

# CURRENTS

Q3/2008

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Ten years on, celebrating and expanding a strategy that sparked downtown

## SKIP TO KIPP

School leaders seek successful charter program



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# Baton Rouge Area Foundation



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Progress is measured in many ways. For the strategy that accelerated the redevelopment of downtown, an indicator of a step forward is a step sideways on downtown sidewalks.

Over the past decade, downtown sidewalks have become busier, requiring pedestrians to dodge each other. It's a good sign, one that recalls a week 10 years ago, when Plan Baton Rouge began with gatherings at the Old State Capitol.

At the community design meetings, called char-

They come to the Shaw Center for the Arts, which Duany scripted in Plan Baton Rouge as a Southern Guggenheim crafted from the Auto Hotel. Because of a partnership among city, state, business and nonprofit leaders, the result was grander—a \$55 million modern building that draws people to the LSU Museum of Art, the Manship Theatre, restaurants and public spaces.

Meanwhile, business pioneers have revived Third Street, which is now lined with restaurants, clubs and businesses.

On North Street, the state consolidated offices in Art Deco buildings that reflect the architecture of the Louisiana Capitol. Agreeing with Plan Baton Rouge's recommendations to create lively ground floors, new state garages house the Main Street Market and a YMCA.

## Ten years on, partly because of Plan Baton Rouge, more than \$1.5 billion in investments have occurred in downtown and \$300 million more are on the way.

rettes, residents envisioned a new future for their downtown. They dreamed of small and big things, of roads that flowed better, of restaurants alive with talk, of an arts center like no other. From those meetings, architect and town planner Andres Duany crafted Plan Baton Rouge, a blueprint for reviving the place where the city began.

Plan Baton Rouge has defied the low expectations of such plans. Ten years on, partly because of the plan, more than \$1.5 billion in investments have occurred in downtown and \$300 million more are on the way. Downtown Baton Rouge is busy with life, not only during the day, but also in the evening, when people descend on the area for dinner, drinks, dancing and discussions.

Downtown's rebirth is continuing.

Cranes, as you see on the cover of this issue, are building a new courthouse, which will balance the State Capitol at the other end of Fourth Street, another recommendation of Plan Baton Rouge. Mike Wampold is constructing II City Plaza, providing necessary top-line office space to a burgeoning downtown. New projects have been revealed for the waterfront, and I'm certain more are quietly being developed for downtown.

Yet, there is more work to do, which is why the city, Fannie Mae Foundation, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Downtown Development District, the Downtown Business Association and the Baton Rouge Area Convention and Visitors Bureau are

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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 the capital region. 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 buy eyeglasses for needy children. 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](mailto:mverma@braf.org).

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funding Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two.

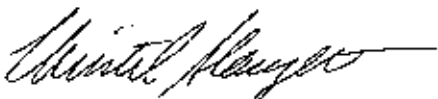
An urban land design firm was chosen for the second phase, which started in July. The DDD and the Center for Planning Excellence will manage the process.

PBR Phase Two will recommend how investments in downtown can be enhanced. The planning firm, working with a veteran group of planners, economists, landscape architects and others, will provide a scheme for the years ahead by conducting a retail market study, determining how residential, commercial and public spaces work together and recommending incentives to boost private development.

The original Plan Baton Rouge did far more than was intended. It demonstrated that planning can foster more livable communities. Because of that, planning has expanded across the region. For instance, after Katrina, the Foundation helped to create the Center for Planning Excellence. The nonprofit spearheaded Louisiana Speaks, a post-Katrina regional strategy for South Louisiana. CPEX also has arranged for town planning in Lake Charles and has worked on designs for West Feliciana and Tangipahoa parishes, among others.

Meantime, back in Baton Rouge, CPEX and the Foundation are working in Old South Baton Rouge, the neighborhoods between LSU and downtown. As in downtown, there is promise in Old South BR. New housing and businesses are rising in the area. Soon, the sidewalks will become busy with neighbors, children riding their bikes and new people who have chosen to make the historic neighborhood their own.

Thank you,



Christel C. Slaughter, Ph.D.



Hilton Capitol Center



Youth Oasis



Shaw Center for the Arts

Our donors have...Planned a new Baton Rouge downtown...Funded a safehouse for runaway children... Partnered to build the Shaw Center for the Arts...

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Find out how to open a charitable fund by calling  
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*Baton Rouge  
Area Foundation*

# About Us

## *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 \$18.8 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, supporting the improvement of public education through experimental schools, creating an economic corridor across South Louisiana and much more.

**Who we serve:** We conduct projects and provide grants in eight parishes in South Central Louisiana: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, West Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston and Pointe Coupée. The Foundation also 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 Mandeville. This year, the Foundation started providing support services to 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 at the Foundation 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 Jake Holinga, director of donor services, 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 Hotel in Baton Rouge, as well as shopping centers in Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico. The real estate assets are managed by Commercial Properties Realty Trust.

**What's our size:** At year-end 2007, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$568 million, making it among the top-30 largest community foundations in the country and the largest in the Gulf South. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over more than 40 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued \$210 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 about the Foundation is available at [BRAf.org](http://BRAf.org) or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387-6126.

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**Imo's bridge >>**

What a beautiful place, and most people in Baton Rouge don't know it exists. But a planned expansion should provide LSU's Hilltop Arboretum with a higher profile, while letting it teach more people how to make their gardens grow.

The arboretum is 14 acres hidden on Highland Road between Siegen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard. Donated by Emory Smith, a postal worker who lived with his family on the property, the arboretum has ponds, native plants, a bridge, an open-air pavilion and offices.

There will be more, for the Friends of LSU Hilltop Arboretum have already raised \$1 million toward a \$1.8 million campaign to add an enclosed building, a second bridge and an outdoor courtyard. The building was part of the original plan, but funding was difficult to secure.

Before she died last year, Imo Brown, through the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, provided a \$500,000 gift toward the bridge and building. Her donation started a new round of fundraising aimed at completing the original plan. Other donors of the Foundation, including founder John Barton, Sue and Bert Turner and Dudley Coates, donated to the building as well.



To the existing pavilion overlooking the pond, LSU's Hilltop Arboretum will add a building, bridges and more.

Cathy Coates, president of the Friends of the Hilltop Arboretum nonprofit, says the building will be a multipurpose education facility with a catering kitchen. "And it will be LEED certified."

Brown's funds will pay for a bridge to cross a ravine and start a path around the property. Other Hilltop donors, former LSU Chancellor Paul Murrill and wife Nancy, have provided \$28,000 to build a path on the property.

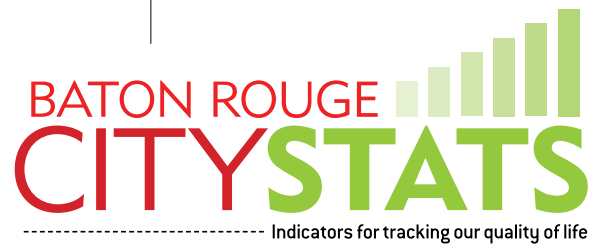
Construction of the projects could begin early next year.

"When we make this a destination site, that's when we sit back and relax and enjoy the show," said Peggy Davis, executive director of Hilltop. •

**Indicators Phase**

**II >>** A donnybrook was avoided, but the final community meeting of the Foundation's indicators project produced some spirited debates over an unlikely topic—which statistics should be used to measure the quality of life.

At the gathering of 70, some got carried away, ignor-



ing the instructions to pick more than the requested five indicators for topics to be measured. It's OK to be exuberant, for the project, named Baton Rouge CityStats, will produce an important result



Productivity growth for Baton Rouge metro, the highest rate among the top 100 areas in the country from 2001 to 2005. The rate is more than twice the national average.

Source: Brookings Institution

—an improved parish for all people.

BR CityStats will tell our community how far we've come, where we are and where we need to go. It will do so with about 60 indicators that measure health, environment, social well-being, education, public safety, infrastructure, arts and culture and more.

The first indicators report will be released in early 2009. The Foundation will use the indicators to help guide millions in annual grants, focusing resources on solving the problems revealed by the statistics. The information is expected to guide other groups and local government as well.

Before the indicators were chosen, people attending the meetings came up with a vision for the community. The indicators will drive the community to that vision.

The Baton Rouge Area Chamber has been contracted by the Foundation to gather the data and do a supporting survey. The Foundation will take over in fall, writing the first annual report. Next year, The Foundation expects to bring the community together to begin solving problems that are made evident by the indicators. •

## Nip/Tuck in OSBR

>> Ingram's will get a new face. As will four other businesses in Old South Baton Rouge, thanks to funding from Capital One and the East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority.

Those organizations gave money for façade improvements in OSBR, an area between LSU and downtown that is being revived by the

look for quite some time and this program provided me with a great opportunity to do just that."

Grants to improve the façades were \$5,000 for one-story buildings and \$7,500 for two-story buildings. Awardees contributed an equal amount in order to receive a grant. Construction and improvements will begin later this summer and will be managed by the grant recipi-



Foundation and partners.

In May, the grants were awarded to Ingram's Fabricated Filters, Ingram's Upholstery, Wings and Things and Marlene's Hair and Nails—all located on Thomas H. Delpit Drive, a main OSBR thoroughfare. Inga's Subs and Salads on West Chimes Street is a grant recipient, too.

"Because the neighborhood is historic and because there is so much activity on Chimes Street, we need to do all we can to keep the area up and improve it," said Inga Kim, owner of Inga's. "I've wanted to give the building a new

ents. NeighborWorks America is helping in building design.

The grants are part of the broad strategy to revitalize OSBR, which began with the Foundation helping to secure \$18.6 million in federal funds to replace aging public housing projects with single-family homes that are integrated into the community. The Center for Planning Excellence, which has provided planning across South Louisiana after the storms, is working with the Foundation and partners to prepare land for redevelopment, while the OSBR Partnership is a com-

munity nonprofit charged with executing the strategic plan for the neighborhood.

The East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority helps to stimulate home ownership by providing attractive mortgages and grant funds to improve inner-city neighborhoods. •

# ↑ 14%

## Foundations give more >>

Community giving rose 14% last year, reaching a record \$4.1 billion from the nation's 717 grantmaking community foundations.

The sharp rise in philanthropy by community foundations, such as the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, was reported by the Foundation Center. The association's survey indicates another giving record will be set this year.

Though community foundations are just 1% of all U.S. grantmaking foundations, they were responsible for 9% of giving in 2007. Also, 42% of community foundations provided at least \$1 million in grants last year. (Ranked among the largest community foundations in the country, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation provided \$18.8 million in grants last year.)

Education and human services were the top giving priorities of the larger community foundations included in the survey.

"Since the beginning of the 1990s, community foundation giving has grown more quickly than overall foundation giving in all but two years," said Steven Lawrence, senior director of research at the Foundation Center. "Strong asset growth, new gifts and bequests from donors and exceptional disbursements from donor-advised funds are the primary factors contributing to these gains."

For the complete report visit the Foundation Center at <http://www.foundationcenter.org/> •

## Trace the pattern >>

The Center for Planning Excellence has produced a pattern book for Old South Baton Rouge, the area between LSU and downtown being revitalized under a Foundation project.

The pattern book offers investors, homeowners and residents a framework for building, renovating and maintaining houses and businesses in a way that is cost effective and makes the neighborhood beautiful. It

also provides tips for building and maintaining structures.

The pattern book has architectural styles of Old South Baton Rouge, types of buildings, development patterns within the community, demonstration plans and more. Look for the pattern book at the Carver Branch Library at 720 Terrace Ave. and the McKinley Alumni Center at 1520 Thomas H. Delpit Drive.

