

CURRENTS

The promise of Government Street

A few million dollars could turn the rough main thoroughfare into a welcoming destination

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ARLO GUTHRIE

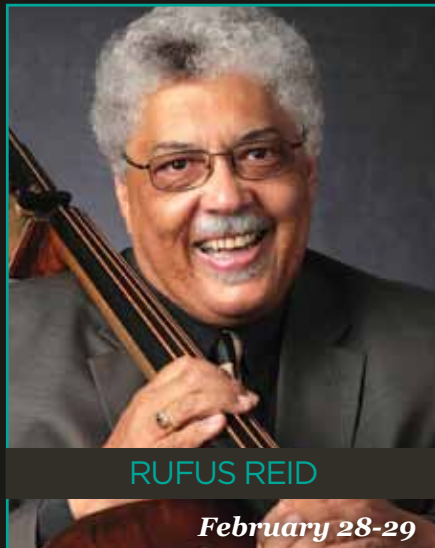
March 1-2



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March 7



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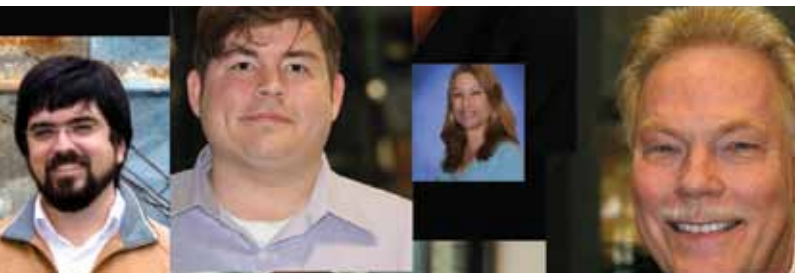
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THE
ADVOCATE

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*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*



Conventional wisdom insists that Baton Rouge has sorted itself into four geographic areas. People in South Baton Rouge, it's believed, don't want the same things that residents of Shenandoah and Sherwood Forest seek. And certainly the inhabitants of Baker, Central and Zachary have very little interest in downtown and South Baton Rouge.

At the Foundation, we wondered whether this was true. We wanted to know if East Baton Rouge is truly divided, and thus constrained. So, to find out what EBR really wants, we hired LSU's Public Policy Research Lab. The Lab sought out a sample deep enough in the four geographic areas to discover where there might be agreement across those boundaries on current issues, such as a bond election, mass transit, and downtown development.

The results that LSU delivered are surprising—and encouraging. The poll, which we believe is the largest survey of EBR ever conducted, revealed that respondents want better things for their parish and they are even willing to pay more in taxes for public projects—a remarkable finding, considering the nation's current anti-tax mood.

For instance, before the poll, anecdotal evidence suggested that residents were exasperated, even angry, about government spending to improve downtown over the last decade. But our survey shows that's not really the case. Nearly half of those polled said the local government should spend more on downtown in the next decade, while another 20% said the amount should be about the same. In Southeast Baton Rouge, which includes Shenandoah, and the cities of Central, Baker and Zachary, a plurality said that government should spend more on downtown. Only 37% of respondents in Central/Baker/Zachary said spending on the city center should be cut.

The results suggested some unsettling concerns as well, including evidence that EBR residents aren't sufficiently attached to the community, with more than half saying they would not be unhappy to leave the parish. But, to us, what is most significant is the surprising degree of consensus on vital issues across the four geographic boundaries that, supposedly, divide us.

The poll is part of our CityStats project, which measures the quality of life in EBR. It's the first survey that doesn't follow our pattern of annual reports, which are released in the spring. Our hope is that the survey will guide public policy, for it certainly presents a clear roadmap of what residents are willing to support.

You can download the full report at BRAf.org under the reports section, or you can get a copy at [Facebook.com/BRCityStats](https://www.facebook.com/BRCityStats), where we continue a conversation about the future of cities. We thank the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation for underwriting CityStats.

•••

The idea of remaking Government Street into a vibrant thoroughfare has been discussed for more than a decade. Underpinning this dream are some hard economic advantages: turning a rough road into an appealing avenue will draw people to live on that street and around it, returning residents into the city center where infrastructure, paid for by taxes, already exists. What's more, the resulting increase in property values provides a return on any public investment in reinventing the street.

Years of talk about an improved Government Street may finally translate into true work-on-the-ground. Mayor Kip Holden and redevelopment groups have identified Mid City

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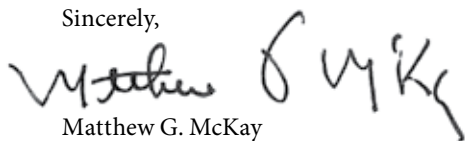
among the first projects to pursue in FutureBR, the parish's blueprint for growing over the next 30 years. Entrepreneurs have already begun to transform Government Street, opening unique local shops and restaurants along the road. Participation by local government would attract more pioneering investors to the area, ultimately turning Government Street into a destination for all of us.

In this issue, we explore the prospects for a new Government Street. Our writer Jeremy Alford spent time on the thoroughfare, discovering new places to visit. He also provides a snapshot of what's possible for one of the original streets of Baton Rouge.

...

Also in this issue, we salute Randy Nichols with a story about his labors on behalf of the homeless. A meandering economy has meant long odds, but Mr. Nichols bested them by gathering many partners to create a one-stop homeless shelter. At the shelter, Mr. Nichols and his staff help homeless families return to a place of their own by offering legal assistance, medical help, a career center, a place to shower, and temporary housing. He has also converted an abandoned school into an apartment complex for people who can't afford market rents.

Sincerely,



Matthew G. McKay

Baton Rouge Area Foundation

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in South Louisiana. We do so by providing two essential functions. One, the Foundation connects philanthropists with capable nonprofits to make sure the needs of our communities are met. For example, our donors support the Shaw Center for the Arts and education reform. Two, the Foundation invests in and manages pivotal projects to improve the region. Our Plan Baton Rouge initiative spearheaded the downtown revitalization plan and now is working to revive Old South Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Mukul Verma at mverma@braf.org.

Currents is published four times a year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at 225.387.6126 or email the Foundation at mverma@braf.org.



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Baton Rouge Area Foundation

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is among more than 700 community foundations across the country. We work to improve the quality of life for all people in the region. We do so in two ways.

First, we connect philanthropists with exceptional nonprofits to make sure the needs of our neighbors are met. Our donors, for instance, fund safe havens for abused women and children, provide vaccinations to prevent cancer and pay for teacher supplies. Last year, we provided thousands of grants worth \$18.3 million.

Second, the Foundation invests in and manages pivotal projects. Working with partners, we have revitalized downtown Baton Rouge, are rebuilding neighborhoods between downtown and LSU, support the improvement of public education through experimental schools and much more.

Mission: The Baton Rouge Area Foundation unites human and financial resources to enhance the quality of life in Southern Louisiana. To achieve our mission, we:

- Serve donors to build the assets that drive initiatives and solutions;
- Engage community leaders to develop appropriate responses to emerging opportunities and challenges;
- Partner with entities from all segments of our service area, as well as with other community foundations, in order to leverage our collective resources and create the capacity to be a stimulus of positive regional change; and
- Evaluate our work and share the results with our stakeholders.

Who we serve: We conduct projects and provide grants across South Louisiana—East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Ascension, Livingston, Pointe Coupee and Iberville. The Foundation works in St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington and St. Helena parishes through the Northshore Community Foundation,

a support organization that operates independently from a home base in Covington. The Foundation also supports the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana. Based in Lake Charles, that foundation serves Calcasieu, Beauregard, Allen, Cameron and Jefferson Davis parishes.

How we work: The Foundation is funded in several ways. One key way is through generous people who choose to start donor-advised funds to provide grants to nonprofit groups and community projects. Philanthropists can start a tax-deductible charitable fund for \$10,000. To learn more about charitable funds, call Ellen Fargason at 225.387.6126.

The Foundation also is funded through earnings on unrestricted assets, which were donated by philanthropists and grow over time.

Among Foundation assets is the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which is comprised of real estate left by the late Wilbur Marvin. Those real estate assets include the Hilton Capitol Center Hotel in Baton Rouge, as well as shopping centers in Louisiana, Florida and Texas. The real estate assets are managed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

What's our size: At year-end 2010, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$640 million, making it among the top-20 largest community foundations in the country. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over 47 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued more than \$250 million in grants to support our community. Also, the Foundation has contracted with for-profit organizations to provide social benefits to the region, such as guidance on health care reform and direction on whether to build a new airport or invest in our existing ones.

More information is available at BRAf.org or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387.6126.



Galatoire's at Acadian Village

Construction of Galatoire's at Acadian Village will begin in spring with the expectation of an opening before year-end. Galatoire's of New Orleans is considered among the finest restaurants in the world. Fronting Perkins Road, the Baton Rouge Galatoire's will be 7,500 square feet, including a 1,500-square-foot courtyard for outdoor dining. Acadian Village is an asset of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, a supporting nonprofit that holds most of the real estate of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Commercial Properties Realty Trust, which manages real estate assets of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, is developing Acadian Village.

Grants

The Foundation's donors make thousands of grants each year. Here are a select few. All the grants are enumerated in annual reports.

EVERY KID A KING, a donor advised fund established by Jim and Dana Bernhard, granted \$75,000 to the Our Lady of the Lake Foundation toward purchasing a RetCam3, which lets pediatric specialists peer deep into the eyes and retinas of children to detect broken blood vessels.

THE CREDIT BUREAU OF BATON ROUGE FUND, a competitive grant program, awarded \$3,000 for the MicroSociety program at Dufrocq School. Children in the program create a microcosm of the real world, with

each student having a role in running that world. Some produce goods; others are elected to establish laws. The school has a virtual economy, complete with banks and tax collections. The program is active in hundreds of schools in more than 40 states.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation granted \$410,000 to **LOUISIANA VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS**, which used the money to gather VOAD members from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for the first time at a three-day conference in Jackson, Miss. At the Tri-State VOAD conference, nearly 250 nonprofit and government leaders networked and began coordinating disaster responses across the three states, all of which are vulnerable to extreme weather, especially hurricanes. The next Tri-State VOAD conference is slated for January 2014.

Good things



WALK THIS WAY Secured by U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, federal transportation funds will build two biking-and-walking paths. A \$1.6 million, 6.5-mile route atop the Mississippi River levee will connect BREC's Farr Park near Brightside Drive to Ben Hur Road, extending the existing route to downtown Baton Rouge. And \$1.8 million will build a path that links the town square on North Boulevard with Memorial Stadium in one direction and City Park in another. Additional funds may be needed to complete the second project, which is part of the Downtown Greenway.



TOP SCHOOL Baton Rouge High School is rated the best public high school in Louisiana and among the best in the country. Its students soon will study in surroundings as smart as they are. Set to reopen in fall, BRHS on Government Street is being expanded and renovated for \$46 million. Since 1998, EBR voters have approved four tax initiatives to update and build new schools and for school operations.



SOLAR PAVILION At the Baranco Clark YMCA in Old South Baton Rouge, an outdoor classroom pavilion powered by the sun was ready for use in early January. The \$75,000 pavilion is a collaboration of the Center for Planning Excellence, the LSU School of Architecture and Baton Rouge Community College's Construction Education Program, and funded by a grant from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation. Solar power will operate lights and a fan, while providing power to the Y branch.

NEW PARKS BREC continues to execute its Imagine Your Parks strategy, opening a community park in Baker and preparing to return to downtown, where it will build a two-acre park on the corner of Convention and Seventh streets. Greenwood Community Park in Baker has a waterfront café, new golf course shop, kayak and canoe rentals, disc golf course, water park with splash pad, renovated tennis courts, playgrounds, trails and more. The downtown park will have seating areas and art, and will be a connector between Beauregard Town and Spanish Town, as proposed in the Plan Baton Rouge strategy paid for by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Civic leadership initiatives

The Foundation conducts long-term civic leadership initiatives and short-term special projects—all underwritten in large part by members. Civic leadership initiatives include The Water Institute and reclaiming Old South Baton Rouge, while short-term projects include the No Kill effort that led to the birth of the Companion Animal Alliance, which has taken over the EBR Animal Shelter and reduced the euthanasia rate. Here, we provide an update on some of our projects.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

Smiley Heights, a learning community off Florida Boulevard, is progressing.

By the end of January, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority should have bought the 200 acres from nonprofits that own the land. The RDA then will ask developers for their best offers to build a community that will blend housing and retail with educational institutions.

Developers will have at least two destinations as incentives. One is a proposed \$26 million, 75,000-square-foot automobile training center operated by The Louisiana Community and Technical College System, with the state and automobile dealers as partners.

The other is a career high school built and operated as a charter school by the EBR School System. Students would learn skills in high-demand fields, allowing them to opt for jobs after graduation, while keeping the option of going to college open as well.

Smiley Heights began as a project of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, which continues to work with the RDA on community projects. The development would improve the fortunes of the neighborhoods off North Ardenwood Drive and Lodbell Avenue.

66%

Save rate for companion animals for October, more than triple since the Companion Animal Alliance began to oversee the EBR Animal Shelter in the summer.

Established in part by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, CAA is saving more dogs and cats through expanded adoptions and fostering, with huge assistance from other animal welfare groups, including Yelp! Baton Rouge, Project Purr Baton Rouge and Friends of the Animals.

CAA wants to raise the rate to 90%, virtually eliminating unnecessary euthanasia in the parish. It needs your backing. You can adopt or foster an animal, volunteer with CAA and donate to the organization. Also, if you own a pet, CAA wants you to make sure it's spayed or neutered, a surefire method for reducing the pet population.

More information about the effort is at CAABR.org.



Together Baton Rouge

Broderick Bagert wanted to be a professor of comparative literature. Well on his way, he had earned a bachelor's degree from Boston College and a master's in languages and European Literature from Oxford University.

A desire to change the world intervened. "I had an appetite for public life," says Bagert. More schooling was required. He completed a master's in social policy from the London School of Economics; returned to the U.S. to become an organizer, and ended up in New Orleans, his hometown, to work for Jeremiah Group.

Together Baton Rouge rang him up, and Bagert, now 35, became the first full-time employee of the grassroots movement in August 2009. Currents had a conversation with Bagert about Together Baton Rouge.

How large is the organization: Together BR is comprised of about 40 churches and civic organizations that represent 40,000 people—and it's growing.

Goal: "The most fundamental thing we would like to accomplish is to affect and transform the level of civic trust in Baton Rouge across the lines where trust has broken down. From that, a whole host of issues-related accomplishments will follow."

When did it begin: Nearly four years ago, with about half its existence in a quiet phase. "One thing we learned is you have to spend two years building an organization before you get into an issue," says Bagert.

How it was organized: TBR built leadership, engaging 12 to 15 people within each of the member organizations—a deep enough base to ensure commitment and longevity. To remain independent, TBR raised money from foundations and group members. "Dues have to be at the core, which is how we are accountable."

First visible victory: TBR members descended in big numbers to a Metro Council meeting to support the approval of a bridge repair. The threshold for taking on the project: "Are there some people who can organize a constituency and are willing to do the work?" says Bagert. There were. The group was led by Dorothy Thomas,

who had tirelessly complained about the broken bridge. After being contacted by TBR, she began to gather support from her neighbors. Ultimately, with TBR standing with Thomas and her neighbors, the Metro Council approved the bridge repair. "It was a symbolic win; this is the first step in a whole series of issues," says Bagert.



Five targeted issues: mass transit, public education, food access, health care and crime and criminal justice. "We are looking for opportunities where we can make a significant difference," says Bagert.

Current big project: With the bus system running out of funding again, TBR has taken up the cause of building a functioning mass transit system. Members sat on a mass transit panel that has recommended a strategy to reinvent the bus system, putting routes where the demand is greatest and funding the system with a regular stream of taxes.

Has this model worked elsewhere?: Yes, says Bagert, whose example is San Antonio, where the Communities Organized for Public Service was created in 1972 and has been credited for \$1 billion in investments in underserved communities, including housing, literacy centers and infrastructure improvements. Like COPS, Together Baton Rouge is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, which says it "builds a political base within society's rich and complex third sector—the sector of voluntary institutions that includes religious congregations, labor locals, homeowner groups, recovery groups, parents associations, settlement houses, immigrant societies, schools, seminaries and others. And then the leaders use that base to compete at times, to confront at times, and to cooperate at times with leaders in the public and private sectors."

In closing: "The people who don't like this are ideologues from the left and right. It's very pragmatic. For specific situations, we search for solutions."

Mengestu wins Gaines award

In the fifth year of the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, the winner is Dinaw Mengestu for his novel, *How to Read the Air*.

Created by Foundation donors, the Gaines award honors outstanding work by rising African-American authors while recognizing Gaines' extraordinary contribution to the literary world. Mengestu received a \$10,000 cash prize and was honored in Baton Rouge on Jan. 26.

In the book, Yosef and Mariam, young Ethiopian immigrants who have spent all but their first year of marriage apart, set off on a road trip from their new home in Peoria, Ill., to Nashville, Tenn., in search of a new identity as an American couple. Soon, their son, Jonas, will be born in Illinois. Thirty years later, Yosef has died, and Jonas needs to make sense of the volatile generational and cultural ties that have forged him. How can he envision his future without knowing what has come before? Leaving behind his marriage and job in New York, Jonas sets out to retrace his mother and father's trip and weave together a family history that will take him from the war-torn Ethiopia of his parents' youth to his life in the America of today, a story—real or invented—that holds the possibility of reconciliation and redemption.

After the release of his debut novel, *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, Mengestu was named one of the top authors under 40 by *The New Yorker* in 2010 and won numerous other awards, including the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, the *Guardian* First Book Prize and the Prix du Premier Meilleur Roman Etranger.

He was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and grew up in Peoria and suburban Chicago. Mengestu earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and a master's from Columbia University and now resides in Paris.

His novel was chosen by an independent panel of judges: Thomas Beller, an award-winning author and professor of creative writing at Tulane University; Elizabeth Nunez, a critically acclaimed author and English professor at City University of New York's Hunter College; Francine Prose,

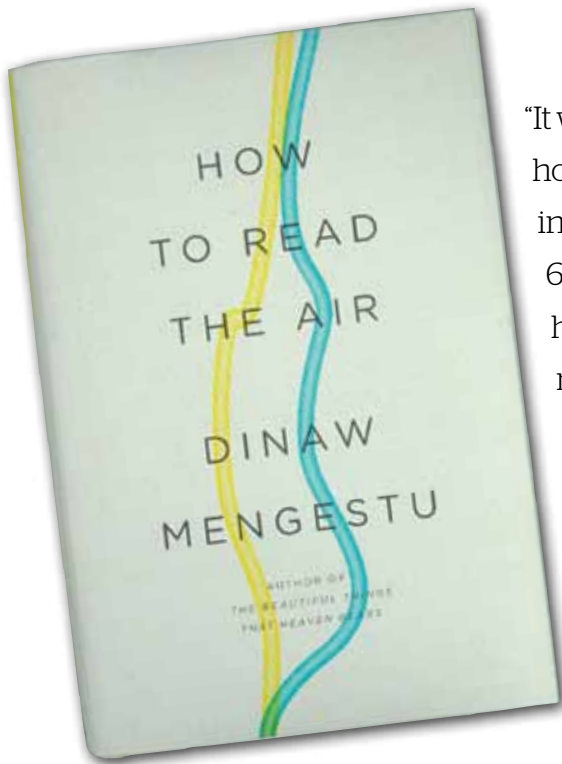


author of more than 20 books, including "Blue Angel," a nominee for the 2000 National Book Award; and Patricia Towers, former features editor for *O: The Oprah Magazine* and a founding editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine.

Mr. Gaines, who lives nearby in Oscar, has attended the first four awards ceremonies. At the events, the winner reads from the chosen novel and signs copies of the book afterward. A reception follows the event.

Past winners of the Gaines award are Victor LaValle for *Big Machine*, Jeffrey Allen for *Holding Pattern: Stories*, Ravi Howard for *Like Trees Walking*, and Olympia Vernon for *A Killing in this Town*.

Mr. Gaines is known worldwide for his work, which includes *A Lesson Before Dying*, *A Gathering of Old Men* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.



“It was four hundred eighty-four miles from my parents’ home in Peoria, Ill., to Nashville, Tenn., a distance that in a seven-year-old Monte Carlo driving at roughly 60 miles an hour could be crossed in eight to twelve hours, depending on certain variables such as the number of road signs offering side excursions to historical landmarks, and how often my mother, Mariam, would have to go to the bathroom. They called the trip a vacation, but only because neither of them was comfortable with the word ‘honeymoon,’ which in its marrying of two completely separate words, each of which they understood on its own, seemed to imply when joined together

a lavishness that neither was prepared to accept. They were not newlyweds, but their three years apart had made them strangers. They spoke to each other in whispers, half in Amharic, half in English, as if any one word uttered loudly could reveal to both of them that, in fact, they had never understood each other; they had never really known who the other person was at all.”

– Excerpt from *How to Read the Air*



New BRAF employee

TANNER ALSTON JOHNSON is the new director of donor services for the Foundation, replacing Helen Lowery, who moved to Seattle to a new career.

Tanner returns to Baton Rouge after nearly a decade in Washington, D.C., where he worked for U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu. He also served on the staffs of U.S. Rep. Donald J. Cazayoux Jr. and Gov. Kathleen Blanco.

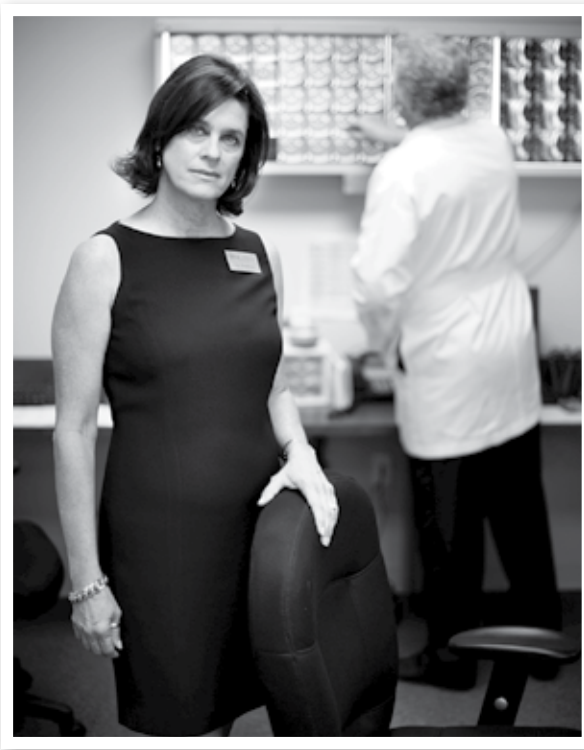
Tanner is an attorney admitted to practice in Louisiana, as well as the U.S. Supreme Court. He is a graduate of Catholic High School, Spring Hill College and the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University.

the faces of Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area commissioned Aaron Hogan and Tate Tullier to photograph patients with Alzheimer's and the people who care about them. An exhibition of the photos was held at the Manship Theatre in the Shaw Centre for the Arts in November, which is Alzheimer's Disease Awareness month. The photos here were part of the exhibition.



Shirley Wood and family



June Boudreaux



Helen Rea and family



Narses and Luz Barona



Dorothy Roan

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What Government Street could become: safe for walkers, green with trees, enabled for mass transit, with housing and shops near each other. Rendering by Fregonese Associates is Government at Kenmore Avenue, where Denicola's, Honeymoon Bungalow, the Radio Bar and others already do good business.

The Promise of Government Street

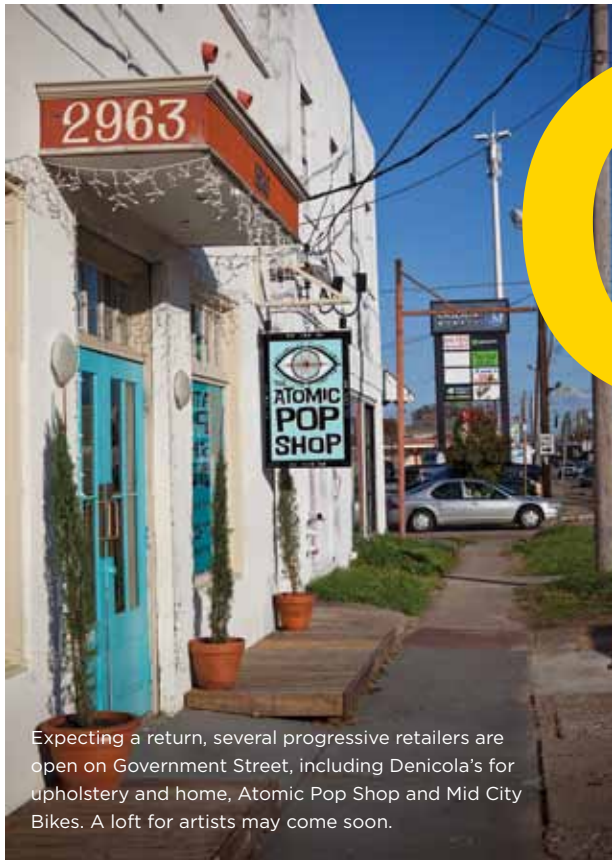
Outside of downtown, perhaps no other area in East Baton Rouge Parish holds as much redevelopment potential as Mid City—and its rebound turns almost entirely on the fate of a single thoroughfare.

By Jeremy Alford | Photos by Brian Baiamonte | Illustration by Fregonese Associates



Kenmore St

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Expecting a return, several progressive retailers are open on Government Street, including Denicola's for upholstery and home, Atomic Pop Shop and Mid City Bikes. A loft for artists may come soon.

“...it would create a return for taxpayers by boosting property values to levels greater than the investment.”

—John Fregonse, lead planner for FutureBR, on Government Street's prospects

After founding Urban Properties with her husband and business partner, Camille Manning-Broome quickly zeroed in on Mid City as a place where the market potential could increase over the next 15 to 20 years. That was in 2007, when there was no shortage of apartment complexes in the area in need of renovations. She had her pick, so to speak, and settled on a complex near Government Street.

It's important to note here that Manning-Broome isn't your typical developer. She plies her commerce with heart and invests in areas that require real change. It's more of a mission than a trade. Nonetheless, her company's choice of locales held promise. “We saw a lot of potential,” she recalls. “You could look at Government Street and tell it could become a walkable community, something special. It already had mixed-use and mixed-income types. It was perfect.”

Well, almost perfect. The 17-unit apartment purchased by Urban Properties was overridden by drug dealers and thugs—not to mention it was in poor physical shape. “There was only one way to turn the place around. We rented out our house and moved in,” Manning-Broome says. “We did everything ourselves. No loans, just out of pocket. We did everything, right down to taking out the studs.”

Manning-Broome, who's also director of planning at Center for Planning Excellence in Baton Rouge, says her husband witnessed a murder during the process. And, at least initially, they failed at their efforts of getting nearby landlords on the same page. No one else wanted to take a stand. Of course, that didn't last. Once other property owners saw how Urban Properties took rent from an average of \$350 to \$975 today, they realized the value of what Manning-Broome & Co. were doing.

Not only is the complex a much safer place, but Urban Properties has made its mark. Two of the renovated units were reserved for elderly women who were living there prior to the renovations. “And we've allowed them to continue paying the same price for rent as they were before,” Manning-Broome says. “So we were able to help them out and still triple our original investment.”

It's an inspirational story, especially as stakeholders move forward with FutureBR, a master plan for the parish that was approved by the Metro Council in mid-November. The blueprint took two years to compile with the help of architects, planners, developers, civic associations, businesses and more than 3,500 residents who participated in the drafting process.

While the plan offers a vision for the entire parish, Mid City is given special recognition as having possibly the most redevelopment potential in Baton Rouge proper. The plan also states that “Government Street (is) expected to lead the way in transforming Mid City into a vibrant, desirable area.”

The long-term plans include designing a passenger rail station near 15th and Main as a community asset and integrating it into the neighborhood. Prioritizing safety, convenience and pedestrian orientation are included in this plank. There’s also hope for facilitating the redevelopment of the Westmoreland Shopping Center and sites surrounding Baton Rouge General Medical Center.

Additionally, FutureBR calls for enhancing the Convention Street Connection between Mid City and Baton Rouge Community College; beginning bus rapid transit service on Florida Boulevard; and continuing to strengthen and support existing neighborhoods.

An underlying goal of these initiatives is to accelerate a return to the city. Between 2001 and 2008, East Baton Rouge Parish experienced a net loss of residents to other parishes in the metro area—that is, during all years, but one. During 2005 and 2006, EBR underwent a significant population increase due to effects of Hurricane Katrina. As such, data from the Internal Revenue Service shows that since 2001, East Baton Rouge Parish has seen both in-migration and out-migration. But the overall net loss is about 2,700 residents per year on average.

The return to metropolitan areas by residents who have previously fled is a national trend. Harvard Business Review recently took a closer look at the movement and gave examples of businesses that are doing the same: “These companies are getting a jump on a major cultural and demographic shift away from suburban sprawl. The change is imminent, and businesses that don’t understand and plan for it may suffer in the long run.”

Put another way, the burbs and the countryside just don’t hold the sway they used to. “Both young workers and retiring Boomers are actively seeking to live in densely packed, mixed-use communities that don’t require cars—that is, cities or revitalized outskirts in which residences, shops, schools, parks, and other amenities exist close together,” the HBR study found.

That’s a favorable tune to the ears of John Fregonese, a Portland-based consultant who’s leading the FutureBR efforts. He contends that remaking Government Street

Government Street, a brief history

1700s: Government Street was originally called Grand Rue, the main thoroughfare of Beaugard Town.

1860s: Government Street stretches further to the Magnolia Racetrack, which sported a large grandstand. This later became the Roseland Terrace subdivision.

1890s: One standard gauge street railway car went from Government Street to Dufroc before continuing onto other routes along what is now Mid City and downtown.

1890s: People used to drive their wagons down Government Street and into the woods of what is now the heart of Mid City to gather black moss and haul it to the nearby moss factory to sell. The moss factory made mattresses out of the moss.

1908: Gov. Sanders initiates the first major extension of Government Street. He said the road would be the model for all roads in the state—and he almost renamed it Model Road.

1940s: Calandro’s Supermarket opens.

1960s and 1970s: D.H. Holmes, Tic Toc Shoes and Goldrings were at Government Street and Acadian. All will eventually close.

1980s and 1990s: Government Street enters its darkest period, but groups like Mid City Merchants and the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance are formed with an eye to the future.

2000s: A rebirth occurs across Government Street with new developments like Circa 1857, Radio Bar and more.

SOURCES: MARY ANN CAFFERY; “CHANGING TIMES MEANT STREET NAME CHAOS HERE,” BEVERLY WOLTER, THE MORNING ADVOCATE 8/30/48; HENNICKE, LOUIS C., LOUISIANA - ITS STREET AND INTERURBAN RAILWAYS, VOL. I, SHREVEPORT, 1965; “A STORY OF OUR STREETS,” JOE BLANCHARD, THE MORNING ADVOCATE 10/15/54; AND CARLETON, MARK, RIVER CAPITAL: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF BATON ROUGE.



Oh, the possibilities.....
Government Street
at Westmoreland
Shopping Center,
before and after.

Goals and Standards

Want to know what elected and community officials have in store for Government Street? Here's an overview of the planned improvements.

Buildings: Commercial buildings should front the street. Entrances should be prominent and street facing.

Parking: Parking should be located on-street and/or at the rear of buildings. A limited amount of parking between the building and the street may be allowed. Parking credits and "in-lieu of" programs are encouraged.

Pedestrian walkways and landscaping: Wide, highly visible crosswalks with sidewalk bulb-outs should be included. (Bulb-outs are traffic calming measures, primarily used to extend sidewalks. Bulb-outs reduce the crossing distance and allow pedestrians who are preparing to cross a roadway and approaching vehicle drivers to see each other.) A landscaped buffer with street trees or trees in tree grates should be located between the sidewalk and street.

Site considerations: A well-connected network of streets with small blocks is encouraged.

SOURCE: FUTUREBR STRATEGIC PLAN

from a harsh to a welcoming thoroughfare would provide the greatest return in FutureBR project recommendations. And he can go on breathlessly about the value of Government Street.

Spanning about two miles from the proposed passenger rail station just east of downtown to the campus of Baton Rouge Community College, the area includes Baton Rouge General Medical Center, several established historic neigh-

borhoods and numerous parks and schools within a well-connected street grid. Florida Boulevard, Government Street and North Boulevard connect the area directly into downtown, the Capitol Complex, Spanish Town and Beauregard Town.

The Government Street area is among the few initiatives in the FutureBR plan that are ready to move forward, Fregonese says. "It already connects residential districts

with a growing retail district and there are even signs of an entertainment district popping up,” he says. “And unlike Florida Boulevard, it doesn’t have overwhelming traffic. You know, when you’re planning, it’s OK to have a street or two that’s not specifically for traffic flow.”

That fits with the long-term vision of Government Street as detailed in the FutureBR plan—larger sidewalks, more of an emphasis on public transportation and mixed-use offerings. Fregonese says improvements could range from a “few hundred thousand to \$2 million or \$3 million.” But that’s a drop in the bucket when compared to widening an interstate. “Plus, it would create a return for taxpayers by boosting property values to levels greater than the investment,” he adds.

While some in Mid City have become jaded over the years in the face of promises about Government Street, Mayor Kip Holden says this is a different turn. He has already ushered a “strategic implementation plan” through the Metro Council process. It targets priorities that can be completed within one to three years.

Holden says the cash needed for this first phase will be pulled from the city’s operating budget and hopefully drawn down from bond proposals. Private partnerships will be leveraged to keep taxpayer costs to a minimum, he says.

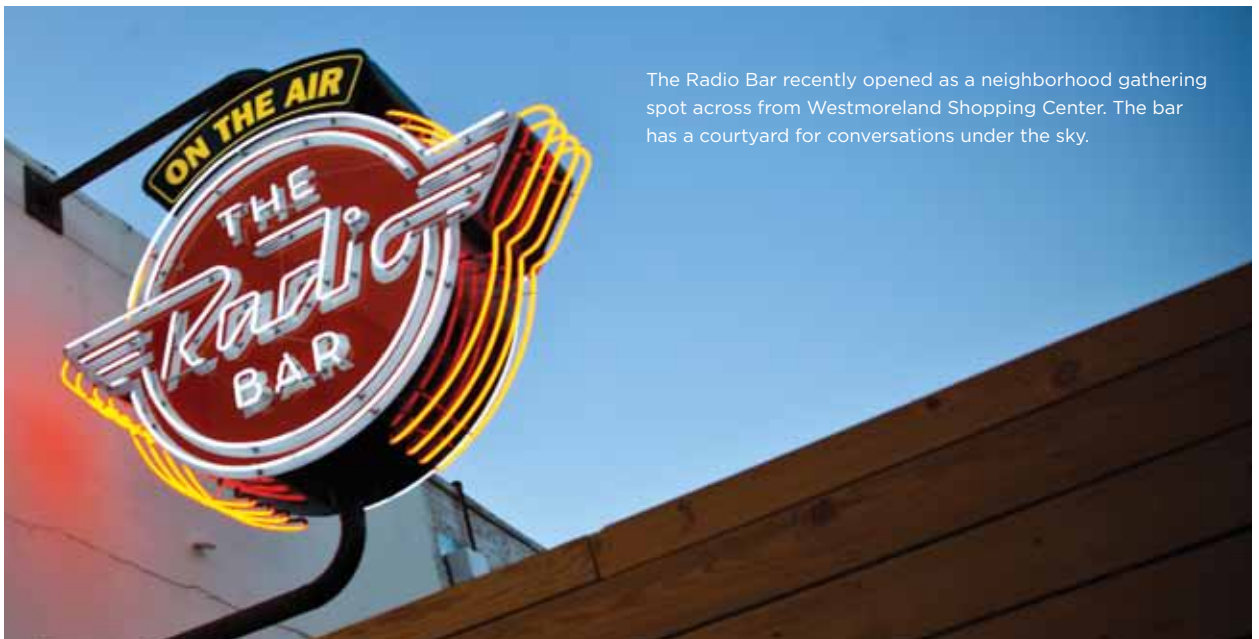
This opening salvo, in terms of Government Street, appears aimed at making the thoroughfare pedestrian friendly. The implementation plan calls for a “complete

“When other communities were divided and planning efforts stalled, we came together by the thousands and said, ‘This is the city and parish we want for our future.’”

—Mayor Kip Holden

street program” and a “highly walkable, hip, urban destination.” That’s basically a few trees here and there; major crosswalks and minimal vehicle traffic; street parking; less signage; bike lanes running where poles once stood; and outdoor dining where guys with goatees can sip coffee and talk geopolitics.

Even though hipsters shudder when they hear it, a comparison to Magazine Street in New Orleans has been drawn. Fregonese likens the coming Government Street transformation to a set of streets in Portland: Belmont and



The Radio Bar recently opened as a neighborhood gathering spot across from Westmoreland Shopping Center. The bar has a courtyard for conversations under the sky.

Mississippi, both of which have seen boosters develop their own street fairs. “Both of them went from being completely ordinary to being drivers that revitalized neighborhoods,” he says.

The most prominent challenge is traffic. Pedestrian-friendly changes to Government Street have been broached in the past, but the thoroughfare’s importance to overall traffic flow around Mid City and Baton Rouge has been repeated in more than one study. That debate, surely to resurface sooner than later, pits Fregonese’s roads-as-open-spaces offense against the defense of lost traffic capacity.

Holden, for his part, says he’s guarding against the kind of bureaucratic red tape that sends these types of debates into hyperdrive. He says he has assembled an “implementation team” that’s working directly with his office and prioritizing funding needs in a fashion where small hiccups won’t hold up the entire project.

He has also decided to assign one of his assistant chief administrative officers to serve as the comprehensive plan manager. “This person will report directly to me,” Holden says. The City-Parish Planning Commission, meanwhile, is serving as the lead monitoring agency for the FutureBR plan, overseeing the day-to-day implementation.

It’s an important flowchart to know for anyone involved or interested in the future of Government Street. And Holden hopes it fosters the same kind of unity that first defined the FutureBR process. “When other communities were divided and planning efforts stalled,” Holden says, “we came together by the thousands and said, ‘This is the city and parish we want for our future.’”

In lieu of the future, there are a few happenings along Government Street that signify change is coming. For example, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has kicked up its involvement a notch over the past few years. It’s in talks with Entergy to redevelop the energy giant’s complex near the railroad tracks off of Government Street.

Down Government Street between Acadian Thruway and Eugene Street, Radio Bar is quickly becoming a neighborhood fixture. Co-owners Brian Baiamonte and Dave Remmetter say they were lured to the area last year after watching a few “progressive-type” businesses making a go of it. “I was actually standing across the street and looking at the building we’re in now when a friend remarked that someone should open a bar or restaurant there,” Baiamonte says. “Now I just love this place, with its huge garage doors.

Government as Main?

From the FutureBR Strategic Plan:

Main streets tend to specialize in different types of businesses, such as those related to dining, art galleries or specialty apparel, and will attract visitors from around the region.

Buildings along main streets feature an attractive variety of continuous storefronts. They generally range from one to three stories, with housing on upper levels. With time, infill and redevelopment will gradually fill in gaps where there might be parking lots or buildings setback from the street.

For example, Government Street has the makings of a main street.

It’s awesome.”

As for whether the most recent push to overhaul Government Street will flourish, Baiamonte is optimistic. “Sure,” he says. “Why not? The thing is, there’s already a lot of fun little things to do on Government. You can grab a bite at Bistro Byronz, poke around at Denicola’s, have a drink here, shop at Honeymoon Bungalow.”

Remmetter is little more fine-tuned into what FutureBR is striving for. He owns another business at the heel of the Perkins Road Overpass District, Chelsea’s. “You have everything you need off Perkins right there without ever having to leave,” he says. “There’s a grocery store, a pharmacy, a dry cleaners. It has a great neighborhood vibe.”

The comparisons stop there, Remmetter admits, because unlike the Perkins Road overpass area, Government Street is absolutely drenched in growth potential. And investors are paying attention. So, the difference this go-round may be that FutureBR is simply the right plan at the right time. “That’s why I love the whole idea,” Remmetter says. “It’s an absolute perfect fit.” •

*The first installation of solar panels
in the Old South Baton Rouge
neighborhood sits atop a
new outdoor pavilion
at the Baranco
Clark YMCA.*



This outdoor classroom and activity space was built through a collaborative effort of Center for Planning Excellence, the LSU School of Architecture and Baton Rouge Community College's Construction Education program, with major funding from the *Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation*.

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 Center for
Planning Excellence

The EBR we want

Some believe that Baton Rouge has sorted itself into four geographic areas that are quarreling over the direction of the parish. That appears not to be true. Our latest CityStats survey reveals that there is much agreement over what people want for themselves and the parish, including a vibrant downtown, taxes for mass transit and infrastructure, and components of the FutureBR plan.

The poll presents an opportunity for EBR leadership, providing a clear policy direction for the parish.

On behalf of the Foundation, LSU's Public Policy Research Lab polled EBR residents in October and November 2011. The goal was to discern agreements and disagreements on various issues among the four geographic areas: South Baton Rouge, Southeast Baton Rouge, North Baton Rouge and Baker/Central/Zachary.

Pollsters questioned at least 300 residents in each of the four regions and compared the results. The overall parish sample, which included 300 cell-phone surveys, is 1,618 with an error margin of plus or minus 2.5%. The margin of error for the four areas is 5.7%.

The survey is part of CityStats, a Foundation information project that measures the quality of life in the parish. CityStats is underwritten by the Newton B. Thomas Support Foundation. The complete survey report is available at BRAf.org and at [Facebook.com/BRCityStats](https://www.facebook.com/BRCityStats).

CITYSTATS®

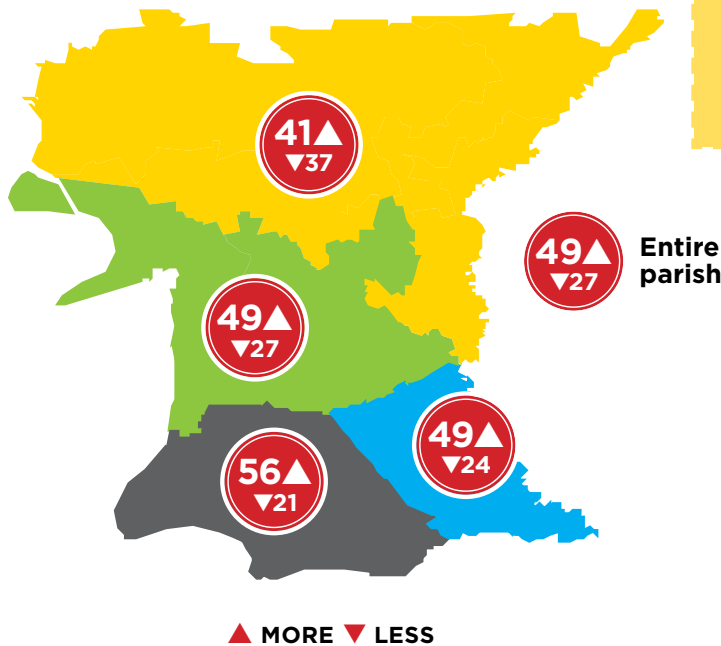
Indicators for tracking our quality of life

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Downtown has seemingly divided Baton Rouge. Squabbles have broken out over public funding of projects, such as a stage canopy for the town square and a new downtown library. We wondered whether Baton Rouge really is divided over downtown.

SPEND MORE OR LESS ON IMPROVING DOWNTOWN?



SNAPSHOT OF RESULTS

What the poll found may surprise many. A vast majority of respondents want local government to spend more or at least the same on downtown in coming years, and there is agreement across the parish. Even in Baker-Central-Zachary, a plurality want government to spend more on downtown in the next decade. Also, they want a major riverfront attraction, but are uncertain over what that attraction should be.

A plurality of East Baton Rouge residents—49%—support more spending on the downtown area. Just 27% say less should be spent and 22% prefer keeping spending about the same. While there are some differences between voters and nonvoters in terms of their spending, (53 percent of nonvoters prefer more spending compared to 47 percent of voters), the differences are not statistically significant.

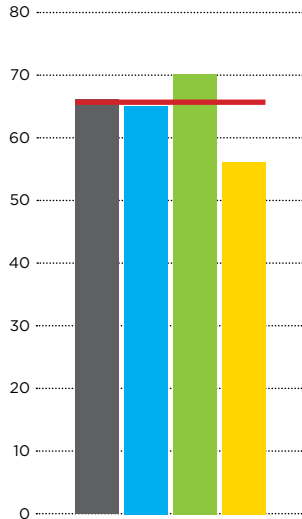
IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPEND MORE OR LESS ON IMPROVING THE DOWNTOWN AREA?

	More	Less	Same	Don't Know
South Baton Rouge	55.8%	20.8%	20.4%	3%
Southeast Baton Rouge	48.7	24.2	24	3
North Baton Rouge	49	27	22	2
Baker, Central, Zachary	40.5	37.2	20.4	1.9
Entire Parish	49.3	26.6	21.7	2.4

South Baton Rouge
 Southeast Baton Rouge
 North Baton Rouge
 Baker-Central-Zachary

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

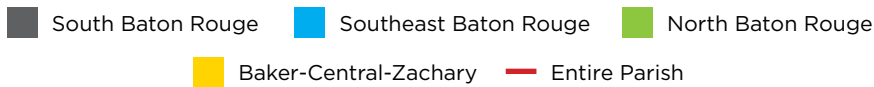
SUPPORT FOR BUILDING A SIGNIFICANT DOWNTOWN ATTRACTION



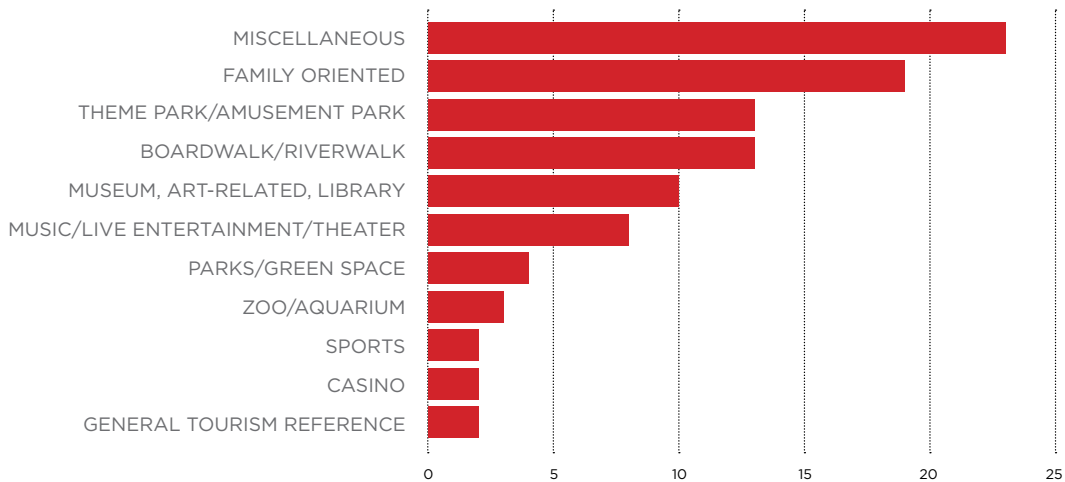
Sixty-six percent support building a significant downtown attraction, while only 29% are opposed and 5% are unsure or don't know. There are significant differences by region, but a plurality in each area supports the construction of a riverfront attraction.

WOULD YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE A PROPOSAL TO BUILD A SIGNIFICANT ATTRACTION FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS ON THE BATON ROUGE RIVERFRONT?

	Support	Oppose	Don't know
South Baton Rouge	65.6%	28.4%	6%
Southeast Baton Rouge	64.9	30.1	5
North Baton Rouge	70.1	25.8	4.1
Baker, Central, Zachary	56.1	37.4	6.6
Entire Parish	65.8	29.1	5.1



RIVERFRONT ATTRACTION EBR RESIDENTS WANT BUILT



While support for building a significant downtown attraction is strong, there is no consensus on what that attraction should look like. In an open-ended follow-up, respondents identified a range of attractions, from a minor league sports team to new music venues to museums to a theme park.

TAX ISSUES: MAYOR'S TAX PROPOSALS

BACKGROUND

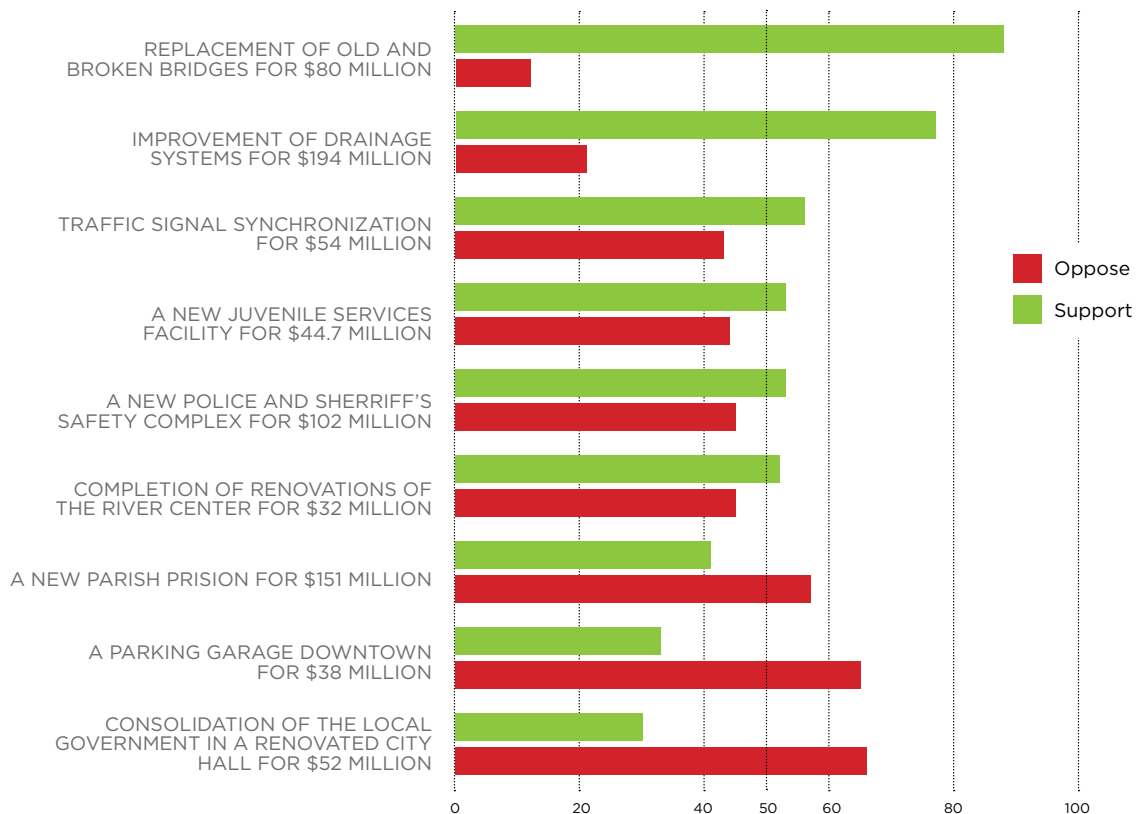
In the past 30 months, Mayor Kip Holden has offered two nearly identical tax proposals to fund infrastructure improvements, public safety, downtown improvements and more. Each was defeated, the first by about 1% of the vote and the second by a wide margin. Meanwhile, the mass transit system is nearly broke and is considering a tax to provide a stream of regular funding.

Importantly, our questions asked respondents if they would support these projects via an increase in taxes.

SNAPSHOT OF RESULTS

Respondents strongly support taxes for infrastructure improvements—bridges and roads. But they are divided over public safety components of the previous bond issues and are mixed on downtown projects. They are clearer on mass transit, with a majority supporting a sales and property tax combination for mass transit.

SUPPORT FOR PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE EAST BATON ROUGE



KEY FINDING: When asked to pick a single item from this same list, a plurality (31%) selected replacing old and broken bridges. Respondents were split on the remaining items, with 11% selecting a new parish prison and 9% selecting a new juvenile facility, a new police and sheriff's safety complex and completion of River Center renovations, respectively.

TAX ISSUES: MASS TRANSIT

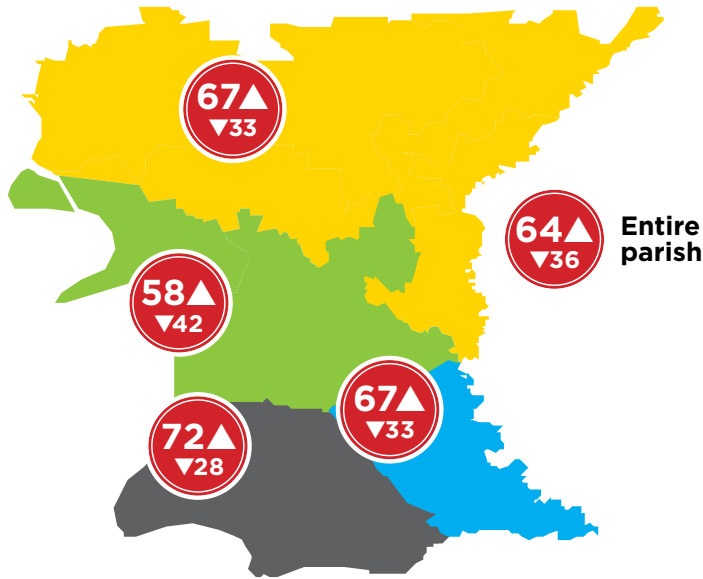
BACKGROUND

Capital Area Transit System (CATS), the EBR bus service, is running out of money, with no dedicated stream of income to save it. In response, a panel convened by Mayor Kip Holden delivered a strategy to form a mass transit system that would add more hubs to reduce waiting time on buses from 75 minutes to 15 minutes, offer fast buses in employment corridors for moving people to jobs and deploy buses mainly to match rider demand. The panel also offered a tax proposal to pay for mass transit operations.

SNAPSHOT OF RESULTS

Respondents said they would approve the proposed tax for buses, while also expressing majority support for a light rail line in coming areas. Most know the bus system is running out of money, but the percentage that don't is quite high as well.

AWARENESS OF MASS TRANSIT FUNDING SHORTAGE



Sixty-four percent of respondents said they were aware that the mass transit system was almost shut down due to a lack of dedicated funding. A surprisingly high number of respondents, 36%, said they didn't know the bus system was near closing. Awareness is associated with education, income and race, with better educated, higher income and Caucasian respondents more likely to say they knew of the potential shutdown.

▲ AWARE ▼ NOT AWARE

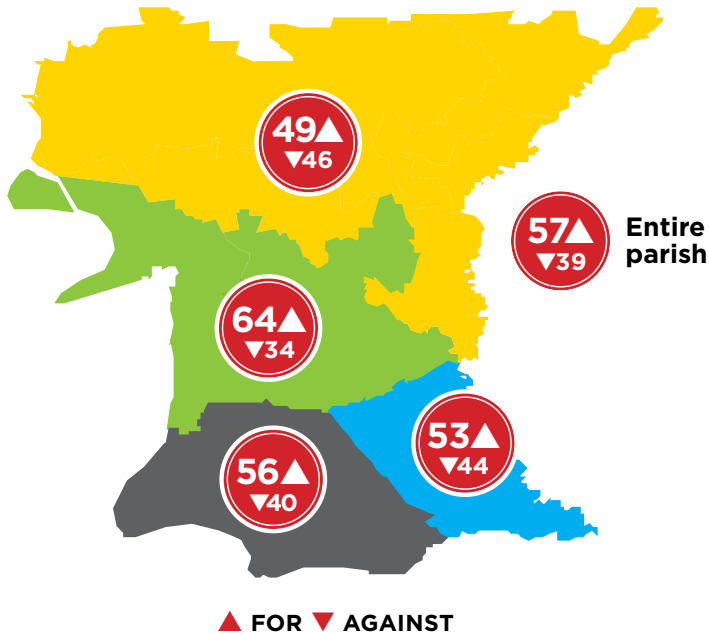
WERE YOU AWARE THAT THE MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM WAS ALMOST SHUT DOWN THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF A LACK OF DEDICATED FUNDING?

	Aware	Not aware	Don't know
South Baton Rouge	72.2%	27.6%	0.2%
Southeast Baton Rouge	66.5	33.4	0.2
North Baton Rouge	57.7	42.3	0.1
Baker, Central, Zachary	67.1	32.9	0
Entire Parish	64.4	35.5	0.1

■ South Baton Rouge ■ Southeast Baton Rouge ■ North Baton Rouge ■ Baker-Central-Zachary

TAX ISSUES: MASS TRANSIT

SUPPORT FOR A TAX TO BUILD NEW MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM

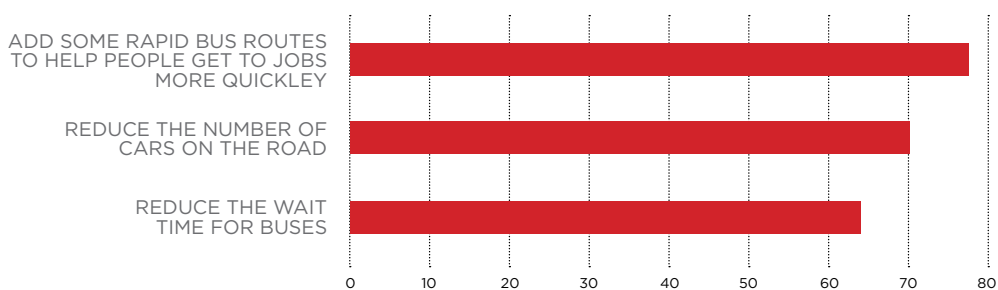


Would you vote for or against a one-fourth cent sales tax and an increase in property taxes of approximately \$50 on a \$200,000 home to build a new mass transit system within Baton Rouge?

A majority of respondents—57%—support a proposed tax increase to build a new mass transit system in Baton Rouge. That includes more than half South Baton Rouge, North Baton Rouge, Southeast Baton Rouge, and a plurality—49%—in Baker-Central-Zachary.

KEY FINDING: Sixty-eight percent of African Americans support the mass transit tax, compared to 48% of whites. The tax proposal is more popular among younger people, with 61% of 18-34 year olds saying they would vote for it, compared to 50% of respondents 55 and older.

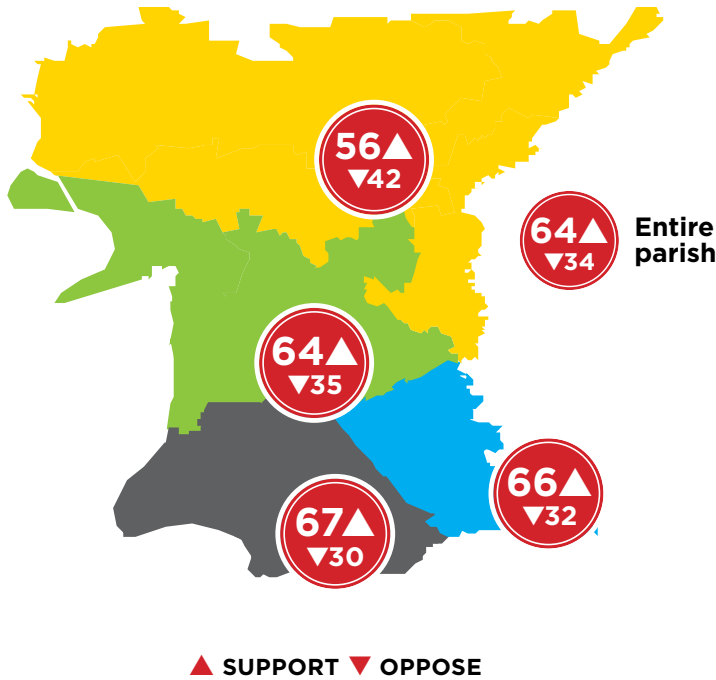
PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT NEW MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM BY REASON



How can public officials build support for a mass transit tax? Respondents were more likely to support the tax if it would help get people to jobs more quickly (78%), reduce the number of cars on the road (70%) and reduce the wait time for buses (64%). Clearly, if one wants to increase support for a new mass transit system, the connection to jobs and work is critical.

KEY FINDING: Among respondents who initially opposed a tax increase to build a new mass transit system, 49% said they would be more likely to vote for new transit tax if it got people to jobs more quickly, and 45% would pull the lever if it reduced the number of cars on the road. Only 29% said they would vote for the system if it reduced the wait time for buses.

SUPPORT FOR LIGHT RAIL



FutureBR, the parish's new master growth strategy, calls for the mass transit system to eventually build a light rail line connecting downtown, LSU, Perkins Road and the Mall of Louisiana. Sixty-four percent support the rail line.

Would you support or oppose a proposal for a light rail transit system to connect downtown, LSU, Perkins Road and the Mall of Louisiana?

KEY FINDING: Support for light rail was contingent on the number of trips a respondent makes downtown. Seventy-five percent of respondents who went downtown more than 10 times last year favored a light rail system, compared to 51% who did not go downtown at all. Seventy-one percent of nonvoters compared to 59% of voters said they supported a light rail system.

No matter whether they live in Shenandoah or South Baton Rouge or the outlying cities, residents have a desire for the kind of improvements that make a great community.

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Randy Nichols and partners have joint projects to get the homeless into homes.



A little closer

New center gives
homeless a path to a place
of their own

By Maggie Heyn Richardson
Photos by Tim Mueller

For Baton Rouge's chronic homeless population, most days are not spent finding the path back to mainstream society, but on basic survival. It starts in the early morning, when lines begin to form around community dining rooms that serve free hot meals with the help of volunteers.

The afternoon brings the hunt for warm clothing, blankets or free prescription drugs for the multitude of mental and physical illnesses the homeless often face. Many of these men and women are entitled to disability benefits, but that means scheduling—and keeping—appointments with case workers. It's not an easy task without transportation or clean clothes. In the late afternoon, the focus turns to finding a bed at an emergency shelter, which must be vacated by 6 a.m. the next morning when the cycle begins again.

The homeless face mammoth challenges to survive—even more to make the life changes necessary to leave the street permanently. But two new initiatives recently completed by the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless aim to change the equation for homeless men and women and their families in Baton Rouge. The One Stop Homeless Services

Center brings several key social services to one location, which also features permanent apartments for 36 homeless and disabled individuals. The \$8.5 million project, funded primarily through federal tax credits, opened in November at the corner of Convention and 17th streets in Mid City across the street from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Bishop Ott Shelters and Community Pharmacy.

In addition, the Scott School Apartment Homes now provide 60 housing units specifically for low-income workers. Fourteen of the units have been set aside for homeless individuals. The Scott School homes opened in a former Baton Rouge elementary school on North 19th Street, one block north of Spanish Town Road, in May 2011.

Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless was established in 1996 and has been a successful collaborative network among 35 Baton Rouge service providers that operate shelters, transitional housing and other services to the homeless. The network includes such charities as Volunteers of America, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Capital Area Family Violence Intervention Center. Its agencies work with both chronically homeless individuals as well as families new to homelessness.

CAAH Executive Director Randy Nichols says the organization had studied solutions to homelessness and believed the one-stop shop model was an effective strategy for a population with no stability and constant personal challenges.

“Homeless people, when they’ve been on the street for a while, forget how to live,” says Nichols, who has served as CAAH head since 2004. “They can’t keep appointments. It’s easy for them to get off their meds. So to have the services they need under one roof is huge.”

Members of the CAAH visited other one-stop centers in Houston and Phoenix in 2005 and began working to bring the idea to the Capital City.

“We wanted it to be a collaborative, so we’ve brought all



kinds of services and service providers to one place,” says Nichols.

The Center offers drop-in day services like shower and laundry facilities, mail, telephone and internet access. Case managers help clients navigate the social services system, depending on the issues they face. Surveys conducted annually by CAAH revealed that of 1,031 homeless people in the area, 237 self-reported serious mental illness as their primary cause of homelessness, while 467 pointed to substance abuse.

Thus, there is a strong behavioral health component in the Center that includes group counseling run by Catholic Charities and screening for mental disabilities led by Volunteers of America and the LSU Department of Psychology.

The Center also enables homeless individuals and families to apply for Supplemental Security Income, food stamps and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Classrooms include computer terminals where clients can work on obtaining a GED or improving their literacy. Health services, including dental and eye exams, are on site as well, as are job placement and support services that can help homeless men and women get back to work. Finally,

an attorney specializing in disability claims is also at the center.

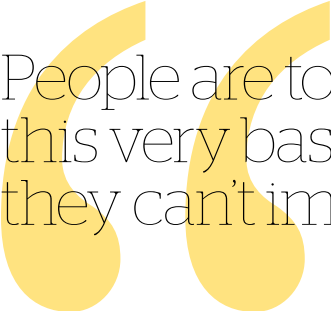
These services take place on the center's expansive first floor, while the housing units are located on the second and third floors. Clients who obtain a housing unit are all disabled, and their benefits allow them to pay rent ranging from about \$215 to \$300 per month.

Nichols says about eight funding streams have contributed to the Center's creation, but it's primarily funded through federal low-income housing tax credits. The Scott School Apartments were paid for in a similar fashion.

Baton Rouge Parish School System for \$700,000. Former classrooms are now expansive, attractive one-bedroom units that can be rented by those earning 20-50% of the area's median income.

The building's landscaping is being provided by Plant it Forward, a social enterprise program of the O'Brien House, a substance abuse treatment and transitional housing center. The cleaning and janitorial services are provided by Louisiana Industries for the Disabled (UpLIFTD). Both organizations are CAAH members.

Nichols says that homelessness is an issue that touches



People are touched because they appreciate this very basic need, the need for a home, and they can't imagine life without it.

—Randy Nichols, Capitol Area Alliance for the Homeless executive director

When the housing market crashed in 2008, investors for tax credits were hard to come by. But the One Stop Center and the Scott School Project qualified for a special exchange program with the U.S. Treasury. The federal government became the investor and provided the capital for the projects.

If the One Stop Center is for individuals and families facing dire circumstances, the Scott School Apartment Homes attempts to protect economically vulnerable populations from becoming homeless. It provides an affordable housing alternative for working people who earn less than the median income. The development addresses a key concern revealed after Hurricane Katrina: a lack of affordable housing for the low-income workers crucial to a community's economic fortunes. Service workers, teachers' aides and some law enforcement have faced difficulty finding affordable housing options, particularly in cities that have experienced a growth in population.

The CAAH's real estate partner, Gulf Coast Housing Partnership, purchased the former school from the East

nearly everyone regardless of their station in life, making it a cause that most in the community feel compelled to get behind.

"Even if you don't know someone who is homeless, you've probably been confronted by this issue," says Nichols. "People are touched because they appreciate this very basic need, the need for a home, and they can't imagine life without it." •



From left, Marquis Walls and Eric Wallace wait for the start of the First Annual KIds' Orchestra Winter Concert in December at St. James Place.



Note-worthy

New program teaches harmony to schoolchildren
through music

By Maggie Heyn Richardson | Photos by Tim Mueller



ike most elementary schoolchildren, the youngsters gathered for music rehearsal at Capitol Elementary in Baton Rouge on a recent winter afternoon were full of energy.

Two girls fashion a human Tilt-A-Whirl when one offers an overstretched sweatshirt sleeve and says to the other, “Spin me around!” Boys jockey for positions in line aided by hefty book sacks. Ceaseless chatter fills the air.

But when it is time to grab their instruments and file into the rehearsal room, unbridled energy melts into restrained expectation. “Yay!” Capitol Elementary first grader Gabby Clay squeals quietly. “I get to get my recorder!”

The woodwinds pick up their plastic recorders, while members of the “bucket band” choose bright aqua or salmon colored five-gallon buckets on their way in. They form two neat sections in the rehearsal room and wait for conductor Raul Gomez’s command.

When it comes, the drummers’ small hands rhythmically pat notes to the whispered syllables, “Miss-iss-ip-pi-Riii-ver.” A few bars in, the recorders begin playing “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Then Melrose Elementary fifth grader and drumming enthusiast Joel Swain contributes the backbeat of a snare drum. Their focused faces watch Gomez intently; he soon brings the piece to a close.

Applause erupts from 10 adult instructors and volunteers in the room, after which the children ready to play again.

These children are part of the Baton Rouge nonprofit Kids’ Orchestra. Most of them would not have access to music lessons were it not for the new program. Kids’ Orchestra was founded by entrepreneur and philanthropist Nanette Noland in 2010. Its purpose, quite simply, is to build social harmony in Baton Rouge.

Noland was disturbed by the neighborhood silos that pervade Baton Rouge, which was discussed one Sunday at St. James Episcopal Church by the Very Rev. J. Mark Holland.

Noland, a musician, believed that music could be the cure, especially after learning about the work of dynamic young conductor Gustavo Dudamel, music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, who was trained through the state-supported Venezuelan music education program El Sistema.

That program has taught more than 250,000 children—many of them poor—throughout Venezuela. More signif-

Daylon Daniel, left, plays the cello in a performance of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and students (right) perform a bucket band demonstration of melody and rhythm. They played at the Kids’ Orchestra Winter Concert at St. James Place.



icantly, El Sistema has been replicated worldwide and is upheld as a powerful tool in developing character and leadership.

Noland turned to Gwendolyn Jones, an award-winning mezzo soprano with more than 40 years of performance experience in national and international operas, to staff the initiative. Jones had moved to Baton Rouge from New York City a few years earlier when her partner, Dugg McDonough, accepted the LSU Opera director position.

Jones tapped into talent pool at the LSU School of Music and recruited an impressive nine-person faculty with serious credentials, including Gomez, the program’s artistic director and the Sidney M. Blitzer violinist and a Huel D. Perkins Fellow in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at LSU. Gomez is also an El Sistema graduate. The program is in place in his home, Costa Rica.

“We want to accomplish something similar to El Sistema, to give kids who probably wouldn’t have had the chance to learn about music,” says Gomez. “Music opened a lot of doors for me and it can for them.”

Kids’ Orchestra is a project of entrepreneur Nanette Noland, who makes grants through her charitable fund at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Both Gomez and Jones are quick to say that while Kids’ Orchestra will probably unearth undiscovered talent, that’s not its primary purpose.

“This is about exposing children of different backgrounds to music in the same room, teaching social skills, showing them how to work as a group and preparing them for the future,” said Jones.

Indeed, the children are constantly reminded that they’re part of an ensemble that functions only when each boy and girl cooperates, says Program Manager Eliza Eaton, a Baton Rouge Teach for America alum and a former national youth concert violist.

Eaton says her background as a reading intervention teacher at Mayfair Middle School, whose students often had behavioral problems, taught her how to comfortably command a room. She believes music has the power to

Jason Fan and Elizabeth Arey (left) perform during the Kids' Orchestra Winter Concert. Maniquwa Holmes, right, receives her achievement award after the concert in December.



transform children.

“I just remember one of my students, a kid who was always drumming and tapping on things,” recalls Eaton. “How great would it have been for him to have been in a program like this? How would that have changed things for him?”

While lower income students currently dominate the program, a central tenet of Kids' Orchestra is to build a coalition of socio-economically diverse children, says Jones. During the 2011-2012 program year, five schools are participating: Capitol Elementary, The Dunham School, Lanier Elementary, the LSU Laboratory School and Melrose Elementary. A few at-large students from other schools also attend.

“It's wonderful to see children from different backgrounds helping each other with their instruments and learning to work together,” says Jones. “We really believe this will build bridges between groups and build a stronger community.”

The students meet twice a week at one of two locations, Capitol or Lanier, where they learn a variety of instruments, including strings. Those from other schools are transported

by buses operated by the Big Buddy Program and Star Hill Church, says Jones. The first 30 minutes is spent working on homework. Then it's time for rehearsal. Gabby's mother, Tory Crawford, says the program has been a strong fit for her daughter.

“She loves it,” says Crawford. “She always wants to rehearse at home, and she can't wait to come to practice.”

Gabby plainly explains why. “It's just fun because you get to play music,” she says.

Twice during the fall the children had an opportunity to perform, which enabled the stage-weary to overcome their apprehension.

“A couple of the children told me they didn't want to go on” says Jones. “I told them it was OK, and to just wear their t-shirts and watch their friends. They were part of a group, after all. But when it was time for them to go on, they felt comfortable and they jumped right up and did great.” •

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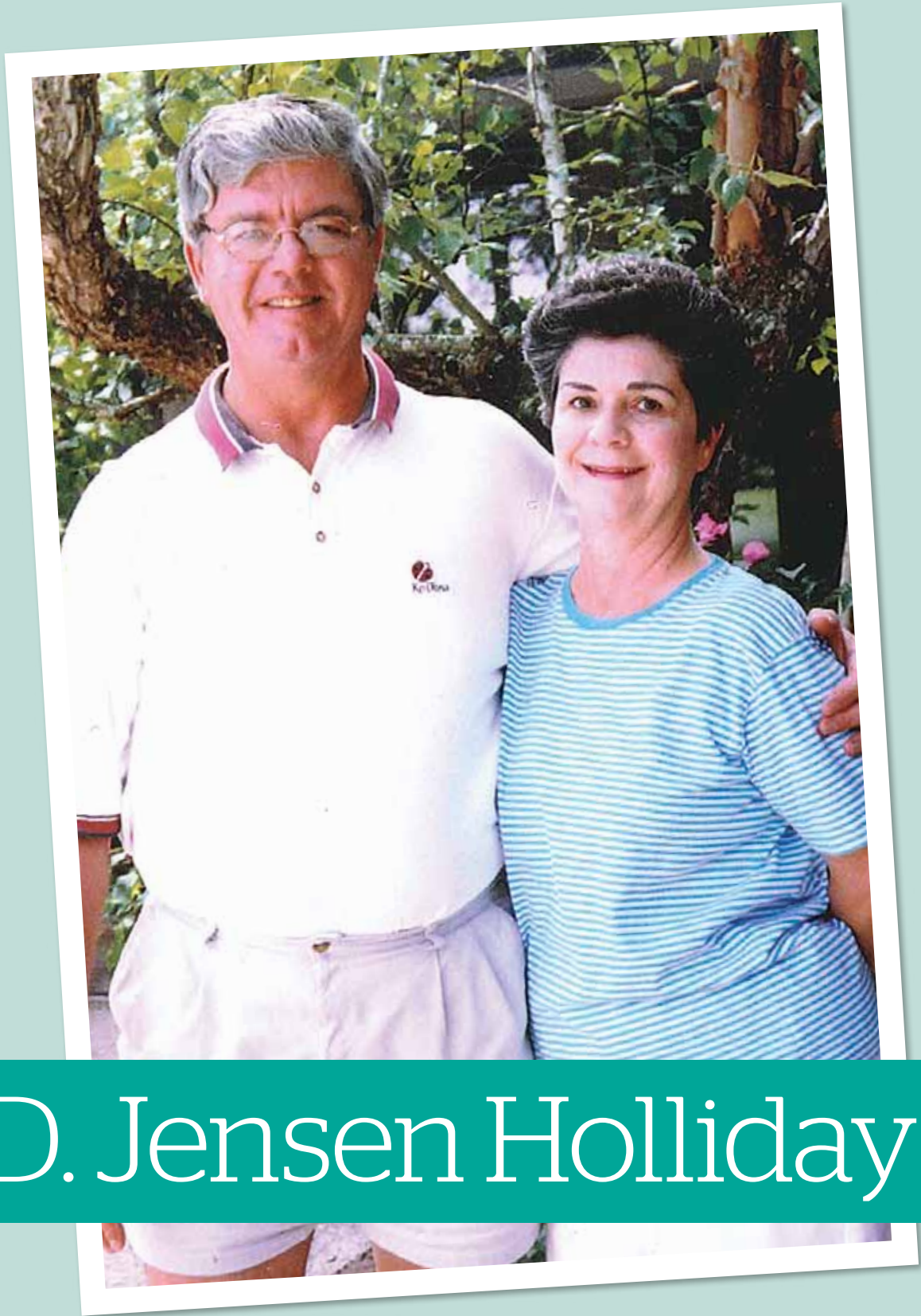


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D. Jensen Holliday

A series on people who transformed Baton Rouge, the few who quietly carried us forward as a community.

D Jensen Holliday spoke his mind, and he did not duck controversy.

The former president of Franklin Press Inc. worked tirelessly for progress in Baton Rouge, most notably in the sphere of public education. He co-chaired the mid-90s Community Action for Public Education (CAPE), a history-making initiative to reform the parish school board.

The Catholic High School grad's legacy continues nearly a decade after his passing. There are rooms at Woodlawn High School and LSU's Manship School of Communication that bear his name. Some features of contemporary Baton Rouge, like the Swine Palace Theater, might not exist without Holliday's efforts to bring them to life.

Holliday passed away in 2002, but those who knew him well say he still guides them in difficult decisions, when they ask themselves, "What would Jensen do?"

Currents: What was it about Jensen Holliday that made him an effective leader in Baton Rouge?

Cynthia Michael met Holliday in the '60s when he joined the board of Union Federal Savings and Loan at age 24:

Jensen listened to what people had to say. He had a passion for doing what was right, and a quality of openness to everyone.

Nanette Noland of The Powell Group met Holliday through the Baton Rouge Chamber: He was tenacious. When he felt passionately about something, you had better join in or stand clear because it was going to get done.

Jan Day Gravel of Janus Development of McLean, Va., met Holliday through the Baton Rouge Chamber: He was loyal, and people were loyal in return. His leadership

of CAPE was without precedent, and it would not have succeeded without him. Jensen, like co-chair Rev. Charles Smith, had credibility that had been earned over time, and that was crucial during that very difficult leadership challenge.

J.H. Martin worked for Holliday for more than 30 years at Franklin Press: He was a master of compromise. He built coalitions in almost every organization where he was involved, and there were so many of those. He knew how to get things done.

He was a master of compromise. He built coalitions in almost every organization where he was involved, and there were so many of those. He knew how to get things done.

—J.H. Martin

When he felt strongly about something he could get red-faced in a minute. What he cared about, he cared about deeply.

Gravel: He understood there were times when you need to step in and actively lead, but there were other times when it was best to step back to allow the process to play itself out. He could also articulate to people why something should matter to them. He knew, for instance, that public education was something that touched the entire community, even if their children were not in public school.

How did he express his values?

Michael: He always took the time to listen. He was giving and generous, both financially and with his time. If there was a survey done, I bet that you would find his name on the

Can you give me a sense of how he interacted with people around him—what was he like up close as a person?

Michael: He spoke the truth no matter what. He didn't sugar coat things. He was open, honest and trustworthy.

Noland: Part of his success was he was a pussycat, not a tiger—except deep down he really was a tiger. He was warm, gentle and had a sense of humor. I don't want to draw him as too cool a cucumber, though.

board of almost every nonprofit organization in the parish at one time.

Noland: He believed that every child could learn, and he wanted to give every child in the community the opportunity to learn. That shaped so much of his work.

Gravel: Family and people mattered most to him. I got to see him put his values to work every day when I had an office at Franklin Press. He had an inner compass of integrity that guided him in how he lived.

Martin: He valued people, not just the people he knew but the entire community. He was deeply religious, and that was a reflection of that.

What do you think might surprise Jensen Holliday about the Baton Rouge of today?

Michael: The traffic and growth since Hurricane Katrina. That LSU is ranked No. 1 in college football and that the Saints won the Super Bowl. I think he would be surprised that there's no longer a golf course at Shenandoah, where we played a lot of golf together. He would be surprised at the crime in the city, but also happy to see that we have built new public schools, but also disappointed in the progress of the schools when it comes to test results.

Noland: I imagine that his biggest thrill and his biggest frustration would concern the public schools. He would be thrilled that the desegregation order ended, but also feel that we have not come far enough in making progress in our schools. I think he would be frustrated that the riverfront has not been developed—I recall listening to him talk about what the riverfront could become in a speech more than 20 years ago. He would celebrate the changes downtown and the city's greater diversity.

Gravel: People underestimate the amount of time that real change takes, and I think if Jensen were here he would remind people how long that process takes, for example for significant improvement in the public education system. I have sometimes wondered how, if he had lived, he might have helped the city through the period after Katrina. I think he might have helped to shepherd the response during that time.



Jensen Holliday and his wife, Estelle.

Martin: Education was on the top of his list of what was important to the community, and he would be disappointed that we have not seen more improvement in public education. But he was a supporter of a revived downtown and that would be a positive change for him.

What is his legacy to the community and to people who knew him?

Michael: Jensen left his mark through his involvement with so many non-profit organizations. I remember one of his children saying at his funeral that the outpouring of people there made them realize how much he had done, although he never talked or bragged about his work for the community.

Noland: Everything he touched was good, and the community lost a gift when it lost him. He was about doing what was right for family, friends and community. There are good things in this community, like Swine Palace, that probably would not exist without him.

Gravel: Those who knew him and worked with him still ask ourselves, "What would Jensen do?" when we are facing a difficult decision. We carry his spirit with us. When I talk about leadership when I meet with groups and companies across the mid-Atlantic I discuss his leadership during CAPE. I talk about him as an example of staying the course when things get difficult.

Martin: I sometimes wonder how the community might have changed in additional ways if he was still with us, especially regarding education. Those who knew him still miss him. The community lost a champion when he died. •

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IF I RAN THE PARISH...

What would you do if you were benevolent ruler over the parish?

That's what we asked a diverse group of locals and they provided the following responses...



Emel Alexander,
Urban Restoration
Enhancement Corp.

I would work to reduce the number of families living in poverty within our city. As the executive director of a nonprofit

organization, I see how poverty affects our citizens. The high poverty rate in our communities has an impact on crime, education and economic outcomes. That rate has continued to increase in the past several years. As Louisiana's Capitol City, Baton Rouge has the opportunity to provide transformative leadership to address and lead the charge for change as it relates to the issue of poverty.



Ann Edelman,
Zehnder Communications
director of public relations

I would foster an atmosphere of honesty and frankness in city-parish government by requiring truth serum before each Metro Council meeting—

the psychoactive drug kind. No more hedging, doublespeak or fence straddling on Thursday nights. Unencumbered by higher cortical functions, our council members will be compelled to say what they really think about capital outlay, zoning requests, downtown libraries and each other. Crime and traffic congestion will plummet as citizens learn a new definition of must-see TV, while the ratings bonanza would generate enough advertising revenue to build a state-of-the-art sewer system and fund CATS for the next 10 years.



**Jim Engster,
Louisiana Radio Network
president**

I would meet with the Metro Council at Jaguar Lanes at the Southern Union and Louie's Café at the gates of LSU and stress collaboration.

Insights from all segments of the city are essential to addressing significant challenges involving crime, education and poverty.

Baton Rouge should celebrate all its citizens. An annual football game between LSU and Southern would be a positive step toward ending the two tales of one city.

If LSU can host Northwestern State and McNeese State at Tiger Stadium, as it has the past two years, the Tigers and Jaguars can also play in Death Valley. What a cultural event it would be.

I would take all revenue produced by red light cameras in 2012 and distribute the money among our people. We would conduct confidential weigh-ins on Jan. 1 and Nov. 30, and pounds lost would produce a bonus in time for the holidays using a formula based on proceeds from red light infractions, the number of participants and reduced weight. Those who lose the most would gain the most.

Baton Rouge would rank as the fittest city in America, and we could definitively state that red light cameras extend lives.



**David Humphrys,
artist/photographer**

I watch *The Price is Right* when I eat lunch, and I noticed not long ago that a trip to Baton Rouge was the grand prize. So I think we have arrived, or we are on the verge of

becoming, a destination that can draw more people as a place to enjoy and for creative opportunities. So I would look to move forward with those things that draw young people and keep them here, like riverfront development that would provide a new, fun place for everyone, more upscale places to eat and venues to hear great music. The river is wonderful, and we have new opportunities in our growing technology, gaming and film sector, and I would look to do anything we could to bring more jobs here. I would

also work to be as inclusive a city as possible because that is something that young people look for.



**Phillip Lafargue,
Center for Planning
Excellence/Valcour
Records**

I would take drastic steps to remove politics from development decisions and give the FuturBR plan

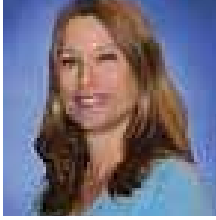
teeth. I would rethink how we move people around. I would connect streets across the board so no one bears the largest brunt of increased traffic. I would work to create districts where residents can vote to tax themselves for improved transit based on a clear plan for useful, reliable service. I would create more demand-based public parking and charge for it, increasing revenues and parking options while encouraging people to walk, bike or take transit. I would use our abundance of cars to work for us through the use of parallel parking to delineate bike lanes and protect pedestrians. I would implement an integrated "fare card" system with a mobile app to make it easy to manage and pay for parking, transit and tolls and to track available parking, alternative routes and transit schedules.



**Slater McKay,
Forum 35/All Star
Automotive**

I would focus my energy on implementing the FuturBR plan. We have an excellent planning document for our city, but we need to ensure

it is implemented appropriately. Based on the success of other government projects like the Green Light Program and Imagine Your Parks, I would structure each phase of the plan around a clearly worded proposal that would allow everyone to understand where we are in the process and where we are going next. I would also do my best not to get drawn into unnecessary battles with other government officials; it only serves to provide ammunition to those who believe government is wasteful and ineffective.



**Margaret Nabers,
legislative aide**

With the return of “Project Runway” designer Anthony Ryan Auld to Baton Rouge, it is apparent our creative capital is drawing interest, literally and

figuratively. Baton Rouge has concentrated on its creative capital and retaining young talent in recent years, but some of its infrastructure has been neglected. Baton Rouge has been under an EPA court ordered upgrade on our sewer system for many years. And still, after a hard rain, the smell of sewerage is strong at the confluence of any street in University Gardens and East Lakeshore Drive near one of Baton Rouge’s greatest gems: The LSU Lakes. This system of lakes is one of the premier spots in our city. On any given day, Lakeshore Drive is thick with runners, walkers and even football fans—a large part of this community. And yet it is an open sewer. If I were leading the parish, I would work hard to make sure that first on the list for sewer upgrades comes is University Gardens so that the quality of water in the lakes can be improved. Now that City Park is completed, it is time to move on to the adjacent system of lakes.



**Arthur “Silky Slim”
Reed,
Stop the Killing Inc.**

I would put education and crime at the top of my list, and a big part of that would be focusing on at-risk youth to direct them toward a positive

life and stop crime before it happens. I would work to establish safe houses in rural areas of the parish as a way to remove kids at risk from urban communities while giving them skills to make the transition back into the community. I envision safe houses where kids could spend up to six months. I would look for additional ways to provide more support to at-risk youth in the community, including through more mentoring and art programs.



**René Singleton,
singer/voice teacher**

The development of a stronger sense of community in the more fragile neighborhoods of our city would be a priority. Not through a big, splashy media-driven campaign, but

a quiet sort of under the radar effort. Communities in which there is a relatively high crime rate would be the focus of a steady, persistent initiative to engage residents in community formation through after-school or after-work programs (not games, but skills-building and educational opportunities, some vocational and some for personal enrichment) for children and adults also. This initiative would be strengthened by the involvement of faith-based organizations in those communities that could provide venues and leadership. Special community-building projects, perhaps something like a neighborhood garden, might provide residents the opportunity to become acquainted with one another and to work together in a way to benefit each participant as well as the neighborhood. •

Baton Rouge should celebrate all its citizens. An annual football game between LSU and Southern would be a positive step toward ending the two tales of one city.

—Jim Engster, Louisiana Radio Network president



Dark and light

LSU's Bradley E. Schaefer's was asked years ago to watch the universe. From the telescope he manned atop Witt Peak in Arizona, what he measured produced astonishing discoveries. The universe was not, as theorized, expanding only to collapse back on itself.

Instead, the movement of supernovas spotted by telescopes was evidence that the universe was expanding—forever. What's more, pushing the universe apart in all directions was dark energy, a discovery that resulted in the 2011 Nobel Prize in physics for a team that included Schaefer.

Only team leaders received a share of the prize, but they asked Schaefer to join them in Stockholm, Sweden, in December at the awards ceremony.

The universe will become cold and dark and empty in a few billions years. But, for now, Schaefer is in its limelight.



It's the humidity

Understanding how a beetle lives in arid areas led Edward Linnacre to create a system that can irrigate land during severe droughts. His Airdrop system harvests condensation to water crops.

A turbine intake drives air underground through a network of piping that rapidly cools the air to the temperature of the soil, where it reaches 100% humidity and turns into water. Stored in an underground tank, the water is pumped to nourish the roots of crops via subsurface drip irrigation.

The Airdrop won the James Dyson Award, which is given each year to a design that solves a problem.

\$5 million

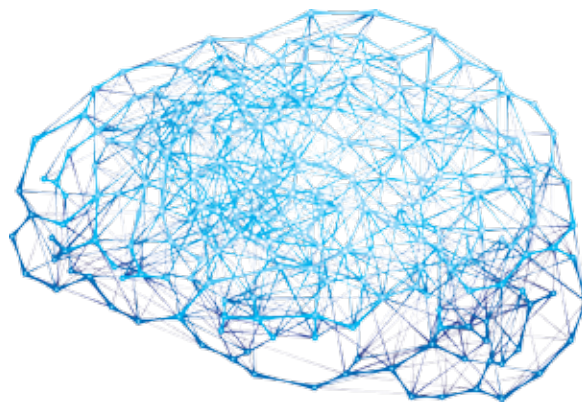
Annual savings to Boston from switching to LED streetlights. The city spends \$7 million annually to power its lights. Through negotiations and partnerships, Boston shared the cost of the \$300 conversion per fixture. Over a decade, Boston will convert the 64,000 lights to LED bulbs that last about 70,000 hours each, or about 24 years burning eight hours per night.

One

Computers chips are speedy; neurons are slow. But humans are superior because our bits work in concert. Scientists in Japan are bringing the two closer.

In a paper published in November, researchers from the National Institute of Materials Science in Tsukuba wrote they had linked a number of organic molecules to function as a computer. The molecule at the center of their computing machine is known as 2,3-dichloro-5,6-dicyano-p-benzoquinone, or DDQ.

DDQ molecules can connect with up to six of their neighbors. Each DDQ molecule can exist in four states, with each state conducting electricity differently. The scientists laid down 300 DDQ molecules on a gold substrate and programmed them with a scanning tunneling microscope. An electrical charge started the machine, which



went on to calculate the way heat diffuses in a conducting medium and the way cancer spreads through tissue.

The DDQ molecules worked in parallel, like neurons in a brain. "Generalization of this principle would...open up a new vista of emergent computing using an assembly of molecules," wrote the researchers, who were led by Anirban Bandyopadhyay.

On the importance of craft in work and product

"Fifty years later the fence still surrounds the back and side yards of the house in Mountain View. As (Steve) Jobs showed it off to me, he caressed the stockade panels and recalled a lesson that his father implanted deeply in him. It was important, his father said, to craft the backs of cabinets and fences properly, even though they were hidden. ...In an interview a few years later, after the Macintosh came out, Jobs again reiterated that lesson from his father: "When you're a carpenter making a beautiful chest of drawers, you're not going to use a piece of plywood on the back, even though it faces the wall and nobody will ever see it. You'll know it's there, so you're going to use a beautiful piece of wood in the back. For you to sleep well at night, the aesthetic, the quality, has to be carried all the way through." —*Steve Jobs*, by Walter Isaacson.



Now hear this

As Google and Facebook rose, Yahoo! seemed an afterthought. In November, that changed a bit. The firm introduced IntoNow, an iPad and iPhone app that listens to audio tracks of TV shows and displays related content.

"So you press a button, we identify the show you're watching and we start surfacing relevant content. You don't have to engage. It's just sort of happening," says Adam Cahan, founder of IntoNow, which was bought by Yahoo! to produce the application.

If you are watching an LSU football game, the application gathers live game statistics, news feeds and comments about the contest.

The application gives Yahoo! a chance to push advertising to users, a potentially sizable market. Yahoo!'s research shows 30% of iPad owners search for information while watching TV.

Global warming speeds up



564 million more tons

MIT's Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change reports the world pumped that much more carbon emissions in 2010, 6% more than the year before and higher than the conservative estimates of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. China, India and the U.S. were blamed. One researcher called the increase a "monster." Worse still, scientists reckon global emissions will ratchet up as economies grow again.

7.5 degrees Fahrenheit

The top-end estimate for increase in global temperatures by the end of the century, once again by the IPCC, has proved to be too conservative in its 2007 report. Louisiana is expected to have more than 5 months each year with temperatures exceeding 90 degrees, up from about 1.5 months in the 1970s, reports the U.S. Global Change Research Program. In South Florida, more than six months each year will be average above 90 degrees.

3+ feet

Sea levels were expected to rise by less than 3 feet at century end, but more and more researchers believe the numbers are too cautious. Some are predicting seas worldwide will be higher by 6 feet. At a 4 foot rise, the U.S. Global Change Research Program projects 2,400 miles of major roadway are to be inundated in the Gulf Coast region. In total, 24% of interstate highway miles and 28% of secondary road miles in the Gulf Coast region are at elevations below 4 feet. Other assets, including entire communities, are likely to be uninhabitable as well.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is creating the Water Institute, an independent nonprofit that will gather the best scientists to produce a response to rising seas and vanishing coastlands.

10

Rank of Baton Rouge in income inequality among 269 cities with populations of more than 100,000. The U.S. Census Bureau rated the cities based on the Gini Coefficient, which was 0.530 for Baton Rouge. A zero coefficient means everyone in the group earns the same amount; 1 means a single person earns all the money. Compared to other places, there are more poor and rich people in Baton Rouge, with a thinner middle class. Atlanta had the highest Gini Coefficient (0.571) and New Orleans was second (0.546), while Washington, D.C. and Miami were tied for third (0.540), and Gainesville, Fla., was fifth (0.537).

Must See



Urbanized

Director: Gary Hustwit

His other documentaries: *Helvetica* and *Objectified*.

Hustwit travels the world to look at city design and solutions, a very timely topic as urban centers are predicted to house 75% of the world's population by 2050.

Smart ideas: Bogota, Colombia, has built hundreds of kilometers of bike lanes, and New York has converted an abandoned elevated railway into the High Line linear park.

Not so smart idea: New Orleans is rebuilding isolated homes in the Ninth Ward with no sense of community.

"We're on the cusp of this really incredible moment in cities where technological advances and the mass migration to cities are happening at the same time," Hustwit tells FastCoDesign.com



Designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects, the Ray and Dagmar Dolby Regeneration Medicine Building opened last year at the University of California-San Francisco. The 660 foot long, serpentine building is broken into four segments, each stepping down a half-story as the building works its way down a wooded slope. An office cluster and green roof tops off each segment, with transitions between the segments permitting for scientists to gather and discuss their research.

Lab Experiment

"So many lab buildings are now designed with the goal of promoting collaboration that I've begun to think that scientists have become the architecture profession's most optimistic clients. They believe that well-designed buildings can help them."

Paul Goldberger, architecture critic for *The New Yorker*, exploring how architects are reimagining science buildings despite constraints of land and labs. (Sept. 11, 2011)

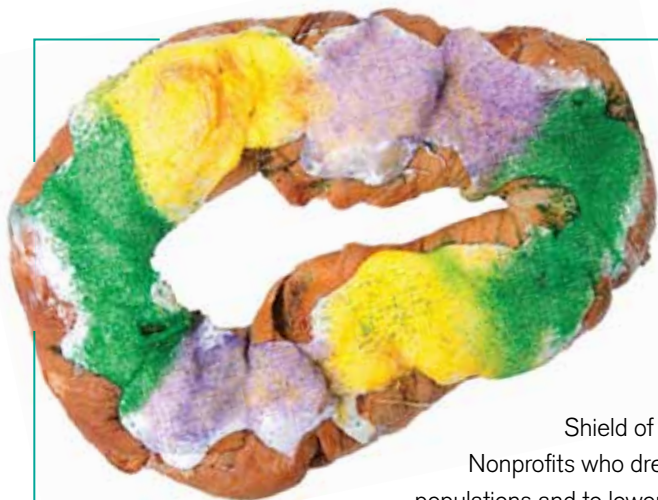


Apple the world

Digital thermostats make sense, but research suggests they don't conserve energy. That's because many homeowners don't program the devices correctly or ignore them altogether. A beautiful solution has been devised by Tony Fadell and Matt Rogers, engineers who led the creation of the Apple iPod and iPhone.

Named "Nest," the temperature regulator requests just three answers upon startup—your Zip code, whether you are heating or cooling your home, and a temperature range when you are not home. After that, you adjust the thermostat for a week to let it learn your comfort level. From there, Nest does the rest.

The Nest is estimated to reduce air conditioner use by 30%. Cost is \$249. Payback period is about two years. The first production of Nest was back-ordered for three months.



Think thin

Louisiana loves to eat. Mardi Gras is for consuming king cake. Football is for beer and grilling. We even have a season named Gumbo Weather. It's good. Too good. With 31% of the people considered overweight, Louisiana ranks No. 5 in the country.

To address this problem, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation is offering a \$10 million bounty. Nonprofits who dream up innovative programs for creating healthier populations and to lower Louisiana's obesity rate will receive implementation grants from the pool, up to \$1 million.

BCBS Foundation wants nonprofits to partner and pool funds for the matching grants.

Christy Reeves, executive director of the BCBS Foundation, says lowering the obesity rate cuts chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, and related health care costs.

\$11 million

Grant received by LSU's Barry Dellinger, who is Patrick F. Taylor Chair for the Environmental Impact of Hazardous Waste in the LSU Department of Chemistry. He will use the funding to continue the Superfund Research Center and focus its research on environmentally-persistent free radicals. EPFR are pollutants generated by hazardous waste that remain in the atmosphere for long periods of time.

"Simply breathing on a worst-case scenario day in Mexico City, for example, is like smoking two packs of cigarettes a day," said Dellinger. "EPFRs are essentially incomplete molecules. We believe, when pollutants are attached to fine particles in the environment, they actually exist as EPFRs, rather than molecules."

Prior to Dellinger's groundbreaking work with EPFRs, these dangerous pollutants hadn't been proven to exist. Dellinger is now finding that trying to extract EFPRs with



solvents creates a new problem.

"We are seeing a reaction in solution that produces a new pollutant that was not originally there," says Dellinger. "This is controversial due to the implications for public health. The reactions in solution mean researchers may be studying chemicals that don't even exist in the environment."

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100 LAFAYETTE STREET | DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE

Dr. Y. Jun Xu, *water tender*

You see the birds perched near the edge of the lake. They are a warning. Beneath their feet, the life cycle—plants growing, dying, turning into sediment—is making the lakes shallower. What’s worrisome, “the process is accelerating,” says Y. Jun Xu, an LSU associate professor of hydrology.

If the lakes aren’t dredged, they will revert to mosquito-infested swamp.

His eyes have seen the receding shoreline during a decade at LSU.

His scientific instruments tell him much more. Several near the shore monitor water level and flow. Loaded with sensors, one device anchored in the lake offers data, such as phosphorous levels, to monitor the health of the lakes.

They are sick. Phosphorous and nitrogen wash into the water to feed to microscopic life, which devours soft oxygen and can lead to fish kills. Plants which grow rapidly and turn into rich sediment feed more plants. The lake gets shallower and shallower.

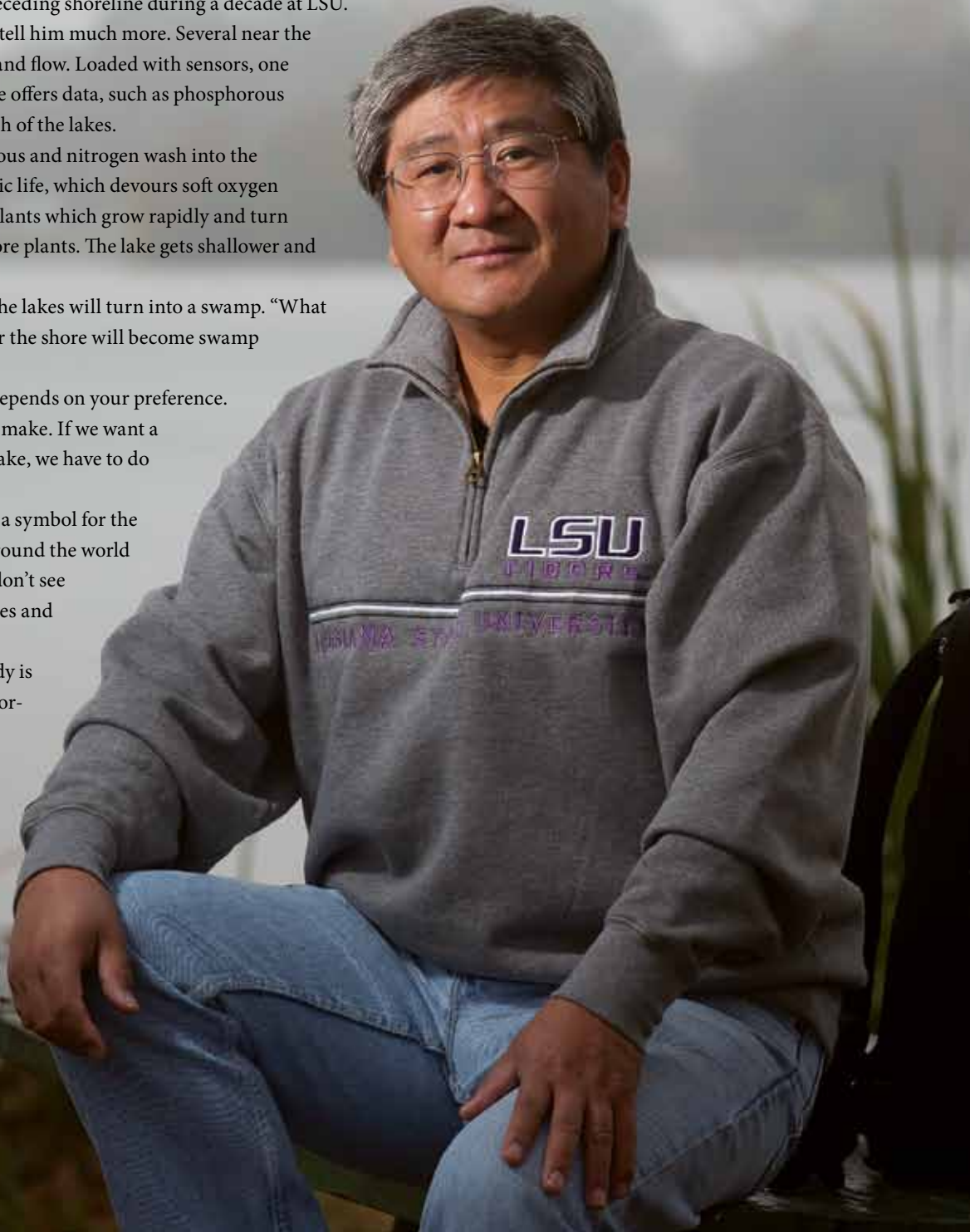
Xu won’t predict when the lakes will turn into a swamp. “What I can see is some spots near the shore will become swamp pretty soon.”

That could be OK, just depends on your preference.

“It’s a choice we have to make. If we want a swamp, fine. If we want a lake, we have to do something.”

His choice is a lake. “It’s a symbol for the city. When friends from around the world visit, they say ‘Wow.’ You don’t see many universities with lakes and open water.”

And he laments: “Nobody is doing anything. It’s so unfortunate. So many people think that the lake will take care of itself.” •





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