

Jefferson EDGE 2020 **BEAUTIFICATION** Status Report 4: July 2011

Prepared by JEDCO and GCR & Associates, Inc.

JEDCO
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission



Beautification

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

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

B = Beautification

Action ID #	Action Item	Progress as of July 2011		
		Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
B1. IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE "BOULEVARDS INITIATIVE" TO SYSTEMATICALLY UPGRADE MAJOR THOROUGHFARES				
B1a	Devise detailed cost estimates, a financing strategy, and an implementation schedule for boulevards initiative			
B1b	Systematically upgrade infrastructure along the Parish's major boulevards			
B1c	Implement a gateway improvement program with a principal emphasis on the corridors abutting the airport			
B1d	Create a small grant program to fund landscape improvements to older commercial properties			
B1e	Sponsor a design and engineering competition to devise interim aesthetic improvements to open drainage canals			
B1f	Work with utility providers to screen major utility infrastructure throughout the Parish			
B2. SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE BOTH THE CONTENT AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE PARISH'S LAND USE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS				
B2a	Revise the Envision Jefferson 2020 Comprehensive Plan to include an urban design element	No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items		
B2b	Incrementally re-write the Parish's zoning ordinance			
B2c	Enact interim improvements to Parish codes and land use regulations	No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items		
B2d	Ensure the even application and vigorous enforcement of existing zoning regulations	No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items		
B3. INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF AND INVOLVEMENT IN BEAUTIFICATION				
B3a	Formalize a lasting public partnership with civic groups and other non-profits to plant additional trees in residential neighborhoods			
B3b	Initiate a public outreach campaign to inform residents of on-going beautification initiatives			
B4. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS THROUGHOUT JEFFERSON PARISH				
B4a	Develop a formal program for incorporating public art into public works projects			
B4b	Coordinate with the state and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to install decorative lighting on the Huey P. Long Bridge			

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						Progress as of July 2011		
Action ID #	Action Item	Original Timeline	Accomplishments/Benchmarks Met	Next Steps	Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress	
B1 Implement a comprehensive "boulevards initiative" to systematically upgrade major thoroughfares								
B1a	Devise detailed cost estimates, a financing strategy, and an implementation schedule for boulevards initiative	Issue RFP in late 2008, early 2009; complete project in 2009	<p>In January and February of 2011, GCR submitted a proposal to JEDCO and Jefferson Parish to prepare such an "implementation plan" for the boulevards initiative. The desired outcome of the plan was to be a pilot street segment or segments that would be appropriate for the kind of comprehensive aesthetic upgrade that is described in the beautification plan. However, due to the current economic climate and severe financial constraints, it was suggested that this study not commence immediately.</p> <p>The Parish government and JEDCO are strongly committed to parish-wide beautification and are committed to truly implementing the recommendations of a detailed boulevards plan. Consequently, the development of such a plan is being put on hold until the Parish's revenue forecast and overall economy improve.</p> <p>A related potential funding source that was discussed in the previous status report is the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant that was awarded to the City of New Orleans for a study of the Claiborne Avenue corridor. The grant was awarded to the City of New Orleans, but the geographical area that will be covered is exclusively in Orleans Parish. Subsequent rounds of funding could be directed to Jefferson Highway and Judge Perez Drive in St. Bernard Parish.</p>	<p>Revisit the proposal to JEDCO and Jefferson Parish for a boulevards "implementation plan" in December of 2011.</p> <p>Maintain dialogue with City of New Orleans and Regional Planning Commission about Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and determine whether Phase II funding could ultimately be pursued to include the Jefferson Highway corridor.</p>				

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B1 Implement a comprehensive “boulevards initiative” to systematically upgrade major thoroughfares								
B1b	Systematically upgrade infrastructure along the Parish’s major boulevards	Secure local funding and pursue external funding in 2009; secure interagency agreements in 2009; issue bids and initiate project in 2010; complete phase one by 2015	<p>While the Parish has not secured funding for a comprehensive boulevards study and a Parish-wide boulevards initiative, Jefferson continues to implement major improvements to its boulevards. A number of projects are currently underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A major tree planting, funded through Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful and Jefferson Beautification, Inc., has been completed along Jefferson Highway from Causeway to the Parish line. •Two subsequent phases along Jefferson Highway, from Causeway to Clearview and from Clearview to the City of Kenner line, are in the planning phase. •Major design work has been completed by Greg Cantrell for an even more ambitious upgrade to Jefferson Highway. Funding to implement this project has not yet been identified. •Greg Cantrell also continues to design similarly ambitious landscape improvements to Lapalco from Brooklyn to Berkeley Drive. •Major tree plantings have been completed along Bonnabel Boulevard from Metairie Road to Lake Pontchartrain as a result of funding committed by the two parish beautification non-profits. Design work for further aesthetic upgrades to Bonnabel has been completed, though implementation is contingent on Parish funding. •Major work continues on the aesthetic improvements along Veterans funded through the Veterans CPZ. Phases I – III are complete, and Phase IV—from Bonnabel to Oaklawn—will be completed in July, 2011. Phase V—at Independence Mall—has been bid out and is under construction. This project will be finished in July, 2011 as well. Phase VI, the final phase, is at the Family Gras site and is currently in the planning phase and should be completed in mid-2012. •In addition to the efforts of Jefferson Beautification, Inc. and Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful, special recognition must also be given to businessman and philanthropist Henry Shane. Mr. Shane has donated a number of sculptures for the landscape improvements along Veterans, most recently at Veterans and Severn. •“Pre-planning” work has begun on beautification improvements at a number of other key intersections and along a number of key corridors. These are Dickory Avenue, I-10 at Bonnabel, and West Metairie across from Cleary Playground. 	Continue to monitor the progress of landscape, streetscape, and public art projects underway. Secure funding to transition projects currently in the design stage into the construction stage. Continue to seek funding for a comprehensive boulevards study to set the stage for further capital improvements. Coordinate boulevard improvements described within this action item with the attempts to secure funding for a pilot project for canal beautification, as described in B1e below.				

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B1c	Implement a gateway improvement program with a principal emphasis on the corridors abutting the airport	Secure local funding and pursue external funding in 2009; secure interagency agreements in 2009; initiate project in 2010; complete by 2013	<p>There are two major components to Jefferson's gateway improvement program: signage and landscaping at the major entrances to the Parish and major aesthetic improvements to the entrance from the airport. For the first initiative, the Parish had to modify its original design scheme for a brick or concrete sign to satisfy DOTD's concerns about safety. The final design that was chosen is a highway reflector sign with breakaway posts. This project should go to bid in the summer of 2011.</p> <p>For the second initiative, Jefferson was successful in obtaining a \$1.6 million Transportation Improvement Program grant. Design work is nearing completion. The environmental assessment with the State DOTD has been completed. The Super Bowl in February of 2013 is the target date for the completion of these enhancements. Discussions with corporate partners regarding ongoing maintenance of the landscape improvements are ongoing.</p> <p>The focus of the improvements will be along the airport access road and along I-10 from the airport access road to the Veterans Boulevard interchange.</p>	<p>With funding secured and with design work nearly complete for the airport gateway enhancements and the entrance signs to Jefferson Parish, this action item is now marked as completed.</p> <p>However, JEDCO and the Parish must continue to monitor these efforts to ensure that progress continues.</p> <p>Also, this action item could be revisited if there is a determination that further landscape improvements are needed both at the Airport and at key roadway entrances to Jefferson.</p>			
B1d	Create a small grant program to fund landscape improvements to older commercial properties	Complete project design and solicit applications in 2009; initiate matching grant program in 2010 and annually thereafter	<p>A major obstacle to this program is the absence of a funding source. While no Parish funding source is in place, the Beautification strike force has begun a dialogue with the Jefferson Community Foundation about the possibility of sponsoring a pilot grant or grants for shopping centers that currently have little or no landscaping.</p> <p>While these discussions are at a preliminary stage, there has been some receptivity on the part of the Foundation to sponsoring such a pilot program.</p>	<p>Continue dialogue with the Jefferson Community Foundation about a matching grant program.</p> <p>Engage members of the Parish Council and/or Parish President to spur interest.</p>			

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B1e	Sponsor a design and engineering competition to devise interim aesthetic improvements to open drainage canals	Issue RFP and award grant in 2009; begin implementing recommendations in 2010	<p>In May of 2011, the Jefferson Community Foundation awarded \$30,000 to the top submission in the canal beautification design competition that the Foundation sponsored. The winning team was a consortium of designers comprised of Cadence from Fort Lauderdale, FL, Poulos Brown Civil Engineers of Orlando, and Studio Snyder from Washington, DC. The second, third, and fourth place teams each received \$5,000 as well.</p> <p>JEDCO, the Jefferson Community Foundation, the Beautification strike force, and the Parish Government are currently exploring ways to fund a pilot project or projects to implement the design concepts that are both most transformative and most feasible from the design competition submissions.</p>	<p>Although this action item, per se, has been completed, follow up action will focus on funding and implementation.</p> <p>Continue outreach to the Regional Planning Commission, Parish Department of Public Works, the GNO, Inc. "Water Management Strategy" initiative, and Senator Landrieu's office to identify funding sources and next steps toward final design work and construction.</p>				
B1f	Work with utility providers to screen major utility infrastructure throughout the Parish	Identify funds in 2009/2010; secure agreements with utility providers in 2010; initiate improvements in 2011	<p>The Jefferson Parish Department of Streets continues to be in contact with Entergy about lingering aesthetic problems with their utility infrastructure (leaning poles, abandoned poles, etc.) The streets department has compiled a spreadsheet of problematic infrastructure and locations and has written a number of letters to Entergy to address aesthetic shortcomings. Parish Councilmembers have been copied on this correspondence.</p> <p>If remedial action is not taken by Entergy, Councilmembers will be more aggressively engaged in outreach on this matter.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor Entergy's progress in remediating the problems enumerated on the Department of Streets' infrastructure spreadsheet.</p> <p>Engage the Parish Administration and Council if further progress is not forthcoming.</p>				

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B2 Significantly enhance both the content and the enforcement of the Parish's land use policies and regulations										
B2a	Revise the Envision Jefferson 2020 Comprehensive Plan to include an urban design element	Identify funds in 2008; issue RFP and award contract in 2009; complete element in 2009	This item has been removed from the list of beautification action items, based on input from the Jefferson Parish Planning Department. However, incremental work on urban design problems should continue to be monitored.	Incremental work on urban design problems should continue to be monitored.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>					
B2b	Incrementally re-write the Parish's zoning ordinance	Identify funds in 2008; issue RFP and award contract in 2009; adoption of new ordinance by year end 2010, beginning 2011	<p>Jefferson continues to make incremental changes to its zoning regulations. The most high profile change is the recent adoption of three new zoning districts for Fat City (see the EDGE 2020 plan for Fat City for further detail), which was described in the previous beautification status update (October 2010). These Districts could serve as a template for further revisions parish-wide.</p> <p>The Parish also continues to migrate the zoning ordinance into a "Unified Development Code" in Chapter 33 of the Parish Code of Ordinances.</p> <p>The Parish Planning Department's ongoing effort to strengthen zoning regulations related to hotels and motels along Airline Drive continues. These revisions will be completed in early December, 2011, and will address a major source of blight on the corridor.</p> <p>While a comprehensive effort to address the Parish's sign regulations is on hold, the Planning Department continues work on a study regarding electronic message signs, which have proliferated in recent years. Recommendations for regulations for these signs are due in early 2012.</p>	Monitor progress of zoning studies and recommendation for the Airline Corridor and for electronic message signs. Following the completion of the electronic message regulations, push for the re-formation of a sign committee to draft comprehensive changes to Parish sign regulations. Continue to search for external funding sources (e.g. Office of Community Development disaster resilience grants) to make more sweeping changes to the Parish zoning ordinance.						

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B2c	Enact interim improvements to Parish codes and land use regulations	Identify gaps and weaknesses in present regulations; adopt amended, interim regulations in 2008 and 2009	This item has been removed from the list of beautification action items, based on the modification to action item B2b, i.e. the decision to pursue incremental rather than comprehensive changes to the Parish's land use regulations.	No further action required.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>			
B2d	Ensure the even application and vigorous enforcement of existing zoning regulations	Ongoing; strive for Greater predictability starting in 2008 and 2009 as regulations are amended and coordination is enhanced	This action item has been removed from the beautification plan. It represents more of an on-going administrative approach to implementation rather than a unique, singular action.	No further action needed.	<i>No longer applicable and removed from beautification action items.</i>			
B3 Increase community awareness of beautification efforts and elicit further community involvement								
B3a	Formalize a lasting public partnership with civic groups and other non-profits to plant additional trees in residential neighborhoods	Development of Co-operative endeavor in 2008/2009; initiate tree planting program in 2009	As of the writing of status report 3, a potential funding source for a tree planning program in residential neighborhoods had not been identified. Since then, the Beautification strike force has made contact with "Hike for Katreena," an organization that has been responsible for numerous tree plantings in the New Orleans area. In partnership with the existing beautification non-profits in Jefferson—Friends of Jefferson the Beautiful and Jefferson Beautification, Inc.—this organization could help to advance a residential tree planting program. The preliminary response of the organization has been overwhelmingly positive, and as of the writing of this update, a meeting between Hike for Katreena and the Beautification strike force is imminent.	Continue dialogue with Hike for Katreena and investigate bringing their model of volunteerism, resident outreach, and plantings to a targeted Jefferson neighborhood or neighborhoods. Depending on the outcome of the conversation with Hike for Katreena, engage the two Jefferson Parish-based beautification non-profits to enlist their participation as well.				
B3b	Initiate a public outreach campaign to inform residents of on-going beautification initiatives	Develop website and newsletter layout in 2008/early 2009. Unveil in 2009	Action item complete. Refer to the October, 2010 Status Update for further detail.	Continue to monitor the effectiveness and the financial self-sufficiency of Jefferson Life magazine. JEDCO should remain vigilant in pursuing additional marketing funds and opportunities to market the Parish.				

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Progress as of July 2011

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B4 Provide additional public art installations throughout Jefferson Parish							
B4a	Develop a formal program for incorporating public art into public works projects	Develop program and secure funding in 2008, 2009; Initiate program in 2009, 2010	<p>No public sponsor has been identified for a program to earmark a portion of public projects' budgets for artwork. Nonetheless, this action item is now shown as complete due to the outpouring of public and philanthropic funding in support of public art in Jefferson Parish. As described in action item B1b above, five phases of public art and landscaping along Veterans Boulevard have been completed or are in progress. Meanwhile, the sixth and final phase is in the planning stages and will be completed by mid-2012. Jefferson businessman and philanthropist Henry Shane merits considerable thanks for his generosity in furnishing sculpture pieces for many of these landscape installations.</p> <p>Additional locations throughout the Parish, such as along Lapalco Boulevard, have been identified as locations for outdoor sculpture displays, further demonstrating the Parish's commitment to public art. A total of 18 public art pieces throughout the Parish have been commissioned, and there have been discussions about subsequent phases.</p>	<p>Monitor the completion of the sixth and final phase of beautification projects along Veterans boulevard and along Lapalco on the Westbank.</p> <p>As the economy and fiscal outlook for Jefferson Parish improve, revisit the concept of earmarking a portion of capital projects for public art.</p>			
B4b	Coordinate with the state and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to install decorative lighting on the Huey P. Long Bridge	Initiate outreach in 2008 and 2009; install lighting before completion of bridge widening in 2013	In 2009, a study was completed by APEX Engineering that recommended decorative metal halide lighting for the Huey P. Long Bridge. The study assigned both a capital cost and a maintenance cost for this approach. However, since the completion of the study, no funding source has been forthcoming. Implementation of this initiative has been delayed due to the lack of a funding source as well as changes in leadership at the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, which has jurisdiction over the Huey P. Long Bridge.	Continue dialogue with the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad and continue efforts to find an adequate funding source. Also, reach out to Jefferson Chamber and other potential private/non-profit funding sources to gauge their interest in providing funding for this initiative.			



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