CPEX, an offspring of the Foundation, also produced a pattern book for South Louisiana to guide rebuilding after Katrina.

For more information about the pattern books, email Mark Goodson at [mgoodson@c-pex.org](mailto:mgoodson@c-pex.org). •

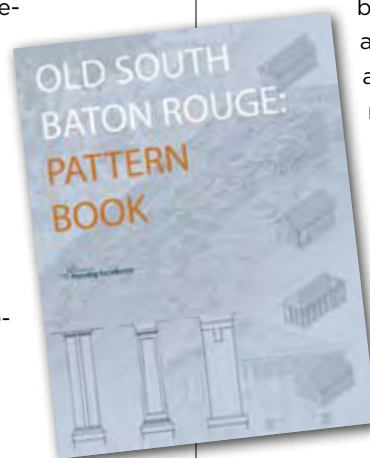
## Northshore grows >>

The Northshore Community Foundation, a partner of the Foundation, has expanded its staff, adding Tara White as mem-

bership director and Frank Saxton as director of community development. Together, they will help the Northshore Community Foundation have an even greater impact in St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, St. Helena and

Washington parishes.

White, a resident of Covington, will be charged with building a



# 10

base of support for the young foundation through its membership program—recruiting businesses and individuals to support initiatives, programs and partnerships that will contribute to making the Northshore community a better place to live.

White has a bachelor's degree from Louisiana Tech University. She volunteers with Helping Hands Medical Missions and has recently returned from a trip to Guatemala where she and others provided medical aid to underserved communities.

As director of community development, Saxton's assignment is to work with communities across the Northshore to facilitate community planning. "One of the tenets of new urbanism and smart growth is that people's environment—their roads, buildings, sidewalks—can impact their quality of life in ways that most people don't even realize.

**“By planning better, we can all live better—and my job is to help make that happen.”**

—FRANK SAXTON

By planning better, we can all live better—and my job is to help make that happen.”

Saxton has a bachelor's from the University of Oklahoma and a master's from the U.S. Naval War College. He previously worked in Washington, D.C., as an assis-

tant to U.S. Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma. He spent the past several years conducting first responder training as a member of the National Center for Security Research and Training located at LSU in Baton Rouge.

Meanwhile, the Northshore Community Foundation has expanded its offices to include a conference center. Located at 635 Lafitte St. in Mandeville, the conference center is open to nonprofits and other organizations for trainings, forums and

**Ghost guide >>** The Old State Capitol, being mended and improved, will get a new feature that Sec. of State Jay Dardenne believes will make the building a destination.

Money is being raised for a \$13.5 million education display called “Spirit of Louisiana.” Visitors will encounter multimedia exhibits that show the history of Louisiana and the building. Among them will be a virtual ghost of Sarah Morgan, whose family donated land for the Old State Capitol.

The project is relying on a \$12 million one-time appropriation from the state. BRC Imagination Arts of California is designing the project. The company creates immersive experiences to educate and entertain. Its works are in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Arizona Science Center and Discovery World.

Dardenne is seeking 15 private companies to pony up \$100,000 each for the private investment. Dardenne expects the project to open in early 2010. •



community meetings. To check availability and reserve the conference center for your event, email Carla Mouton at [cmouton@northshorefoundation.org](mailto:cmouton@northshorefoundation.org). •

**Smart growth summit >>** With smart growth gaining ground across the region, a summit to continue progress toward more livable communities will be held in August.

Called “Livable Louisiana: A Summit on Smart Growth,” the gathering's topics will include building communities of the future, planning to solve transportation problems and exploring connections between planning and health.

The summit will be held Aug. 14-15 at the Manship Theatre at the Shaw Center for the Arts.

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Along the Northshore, planning for smart growth could preserve this scene.

National and local smart growth experts will talk about green building construction, sustainable landscape design, innovative transportation solutions and how to design safer, more pedestrian-friendly communities.

The summit is presented by the Center for Planning Excellence, a nonprofit urban and rural planning organization that serves Louisiana communities. Because seating is limited, people must register to attend the free summit. Save a seat by emailing [summit@c-pex.org](mailto:summit@c-pex.org) or calling 225.267.6300.

Events run from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Aug. 14, beginning with opening remarks by Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden. On Aug. 15, sessions will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu and Louisiana Secretary William Ankner of the Department of Transportation and Development will address the audience. For a full agenda, visit [planningexcellence.org](http://planningexcellence.org).

## NCF provides planning help >>

The Northshore Community Foundation is helping communities in St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington and St. Helena parishes that need planning assistance to build better after Hurricane Katrina.

The foundation is offering seed funding and planning help to communities wanting to implement land plans. "Katrina has provided a chance for our region to create even more livable communities while taking care of the wilderness and green-spaces that make our area unlike any other," said Frank Saxton, director of community development for Northshore Community Foundation, which was created last year to improve the region.

The foundation plans to work with communities interested in fostering economic growth, creating safe and affordable housing, preserving wilderness and landscapes, ensuring equita-

ble redevelopment for all and planning smarter for future development.

The foundation's assistance includes work toward comprehensive master plans, and neighborhood, downtown, corridor, land use, transportation, infill and housing plans. Selected communities will receive seed funding and planning assistance. The foundation plans to assist communities this year with awards ranging from \$20,000 to \$150,000.

## Tangipahoa adopts plan >>

Fast growth can create havoc, particularly in areas that have no zoning.

To get ahead of problems, Tangipahoa Parish leaders and the community worked for more than a year to create a land-use plan. In June, the parish's planning commission adopted the plan.

Working on behalf of Tangipahoa was the Center for Planning Excellence, which has provided land use guidance to parishes and spearheaded the formation of Louisiana Speaks, the regional plan for South Louisiana.

Todd Messenger of Kendig Keast Collaborative created the land use plan for the parish.

To do so, the community told the planners at town hall meetings what they wanted Tangipahoa to become. Eighteen months after the plan was started, Kendig Keast delivered

a blueprint that aims to preserve the wilderness, while directing growth of housing and businesses to existing infrastructure.

The blueprint was the easy part. The difficult work of implementing the plan is ahead. The parish council, for instance, would have to adopt zoning ordinances in some areas to implement the plan. •

### Path of progress >>

Before there is work, there are legal agreements.

BREC is composing a legal document before starting its first path under a new project profiled on the cover of this magazine's last issue.

Ted Jack, planning director for the parks system of Baton Rouge, says the agreement to build a path on private land will provide a model for subsequent agreements. Richard Carmouche is the first landowner BREC is collaborating with on a path—a linear park with walkways, benches and other amenities in lush surroundings.

Jack expects the legal agreement with Carmouche to be in place by the end of summer.

The initial park featuring a trail is planned for Ward's and Dawson creeks between Siegen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard, with a branch that could extend to Perkins Rowe on Perkins Road.

On that land, Carmouche is creating The Grove, a dense mix of housing, offices, retail and hotels.



BREC's Bill Palmer, *left*, and developer Richard Carmouche map out plans for bikepaths along Dawson Creek near the Mall of Louisiana.

A second leg, if built, would connect Bluebonnet with Essen Lane. BREC is discussing that leg, which would link to the Burden Center, with area hospitals and path enthusiasts.

BREC is hoping that the success of the first path will cause a clamor for more linear parks and deflate some of the expected

opposition from landowners who don't want paths in their backyards.

Jack hopes to begin the first path before year-end. It would link neighborhoods, The Grove, the Mall of Louisiana and Perkins Rowe. •

**The initial park featuring a trail is planned for Ward's and Dawson creeks between Siegen Lane and Bluebonnet Boulevard...**

**Thoughtful walk >>**

Our designer describes the art piece as a “sheath of arrows.” It’s named “One Plant, Many Flowers” by Howard Kalish, the artist who created it. This summer, the sculpture may be discovered by more people, thanks to a new walking tour brochure published by the state in collaboration with the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge.

The sculpture, part of the Claiborne Collection at the building of the same name, is among more than 40 pieces of art featured in the Public Art Walking Tour. Pick it up and stroll around downtown to spot *Gates of Dawn*, a painting by Michael Crespo; *Prodigal Son*, a sculp-

ture by Ivan Mestrovic; and *Riviere du Soleil*, a painting on polished aluminum by Richard Taylor.

The brochure is another stride in the Arts Council’s nascent public arts project, which wants to spread art around town. Derek Gordon, council executive director, formed a panel last year for the project. He’s putting together a request to seek startup funds from the city-parish.

The brochure, meanwhile, is part of the state Percent for Art project, which has installed art in public buildings by including purchases in construction costs. Now that the works are in place, the state is using the brochure to tell visitors about art in all of downtown Baton Rouge.

Gordon says 10,000 copies of the brochure are being printed, most of which will be available at visitor centers. “As it was envisioned, this brochure is a prototype so

that other communities that have public art might do the same thing,” says Gordon. “Hopefully, there would be one for every major city in Louisiana, so people can go from city to city and look at public art.” •



*One Plant, Many Flowers* by Howard Kalish, part of the collection at the Claiborne Building, downtown Baton Rouge.



*Left: Gates of Dawn*, a painting by Michael Crespo, part of the collection inside the Claiborne Building.

*Right: Pieta* by Ivan Mestrovic, located between the River Center and the courthouse.





**FARMERS  
MARKET**

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA - PROJECT OF BREADA

**Buy Fresh, Buy Local  
Now 3 Times a Week!**

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**Tuesday – 8 to 12 noon  
8470 Goodwood Boulevard**

**Thursday – 8 to 12 noon  
5825 Florida Boulevard  
LDAF Parking Lot**

**Saturday – 8 to 12 noon  
on 5th Street next to Main Street Market  
Downtown's Freshest Address**

**Get to know the farmer who grows your food!**

To hook up teens, the Charlotte library offers places to create music and art.

# Revolution in the Stacks

SOME LIBRARIES ARE BEING REINVENTED TO MATCH A NEW WORLD >> by **CHRISTOPHER SWOPE**

**S**halique Edmond has come to the Loft at Charlotte's children's library, as he does nearly every Saturday, to record a hip-hop song. In the library's new music and animation studio, a round room jammed with computers, microphones and movie-making equipment, Shalique, who is 14, cuffs earphones over his braids while his friend, Kyree Crawl, mixes beats on a Macintosh. The boys giggle as the track comes together, but as Shalique prepares to rap over it, he puts on a serious air. "If I'm comfortable with the words, it will work the first time," he says, sounding cocky. "I'm a professional."

Music, Shalique explains, is in his blood. His father was a music producer and his uncle was a singer. Shalique once had a place in his home where he would make music, but he couldn't share his work because he didn't own a CD burner. He had pretty much stopped rapping altogether until he discovered "Studio i" at the library. Shalique started cutting CDs, and after a brief attempt at trying to sell them, he began giving them away to schoolteachers or anyone else who might have a listen. He also began uploading tunes to his MySpace page, so that anyone in the world could hear him on the Internet. "You go to the library to read," he says. "But they have the whole package here."

The librarians at the Loft don't necessarily love Shalique's music. What they do love is that he, like a

growing number of other teenagers, thinks to come to the library at all. The draw for Shalique may be making music, but while he's around, he also spends time on the computers. Other kids at the Loft use the library's equipment to create animated videos and upload them to YouTube, take pictures of themselves to put on Facebook and play video games such as Dance Dance Revolution, Rock Band and all the Wii sports games. A few teens are even known to read books here, sinking into one of the Loft's plush orange chairs, or burrowing into one of the cozy booths where there are no rules against putting their feet up on the furniture. "It's a bit like Wal-Mart," says Robin Bryan, a library technology manager. "They come in for one thing and discover something else."

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg library system hasn't always tried so hard to appeal to teenagers. For a long time, public libraries everywhere viewed teens as unreachable—too old for story time, yet too rowdy for the reading room. Now, libraries are beginning to see serving teens not as a nuisance but as a critical test of whether they can survive in the 21st century. Today's crop of teenagers is the first to never have known a world without Google. If libraries can find ways to click with these "digital natives," then today's teens might just keep coming back to the library as adults. On the other hand, if libraries ignore the changing media habits of young people,

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MICHAEL LOBIONDO

“We have to change our role and be part of the fabric of the community beyond books. And we have to go out and ask our customers: What is it you want us and need us to be?”

—LAURA ISENSTEIN, LIBRARY CONSULTANT

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## OF LOCAL INTEREST

The East Baton Rouge Parish library system wants to build four libraries—in downtown, at Independence Park, at Rouzan on Perkins Road near College Drive and at the former Fairwood Country Club on Old Hammond Highway.

Each year, the surplus from the \$30 million operating fund is used for capital improvements. The system expects to deposit \$3.8 million into the building fund this year.

The system has accumulated \$29.4 million to build the Independence Park branch, which is expected to cost a few million more. That library is being designed now. Another \$6 million has been accumulated for the Rouzan branch and \$355,610 for the Fairwood branch. The system would have to raise funds to renovate or build a downtown branch.

they may well slide into oblivion.

“The future is iffy for public libraries,” says Kimberly Bolan, the author of a book on designing teen spaces within libraries. “If we want to be relevant going into the future, this is a group we cannot miss.”

## LIBRARY 2.0

Catering to teenagers is just one response to some very big questions public libraries are facing these days. Not long ago, libraries enjoyed something of a monopoly on the public’s access to information. It was a benign monopoly, of course. But closed stacks, endless lists of rules and the shushing librarian all became symbols of a stuffy order that served institutional interests. Now, the Internet is forcing libraries to change that mentality—and

quickly. Today, the vast majority of information searches begin not at a library reference desk but at an Internet search engine. The troubling fact for libraries is that customers really seem to prefer the latter. A few years ago, the Online Computer Library Center asked library users to compare search engines and librarians in four areas: the quality of information provided, quantity of information, speed of conducting research and overall experience. The search engines beat librarians in every category.

The OCLC survey also found that two out of three Americans, when they think of libraries, think of books. In other words, books are the library brand. But when it comes to books, libraries face more competition than ever. Big-box bookstores have won the affections of many bookworms by slashing prices, selling lattes and creating reading spaces that are more comfortable than a row of carrels. Meanwhile, several for-profit and not-for-profit efforts are under way to scan millions of books into searchable Internet databases. The most ambitious of those scanning projects, run by Google, aspires to create a universal online library of every book ever published.

If the news sounds all bad, library directors can point to some positive trends. Nationally, circulation of books and other material at libraries keeps edging up each year, despite the Internet revolution. Currently, many cities are seeing big increases in visitation, as is common during economic downturns. And in many libraries, the public-access computers are in demand from open to close—a reminder that even if the universal library seems closer to reality, universal broadband access is still a long way off. “It’s fine to say that Google is Google-izing the world,” says Chicago Library Commissioner Mary Dempsey, “but if you’re poor and trying to apply for a job, often the only way to do it is online and the only place to do it is at the public library.”

Still, the library world seems particularly obsessed with its future right now. Library conferences are



Because it was designed by Moshe Safdie, the Salt Lake City main library has become the second biggest tourist attraction in the city. A café, rooftop garden and auditorium create a place to spend time.

abuzz with talk of “Library 2.0,” a concept that boils down to the idea that libraries should offer the services that customers say they want—not what librarians wish they wanted. Meanwhile, the Urban Libraries Council has asked the futurist writer Joel Garreau to help big-city library directors imagine the library of 2020. All agree that for libraries to stay relevant in their communities—and adequately funded by government—they’re going to have to adapt. The question is, how?

“If people only go to Google, or to Barnes & Noble, then what are we?” asks Laura Isenstein, a former library director in San Antonio and Des Moines who now works as a library consultant. “We have to change our role and be part of the fabric of

the community beyond books. And we have to go out and ask our customers: What is it you want us and need us to be?”

## **DUMPING DEWEY**

Some radical ideas are emerging. One British library, convinced that its identity was too intertwined with dusty books sitting on shelves, dropped the word “library” from its name altogether. It now goes by the moniker “idea store.” Contra Costa County, Calif., recently put library vending machines at BART rail stations, allowing commuters with a library card to take out or return books on the go. And last year, in a move that some librarians viewed as heresy, a branch of the Maricopa County library

system in Arizona scrapped the Dewey Decimal System. Instead, collections were arranged by areas of interest, as in a bookstore. Marshall Shore, the administrator who is both loved and loathed in the library world as the man who dumped Dewey, believes the experiment has been a success. “The day we opened, we pulled in extra staff to deal with the mass confusion we were pretty sure was going to happen,” Shore says. “But then we saw customers walk in and their lips would go, ‘Gardening,’ as they saw a sign and went that way.”

...libraries want to create an atmosphere that is not home and not the office, but where people will want to spend a lot of their time.

The most visible changes going on in libraries these days take their cues, as Shore did, from retailing. Cafes and coffee shops are quickly becoming standard offerings at libraries. So are comfortable seating and “living room” areas where patrons are encouraged to stay a while. A growing number of libraries are hiring retail consultants to analyze where patrons go in the library and what they do there. San Jose, Calif., for example, asked Paco Underhill, the author of *Why We Buy*, to do a “touch point” analysis of three branch libraries. His research found, among other things, that librarians needed to get out from behind the reference desk and talk to customers more.

The biggest idea libraries are stealing from retailers—Starbucks, in particular—is the notion of the “third place.” That is, libraries want to create an at-

mosphere that is not home and not the office, but where people will want to spend a lot of their time. Rather than buy, they’ll borrow—and hopefully meet other people in the process. It’s a community-center model as much as it is a library one, and it demands a focus on social programming, readings and events, as well as partnerships with arts and theater groups and other community organizations. It also requires new thinking about how libraries are designed. The best new library buildings don’t devote the bulk of their floor plan to stacks. Rather, they offer lots of flexible spaces that work just as well for a poetry slam as they do for an exercise class for seniors.

One model of that thinking is in Salt Lake City. The new central library there, which opened five years ago, is now the city’s second-most-visited tourist attraction. That’s only partly because it’s a noteworthy building designed by a famous architect, Moshe Safdie. What’s more important is what goes on in and around the building. The library pushes cultural events, lectures and book readings, and turns its outdoor plaza into a front porch for downtown festivals celebrating everything from the arts to jazz to gay pride. Inside, a narrow glass atrium, known as the “urban room,” not only houses a popular cafe but also a garden shop, comic-book store and other retailers whose leases require them to host their own events aimed at drawing yet more people to the library. “It’s not about the building,” says Nancy Tessman, the recently retired Salt Lake library director who was most responsible for getting it built. “It’s about letting people explore and learn on their own terms.”

When library experts talk about the future, it’s remarkable how little the topic of books comes up. To be sure, libraries will carry books for as long as a critical mass of people wants to read them. The same is true of newspapers, magazines, CDs, DVDs and every other form of media that libraries have adopted over the years while following consumer



To remain relevant, libraries are taking lessons from retailers like Starbucks to create a “third place.” Above, a library in Minneapolis includes a coffee shop, a children’s area and an art gallery.



tastes. Increasingly, however, libraries are talking about flipping the content equation around. That is, rather than thinking of themselves merely as a place to find content created by somebody else, the library will create content—and give patrons the tools to create content of their own.

This can take a number of forms, but is usually online. Ann Arbor, Mich., for example, has converted the library’s Web site, [aadl.org](http://aadl.org), into a blog. You can still search the catalog, check library hours and find all the information you’d expect on a library’s home page. But the main window changes frequently, highlighting upcoming events, online discussions and posts from Library Director Josie Parker. “It was a huge leap,” Parker says of the overhaul, “but usage of our Web site jumped 200% right off the bat.”

The library system in Hennepin County, Minn., has a different strategy for creating online content: It allows customers to make comments within the catalog, so that they can recommend titles they like to other patrons or pan ones they don’t like. It’s not much different than what customers around the world do on Amazon.com or Netflix, but Marilyn Turner, the Hennepin library’s manager of Web services and training, says there’s a hunger for people to make local connections around books, movies and music. “They could go to Amazon and share



comments, but they choose to do it on their library’s Web site,” Turner says. “It’s indicative of the fact that people see themselves as part of a smaller community, even though so much of what they do is in a global arena.”

## DIGITAL STORYTELLING

In Charlotte, a national leader in this way of library thinking, creating content is a more tangible thing. It’s Shaliq Edmond recording a rap song at Studio i. It’s Yony Cornejo, a high school freshman, using the library’s tabletop animation equipment to make a short video of a stick figure dribbling a basketball. And it’s a group of teenagers in the studio shooting a TV show on dating violence. In Charlotte’s vision of content creation, access to all the latest computer and audio/visual gadgetry is important. So the library didn’t stop at building Studio i. It also

procured mobile animation stations that travel from one branch library to the next. The roadshow is like a 21st-century version of the bookmobile.

“Traditionally, people have come to the library to find things that fit into the stories of their lives,” says Matt Gullett, the Charlotte library’s director of emerging technologies. “When toddlers come in to learn how to read, it fits the story of how they are growing in life. When adults come in, and they love checking out mysteries or romance novels, it fits the story of those individuals. What we are trying to do now is to give people the ability to tell their own stories. We’re equipping people to use digital cameras, sound equipment and software. It appears to be entertainment in some ways, but at the same time, they’re learning how to interact with this world we’re creating with digital media and the culture that results from that media. That’s a big thing.”

More than most libraries, Charlotte has been willing to follow every turn in the digital lives of young people. The Loft has its own page on MySpace. (It has more than 1,100 friends—not bad for an agent of local government.) The Loft also podcasts readings and interviews with authors. And in addition to occupying the top floor of the children’s library, the Loft has its own “island” in a version of Second Life that is reserved only for teenagers.

The purpose of all this is not merely to indulge the Google generation’s digital addictions. It’s to help teens navigate the online lives they’d be living anyway. Left to their own devices, teenagers have a way of doing dumb things on social networking sites, such as posting risqué pictures of themselves. When they take pictures at the Loft and post them online, at least there’s a librarian around to say what is and isn’t appropriate. What’s more, this generation needs help with Google itself. Not in terms of how to use a search engine, which they’ve been doing since they were old enough to use a computer, but in terms of understanding that when it comes to information, Google is not, in fact, the sole or incon-

trovertible authority.

The notion of devoting a portion of the library just for teens to explore these facets of themselves started in Los Angeles about a decade ago. In Charlotte, the Loft grew out of collaboration between the county library system and the Children’s Theater of Charlotte, which together opened a combined facility, known as *ImaginOn*, three years ago. Aside from the teen-center librarians, only those ages 12 to 18 are allowed at the Loft. The idea is to provide a sanctuary from parents and teachers, where teens are free to make as much noise as they want or doodle on the glass walls with magic markers. None of the usual library rules apply in the Loft. In fact, there are only three rules: respect yourself, respect others and respect the space.

“A lot of people say we need to serve teenagers because they’re future taxpayers,” says Michele Gorman, who manages the Loft. “I think that’s the worst way of thinking of teens. They deserve to be treated with respect and courtesy and we need to be inviting so we can pull them in. Adolescence is one of the craziest times in life. They’re trying to figure out how to fit into society, and we need to give them a place to do that.”

The teens hanging out at the Loft seem to appreciate this new thinking. But occasionally, amidst the cacophony of boisterous conversations and streams from YouTube, even they revert to some old library customs. Steps away from the computer where Shalique and Kyree are recording their track, four teenagers are up against a blue screen, practicing lines for a video they’re about to shoot. Shalique’s microphone is picking up the background noise, and it’s stepping on his rapping. He shushes them. “Could you keep it down over there?” •

This article first appeared in *Governing* magazine’s June issue.



**F**rom sunrise to sunset, two blocks from the Mississippi River, there is huffing and puffing within a parking garage. Ten years ago, a fitness center in a garage seemed an improbable idea within an improbable revival strategy known as Plan Baton Rouge.

Some mocked the idea of people returning to downtown, arguing that residents would not leave the cushy suburbs for dining and nightlife—or to live where Baton Rouge began as a city. To the newspaper, one naysayer wrote that only the “Tooth Fairy could envision returning downtown to its glory days.” Another equated the attempt to revive downtown with “putting lipstick on a dead woman.”

She’s alive, looking splendid in lipstick, thank you.

Ten years after Miami architect and urban planner Andres

# Plan Baton Rouge

TEN YEARS ON,  
DOWNTOWN IS BACK

>> by **MUKUL VERMA** photos by **TIM MUELLER**



Duany unveiled Plan Baton Rouge, more restaurants are open in downtown, clubs have popped up on Third Street, the abandoned Capitol House has returned as the Hilton, the Shaw Center has become the hub for arts and an ice cream truck plays a Pavlovian jingle in sync with afternoon sugar cravings.

After work, people gather for drinks and conversation. Later in the evening, food is served at restaurants, crowds build at the clubs and the streets become busy with people checking out what's happening around them. When the lights are turned off at the clubs, people are slumbering at a growing number of downtown apartments and condos, the final key to creating an around-the-clock community.

A downtown revival had been coming slowly for a handful of years before Plan Baton Rouge. The planning effort—created and funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the city-parish and the state—accelerated the rebound.

“The timing coincided well with what we needed to bring ourselves as a community to the next level,” says Davis Rhorer, executive director of the Downtown Development District.

Proponents have long argued for a dynamic downtown. To them, the reasons were obvious—a city needs a place that defines it, shows what is possible, is a gathering place where all ideas and people

are welcome.

To spark it, Plan Baton Rouge was born. The project began with a week of charrettes, where hundreds of residents gathered in the Old State Capitol to dream with Duany and his designers about a new trajectory for the area.

Duany, a founder of new urbanism, a movement to create more livable communities, used his charisma to draw a future for downtown.

Among his recommendations: Turn the former Auto Hotel parking garage into a Southern Guggenheim, a place for artists to reside and art to be shown. Construct liner buildings to block off surface parking lots. Build a new City Hall on Fourth Street, framing the state Capitol at the other end of the street. Eliminate one-way streets to improve circulation. Ensure that first floors of buildings, even parking garages, have shops or some other activity.

What began with the meetings turned into a movement, led by many, including local leaders, nonprofit operatives, business people and the state of Louisiana in the person of Mark Drennen, the division of administration chief for Gov. Mike Foster.

With a push, Drennen had the state redesign the relationship between state buildings that were already being consolidated downtown to save money. In one of the buildings, the state moved a cafeteria to the first floor, bringing activity to the street and making the diner easily accessible to all peo-





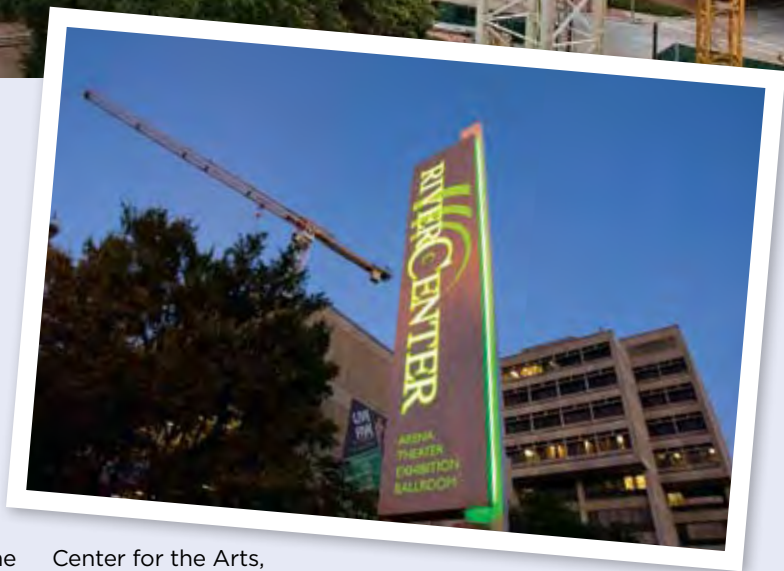
Plan Baton Rouge has provided the confidence to foster more than \$1 billion in downtown investments, with more to come. The investments include state office buildings, an arts center, new businesses and restaurants and an expansion of the River Center, formerly the Centroplex.

ple. A pedestrian bridge between a parking garage and a state building was killed, shifting more activity to the street. Parking garages that take up entire blocks included space for first-floor retail, which is why there is a YMCA in one garage, the Main Street Market in another and, soon, an art gallery in a garage on Third Street.

In came the risk takers, the private pioneers. Not all of them succeeded. Some of them might have been early. For instance, a coffee shop on Third Street struggled and expanded to a second location before the owner sold out. Several coffee shops now operate in downtown.

Frank McMains opened Red Star Bar, which built on early successes and continues to grow. Attorney Danny McGlynn, with partners, renovated office buildings. Laura Souter opened a hair salon on North Boulevard, building a new clientele of downtown workers and offering them more services at a spa in a recent relocation to the Hilton.

Meanwhile, the Foundation, private donors, the state and the city-parish built the \$55 million Shaw



Center for the Arts, expanding on Duany's earlier idea to create something bigger. Partnerships made it possible. LSU chose to build its museum of art within the Shaw Center instead of on Essen Lane. Donors, both private and public, provided the money to build the center, which includes a theater, restaurants, public spaces, fountains.

More businesses followed. A few companies, like MAPP Construction and ABMB Engineers, moved their offices to downtown. Vacant buildings were turned into funky apartments.

But not everything recommended by Plan Baton Rouge has happened. Not one liner building has been constructed. The street plan was only partly adopted. A sustained effort to lure a movie theater did not succeed.

Yet Plan Baton Rouge overcame the low expecta-

tions that are attached to all plans. Rather than turn into a dusty document, it sparked a community that was ready for prosperity. Which, in turn, provided energy for creating and implementing more plans.

“Plan Baton Rouge changed the way the community looks at planning now,” said Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, who directed Plan Baton Rouge and

now is CEO of the Center for Planning Excellence, which provides planning across South Louisiana. “It showed that when you have a good plan and citizen support, good things happen.” •

## Accelerate the Possible

SECOND PHASE OF PLAN BATON ROUGE TO BUILD ON FIRST

>> by **ROB ANDERSON**

**O**n a sizzling June morning, a team of planning experts led by representatives of Cambridge, Mass.-based urban design firm Chan Krieger Sieniewicz sat on a small stage in the chilly, darkened theater of the Louisiana Art & Science Museum. The environment was perfect for napping, but dozing off was not an option for members of the Chan Krieger team. They had to be on top of their game.

The team members were there to

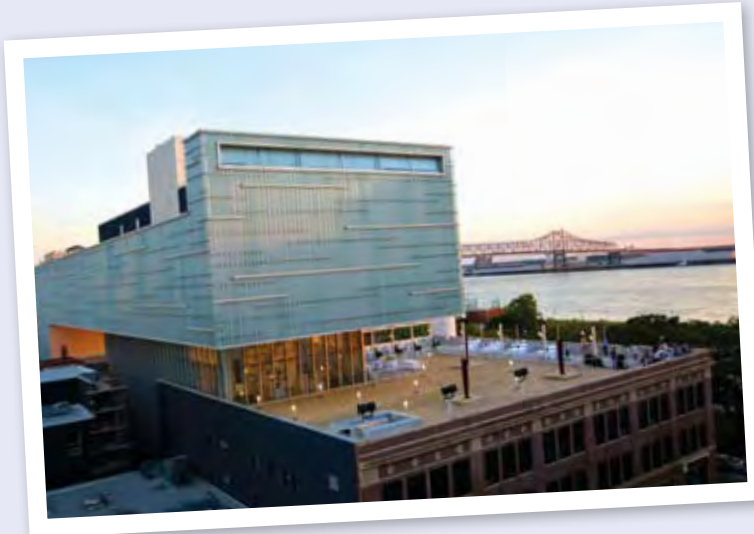
sell their vision for the future of Downtown Baton Rouge to a committee that would decide whether or not they would get to play a role in that future. Not only did they have to answer tough questions about how they would build upon the success of Plan Baton Rouge, the city’s 10-year old downtown master plan, but they had to engage and impress a sizable crowd of interested spectators.

In the end, after presentations from three other all-star caliber teams, the Chan Krieger Sieniewicz group was selected to develop what is being called Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two. Now the planners will be required to do more than dazzle a committee and crowd of onlookers. They must put together a solid, achievable plan for sparking retail and residential development in downtown, while also detailing ideas for better connecting downtown to neighboring areas, improving transit, streetscapes and transportation options in the area and maximizing public and private investment and resources.

More than 16 consultant teams responded when an official request for Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two was released in early June. A selection committee trimmed the list to four that were in-

The \$55 million Shaw Center for the Arts was sparked by an idea from Andres Duany, who said an abandoned parking garage on the site should be turned into a Southern Guggenheim.

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vited for official interviews. The Downtown Development District and the non-profit Center for Planning Excellence will work directly with the Chan Krieger team as it develops Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two.

“This new planning phase isn’t rethinking the original Plan Baton Rouge. That plan has been a success; this is about building on that success and addressing issues that will help downtown take the next big step,” said Rachel DiResto, vice president of CPEX and a project manager for Phase 2. “Chan Krieger is going to help us develop an economically-based plan and implementation strategy that, among other things, will analyze the retail and residential market downtown and recommend ways to advance the new arts and entertainment district.”

The members of the Chan Krieger team are diverse and include several local representatives. Members of the group are:

- Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, urban design and planning; Cambridge, Mass.
- HR&A Advisors Inc., economic strategy; New York, NY
- James Richardson, LSU economist, regional planning advisor
- Reed Hilderbrand, landscape architecture; Watertown, Mass.
- Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, traffic planning; Denver, Colo.
- WHLC Architecture, local planning coordinator; Baton Rouge
- Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, regional planning advisor; New Orleans

The planning team is expected to deliver its work in spring 2009. As stipulated in the request, the plan will cost less than \$500,000.

The City of Baton Rouge and Fannie Mae Foundation are major funding partners for *Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two*. Other funding was con-



Cranes on North Boulevard are building a \$110 million district courthouse and a \$70 million office building. Plan Baton Rouge recommended a civic building where the courthouse is under construction.

tributed by the Downtown Business Association, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Downtown Development District and the Baton Rouge Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. Baton Rouge Mayor Melvin “Kip” Holden will serve as co-chair of the project.

The original Plan Baton Rouge master plan is now in its 10th year of implementation with over 80% of the projects and recommendations addressed or completed. In the previous decade, more than \$1.5 billion has been invested in downtown by the public and private sectors and more than \$300 million in projects are being planned or are under construction. The goal of this second phase is to produce a plan that will lead to quality job creation, increased capital flowing into the community and the expansion of public assets.

“Downtown Baton Rouge has experienced tremendous change and a new spirit of excitement and interest over the past ten years,” said Holden. “But we’re only just beginning. This new phase of our master plan will allow us to plan wisely for future residential, commercial and public spaces as more and more people and businesses look to locate here.” •

...the authority expects to begin by putting **adjudicated property back in commerce.** It can do that by clearing titles and banking land, **removing hurdles for private development.**

# Clear the Way

NEW REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY HAS FAST START IN BATON ROUGE

>> by MUKUL VERMA

**T**he rapid advance of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has surprised even John Noland, who helms the new public agency charged with reinvigorating barely breathing neighborhoods.

In its first three meetings, the authority did groundwork, such as learning about duties, ethics and open meetings laws, as well as the complexity of adjudicated properties. But it also has agreed on a contract with the Center for Planning Excellence that will let it decide where to harvest early successes to build credibility.

For \$91,250, CPEX, an offshoot of the Foundation, will create a strategic planning document, arrange a trip to visit a top redevelopment authority and provide a tool that piggybacks on the city-parish mapping system, among other things, letting the authority determine which properties to target for redevelopment first.

The authority was enacted by the Legislature and enabled by the city-parish to revive neigh-

borhoods. Though the board is deciding on a direction, the authority expects to begin by putting adjudicated property back in commerce. It can do that by clearing titles and banking land, removing hurdles for private development.

Board members of the group are Noland, attorney Van Mayhall, retired LSU landscape architecture professor Susan Turner, LSU interim chancellor William Jenkins and retired LSU administrator Huel Perkins. Noland represents the Foundation on the board. Mayhall is the chamber representative, while Jenkins, Perkins and Turner represent the mayor.

The Foundation assisted the city-parish in creating the authority, which dovetails with an initiative to revive Old South Baton Rouge, the area between LSU and downtown.

The authority board has begun work toward hiring a president and CEO, starting with a draft of the job description. Likely candidates are expected to have more than 10 years experience, be entrepreneurs and have solid records of working with

partners and private sector financiers.

But how to pay for the CEO and operations? The city-parish has pledged \$500,000 in community block grant funds to launch the authority.

What's more, the authority is likely to team up with the city-parish and the planning commission to seek \$1 million in federal funds for cleaning abandoned properties that are polluted. The authority also could get funds from grants and by re-selling adjudicated properties after clearing titles. •

## RECLAIMING PITTSBURGH

So what can a redevelopment authority do? Pittsburgh provides an example.

Called the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, the group was established in 1946.

Across the decades, it has become the economic development agency for the city, taking on projects that developers won't touch, helping businesses, re-establishing neighborhoods and more.

Among the URA's showcase projects is Southside Works, the reinvention of an abandoned steel mill into a mixed-use project. Working with partners, the URA invested \$103 million to remake the site. The result is more than \$219 million in private investments that include a movie theater, office buildings, restaurants, a science center, a sports performance center and FBI regional offices.

URA has collaborated with universities to build a technology center, is demolishing housing projects and replacing them with new mixed-income hous-



Southside Works, a showcase project of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh.

ing, and is revitalizing a once-blighted island into a multi-use development that has housing, offices, a rowing center and a public park.

In its history, the URA has rehabbed thousands of homes, was a pioneer in downtown redevelopment projects and created sites for business relocation. The URA helps low-income households buy homes, reclaims polluted properties and assists communities in reinventing themselves.

The public agency had \$88 million in revenue in 2006, with about 30% coming from federal and state grants and \$13 million from pledged tax revenues. Repayments of loans to homeowners and businesses accounted for 40% of revenue.

ONSITE



“They have a nationally recognized and respected program for students, so since we have continued to look for ways to improve opportunities and instruction for our students they were one of the first that we looked at.”

—CHARLOTTE PLACIDE, EAST BATON ROUGE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

## Skip to KIPP

SUPERINTENDENT, LEADERS SEEK CHARTER SCHOOL

>> by **SARA BONGIORNI** photo by **LORI WASELCHUK**

Baton Rouge is one of two finalists for a new network of free, college-prep schools to be operated by the Knowledge Is Power Program, or KIPP, the nation's premier charter school organization and one that will choose just one city for expansion this year.

The coalition to bring KIPP to Baton Rouge includes Advance Baton Rouge, Forum 35 and the Foundation. Notably, it also includes the East Baton Rouge Public School System, whose superintendent has pledged funding and facilities to support the effort.

That commitment from Superintendent Charlotte Placide may be crucial in helping Baton Rouge prevail over Jacksonville, Fla., the other finalist.

“That is what may give us a competitive edge,” says Christel Slaughter, the Foundation's chair and co-founder of Advance Baton Rouge, which supports initiatives related to public education, including the expansion of charter schools.

Says Placide, “They have a nationally recognized and respected program for students, so since we have continued to look for ways to improve opportunities and instruction for our students they were one of the first that we looked at.”

The school district already provides facilities for the area's three charter schools. A May 28 letter to KIPP from Placide and Jerry Arbour, school board president, said the district “would make every effort to provide similar arrangements for a KIPP school.”

The amount of per-pupil funds would be negotiated, and a specific school site has not been identified. The provision of a low-cost lease, like what the district provides to the three existing charter schools, would be subject to board approval.

If KIPP chooses Baton Rouge, the district would authorize the first school's charter and enter a contract with a new nonprofit to oversee operations (alternately, the state can grant the charter). The

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board of directors of the new nonprofit, as yet unnamed, would most likely draw heavily from individuals and organizations listed in the current application to KIPP. Supporters include community activists Jennifer Eplett Reilly and Donna Saurage, retired banker Lee Griffin, and Vic Howell of the Red Cross.

If Baton Rouge is tapped by KIPP, the community will need to raise \$500,000 for start-up costs and \$150,000 for intensive, yearlong training of its first school principal. Local supporters would then need to raise about \$1 million a year to augment local school funds and three years of federal funding of \$220,000 per year.

“We feel confident we will be able to do that,” Slaughter said.

KIPP will announce its decision in August. The new school, the first of a local “cluster” of KIPP schools, would not open until 2010.

San Francisco-based KIPP was founded in Houston in 1994 by two youthful Teach for America teachers who were looking for a more effective way to keep low-income, minority children in school and thriving. Its approach includes longer school days, Saturday classes and three weeks of summer school, time that adds up to 60% more class hours than in traditional public schools.

KIPP rigorously tests for student achievement

and, unlike many charter schools, makes those scores public. Teachers, students and parents take a pledge to uphold high standards of behavior and performance. The walls of its schools are blanketed with posters declaring mottos like “Be nice,” and “Work hard.” KIPP has stayed close to its Teach

for America roots: 30% of its teachers and about 60% of its principals come from the program.

KIPP’s approach clearly works for the more than 14,000 mostly African American and Hispanic students at its 57 mostly middle schools in 17 states and Washington, D.C. (KIPP already has a Louisiana presence; it operates three schools in New Orleans.) On average, the performance of KIPP students enrolled in its program from the fifth to eighth grades jumped from the 40th to the 82nd percentile in mathematics and from the 32nd to the

60th percentile in reading, according to the results of national standardized tests as reported in the 2007 KIPP Report Card.

KIPP also outperforms other institutions in its goal of getting kids to college. About 80% of its students who completed the eighth grade with the program later entered college, compared with a national rate of about 20% for low-income students.

## HIGHER ED

**What:** A group of education advocates, including the school board president and superintendent, have applied to Knowledge is Power Program to start a charter school in Baton Rouge. KIPP has 57 college-prep schools with more than 14,000 students and is regarded as a successful model.

**When:** If Baton Rouge, a finalist with Jacksonville, Fla., gets a KIPP school, it would open in 2010.

**What it means:** The application to KIPP shows a shift in the school system’s thinking about charter schools. A previous board and superintendent rejected an application for a KIPP school.



“No other program has shown gains as great for as many poor children as KIPP has,” a *Washington Post* columnist wrote in April.

That just two cities are applying to KIPP this year reflects the rigorous nature of the application process. KIPP in 2006 adopted an exhaustive new site-selection process that demands clear evidence of community support that KIPP views as essential, said spokesman Steve Mancini.

Mancini noted that where KIPP schools have faltered—KIPP closed a school in Annapolis, Md., for instance, after it could not secure a permanent building from the community or local school district—it is because that support was lacking. It also seeks communities where it can grow a local network of schools—it does not take over existing schools in trouble—and typically starts with a new middle school.

Cities that want KIPP schools also need patience. St. Louis, Mo., which was the only region tapped by KIPP for a new school in 2009, applied several times before its eventual selection.

“Ultimately, if you are not chosen, you have the opportunity to come back and try again,” Mancini said.

KIPP considers several factors in choosing a site, including the availability of local school funds and facilities, said Mancini. The freedom to implement its unique curriculum is also essential, as is a pipeline of potential school leaders, to whom KIPP gives wide latitude in decisions over hiring, budget and other matters. In its application to KIPP, the local coalition cites Advance Baton Rouge’s new principal leadership program, Redesigning Lessons, Re-envisioning Principals, which is modeled in part on KIPP’s Fisher Fellow program, as a crucial talent resource.

Baton Rouge already has cleared the first phase of the selection process. A KIPP representative visited the city in May for two days of interviews with

“No other program has shown gains as great for as many poor children as KIPP has.”

WASHINGTON POST

community members, school system officials and a range of others taking part in the effort to bring KIPP here, said Gwen Hamilton, Foundation director of civic leadership initiatives.

“It has been very exciting to be in this process,” she said.

The current application represents a second attempt to bring KIPP to Baton Rouge. Several years ago, teacher Scott Shirey wanted to start a KIPP school here, but those plans were shelved—and Shirey ended up opening a KIPP school in Helena, Ark.—after the effort generated resistance among some EBR school board members.

But, as Hamilton noted, the district now has a different board and a different superintendent. Discussions between the superintendent and KIPP, in fact, date back to the chaotic months following Hurricane Katrina, when Placide spoke by telephone with KIPP officials about how the area might attract KIPP, according to the coalition’s application.

Both Hamilton and Slaughter praised Placide for her support, which they said has been essential in Baton Rouge making it so far in the selection process.

And if Baton Rouge isn’t chosen this time around?

Nobody has talked specifically about the next move, said Slaughter, “but I believe we would try again.” •

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## Playground Move-around

YWCA COMPLETES ITS RENAISSANCE VILLAGE WORK BY PARTNERING WITH BREC TO RELOCATE THE FACILITY'S PLAYGROUND >> by **NATHAN SELF** photo by **LORI WASELCHUK**

**W**ith residents now moved out of Renaissance Village—the trailer community formed after Katrina outside of Baker—Charlotte Provenza, director of the YWCA's Early Head Start Program, is working to have playground equipment at the site relocated.

The equipment was originally donated to the YWCA by Rosie O'Donnell's For All Kids Foundation to benefit children and families impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

The equipment, valued at \$105,000, has already been removed from the Baker site through a partnership with BREC. Plans are to split the equipment between the Alaska Street Neighborhood Park in Old



South Baton Rouge, a Gardere Lane location and another undetermined site.

“Our partnership with BREC,” says Provenza, “started as we looked to keep some of these assets—like the playground—in our community by partnering with an organization that had the capacity to maintain it. They have helped us identify sites that will benefit most from the equipment, and we’re looking forward to seeing the pieces reinstalled in our community.”

The playground shift marks the end of three years’ work by the YK Hurricane Response Collaborative. Formed following Katrina, the group included the YWCA Early Head Start Program, ARC Baton Rouge, EBR Head Start, Children’s Coalition of Greater Baton Rouge, Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge and VOA Partnerships in Child Care.

Since August 2005, the collaborative—coordinated by Provenza—has been dedicated to helping young kids through community collaboration, including providing services at the Children’s Plaza and Family Center located in Renaissance Village.

The Children’s Plaza and Family Center, the first of its kind at a FEMA site, was the result of lengthy negotiations between FEMA and the YWCA to create a facility where residents could gather and service providers could work. Full-time child care, comprehensive family and child development services, services for pregnant women and children with disabilities, medical and dental assistance, after-school tutoring, meal programs and other services were provided at the site. The YWCA assumed all responsibilities and liabilities associated with the site in order to make it a reality. Ultimately more than 500 displaced children, their families and pregnant women directly benefitted from the services offered by the YK Collaborative.

Other groups were also allowed to use the facil-

“Our idea was to co-locate several important services so that we could provide the best care possible to displaced residents...”

—CHARLOTTE PROVENZA, YWCA

ity, and many groups took advantage of the opportunity to help people living in the temporary trailer community: Catholic Charities held employment and financial literacy workshops; the LSU School of Social Work held activities for teens and families; the Boy Scouts of America held regular meetings for scouts. Sister Judith Brun of the Community Initiatives Foundation held activities for children, including art therapy, and residents held nearly nightly Bible study sessions at the facility. In all, more than 30 service providers helped displaced residents recover from Katrina and Rita.

The YWCA, which managed the site, enrolled more than 20 children in their daily Head Start program and helped hundreds of teens a month through its Teen Center. “Our idea,” says Provenza, “was to co-locate several important services so that we could provide the best care possible to displaced residents as they recovered from Katrina and Rita. Rosie’s Foundation made that possible by funding start-up and facility costs, and basic staffing.”

For All Kids Foundation also paid for setup and removal of the facilities, as required by FEMA. The facility was also supported with funding from the Administration for Children and Families, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and others.

The partnership between service providers working at a single location within a temporary housing facility is now considered a national model that can be replicated to benefit people impacted by other disasters. •

# Big Dig

DREDGING TO IMPROVE LAKE HEALTH, BUILD PATH

>> by **MUKUL VERMA** photos by **TIM MUELLER**

**A** walk around the lakes at City Park and LSU is interrupted. The sidewalks end. On occasion, the people who live and run around the lake get a strong whiff of dead fish, a consequence of fish kills because the lakes are shallow.

Long planned, a project to dredge the lakes and use the sediment to create continuous paths around the lake is approaching a milestone. By September, the regional office of the Army Corps of Engineers, the lead on the project, will run a feasibility study up the chain to seek money. Nick Sims, project manager for the corps, says the study is being wrapped up now.

If done, the project would continue enhancements to the area. On the lakes, an improved City Park opened this year. The city-parish wants to fix the bumpy—and dangerous—bike and hike trail that runs along Dalrymple Drive, but Pete Newkirk, Department of Public Works director, says the bids have been too high and the project is not on the schedule.

Over time, sediment, particularly phosphorus, collects in the lakes, causing occasional fish kills. In response, the corps dredges the lakes about every two decades. Several years ago, the corps began discussions to dredge again, holding public meetings to provide information and gather ideas.

Early ideas included using some of the dredged material to make islands, but the corps is back to an original scheme offered by BREC under former

superintendent Mark Thornton. Use the dredged material, he recommended, to build paths around the lake.

Sims says the paths are just part of the proposal. The corps also wants to build sitting areas with benches so people can take a break or sit and fish, which is already popular at certain spots on the lake.

The project would start with deepening of the lake, which is roughly three feet deep. Sims says



the corps wants to deepen it to an average of five feet.

What's more, the corps' goal is to reduce the need to dredge in the future. It wants to do so by digging deeper in some parts, where pipes would be installed to move phosphorus from the lakes to Corporation Canal, which will remove the sediment



Walkers, joggers and bikers navigate between paved trails and roads around the LSU lakes.

to the river. Sims calls it the trickle-tube system. "It adds sustainability to the project."

The feasibility study is likely to trigger funding. Federal elected officials have power to add funding for such projects, says Sims.

The corps could pay up to 65% of the estimated \$10 million project cost. Local groups are responsible for the rest. BREC, the city-parish and LSU are collaborating with the corps, and state Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-Baton Rouge, has been involved in the project as well. Ted Jack, BREC planning director, says the locals have been discussing how much each can afford to pony up for the project.

He estimates the six miles of paths would cost nearly \$2 million.

Working in the favor of the project, just about all the homes on the lakes are across the roads, elimi-



nating the "not in my backyard" opposition.

The partners and residents must be patient. The project is taking time. After securing funding, the planning and design could take a year. That must be followed with bidding and construction. Sims stayed away from committing to a schedule for the project, but promised the results would be welcome.

"It will be nice out there," says Sims. •

# Gathering Place

NEW TOWN SQUARE WILL DEFINE BATON ROUGE

>> by **MUKUL VERMA** photo by **TIM MUELLER**

**B**aton Rouge already has a town square, but by default, not by design. Tree-lined North Boulevard serves as a gathering space for runners, holiday celebrations and festivals. It's a nice space that is destined to become much more lively, for the city-parish has set aside \$4.5 million to start building a new town square there.

The space for the square, from about the Shaw Center for the Arts to Fifth Street, is a lively location now with other construction. The new parish courthouse is going up on the block, as is an addition to City Plaza, Mike Wampold's office building. The Foundation is building out the former Stroube's space on the road for a restaurant.

An initial concept for the square has been completed. The details of the space will be filled out by Brown Danos Land Design and Joey Furr Design Studios. The two Baton Rouge firms are collaborating with a unique group to design the square.

Dana Brown, of Brown Danos Land Design, is leading a team to create a town square. "The core of any community is a downtown that has vigorous activity."





On the team, for instance, is Jenni Peters, owner of Varsity Sports and a leader in the local running movement. A slam poet, a music producer and others are providing ideas as well.

*Currents* had a conversation with project manager Dana Brown of Brown Danos about the town square, which should open in 2010.

### **Did Baton Rouge have a town square?**

There used to be a major node where the diagonals cross on North Boulevard, where the town square will be. That node was obliterated. A lot of towns go through phases of life. In most cases, what used to be town squares are no more. In some historic places, they are preserved as always.

Like Jackson Square in New Orleans. Like Boston Commons. They are historic spots; no one touched them.

### **So there wasn't enough quality in Baton Rouge's square to save it?**

And not enough history, or culture or activity in the space for people to say, "No! Don't put a road there or don't do this or that."

### **Have other cities re-established their town squares?**

I've seen it in larger sub-cities of bigger towns, like parts of New York and Los Angeles, where whole neighborhoods are bigger than all of downtown Baton Rouge. The neighborhoods needed common spaces and created the square.

### **Are there other areas in Baton Rouge where a square could be built?**

You don't have the urbanity. The rest of the city has more park-like settings instead. They are creating a square at Perkins Rowe, but that's a square around a commercial development, not a public space. You can create squares in some little towns, like Independence and Zachary. They have town centers that are pretty special.

You just end up there because there is so much going on around there.

### **In your mind, what does the Baton Rouge square look like?**

It's about an image. The image that the square is the cultural, social, public center of Baton Rouge. It's the place to be. It's the place every tourist would definitely go to see, like they visit

Jackson Square on New Orleans visits. But it's not for tourists, it's for locals. Locals know that's where you go. You just end up there because there is so much going on around there.

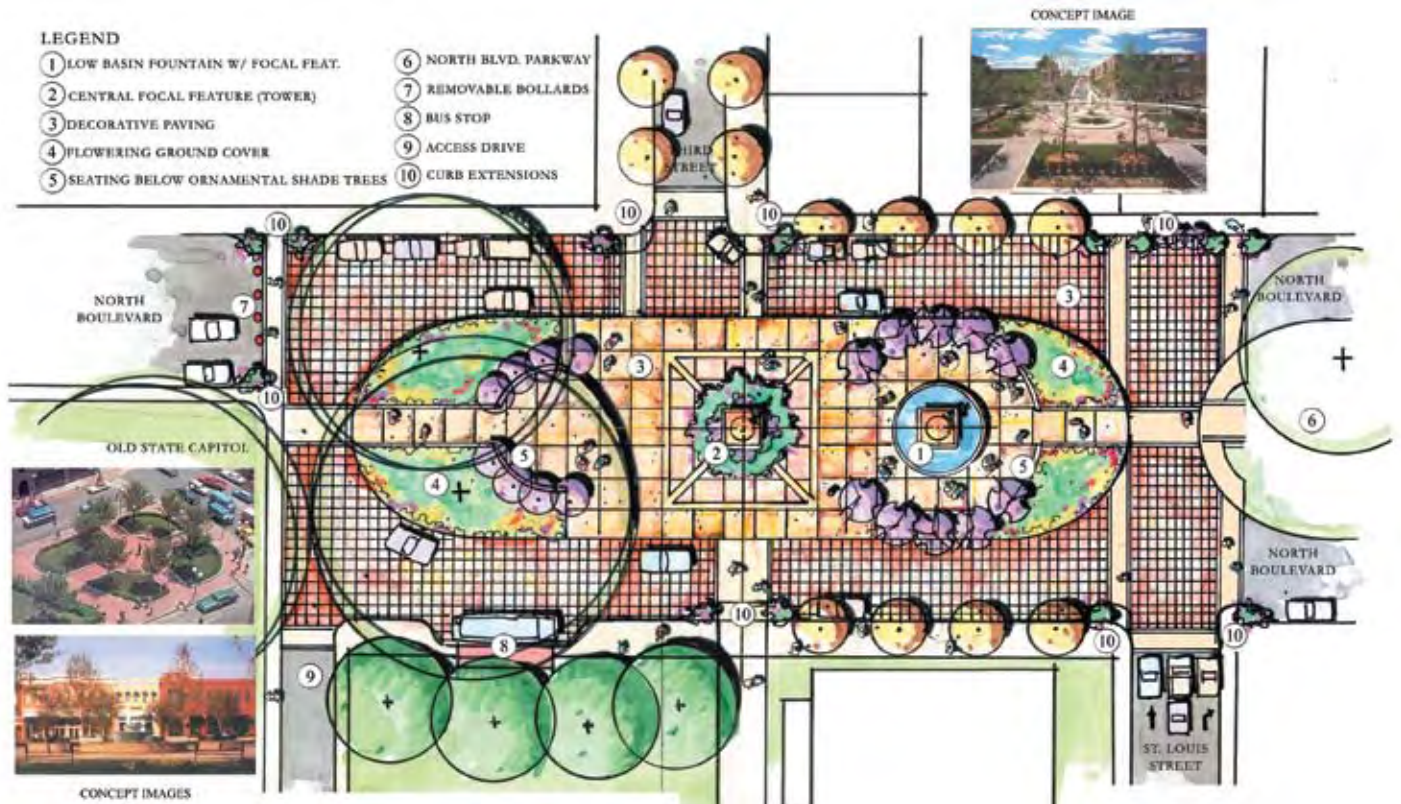
### **It seems like a good location for a town square.**

Yes. And there is space because of North Boulevard and Galvez Plaza. It's right by the river. And it's near other civic spaces.

### **What do you envision within the space?**

I don't have any preconceived notions. We have the people to help us think of the types of programs in the space that are not being done there yet. Live After Five is there. Parades are there. Road races begin there. But there could be a whole other number of activities that happen there that I haven't thought of. Which is why we have enlisted





A concept for the town square on North Boulevard was created by Washer Hill & Lipscomb, Eskew+Dumez+Ripple and Reich Associates. A master plan now under way will provide a final design. The square should be ready in 2010.

a slam poet, a musician, an artist, a sports person. The symphony wants to work with us on the project. We expect others to join as they think of uses for the space.

**The space is broken up. The roads don't align. Will there be some road shifting?**

There are some traffic studies being done to see what we can do.

**In town squares, there isn't much traffic. Is this what you envision for the space?**

In Europe, the square has no curbs. There is nothing to tell the traffic where to go. This is not a big issue of safety because of the way the spaces are designed. They are designed for pedestrians

and the cars are intruders. When someone drives in, they feel their way around and it's their responsibility to get through. So they don't need the curbs and traffic lights. That's an idea we will consider. Or maybe we can take the cars out for a time, for a race or other event.

**Does the square reflect downtown or the wider city?**

Downtown is Baton Rouge. The core of any healthy community is a downtown that has vigorous activity. Much of it is informal and happenstance, because everybody is gathered in a downtown area and working on other things and they encounter each other. In downtown, other things happen now to a certain degree among

businesspeople. We need the social side as well. It creates community. You can't have community without an actual physical space that has an identity that people relate to.

### **Will the town square be built in a way that the community can change it?**

We are hoping to design the physical space so it can accommodate activities. It's not unlike manufacturing or commercial spaces, or the concept of having a street grid. They are flexible so they can be a lot of things. If you design it for just one or two purposes, you prevent a lot of the other things from happening. The space will have to be very open to be used in many ways and very easily.

### **There is an initial design of the square. Do you expect it to resemble that rendering?**

It was pretty conceptual. There are elements that were pretty good and people want to see in the square. We are going from a conceptual plan to a master plan, which is when you see the details. The conceptual plan is our starting point.

### **What do you expect from Galvez Plaza?**

I think it needs to be reworked. It blocks people off. It precludes it from being one big space. It's already defined as "that's it, stop here."

### **Especially because of the bus stop.**

That's going to go. It's going to be redesigned under another contract. Where it goes, we will figure out with CATS.

### **What else do you see changing?**

The big thing is that it should be a pedestrian space that the cars are intruding upon. It should really be the full extension of Third Street, because the axis is important.

I think we need some shade, so maybe Live After Five could occur later in the spring and earlier in the fall, move more into summer. Maybe the shade could be something that pulls out during an event and goes away after it.

There are so many things we need to accommodate in the square. School kids, for instance, come to the Shaw Center for the Arts. Where are they going to eat lunch?

You can't have community without an actual physical space that has an identity that people relate to.

### **When the square is done, what's next?**

This is phase 1 of the master plan for the riverfront. There is more work to be done on the river, getting across River Road, making those connections, whether they are overhead or ground plane. And there is the whole riverfront. There is a lot of work to do. •



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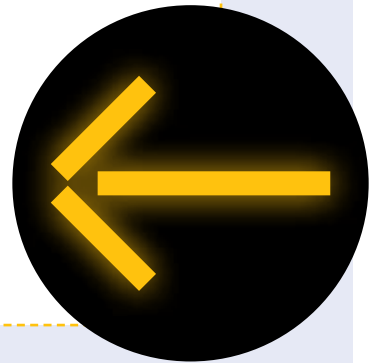
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## Proceed with caution

A traffic innovation that began in Indiana is getting traction across the country. If you have seen a flashing yellow arrow, you know why. Easy to understand, the new wrinkle in traffic management also shrinks the chance of accidents at intersections.

The flashing yellow tells motorists it's OK to make left-hand turns but only after yielding to oncoming traffic. This year, Michigan's Department of Transportation has begun mandating that flashing yellows replace flashing red turn signals across the state.

The state of Louisiana has begun exploring the option, but is not convinced that people will understand the need to yield any better, says Brendan Rush of the State Department of Transportation. •



## Rays of Hope

Just as high food prices decades ago sparked investments that led to the "green revolution," higher gas prices are prompting a rush to create new energy technologies. Solar companies particularly are in high gear.

Among them are SunPower and HeliVolt. In spring, each of the firms announced advancements in solar power technology.

SunPower announced it had produced a solar cell that was 23.4% efficient, an improvement over its 22%-efficient technology already in mass production. The new technique—more efficient at turning sunlight into energy—will be available in two years. The latest breakthrough illustrates progress toward the company's goal to cut solar system costs in half by 2012.

Meanwhile, HeliVolt is developing thin-film solar cells using copper-indium-gallium-selenide instead of silicon. The firm says it has produced CIGS cells in just six minutes, demonstrating it can dramatically boost production, thereby sharply reducing the cost of solar systems. The company is refining its technology for mass production. HeliVolt promises to have its thin-film solar cells—which will be printed akin to ink on newsprint—integrated in building products, including roofing tiles and sunshades.

Other firms are also competing to expand the thin-film solar cell market. •



## No dog ears

It's ugly, but don't judge the Amazon e-book by its cover. A surprise best seller, the Kindle is creating suspense in the publishing business.

The Kindle is powered by a computer, which displays text on e-paper, an ultra-thin black-and-white display. The device, the size of a paperback with a keyboard, can wirelessly download 125,000 titles, as well as newspapers and magazines available at Amazon.com. Want to buy a book while at the beach, just search the Kindle and download the latest page-turner to the device in seconds.

When the Kindle launched last November, Amazon couldn't keep the device in stock, even at \$359 per machine.

At a national book fair in June, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos reported the Kindle already accounts for 6% of sales for the 125,000 titles available in print and digitally.

Knowing the trajectory of technology, future Kindles and tablet computing devices from competitors are likely to be more useful. For instance, organic light emitting diodes—the next generation of color displays—are bright and light. When they become cheaper in coming years, a color e-book could display video and words and have hyperlinks. Users then could have virtual book clubs and more.

Still, don't count out the printed book. A Random House/Zogby poll released at Book Expo America showed that 82% of all readers prefer printed books. Even among the 30 set, only 13% expressed comfort with reading books electronically. •

## Now that's Progressive

The distance driven hasn't factored into the cost of automobile insurance. People who drive sparingly pick up the cost of insuring motorists who drive a lot. That could be changing.

In three states so far, Progressive Insurance has started discounting rates for people based on how much they drive and how safe they drive. Conversely, insurance costs under the MyRate plan—available in Michigan, Oregon and Minnesota—can be higher for motorists driving more than the norm.

Drivers who choose MyRate plug a sensor into their car. The sensor monitors distance and aggressive driving. Periodically, the driver uploads the information to Progressive. The insurance company, known for innovation, says good drivers can receive up to 40% insurance discounts.

Now that the technology for measuring driver behavior is cheaply available, you can expect more insurers to try the new schemes, aligning motoring costs to driving patterns. •

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## Tidy solution

Disgusted by the mess he saw spilling out of trash cans in Boston, Jim Poss devised a solution. His welcome invention is slowly spreading around the world.

Poss' firm, Seahorse Power, produces a solar-powered trash compactor. Known as The BigBelly, the high-tech trash can is used at Boston's Fenway Park, Baltimore's Inner Harbour, The Alamo, Chicago's Millennium Park, Harvard University and other locations. Baton Rouge's downtown district could install them.

By compacting, BigBelly holds up to five times more refuse than ordinary cans, which the firm's marketing VP, Richard Kennelly, says eliminates four out of five pickups, reducing operating costs. The cans cost about \$3,500 apiece.

"Because it's doing the work that is being done by collection crews, payback is under two years," said Kennelly.

The cans can be monitored remotely, letting users know when they need to be emptied.

The BigBelly makes sense in places with heavy usage, such as college campuses, parks, downtowns. It's also economical in remote places that are expensive to service, such as trailheads.

But the product is also compelling because it fulfills Poss' initial desire. The trash is contained, so is the stench. •

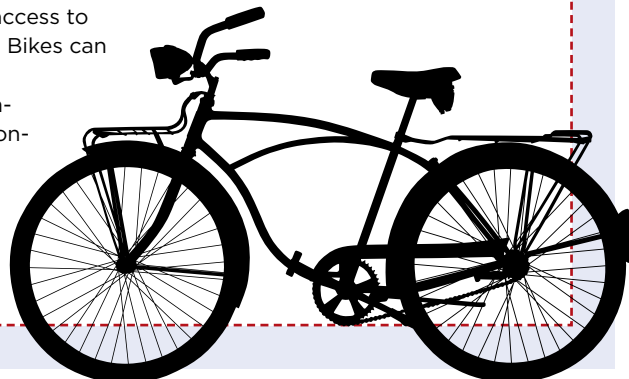
## Bicycle built for many

Bike sharing has made a beachhead in America, just in time to combat wallet-draining gasoline prices. Becoming common in large European cities, a bike sharing system has launched first on our shores in Washington, D.C.

For \$40 per year, SmartBike DC offers 120 bikes at 10 stations in the city. The number of stations and bikes should grow with popularity.

By swiping cards at bike racks, riders get access to two-wheelers for up to three hours at a time. Bikes can be returned to any of the racks.

Clear Channel, the radio and billboard company, is running the program under its city contract for bus shelter signs. The company has SmartBikes across Europe and is in talks with other American cities to expand in the United States. •



# Skinny bugs

Working with a North Carolina company, Pennington Biomedical Research Center is going hunting. Zen-Bio and the Baton Rouge research center will explore natural compounds that could prevent and treat metabolic disease and obesity.

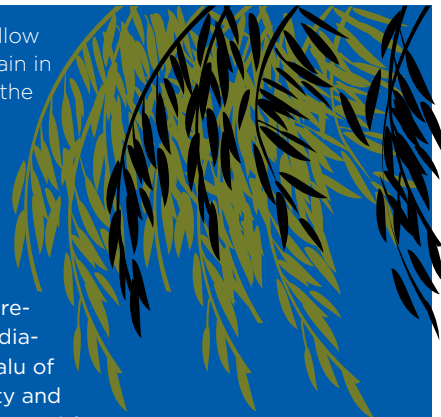
The market is big. About 142 million Americans are considered obese, a figure based on a body mass index of 25. BMI is a measure of body fat based on height and weight.

First, Zen-Bio and Pennington will screen thousands of botanical extracts for their beneficial effects on primary human abdominal fat cells and adult stem cells. Pennington and Rutgers University have built a library of botanical extracts, which Zen-Bio will scan with its human fat-derived stem cell screening system.

Containing salicylic acid, willow bark combated fever and pain in the 18th century and led to the creation of aspirin.

“One of our goals was to find and test promising botanicals that may be effective in treating obesity, and equally as important, preventing the progression to diabetes,” said Dr. William Cefalu of Pennington. “Clearly, obesity and diabetes increase heart disease risk and both are reaching epidemic levels. We believe we can make real progress quickly in our search for effective clinical interventions.”

A grant from the National Institutes of Health is funding the research. Zen-Bio provides research tools for the study of human metabolic disease. •



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# Medical Missionaries

CARING FOR THE UNINSURED, AND LIGHTENING THE ER'S LOAD

>> by **MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON** photo by **BRIAN BAIAMONTE**

**A**ndrew Smart is talkative and cheerful, but his cloudy eyes look tired as he reclines in the examining room chair. A nurse breezes in, offers a robust greeting and takes his vital signs. She asks Smart how he's been feeling while his daughter, Latasha, looks on.

Smart, 60, says that until recently he was in overall good health. The building supply company maintenance worker recounts that he has spent most of his life doing physical labor, and that he used to lift weights vigorously (the reason, he laughs, he looks so good now). But a frightening bout of breathlessness three months ago sent Smart to the emergency room at Earl K. Long Memorial Hospital.

Smart was stabilized and sent home, but doctors discovered chronic hypertension. With no health insurance, Smart had few options for follow-up visits, and if unchecked, his condition could lead to stroke. Ideally, he would have been assigned a primary care physician through Earl K. Long, but the publicly funded facility's rolls are full. The best a new patient can expect is a lengthy waiting list.

But Smart's doctors had a new option. They issued orders for a check-up one week later at the LSU Mid City Medical Clinic on North Foster Drive, an after-hours operation staffed entirely by volunteer physicians, nurses and social workers serving through the Volunteer Health Corps of Baton Rouge.

The year-old VHC provides care to the uninsured—particularly patients with diabetes and high

blood pressure who formerly turned to the ER.

"They needed a bridge to get them from the emergency room to an established medical home," says VHC board member Michael Rolfsen, part of the founding team and an internist at the Baton Rouge Clinic. Three years ago, Rolfsen and others were moved after volunteering with Hurricane Katrina victims. They wanted to create a permanent vehicle for health care professionals to continue to give back.

Rolfsen says they also wanted to do something

else: develop a model that lessened the burden on the state health care system, which absorbs the lion's share of uninsured patients. Working with administrators at LSU Health Care Services, along

with officials at Earl K. Long and other hospitals throughout Baton Rouge, the team created an efficient strategy for treating patients who need immediate care, and who are better served outside the ER.

Last year, more than 100 different local doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and social workers cared for 650 patients through the program, says VHC Executive Director Michele W. Broome.

The easiest part of her job is recruiting volunteers.

"It's incredibly gratifying," says volunteer Wendy Rasmussen, a former RN who now works in emergency preparedness for LSU Health Care Services. "We all have a higher purpose. It's actually self-serving for me in a way, because I love being around and caring for families again."

## HEALTH CHECK

Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have granted \$180,000 to Volunteer Health Corps since 2006.

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Dr. Mitch Montelaro checks out Aaron McDonald at the LSU Medical Clinic on North Foster Drive, an after-hours operation staffed entirely by volunteer physicians.

By day, the Mid City clinic is a state-run medical facility offering family medicine, dermatology and other services. By night, the dermatology wing is transformed into VHC's bustling doctors' office, where more than a dozen patients are treated every Tuesday night.

"It was an efficient use of existing space," says Broome. "There was no need for new bricks and mortar."

The vibe is serene, and the patients are calm. Despite working elsewhere all day, the staff is relaxed and eager to help.

"You feel totally appreciated," says Broome. "It's a completely different experience for our volunteers than what they may have faced during the day."

Smart noticed it off the bat. "Everybody is so relaxed," he says. "It makes me feel relaxed."

Patients are between 35 and 60 years old, says Broome. All are either uninsured or underinsured, and most struggle to afford the multiple prescription drugs required to manage their conditions. Many have let them lapse.

"A lot of what I do is finding resources for people,"

says Heather Frazier, a licensed clinical social worker who rounded out the VHC's two-person staff in May. "They desperately need prescription assistance. Many need transportation, and, believe it or not, affordable housing, too."

The program recently added colonoscopies on Monday nights at the LSU Health System Surgical Facility on Perkins Road. The free screenings help relieve the backlog at Earl K. Long, where patients in need of the procedure face a one-year wait. Rolfsen says VHC is paying close attention to other uninsured medical needs, like orthopedic services, in the hope of adding them in the future. The goal is to continue supporting Earl K. Long and its patients, he says.

Expansion, says Broome, looks promising when you consider the response from the medical community.

Volunteer physician Curtis C. Chastain II, an internist at Our Lady of the Lake specializing in men's health, says his nights at the clinic help him stay close to his core values as a physician.

"This," he says, "is why I went to medical school." •

# Corridor of Opportunity

IDEA CITY DELIVERS A MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO LURE CREATIVE CLASS >> by MUKUL VERMA photo by TIM MUELLER

South Louisiana residents work hard. On occasion, they also take more than an hour for lunch, drink with co-workers after 5 p.m. or sneak out early to make the kid's soccer game or dance recital.

And that creates a twinge of guilt.

It shouldn't. Research from GSD&M's Idea City, which the Foundation hired for a media campaign to help boost the economy of the 10/12 corridor, reveals that the balance between life and work makes South Louisiana unique—and desirable to people who may want to relocate here.

"People are craving more substantive experiences and Louisiana can become a magnet to them," said Idea City's Haley Rushing, who digs into cultures like an anthropologist to deliver purpose-based marketing plans.

The Foundation's 10/12 corridor project began in 2007. The goal was to flip the negative image of South Louisiana and to create jobs in parishes that border I-10 and I-12 from Lake Charles to the Northshore. The new

wealth would offset the economic downturn expected with the end of the hurricane economy.

For the project, the Foundation recruited leaders from across the region and hired Idea City to create a brand and marketing strategy to promote the corridor.

Idea City, based in Austin, was chosen because it had a background in purpose-based branding and had run innovative, successful campaigns. Wal-Mart had grown to be the largest retailer in the world with Idea City as its marketing agency. Southwest Airlines soared with Idea City's successful pitch, "You are now free to move about the country," which was based on discovering the airline's purpose of democratizing air travel.

## ROAD TO PROSPERITY

**What:** Working with leaders from Lake Charles to the Northshore, the Foundation is creating a marketing campaign.

**When:** The creative concepts by GSD&M Idea City are nearly completed. The Foundation is talking to state leaders about launching the campaign.

**Why:** The campaign is designed to create jobs by drawing creative catalysts to the region and by improving the image of Louisiana.

## TAKE OFF

To launch the 10/12 initiative, corridor leaders flew to Idea City offices in May 2007. There, Shreveport demographer Elliot Stonecipher revealed some unexpected

facts. Even though young talent was fleeing Louisiana, his analysis showed the parishes along

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“We found a high quality of life, among the highest we have ever experienced in the country. It’s very European in nature.”

—HALEY RUSHING, IDEA CITY

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the corridor were growing faster than the nation. Since 1980, 365,000 people had moved into those parishes, which accounted for one-third of the state’s population.

Pushed by that favorable wind, the leaders—mayors, chamber chiefs, foundation heads—got to work. Sitting at computers running collaboration software, they shared ideas, challenges and issues. With the basic facts and a marketing challenge, Rushing and her crew spent months learning about

South Louisiana, reading reports and books, interviewing residents and expatriates, living in the area to understand it.

On their culture dive, they discovered a different South Louisiana, one that people who live here cherish but often don’t believe is valuable. “You would think everyone in Louisiana is at the end of their rope and miserable, but that’s completely contradictory to what you find there,” says Rushing. “We found a high quality of life, among

the highest we have ever experienced in the country. It's very European in nature."

## WELCOME BALANCE

As in Europe, life is balanced in Louisiana. People engage in meaningful work within a meaningful life. They wake up, enjoy breakfast, work at something they care about, lunch with friends, work some more, lounge after work with co-workers, have dinner with family and friends, go to bed knowing a good day was lived.

"Joie de vivre pervades the Louisiana Zeitgeist from morning to night. While people in other states are putting together to do lists, Louisiana residents are actually doing it," says Rushing.

A life well lived is the advantage Idea City wants the corridor to market to the rest of the country. And that meshes with the firm's research, which shows millions of Americans spend too much time working, not knowing their neighbors, disconnected from their own families.

Rushing says what Louisiana has to offer should be promoted to the creative catalysts, a subset of the job-fostering creative class that seeks what South Louisiana has to offer.

The purpose of the campaign: To bring energy to life.

Says Idea City, "Energy for life is a call to action based on the amazing opportunity that exists in Louisiana today. It asks people to get fired up and contribute their talents to making their mark in Louisiana. The challenges that make people want to leave Louisiana are the very same challenges that create meaningful opportunities for talented people in Louisiana."

Idea City followed with a marketing plan and initial creative concepts, which were presented in the second quarter. The brand for the region is "Creative Corridor." The targeted creative catalysts number 28 million and generally are 25- to 49-year-olds. Thirty-six percent are college grad-

uates, 55% have household incomes of more than \$75,000 and 32% are single.

Creative catalysts, says Idea City, strive to improve their lives, measure success by happiness and not their bank accounts, want to make a difference and enjoy standing out.

## NEXT STEP

Idea City is fine-tuning a number of creative concepts, the basis for a print, online and broadcast campaign. Among the possible campaigns is the "Louisiana Rescue Squad," a sort of EMS unit to correct misled lives. In ads, the squad, says Rushing, could facilitate experiences in other places that are common in Louisiana, such as showing people how to connect to their neighbors or telling them it's OK to leave work at 4 p.m. to attend a child's recital.

The ads would drive people to a website, which would be designed to provide them with more information about South Louisiana opportunities and give them a path to relocate to the region.

As a next step, the Foundation is talking with state officials to fund the advertising campaign, which is expected to meet the original goal of creating jobs and shining the image of South Louisiana. •



**EDDIE PALMIERI**



**REGINA CARTER**



Nicholas Payton

**BLUE NOTE RECORDS  
70TH ANNIVERSARY**



**PATTI AUSTIN**

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This performance is funded in part by a grant from the Southern Arts Federation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Louisiana Division of the Arts. Additional support provided by the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation.

# From Acme to Philanthropy

COATNEY PROVIDES LIFT TO NORTHSHORE NONPROFITS

>> by NATHAN SELF

Ask any marketer and they will tell you about the perils of direct mail—about the slow, often miniscule return that advertisers get on sales letters, brochures, flyers and other notices. It's a truth we can all witness on a daily basis as we sort through the coupons and cards in our own mailboxes. So when an unsolicited invitation arrived in Doyle Coatney's mailbox last year, probability was in favor of it ending up in a recycling bin. Instead, the invitation led Coatney to a reception introducing the newly formed Northshore Community Foundation to the region.

And that eventually led to a new resource for nonprofits working on the Northshore.

At the reception, Coatney mingled with other community and business leaders from across the four parish area and was introduced to Susan Bonnett, the CEO of the new organization bent on enhancing the quality of life in the region.

Later, Coatney met with Bonnett, and over lunch they discussed the future of the Northshore Community Foundation. Having lived in the area since 1995, Coatney was optimistic about the potential for the new Foundation and asked what he could do to help.



The death of Doyle Coatney's wife from cancer is among the reasons he has used his wealth to care for others.

## FOLLOW THE MONEY

Coatney, originally from Texas, said that he moved to Louisiana to follow his paycheck. Tuboscope, an oilfield service company, transferred him to Louisiana. In 1972, after realizing his chances of advancement with his employer were limited, Coatney, at the age of 36, rolled the dice and purchased Acme Truck Line Inc. by assuming the debt of the company.

The oilfield hauling company had just six trucks. When he sold the company to his son in 2000, the

line had grown to more than 1,000 trucks and \$104 million in revenues. