery from Katrina. In order to understand the economic policies and actions that Jefferson Parish should pursue in the coming years, one must first have an appreciation for where the Parish stands along a number of objective economic indicators.

By virtually every measure, Jefferson continues its robust recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Overall population is nearing pre-Katrina levels; sales tax collections remain strong; and by a number of measures, there is more business activity in Jefferson Parish now than there was before the storm. While there are few statistics that capture the effect of the worldwide economic recession upon Jefferson Parish, the limited data that are available suggest that the Parish has been economically resilient through the beginning of 2009. Overall, the limited economic data presented below paint a generally positive picture of the Parish's economic fundamentals. Job growth is strong; unemployment is relatively low; the real estate market is robust.

However, there are multiple measures that suggest that the Parish has experienced and continues to experience a relative decline in the median income of its population. The foundation for economic and community stability in any community is the presence of a healthy, sizable middle class. Jefferson remains a predominantly middle class community, but the continued erosion of its middle class could threaten its tax base, its appeal as a location for businesses, and the overall strength of its economy. These indicators suggest that the socio-economic profile of the Parish must be scrutinized closely in the coming years and that efforts to retain the Parish's middle class population, such as *Jefferson EDGE 2020*, are well founded.

Population

One of the most unequivocally positive messages about Jefferson Parish in the three and a half years since Katrina has been the resilience of the community and the rapid rate at which it has recovered. Despite the fact that Jefferson suffered considerable damage to its housing stock and commercial properties following the storm, the Parish has largely recovered its pre-Katrina population and is in many ways indistinguishable from its pre-Katrina condition.

- Jefferson Parish's population has rebounded much faster than the metropolitan area as a whole to nearly 98% of its pre-storm population by July, 2007. This is an especially impressive figure in light of the widespread flooding that much of Jefferson experienced.

- The most recent Census Bureau population estimate was for July, 2008. This figure showed a small decrease in population in Jefferson from 2007 to 2008 after several years of post-storm population growth. However, the Parish was successful in appealing the Census Bureau's original population estimate for 2007 and will likely appeal the 2008 figure as well. Based on several metrics of population growth, there is reason to believe that Jefferson's current population is approximately 445,000 or 99% of its pre-storm total[1].
- Prior to Katrina, Jefferson was experiencing very little population growth, partially a result of diminishing household sizes and partially a result of limited, readily developable land.

Pre- and Post-Katrina Population in the New Orleans Area

Parish	July 2005	July 2006	July 2007	July 2007 as % of July 2005
Jefferson	449,640	420,891	440,339	97.9%
Orleans	453,728	210,198	288,113	63.5%
St. Tammany	217,551	224,227	226,625	104.2%
St. Bernard	64,683	13,873	33,439	51.7%
St. John	45,602	47,693	47,684	104.6%
St. Charles	50,164	51,969	52,044	103.7%
Plaquemines	28,588	21,625	21,540	75.3%

Source: Census Bureau
Note: Numbers in red reflect successful 2007 Census challenges.

Employment and Unemployment

Employment statistics in Jefferson Parish are favorable, both in comparison to pre-Katrina employment and in comparison to the national unemployment rate. According to some measures, Jefferson Parish exceeded pre-Katrina employment levels as early as 2007. Other measures suggest that the Parish remains slightly below the pre-Katrina number of jobs but that job growth has been steady since 2005.

The employment picture in Jefferson Parish is particularly positive in comparison to other geographical areas. While the unemployment rates both in the New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area and in Louisiana are extremely low by national standards, Jefferson's unemployment rate is lower still. Most encouraging of all is the fact that in spite of a steepening international economic downturn, Jefferson's unemployment rate actually fell from January to February of 2009.

- According to the Louisiana Workforce Commission, overall employment in Jefferson fell significantly immediately after Hurricane Katrina but rebounded rapidly. According to their data, in 2007 overall employment in Jefferson exceeded pre-storm (2004) employment in the Parish.
- It is estimated that Jefferson is by far the "most employed" Parish in the region, with 220,419 jobs as of 2008. St. Tammany Parish, by comparison, is the next highest with 116,273[2].

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), however, overall employment in Jefferson remains slightly below pre-Katrina levels. Utilizing their methodology, the BLS estimates that as of the summer of 2008, Jefferson Parish had recovered approximately 93% of pre-Katrina employment. Even though this number is somewhat lower than the Louisiana Workforce Commission's estimate, the BLS does confirm that employment growth in Jefferson has been unabated in the three years since Katrina.

- Local unemployment figures suggest that the state, metropolitan area, and Jefferson Parish remain relatively resistant to the international economic downturn. The national unemployment rate in February, 2009 was 8.9%, up from 8.5% a month earlier. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate in Louisiana was 5.1% in February, <u>down</u> from 5.5% in January. Jefferson Parish's unemployment rate also declined from January to February of this year—from 4.9% to 4.7%[3].

Jefferson Parish Employment, 2001-2008

Year	January	June	December	Annual	Annual Change (from previous period)
2001	212,473	216,072	214,857	213,911	n/a
2002	208,330	212,908	211,371	210,070	-1.8%
2003	210,116	212,811	214,378	212,251	1.0%
2004	211,586	214,114	215,126	213,301	0.5%
2005	211,169	216,292	179,644	198,682	-6.9%
2006	176,324	193,137	198,237	190,405	-4.2%
2007	195,656	199,052	203,155	198,071	4.0%
2008	(P) 198,085	(P) 201,899			

Notes: P = Preliminary
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009.

- Given the breadth and depth of the current recession, Jefferson has not been and will not be fully immune to job losses. Nonetheless, the employment data underscore the fundamental strength and diversity of employment in Jefferson Parish.

Employment Growth, 2003-2008: Select Parishes in the New Orleans MSA

	2003	2004	% Change	2005	% Change	2006	% Change	2007	% Change	2008*	% Change
Jefferson	212,410	215,062	1.2%	199,982	-7.0%	207,538	3.8%	214,033	3.1%	220,467	3.0%
Orleans	186,325	185,607	-0.4%	170,352	-8.2%	91,142	-46.5%	102,479	12.4%	105,559	3.0%
St. Bernard	28,918	29,109	0.7%	26,971	-7.3%	6,974	-74.1%	9,362	34.2%	9,643	3.0%
St. Tammany	96,228	100,086	4.0%	96,000	-4.1%	109,478	14.0%	113,009	3.2%	116,407	3.0%

Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission
*Reflects Preliminary 2008 Information; Not Seasonally Adjusted

Tax Revenue

Local sales tax revenue is one of the economic indicators that has fluctuated most wildly since Hurricane Katrina. The near cessation of business activity in the region for the first two months after the storm resulted in a steep decline in sales tax revenue in Jefferson. From that point forward, though, purchases related to rebuilding activity coupled with the rapid recovery of Jefferson's retail sector resulted in a significant spike in sales taxes and overall collections that were substantially greater than pre-storm totals.

As was predicted soon after the storm, retail activity in Jefferson has slowed in recent months but remains approximately at pre-storm levels. While Jefferson is rather insulated from the larger economic slowdown, the recession may have had an effect on retail sales—and sales tax collections—over the past several months.

- Total sales tax collections in 2004, the last full calendar year before Hurricane Katrina, were $350 million. Annual sales tax collections rose to a high of $488 million in 2006 and leveled off to $433 million in 2007. In 2008 sales tax receipts were approximately 5% below 2007 totals, thus reinforcing the fact that sales tax collections have stabilized from the post-Katrina spike[4].
- The moderate decline in sales taxes from 2007 to 2008 is most likely a reflection of the slowing pace of rebuilding activity and associated purchases. Other contributing factors could be the return of retail establishments in neighboring Orleans Parish and the slowdown of the national economy.
- The return of sales tax receipts to pre-Katrina levels had been anticipated for some time. An analysis by Systems Solutions Consulting in March of 2007 projected that sales taxes would return to pre-Katrina levels in 2009.
- While the overall retail climate in Jefferson Parish remains strong, the Parish has witnessed the loss of some major chain retailers in recent months as a result of the national economic slowdown. Both Linens and Things and Circuit City closed all of their stores across the country in recent months, including their Jefferson Parish stores.

Assessed Value of Real Property (000's)

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
$3,210,149	$3,030,455	$3,073,676	$3,340,030	$3,970,542

Ad Valorem Taxes (000's)

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
$141,151	$146,209	$141,243	$127,901	$158,408

Source: JEDCO

Another principal source of tax revenue in Jefferson Parish is property or "ad valorem" taxes. Both the assessed value of real estate and overall tax collections in Jefferson Parish were rising steadily before Hurricane Katrina. The profound destruction to property that the Hurricane inflicted in Jefferson resulted in a reduction of assessments and an accompanying reduction in property taxes. After a two-year dip, property tax collections rebounded substantially in 2008 and now exceed pre-storm collections. Additionally, the Parish Assessor's office conducted a constitutionally mandated re-assessment of property in 2008.[5]

After stagnating in 2005 and 2006, largely as a result of storm damage, the assessed value of real property in Jefferson now greatly exceeds the pre-storm level.

- In 2008, ad valorem property tax revenues totaled $158,408,000. This figure is 24% higher than collections in 2007 and 8.3% higher than collections in 2005[6].
- The total assessed value of real property in Jefferson was $3,970,542,000 in 2008. This is 24% greater than the pre-storm assessed value of $3,210,149,000, recorded in 2004[7].

Airport and Overall Business Activity

Aside from tax revenues and employment, there are few regularly updated indicators of overall economic activity. Passenger traffic at Armstrong International Airport and the total number of businesses and new business registrations (as measured by locally issued occupational licenses) are two such indicators. While airport traffic has grown steadily since Katrina, it remains below pre-storm levels. Revenues from occupational licenses, on the other hand, have grown by 36% over the past three years and are well above pre-storm totals.[8]

- There has been considerable anecdotal evidence of business relocations from other metro area parishes to Jefferson Parish since Hurricane Katrina. As population and public services have returned in other parishes, though, this trend has likely slowed.
- Occupational licenses issued by the Sheriff's Office continue to indicate robust economic activity. Total revenues from occupational licenses have steadily risen in recent years: from $5.7 million in 2004, to $6.6 million in 2006, to $8.4 million in 2008.[9]
- As with employment data in Jefferson Parish, these statistics are particularly impressive in light of the severe international recession.
- Airport traffic is moderately lower than pre-Katrina levels (at approximately 82% of passenger traffic in 2004), but passenger traffic has rebounded steadily from 2006 through 2008. Passenger totals for 2008 were 5.6% higher than in 2007.[10]

Airport Traffic, Pre- and Post-Katrina

Year	Total Passengers
2000	9,874,257
2001	9,567,651
2002	9,251,773
2003	not available
2004	9,733,179
2005	7,775,147
2006	6,218,419
2007	7,525,533
2008	7,944,397

Source: Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport

Housing

In the New Orleans Metropolitan Area, home values have generally resisted the kind of steep declines that other communities throughout the country have witnessed. Whereas double digit declines in value have not been uncommon elsewhere in the country, home values in New Orleans have been relatively a stable. Many parishes in the area have suffered slight declines in the average sales price of single family homes; but in a potentially troubling development, Jefferson Parish has experienced the largest percentage decline in the region. Home values dropped by approximately 7.6% in Jefferson from the end of 2007 to the end of 2008—a far smaller decline than that experienced by many other communities throughout the country but a more severe decline that that experienced by other parishes in the metropolitan area.[11]

This phenomenon is partly attributable to the condition of the national economy, but it is likely amplified by conditions that are unique to post-storm New Orleans. The level of devastation that New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish experienced from Katrina may have temporarily displaced residents to less-damaged Jefferson Parish, thereby inflating home values for a period of time. The return to more of a normal, less inflated real estate market and the restoration of habitable for sale houses in Orleans and St. Bernard may be a major reason for the decline in prices that Jefferson has witnessed. It is far too early to be alarmed about these recent trends in home values, as prices in Jefferson remain above pre-Katrina levels and as post-Katrina market distortions are a likely contributing factor. Nonetheless, Parish leaders must continue to monitor these data in 2009 in comparison to other communities in the metro area and in comparison to national trends.

- The average price of a single family home in Jefferson Parish in 2008 was $199,070. This is 7.64% less than the average sales price in 2007 ($215,547), but it remains 3.85% higher than the average value in (pre-Katrina) 2005 of $191,696.[12]
- As was the case before Katrina, Jefferson can best be understood as distinct submarkets, with significant differences in price, price appreciation, and sales activity on the East Bank and West Bank. While average home prices vary considerably between the East Bank and West Bank, both communities experienced declines in average sales prices in 2008.[13]
- Residential permit activity was mixed. Permits in 2008 for single family homes in Jefferson were down by 26% from 2007 levels and down by approximately 50% from 2004, the last full year before Katrina. Meanwhile, multifamily permits in 2008 were nearly three times higher than in 2007 and nearly five times higher than in 2004.[14]

Income, Poverty, and Migration Data – Troubling Trends

The economic data presented thus far provide a largely positive picture of the economy of Jefferson Parish. They describe a Parish that has recovered rapidly in the face of regional devastation and extensive flooding within its boundaries. They describe an economy that has grown considerably in recent years and that has been relatively immune from an economic downtown that has resulted in near-depression conditions in other areas of the country. However, statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service paint a different picture. In spite of the fundamentally sound employment and employer climate in Jefferson Parish, the profile of the population appears to be changing somewhat.

Demographic change is a natural characteristic of every community, but changes in a community's population should be a source of concern to local leaders when the socio-economic "equilibrium" of the community appears to be upset. A healthy, sustainable job market, retail economy, and tax base all hinge on a community's having a substantial middle class population. If a community witnesses a severe decline in its socio-economic profile, it may become difficult for the community to fund needed services, and the community over time may be seen as a less lucrative, less appealing place to do business.

Jefferson is in no imminent danger of being in this position. It remains a fundamentally middle class—though still diverse—community with healthy neighborhoods and a robust tax base. However, migration data from the IRS and income and poverty data from the Census Bureau suggest that a moderate decline in Jefferson's socio-economic profile may be underway. If this trend continues unabated, Jefferson Parish may be faced with the fiscal, neighborhood, and quality of life problems that afflict more challenged communities. These changes could, in turn, diminish Jefferson's appeal as a residential community and potentially its overall economic competitiveness.

The migration trends outlined by the IRS data and the changing income profile of Jefferson residents suggest that the quality of life initiatives identified by the *Jefferson EDGE 2020* are well justified. Halting the slow outmigration of middle class families and attracting new middle class families to Jefferson Parish will be critical to maintaining the healthy economic growth that has characterized the Parish over the past 60 years.

- Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Jefferson Parish was witnessing *relative decline* in the income profile of its families. That is, growth in median family income in Jefferson Parish was not keeping pace with growth in median family income in the metropolitan area overall.[15]

- Hurricane Katrina has potentially exacerbated this trend. Median family income between decennial Census years (1990, 2000, etc.) is a less reliable figure than income figures collected in the full Census every ten years. Nonetheless, estimates prepared by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey suggest that median family income in Jefferson is now lower than the metropolitan median. Jefferson Parish has typically had a median family income moderately above the metropolitan figure.

- At the same time, the family poverty rate in Jefferson increasingly resembles the poverty rate of the metro area as a whole. Family poverty has declined in Jefferson over the years, but at a slower rate than the metro area overall.[16]

- Migration data from the IRS highlight two unfavorable trends. More households, as measured by tax returns, typically move away from Jefferson than move into Jefferson. Secondly, the households that migrate to Jefferson Parish tend to have lower incomes than the households that move away.

- In the most recent year for which data are available (2006-2007), more households actually moved to Jefferson Parish than moved away. However, the average income of in-movers tended to be over $10,000 less than the average income of out-migrants.[17]

- These data suggest the importance of efforts to improve quality of life and maintain Jefferson Parish as a "community of choice"—the kind of community that will attract residents who can afford to choose a different community but who make the conscious decision to live in Jefferson.

Family Income and Poverty: Jefferson Parish and the Metropolitan Region: 1990-2007

	1990	2000	2005	2007
Jefferson Parish				
Family Households	119,065	120,841	110,045	104,632
Median Family Income	$32,446	$45,834	$53,341	$57,409
Family Poverty Rate	11.4%	10.8%	12.3%	9.2%
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA MSA*				
Family Households	318,544	343,201	309,381	245,792
Median Family Income	$29,304	$42,626	$49,434	$58,125
Family Poverty Rate	17.5%	14.8%	14.5%	10.5%

Source: Census Bureau; Census 1990, SF-3; Census 2000, SF-3; American Community Survey 2005, 2007
(Dollar amounts reflect previous year's income; not adjusted for inflation)
*Defined by the Census Bureau as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) consisting of seven parishes: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, and St. Tammany

Economic Development in Jefferson Parish: A Strategic Response to Emerging Challenges

In recent years, there has been considerable focus on economic development policy, both within the New Orleans metropolitan area and at the state level. Much of the attention has been directed toward the state tax code and specifically at reducing or eliminating taxes that put Louisiana at a competitive disadvantage relative to other states. This concept attracted considerable bipartisan support in the State Legislature, which culminated in the repeal of two state taxes in 2004: the corporate franchise tax on debt and the state sales tax on the purchase of machinery and equipment. Additionally, legislation was passed in 2008 to phase out the sales tax on business utilities.

According to many experts, the tax cuts that have been signed into law in recent years have succeeded in reducing the competitive disadvantage that Louisiana had faced in relation to other southern states. By extension, Jefferson Parish—like all parishes within the state—has been made more competitive in attracting and retaining businesses as a result of this state legislation. Jefferson has long had a reputation for being a parish that is business friendly and that provides a low cost, low tax environment for its business community. This reputation is well deserved as the Parish is characterized by efficient, responsive local governance and by low property tax rates and a sales tax that is competitive with other communities in the region. Maintaining an environment that is business friendly and that minimizes the cost of government to business must remain a core economic development strategy in the years ahead.

However, this strategy, while a necessary component of the Parish's economic development efforts, must be coupled with a comprehensive suite of additional economic development policies. At present, Jefferson Parish faces a number of competitive challenges relative to other communities within the state and across the Southern region. In the context of these challenges and the emerging evidence that suggests that the Parish may be slowly losing its middle class, an ambitious, holistic economic development strategy is an imperative. Jefferson Parish must remain a community that provides a low cost, low tax business environment, but it must also be willing to make the strategic investments that will elevate the overall *quality* of doing business and living in Jefferson.

The first major economic challenge that Jefferson Parish faces is the fact that the Parish is an aging community with aging infrastructure. The *Jefferson EDGE 2020* plans have rightfully pointed out that considerable local, state, and federal resources must be committed in the coming years to support a range of pressing infrastructure and community needs. These include the construction of new schools, the comprehensive redevelopment of Fat City and the Parish's major boulevards, improvement of the Parish's drainage infrastructure, and addressing crime and neighborhood blight. Given that Jefferson's newest school was completed in 1987, the resource needs of Jefferson Parish are real, and they are considerable. If Jefferson is to compete with other communities that offer exemplary community infrastructure, it must be committed to making the necessary public investments.

The second major challenge that Jefferson Parish faces is the scarcity and the cost of developable land within its boundaries. As a mature suburban community whose remaining undeveloped land is largely in areas with wetlands, Jefferson is not blessed with thousands of acres of low-cost, well drained land. Both from the standpoint of residents and businesses, there is a cost premium associated with a Jefferson Parish location because of the price of real estate. The unavailability of developable land also has implications for the quality of the built environment and the quality of the Parish's housing stock. Jefferson Parish was largely built out by 1980, meaning that most of the residential structures and many of the commercial structures are at least thirty years old. Jefferson Parish cannot effectively compete with other communities on the basis of spacious, abundant commercial property and a spacious, modern housing stock. Upgrading the *quality* of the community and creating a community that residents and businesses choose to locate within (in spite of premiums associated with the cost of land) is a principal way to offset this challenge of scarce land and an older building stock.

Much of the infrastructure in Jefferson is at least 30 years old and is in need of substantial investment.

Photo credit: Mark Strozier

Unlike newer suburban communities, Jefferson does not have an abundance of low-cost, readily developable land. Attracting reinvestment dollars to the *existing* footprint of the Parish will be a critical challenge in the coming years.

For these reasons, Jefferson Parish must recommit itself to a balanced, truly comprehensive economic development strategy. This strategy must balance maintaining a low cost business climate with the investments that are needed to transform Jefferson Parish into a community of quality. Because of the inescapably high cost of real estate and the age of its neighborhoods and housing stock, Jefferson must ensure that it remains a compelling place to live and do business *in spite* of these challenges. Jefferson must become the kind of place where residents and businesses will be willing to make certain trade-offs (such as older housing, smaller commercial footprints, more expensive real estate) in order to live in a first-rate, high quality community. Therefore, community characteristics such as high-performing schools, attractive commercial centers, and vibrant neighborhoods must be just as much of a selling point for Jefferson Parish as efficient governance and low taxes.

Fortunately, this is precisely the kind of balanced, comprehensive approach to economic development that has been enumerated in other economic development efforts. These principles were expressed in various ways in the *Jefferson EDGE 2010* economic development plan, adopted in 2005, and they have been reiterated even more forcefully in the ongoing *EDGE 2020* process. The key challenge in the coming years is for the broader community and the elected leadership of Jefferson Parish to recommit themselves to the idea that Jefferson must simultaneously be a community of efficiency and a community of quality.

Because of its age and relatively high cost of land, Jefferson must position itself to be a community of quality. It must attract residents and businesses in spite of an older housing stock and more expensive real estate.

To translate this concept into reality, there are a number of broad, over-arching policies that JEDCO, the Parish government, and entire community should pursue. These policies exemplify a balanced approach to economic development. They are as follows:

- **Continue to strive for greater efficiencies and preserve Jefferson as a low cost, business friendly community to the maximum extent possible.** Like any community, Jefferson has a fundamental responsibility to provide as low-cost and as low-tax of a business climate as possible. This must continue to be a cornerstone of the Parish's economic development efforts, and this policy must be balanced against the resources that will necessarily be needed to preserve and enhance Jefferson as a community of quality.

- **Identify key potential growth industries and lead targeted outreach efforts to market Jefferson as a potential hub for those industries.** It is not enough for Jefferson Parish to simply be a low tax, low cost community for all companies; instead, Jefferson must identify those industries that will build on the Parish's intrinsic strengths and that have substantial growth potential nationally. Coastal restoration, environmental engineering, digital media, and energy are all examples of industries that hold tremendous promise for Jefferson Parish. Jefferson must think and act strategically about what the sources of high quality jobs will be in the coming years.

- **Invest in infrastructure and coordinated regional initiatives to set the stage for redevelopment and reinvestment.** While there is undeveloped land in Jefferson Parish that could be successfully developed, much of the future of Jefferson will hinge on its ability to catalyze *reinvestment* in its neighborhoods and commercial corridors. Infrastructure investments and regional strategies that encourage redevelopment rather than sprawling new development will be essential to this strategy.
- **Improve the quality of the workforce and connect the underemployed and unemployed to open jobs.** Furthering growth and prosperity in Jefferson is not just a matter of increasing the aggregate number of jobs in the community; it is just as much about addressing existing, excess capacity in the labor force and doing a better job of connecting job seekers to job openings.

As Jefferson Parish pursues these goals in the coming years, JEDCO will undoubtedly play a central role in translating the economic development principles outlined above into tangible action. JEDCO's on-going initiatives and recent accomplishments portend the critical role that the agency will play in the coming years.

Actions Underway

Unquestionably, the most significant improvement in the economic climate of Jefferson Parish in recent years has been the on-going investment in the region's flood projection system. The most basic quality that any business needs in order to survive and thrive is the knowledge that its investments will be secure. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, concern about the security of the region led some firms to move their offices from the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain to locations that were perceived to be more protected from hurricanes. As outlined in the *EDGE 2020* Flood Protection report, however, unprecedented investments in flood protection are being made on an accelerated timetable to significantly strengthen Jefferson Parish's and the region's flood defenses. Already with the incremental improvements that have been made, the region enjoys the highest level of hurricane protection in its history. In 2011, with the completion of the 100-year hurricane protection system, those defenses will be even more robust.

Complimenting these critical investments in the security of the Parish have been JEDCO's on-going efforts to build prosperity and enhance the overall economic climate of Jefferson. Over the years, JEDCO has led a number of economic development initiatives ranging from the traditional business retention/expansion/attraction model to small business financing and business incubation. Most recently, of course, JEDCO has supplemented these core responsibilities with the development of strategic action plans to address some of the Parish's most pressing quality of life problems through the *Jefferson EDGE 2020* initiative.

JEDCO's recent and on-going initiatives and accomplishments include the following:

Business Assistance and Outreach

- JEDCO has remained aggressive in its business retention and expansion efforts. Specifically, JEDCO's Business Retention/Expansion Program combines persistent telephone calls to present and potential businesses (200-300 calls per year) while also processing an average of 35 economic incentive requests per year from interested businesses.
- Working with JEDCO, the Parish government created a new Parish Economic Development Incentive Fund that has played a role in attracting investment and generating new jobs.

JEDCO's website (www.jedco.org) is a critical component of JEDCO's business outreach efforts. The website also functions as a portal to Jefferson Parish for businesses and investors.

- Through incentive programs administered through JEDCO and with JEDCO assistance, over 5,500 jobs were retained and over 600 net new jobs were created in Jefferson in 2008.
- JEDCO publishes a Manufacturing Resource Guide and Economic Profile of the Parish in order to spur interest in Jefferson and offer guidance for any proposed business expansion or relocation.
- JEDCO publishes a website and an annual report and hosts an annual luncheon in order to inform the public and the business community about ongoing economic development progress in Jefferson Parish.
- JEDCO also markets the opportunities and recent successes of the Parish via regular print and radio advertisements as well as mailers. Also, the JEDCO website functions as the "front door" to the community for many businesses, and it provides information on the demographic and economic profile of the Parish.
- In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, JEDCO opened two Business Counseling Centers, secured 900 FEMA trailers for Jefferson Parish companies, and organized a number of post-hurricane forums to keep business apprised of myriad hurricane recovery procedures.

Financing

- JEDCO provides assistance to small businesses in helping them to structure financing. In addition to overall technical assistance, JEDCO has helped to connect business owners to available incentives. For example, JEDCO is the Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) manager for the City of Gretna and the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission. This fund allows a developer or business owner to purchase a contaminated site (such as a former gas station) and subsidizes the costs of site remediation.
- JEDCO also is responsible for managing and administering a number of federal business assistance programs. These include the Small Business Administration's (SBA) 504 loan program, the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) revolving loan fund, and a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loan program on behalf of the Parish government .
- JEDCO was also an intermediary selected by the state to administer the Louisiana Business Recovery Grant and Loan Program (BRGL) in 2007 and 2008. Aimed at businesses with fewer than 50 employees, the BRGL program under JEDCO's stewardship has distributed over $18 million in financing to small businesses in Jefferson Parish since 2007.

- In 2008, JEDCO was responsible for closing or approving 62 business loans for an estimated employment impact of 624 jobs and an overall economic impact of over $17 million.
- As the industrial development board for Jefferson Parish, JEDCO has issued a number of Industrial Development Bonds, both tax exempt and taxable, for a number of redevelopment and investment projects.

Small Business Incubation

- JEDCO has developed the Enterprise Center West, which assists small businesses and startups with financial, technical, operational, and administrative support. This project is in partnership with the Louisiana Small Business Development Center.
- In addition to the Enterprise Center West, JEDCO provides ongoing support to small businesses and start ups in the form of consulting work (accounting, marketing, financing), seminars, a mentor program, and clerical support.

Churchill Technology and Business Park

- JEDCO has spearheaded the development of the Churchill Technology and Business Park on the West Bank, a business park campus which promises to be the center for new and growing businesses in Jefferson.
- The Park is currently open and will welcome its first tenants in 2010: JEDCO's new offices, the Enterprise Center West business incubator, and the new campus of the Patrick F. Taylor Science and Technology Academy.

The Churchill Technology and Business Park promises to be a major locus of job growth on the West Bank in the coming years.

Action Items

To build upon the initiatives underway, to strengthen Jefferson's economy, and to solidify the Parish as a community of quality, a multifaceted approach to economic development is needed in the coming years. Unlike the *Jefferson EDGE 2020* quality of life plans, there is seemingly little thematic unity among the action items that this plan recommends. This is a function both of the breadth of potential economic development strategies and of the economic diversity of present day Jefferson Parish. There is no such thing as an economic "silver bullet," particularly for a community as large and diverse as Jefferson. Thus, a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to strengthening the Parish's economy is in order.

The economic development action items that this plan recommends can be divided into five critical issues, all of which are consistent with the strategic, balanced approach to economic development outlined earlier in this plan. The five critical issues are Land Development and Redevelopment, Workforce, Transportation and Regional Initiatives, Advocacy, and Business Outreach/Quality Jobs.

These issues are very similar to the four critical issues outlined in the last comprehensive economic development plan that JEDCO undertook, the *Jefferson EDGE 2010* plan, which was completed immediately prior to Hurricane Katrina. The fact that there is considerable overlap between this document and the *EDGE 2010* plan suggests that the earlier plan was prescient in identifying key opportunities and evaluating the Parish's economic potential. There has been real progress in meeting the goals, policies, and actions outlined in the *EDGE 2010*; but there have been a number of developments in the intervening years that require these critical issues to be revisited and the accompanying action items to be modified. Hurricane Katrina, local and national economic trends, the recovery of the metropolitan region over the past three and a half years, and the emergence of new economic opportunities are all critical factors that are continuing to shape Jefferson's economic prospects. Furthermore, some of the action items identified back in 2004 and 2005 as priorities for Jefferson remain priorities; but because of resource constraints, insufficient community will, or other factors, implementation has not occurred. These actions should be addressed with renewed vigor and determination in the coming years.

Given that economic development is so broad of a concept, the action items outlined below are not exhaustive and certainly do not go into the level of detail that each of the items ultimately warrants in the coming years. Nonetheless, this plan does provide a relatively concise roadmap of *attainable* economic development action items. They will preserve and attract jobs, expand prosperity to more Jefferson residents, position Jefferson to attract more reinvestment, and solidify Jefferson as a parish that is both business friendly and a community of quality.

Land Development and Redevelopment

Given the scarcity of readily developable land in Jefferson Parish, land functions as an effective ceiling on the growth of the Parish's population, and—in certain industries—a ceiling on potential job growth. Therefore, unlocking new development opportunities and redevelopment opportunities is one of the central challenges that Jefferson faces in the coming years. Overcoming the obstacles that are intrinsic to redevelopment will require strategic capital investments, a new regulatory framework, and concerted public-private partnerships to spur development in certain areas.

1. **Modify land use regulations and invest in infrastructure improvements to develop an "Elmwood West" commercial and industrial node.** There are many converging circumstances that could generate momentum for a West Bank equivalent of the Elmwood Business and Industrial Park. The Huey P. Long Bridge, woefully inadequate for truck traffic and commuter traffic for years, is in the process of being expanded. This will unlock the development potential of the West Bank. Additionally, there are few, if any, remaining, large scale development parcels in Elmwood, and the cost of real estate in Elmwood is forcing some prospective tenants to look elsewhere in the metropolitan region. Finally, although years away, the completion of I-49 will make the area at the West Bank base of the Huey P. Long Bridge an especially appealing location for manufacturing and distribution enterprises.

The widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge will open up new development opportunities on the West Bank.

   In order to prepare the site for further development in anticipation of the completion of the bridge widening, significant infrastructure upgrades, new land use regulations, and even some site assembly will likely be required. A small area study would be the first step in setting the stage for the redevelopment of the area.

2. **Collaborate with Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport to create a master plan for the redevelopment of Airport "buy-out" property.** As part of a federally sponsored program to mitigate noise surrounding airports, Armstrong International Airport purchased a number of residential properties at the periphery of the airport in the 1990's. The properties have remained fallow since then, but they may be used for commercial or even light industrial purposes. The limited supply of "greenfield" development sites in Jefferson and the proximity of these parcels to the Interstate and the Airport make them prime candidates for job generating uses. JEDCO and Jefferson Parish should work closely with the Airport and the City of Kenner to craft a master plan for the use of the properties that creates lasting economic activity. A Request For Proposals (RFP) is being developed by the Airport to study the potential use of these properties. JEDCO and Jefferson Parish should be a partner and active participant in the formulation of development plans.

3. **Continue to aggressively market the first 40 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park.** Recently opened, the Churchill Technology and Business Park will provide a new hub for high quality office space in an appealing setting. The relocation of JEDCO in 2010 and the relocation of the Enterprise Center West business incubator will give the Park its first tenants. This should set the stage for further private interest in the Park in the coming years, but JEDCO and the Parish must remain aggressive in their marketing efforts. Given the relative proximity of the park to both the Harvey Canal and the energy industry in Terrebonne Parish, energy services companies would make for a logical target market. Furthermore, there has been ample discussion in recent years of south Louisiana's potential to become a hub for green energy. Establishing wind farms along the coast and using the Mississippi River as a source of hydroelectric power have both been mentioned as potential green energy sources. Again, the Technology Park's proximity to the River and deepwater access channels position it as a prime candidate for the headquarters of companies in this industry.

4. **Identify partners and potential funding sources to implement Phase II development of the remaining 50 acres at the Churchill Technology and Business Park.** While the first phase of the Churchill Technology and Business Park has just recently opened, the cost and length of time involved in developing a second phase suggest that preliminary work on the second phase should begin. A second phase of the Park will require significant public investment in utility upgrades and site preparation. JEDCO should begin efforts to identify sources of financing, public and private development partners, and a timetable for Phase II development.

Workforce

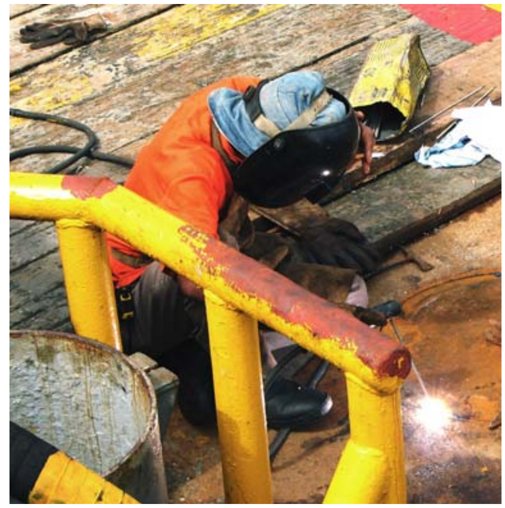
Building a more prosperous community is not just a matter of increasing the aggregate number of jobs; it is also a matter of doing a better job of connecting *existing* residents to *existing* jobs. There are numerous anecdotes of major employers that are simply unable to find qualified applicants in the New Orleans region to fill good-paying positions. At the same time, there are thousands of individuals in the metropolitan area that are impoverished and without a reliable source of income. The New Orleans area, in comparison to other metropolitan areas around the country, suffers tremendously from a sizable impoverished underclass that is not even part of the formal labor force. Unemployment statistics do not even account for this segment of the population. Connecting individuals—especially those who are chronically unemployed—to stable work would benefit the economy in so many ways. Businesses would see their productivity increase; poverty and all of its attendant social problems would decrease; and overall purchasing power and business activity throughout the region would increase.

Unfortunately, arriving at that outcome is an extremely complex task for policy makers. It involves local industry, community and technical colleges, the public school system, social service providers, non-profits, and myriad local, state, and federal agencies. For as complex as workforce development issues are, they are too important to the economy, quality of life, and overall health of the community to ignore.

5. **Build upon existing efforts of GNO Inc. and commission a comprehensive study and action plan for the workforce development infrastructure in the New Orleans region.** The complexity of the region's workforce development infrastructure far exceeds the purview of this action plan. As such, it is a subject that merits its own treatment. This report and action plan should include, among other topics, detailed analyses of the organizational structure of the entities involved in workforce, their administrative and managerial capacity, existing resources and resource needs, best practices from around the country, and the effects of recent state legislation on workforce development services. This document should focus in particular on expanding collaborative relationships between businesses and the education system. Programs such as dual enrollment, career pathways, and long-term business/education partnerships should be examined in depth. The plan should contain detailed legislative and funding recommendations, concrete suggestions for improving coordination between multiple agencies, measurable benchmarks, and recommendations for improving the management and administration of workforce and workforce education programs.

This study should build upon the extensive analysis of regional workforce supply and demand that was completed in the fall of 2008. This report, commissioned by GNO Inc., provides a comprehensive examination of the characteristics of the regional labor force and the labor needs of regional businesses. It focuses less, however, on the *infrastructure* of workforce development and recommends that further analysis be conducted to identify specifically how regional workforce programs can be improved. This level of analysis, with a detailed focus on implementation, is what is now needed to build on previous efforts.

Photo credit: Henrique Vicente



The structure of workforce development programs, funding sources, and implementing agencies is exceedingly complex. This topic warrants its own study to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of

Transportation and Regional Initiatives

The New Orleans metropolitan area would have much to gain from a more coordinated, region-focused strategy in regards to land development, infrastructure, transportation improvements, and economic development generally. Concepts of regional cooperation have typically only been discussed in the context of the metropolitan area. However, regional coordination should not end at the boundaries of the seven parish New Orleans area. New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the I-12 corridor—if linked by transportation infrastructure—could become a kind of "super-region" in the way that Dallas/Fort Worth and Washington/Baltimore currently function. What are presently close yet economically distinct regions could become a single market of over 2,000,000 people. More effectively linking these regions would have a number of significant economic ramifications. A larger single market and significantly expanded purchasing power could attract more investment and attention from around the country. More effective synergies and relationships could be developed between government, universities, health care providers, and businesses in the respective regions. And employers and employees would effectively have access to a much broader and diverse array of job seekers and job openings.

6. **Support the development of a high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, with a stop in Jefferson Parish.** A high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge is the linchpin of the concept of building an economic "super-region" in southeast Louisiana. In the recent federal stimulus package, over $8 billion was appropriated to high-speed, inter-city rail projects. An additional $1-2 billion is expected on an annual basis for the next four years. Furthermore, the Gulf Coast region (including New Orleans and Baton Rouge) has been designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation as a corridor that is eligible for federal high speed rail improvements. The region should capitalize on this unique opportunity to build a high speed rail connection between the two metropolitan areas to link the economy, the population, and the workforce of the two metropolitan areas.

Southeast Louisiana is a federally designated high speed rail corridor that could be eligible for billions in federal funding. A high speed rail line between New Orleans and Baton Rouge would have wide ranging economic benefits and would more closely link the economies of the two regions.

7. **Support the implementation of transportation projects of regional significance, such as a light rail line through Jefferson Parish to the airport, improvements to the Earhart Expressway, and the construction of I-49.** There are a number of pending transportation projects in the region that are expected to enhance truck transportation, improve commuting times, and elevate the overall quality of life of Parish residents. Jefferson Parish should continue to aggressively pursue state and federal funding in coordination with other parish governments so that these critical transportation priorities may be completed on an expedited timetable.

8. **Collaborate with major railroads and the Regional Planning Commission to implement the New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway Study.** One of the principal competitive advantages of Jefferson Parish and the New Orleans region is the superior rail connections to the rest of the country. Six "Class I" railroads converge in the New Orleans region, a level of connectivity that is unparalleled. However, in many ways the regional rail infrastructure does not function efficiently and effectively. There are a number of bottlenecks in the network that add considerable delays to travel times, and there are far too many at-grade crossings that impede the flow of traffic, reduce quality of life in neighborhoods, and create safety hazards. To address these concerns, the six Class I railroads, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad and the Regional Planning Commission formulated the New Orleans Rail Gateway study in 2007 to identify needed capital improvements. Among the improvements were proposals to add more facilities to improve the coordination of train movements; to expand rail marshalling facilities at railroad terminals; and to reduce dangerous at-grade crossings.[20] Jefferson Parish should be an active advocate for these improvements and should collaborate closely with the Regional Planning Commission to secure the public and private funding and the regulatory approvals necessary to improve the efficiency of rail transportation through the region.

The New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway initiative would eliminate dangerous at-grade crossings and would speed the flow of commercial freight through the metropolitan area.

Advocacy

One of the principal economic development responsibilities of any community is to be an effective advocate for job generating initiatives and public policies that support local economic activity. There are a variety of issues at the local, state, and federal level that demand the involvement of JEDCO and Jefferson Parish because of their potential to affect—in good ways and bad—the economy of Jefferson Parish. The Parish must be able to speak cogently and with a clear voice on these issues in order to protect the interests of existing businesses and to catalyze further job growth.

9. **Work closely with East Jefferson General Hospital, Ochsner Health System, and West Jefferson General Hospital to facilitate the expansion of medical facilities throughout the Parish.** Ochsner Health System, the largest employer in Jefferson Parish, has announced plans to undertake a major expansion of its facilities on the north side of Jefferson Highway, including the construction of a state of the art cancer center. The two public hospitals in Jefferson Parish—East Jefferson and West Jefferson—may also need to expand the size of their campuses in the future. Given the importance of health care to the economy and overall quality of life of the Parish, JEDCO should work closely with all three hospitals to address regulatory and infrastructure issues in order to facilitate their growth.

JEDCO and the Parish must work closely with Ochsner, East Jefferson, and West Jefferson hospitals to facilitate imminent and long-term expansion plans.

10. **Oppose changes in the federal tax code that would discourage off-shore oil and gas exploration.** The five-year budget that was submitted this year by the Administration to Congress originally included provisions to eliminate tax breaks that facilitate off-shore oil and gas exploration and production activity. According to representatives from the energy industry, the elimination of these tax breaks would have a devastating impact on offshore activity, particularly in light of the present low price of oil. There is considerable employment in Jefferson Parish that is tied to the oil industry and to offshore production and exploration. Parish leaders should work closely with the state's congressional delegation to ensure that existing tax breaks for domestic energy production are preserved.

11. **Work to preserve funding in the federal defense budget for weapons systems that are produced in Jefferson Parish and in the New Orleans region.** Skyrocketing federal deficits, the imminent end to the war in Iraq, and a new approach to the military budget have placed funding for various weapons systems at risk. Defense contracting employs thousands of individuals at the Northrop Grumman Avondale facility and elsewhere in the New Orleans area. As with the federal tax code, Jefferson Parish leaders must work closely with the state's congressional delegation to preserve funding for locally manufactured weapons systems.

12. **Collaborate with Jefferson's state legislative delegation to renew the state motion picture, digital media, music production, live theater, and motion picture infrastructure tax credits.** Originally passed by the state legislature in 2002, the film and television production tax credits have created approximately $250 million in wages through 2008.[21] Jefferson Parish has positioned itself to be the center for film and television production activities throughout the region. The existing NIMS Center Studios in Elmwood, coupled with a new, state of the art studio being developed by Soundstage One, is creating a critical nexus of production activity in Jefferson. The state tax credits have been a crucial component of the growth in the film, media, and live entertainment industries throughout the state and in Jefferson. Failure to renew the tax credits will undercut the considerable economic momentum, investment, and job growth that the Parish has seen in these industries in recent years. Parish leaders must work with the legislature to preserve the credits in the state tax code.

Business Outreach/Quality Jobs

A final crucial component of Jefferson Parish's economic development strategy must be a renewed commitment to business outreach and the development of quality jobs. There is not a single regulatory change, tax incentive, or resource that can substitute for the relationship building, hard work, and persistent outreach that this activity requires. Through the collaboration of the business community and Parish leadership and through a commitment to cultivating potential growth industries, business outreach will continue to be a critical instrument to generate jobs and wealth in Jefferson Parish.

13. **Identify major national growth industries and the potential for locally based companies to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities.** With the economic collapse of 2008 and the arrival of a new administration and new policy priorities in Washington, DC, the United States faces a changing economic future. Aggregate employment in traditional bastions of the national economy, such as finance and the automobile industry, may be significantly lower for some time. Changing federal spending priorities on initiatives like high speed rail, renewable energy, and health care reform could be the next source of significant job growth. JEDCO and Jefferson Parish should be on the leading edge of understanding the changing national economy by analyzing potential employment growth trends and Jefferson Parish's ability to capitalize on growth industries.

14. **Partner with the Port of New Orleans, GNO Inc., and the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce (BRAC) to expand opportunities for international shipping and trade.** Southeast Louisiana enjoys a number of intrinsic advantages as an international port. With the forthcoming expansion of the Panama Canal, southeast Louisiana is poised to capitalize on expanding trade with southeast Asia and Latin America. GNO Inc. and BRAC have recently commissioned a study to examine the various ways that the ports of southeast Louisiana can best position themselves to gain market share, increase international trade, and generate additional employment. In capital planning, marketing, and the overall formulation of strategies, JEDCO and Jefferson Parish must play a lead role in assisting GNO Inc., BRAC, and the Port of New Orleans in this effort. Expanded international trade would have manifold benefits to Jefferson Parish companies, the Parish's workforce, and the overall economic climate.

Jefferson Parish and JEDCO must work closely with other agencies in the coming years to increase the region's share of international trade and transportation.

15. **Aggressively market Jefferson Parish as a headquarters for energy companies.** Since the oil bust of the mid-1980's, Jefferson Parish and the New Orleans metropolitan area have been home to far fewer jobs in the energy sector than at the industry's peak. Nevertheless, energy remains a critical component of the region's economy and employment base; and a number of factors could lead to increased regional employment in the energy field. The major spike in gas prices that the world experienced in the summer of 2008 was possibly a preview of a sustained period of high gas prices in the coming years, as global demand rises and as supply stagnates. With high oil prices, off-shore drilling would become much more lucrative, which in turn could lead to increased energy employment in Louisiana. Furthermore, climate change accords and increased public and private investment in green technology are leading a shift toward renewable energy. Wind power off the coast of Louisiana and water-driven turbines in the Mississippi River have both been discussed as promising potential sources for green energy. JEDCO and Jefferson Parish should capitalize on these assets to market the Parish as a hub for the energy industry.

The Mississippi River is being studied as a potential source for renewable energy. Jefferson can capitalize on the existing oil and gas industry and the emerging renewable industry to become a hub for the energy industry.

16. **Continue to aggressively reach out to businesses in Jefferson Parish to support business retention, expansion, and access to capital.** As outlined earlier in this report, some of JEDCO's most tangible successes in job retention and job growth have been the result of their aggressive outreach efforts to existing and potential businesses. Direct outreach to businesses to assist them with workforce needs, to connect them to financing and incentive programs, to facilitate business expansions, and to address a range of other needs must continue to be a central thrust of JEDCO's economic development efforts.

17. **Ensure that the Louisiana small business development center maintains a presence at the Churchill Technology and Business Park in order to work in tandem with Jefferson's small business incubator.** The Louisiana small business development center should work with JEDCO to ensure a prominent presence within the Churchill Technology and Business Park. The new JEDCO offices, the potential for start-up employers, and the presence of the Enterprise Center West business incubator would make the Business Park an ideal locus of activity for the small business development center. JEDCO should collaborate with the center to facilitate this partnership.

18. **Seek permanent financing to support an on-going marketing effort for Jefferson Parish.** Among the most immediate accomplishments of the *Jefferson EDGE 2020* process has been the "Jefferson: Opportunity Lives Here" advertising and public relations campaign. JEDCO was able to secure start up funding to support this initiative through its first year, but no permanent funding source has been identified. This outreach campaign has been well received thus far, and it represents a principal mechanism to change attitudes about and generate enthusiasm for Jefferson Parish. JEDCO and the business community should approach a variety of potential funding agencies to continue this effort beyond the initial one year timeframe.

Summary Matrix of Action Items

Action ID#	Implementation Action	Responsible Local Agencies/ Actors	Benchmarks	Local Resources/ Funding	Timeline
LAND DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT					
ED1	Modify land use regulations and invest in infrastructure to develop an "Elmwood West" commercial and industrial node	Jefferson Parish Government (**Parish Planning Department** and Public Works/ Engineering), JEDCO	• Completion of a small area plan to outline regulatory and capital improvement needs and estimate market demand • Initiation of regulatory changes and capital improvements pending outcome of study	• Estimated cost of $100,000 - $300,000 for small area plan • Cost of improvements contingent on outcome of study	Issue RFP or initiate study in 2010; Initiate regulatory changes/ improvements in 2011, 2012
ED2	Collaborate with the Airport to create a master plan for the redevelopment of "buy-out" properties	**City of Kenner**, Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, JEDCO	• Prepare and issue RFP for master development • Outreach to Airport officials and consultant team to represent economic development interests in the City and Parish • Completion of redevelopment plan	• Staff time related to coordination and participation in planning process	Complete and issue RFP in 2009. Complete redevelopment plan in 2010.
ED3	Continue to aggressively market the first 40 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park	**JEDCO**	• Identify funding for continuation of aggressive marketing efforts • Commitment from developers and tenants to locate in the Park	• Staff time for on-going marketing initiatives (estimated cost $85,000—$150,000)	On-going
ED4	Identify partners and potential funding sources for Phase II development of the remaining 50 acres at the Churchill Technology and Business Park	**JEDCO**	• Identification of optimal timetable for phase II development • Identification of funding sources for engineering, design, and infrastructure construction	• Estimated cost of $10 million to provide infrastructure for additional 50 acres	Identify funding and timetable by 2011.
WORKFORCE					
ED5	Build upon existing efforts of GNO Inc. and commission a comprehensive study and action plan for the workforce development infrastructure in the New Orleans region	**GNO Inc.**	• Initiation of study • Completion of study	• Additional phases of existing GNO, Inc. effort underway	Initiate this phase of workforce development study before year end, 2010

Action ID#	Implementation Action	Responsible Local Agencies/ Actors	Benchmarks	Local Resources/ Funding	Timeline
TRANSPORTATION AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES					
ED6	Support the development of a high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, with a stop in Jefferson Parish	**Regional Planning Commission**, Jefferson Parish Government, GNO Inc.	• Securing federal funding to build on the work of the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission to complete alternatives analysis and environmental assessment • Securing federal funding and local match for capital program • Initiation of capital improvements	• Local contribution contingent on outcome of study, future federal funding guidelines	Secure funding for study in 2010, 2011; Initiate study in 2011, 2012; initiate capital program in 2014
ED7	Support the implementation of transportation projects of regional significance, such as a light rail line to the Airport, improvements to the Earhart Expressway, and the construction of I-49	**Regional Planning Commission**, Jefferson Parish Government (Planning Department and Public Works), Jefferson's state legislative delegation, GNO Inc.	• Securing funding to complete final feasibility studies • Securing federal funding and local match for capital program • Initiation of capital improvements	• Local contribution contingent on outcome of studies	Timelines vary by transportation project; aim to have studies underway for all key transportation projects by 2011
ED8	Collaborate with major railroads and the Regional Planning Commission to implement the New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway Study	**Regional Planning Commission**, Jefferson Parish Government (Planning Department and Public Works)	• Securing federal funding to complete environmental assessment • Pending outcome of study, secure public and private funding for capital improvements • Initiate capital improvements (rail upgrades)	• Staff time related to advocacy and monitoring • Local contribution contingent on outcome of study, federal guidelines	Secure funding for environmental assessment in 2010; initiate assessment in 2010, 2011; initiate capital improvements in 2013, 2014
ADVOCACY					
ED9	Work closely with EJGH, Ochsner Health System, and WJGH to facilitate the expansion of medical facilities throughout the Parish.	**JEDCO**, Jefferson Parish Government (Planning Department and Parish President's Office), Louisiana Economic Development (LED)	• Outreach to hospitals to better understand current expansion plans, development needs, and potential impediments • Coordinate meetings with EJGH, Ochsner, WJGH and Parish officials to address any potential regulatory and capital impediments to expansion	• Staff time related to systematic outreach	On-going

Action ID#	Implementation Action	Responsible Local Agencies/ Actors	Benchmarks	Local Resources/ Funding	Timeline
ED10	Oppose changes in the federal tax code that would discourage off-shore oil and gas exploration	**GNO Inc.**, Congressional delegation, JEDCO, Jefferson Business Council, Jefferson Chamber of Commerce	• Outreach to Louisiana's congressional delegation to convey opposition • Outreach to key members of House and Senate involved in tax policy • Preservation of tax incentives for domestic oil exploration and production	• Staff time related to outreach and advocacy	Initiate outreach in 2009; continually monitor federal tax policy to preserve existing tax breaks for oil and gas exploration
ED11	Work to preserve funding in the federal defense budget for weapons systems that are produced in Jefferson Parish and in the New Orleans region	**GNO Inc.**, Congressional delegation, JEDCO, Jefferson Business Council, Jefferson Chamber of Commerce	• Outreach to Louisiana's congressional delegation to convey support for existing weapons programs • Outreach to key members of House and Senate involved in budget decisions and defense matters • Preservation of funding for existing defense programs in Louisiana	• Staff time related to outreach and advocacy	Initiate outreach in 2009; continually monitor federal spending and defense policy to preserve existing weapons programs in Jefferson and the New Orleans area
ED12	Collaborate with Jefferson's state legislative delegation to renew the state motion picture, digital media, music production, live theater, and motion picture infrastructure tax credits	**Jefferson Film Office**, JEDCO, Jefferson Parish Government (Parish President's Office), Jefferson's State Legislative Delegation, GNO Inc., Jefferson Business Council, Jefferson Chamber of Commerce	• Introduction and passage of legislation to extend tax credits	• Staff time related to outreach and advocacy	Pass legislation in 2009, 2010 at the latest
BUSINESS OUTREACH/ QUALITY JOBS					
ED13	Identify major national growth industries and the potential for locally based companies to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities	**GNO Inc.**, JEDCO	• Following completion of "blue ocean" economic development study by Louisiana Economic Development (already underway), coordination with GNO Inc. to analyze study findings • Completion of inventory of local companies to identify those with growth potential in emerging fields • Outreach to local firms to facilitate expansion and national firms to facilitate relocation to Jefferson Parish	• Staff time related to analysis and outreach	Analyze LED study and coordinate with GNO Inc. in 2010; initiate analysis of and outreach to relevant local and national businesses in 2010, 2011

Action ID#	Implementation Action	Responsible Local Agencies/ Actors	Benchmarks	Local Resources/ Funding	Timeline
ED14	Partner with the Port of New Orleans, GNO Inc., and the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce (BRAC) to expand opportunities for international shipping and trade	**GNO Inc**., JEDCO	• Completion of international trade study by GNO Inc. and BRAC (already underway) • Coordination of efforts and analysis with GNO Inc. • Provision of technical assistance to partner agencies to facilitate implementation of study recommendations	• Staff time related to analysis and outreach	Analyze international trade study upon completion in 2009; coordinate with and offer technical assistance to GNO, Inc. and other agencies in the implementation of the study's recommendations
ED15	Aggressively market Jefferson Parish as a headquarters for energy companies	**JEDCO**, GNO Inc.	• Completion of an internal marketing and outreach strategy for this industry • Preparation of marketing materials to sell Jefferson as a location for the energy industry • Completion of analysis of existing and emerging players in the energy field and potential to expand/relocate • Initiation of outreach to target companies • Securing adequate funding for the Jefferson Economic Future Fund (local incentive fund)	• Staff time related to analysis and outreach • Adequate funding for the Jefferson Economic Future Fund (local incentive fund)	Complete internal marketing strategy in 2009, 2010; initiate targeted outreach efforts to energy companies in 2010, 2011
ED16	Continue to aggressively reach out to businesses in Jefferson Parish to support business retention, expansion, and access to capital	**JEDCO**	• Continuation of outreach efforts • Systematic monitoring of outcomes and benchmarks • Securing adequate funding for the Jefferson Economic Future Fund (local incentive fund)	• Staff time • Adequate funding for the Jefferson Economic Future Fund (local incentive fund)	On-going
ED17	Ensure that the Louisiana Small Business Development Center maintains a presence at the Churchill Technology and Business Park	**JEDCO**	• Initiation of outreach to the small business development center • Securing an on-going relationship with the Center at the Churchill Tech Park	• Staff time related to outreach and advocacy	Initiate outreach in 2009; secure a partnership in 2010
ED18	Seek permanent financing to support an on-going marketing effort for Jefferson Parish	**JEDCO**, Jefferson Business Council, Jefferson Chamber, Jefferson Parish Government	• Commitment of recurring resources from external funders	• Staff time related to advocacy and outreach • Total annual cost of \$400,000 - \$500,000 for marketing campaign	Conduct outreach and secure multi-year funding commitments in 2009, 2010

Conclusion

Despite the economic disruption caused by Hurricane Katrina and despite a troubled national economy, Jefferson Parish has the potential to capitalize on a wide range of economic opportunities. To do so will require a balanced, comprehensive approach to economic development. While the Parish has rebounded quickly from Katrina, emerging socio-economic trends suggest that more aggressive, focused, and strategic approaches to economic development are needed. Simply being a low-cost community is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition if Jefferson is to become more prosperous. Strategic investments in infrastructure must be made; coordinated regional strategies must be pursued; and potential growth industries must be targeted. Complimenting the ambitious Jefferson EDGE 2020 quality of life plans, the action items outlined in this document provide a pathway to a more diversified, more robust economic future for Jefferson Parish.

Acknowledgments

JEDCO and GCR would like to thank Jack Stumpf for his stewardship of the Economic Development Strike Force. In addition to Mr. Stumpf, the strike force was comprised of the following individuals:

Lucien Gunter – Executive Director, JEDCO

Dottie Stephenson – Deputy Director, JEDCO

Gaye Frederic – JEDCO

Pete Chocheles – JEDCO

Jerry Bologna – JEDCO

Alberto Queral – JEDCO

Scott Rojas – JEDCO

Tim Whitmer – Chief Administrative Officer, Jefferson Parish

Cherreen Gegenheimer – Chief Administrative Assistant, Jefferson Parish President's Office

Ed Durabb – Director, Jefferson Parish Planning Department

Walter Brooks – Executive Director, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission

Michael Hecht – President and CEO, GNO Inc.

Michael Quigley – Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, City of Kenner

Jay Hebert – Director, City of Kenner Planning Department

Rafe Rabalais – GCR & Associates, Inc.

The action items within this plan were formally endorsed by the JEDCO Board of Commissioners at a Board meeting held on June 25, 2009.

References and Notes

[1]Source: Population estimates prepared by GCR & Associates, Inc., based on Census figures and utility data.

[2]Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission

[3]Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

[4]Source: JEDCO

[5]The Louisiana State Constitution requires all parishes to conduct a comprehensive re-assessment of property every four years. 2008 was a re-assessment year for Jefferson Parish.

[6]Source: JEDCO

[7]*Ibid.*

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]Source: Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport

[11]Source: UNO Real Estate Market Data Center

[12]*Ibid.*

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]Source: UNO Real Estate Market Data Center, from Census Bureau

[15]Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

[16]*Ibid.*

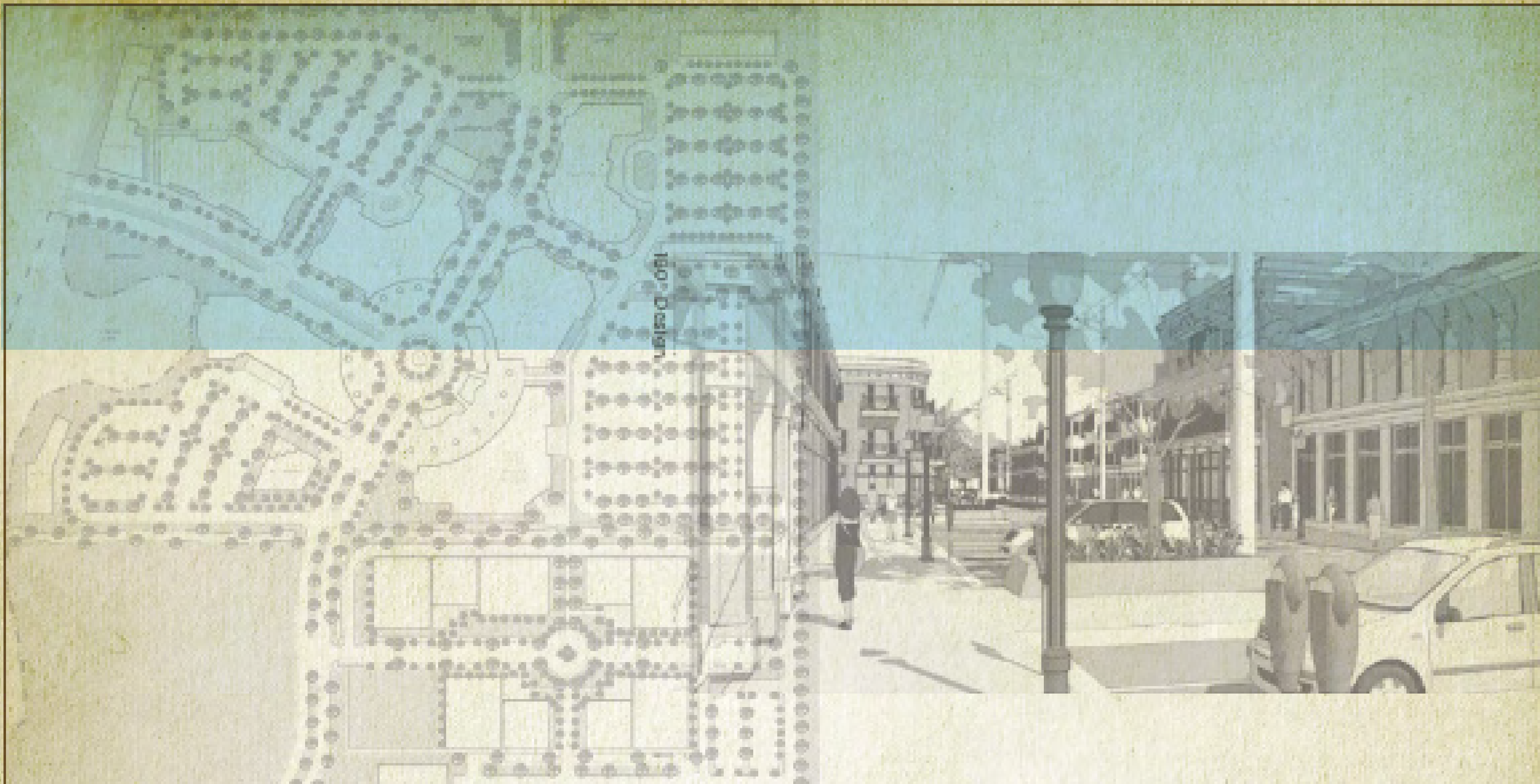
[17]Source: Internal Revenue Service (IRS) migration data

[18]Source: JEDCO & Jefferson Parish, Department of Public Information. The $60 - $80 million dollar estimate was calculated using the initial estimate of $6.7 million for the 40 acres in Phase I to determine an average cost per acre, while the range accounts for higher upfront costs in Phase I for establishing main utility lines and variations in labor and market conditions.

[19]Brookings Institution, Blueprint for American Prosperity. www.brookings.edu

[20]Recommendations include: upgrade of Avondale Yards, signal and track improvements at the West Bridge Junction, either closing existing crossings or creating grade-separated crossings that serve LA 18 and Hwy 90 on the West Bank, and eliminating or separating seven at-grade crossings in Metairie

[21]Kate Moran, "Mansion's Livability to Lure Film Crews," New Orleans Times Picayune 26 April 2009: Money section



JEDCO
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission
3445 N. Causeway Blvd. Suite 300
Metairie, LA 70002
504 833 1881 fax 504 833 7676

gcr
2021 Lakeshore Drive, Suite 500
New Orleans, LA 70122
504 304 2500 fax 504 304 2525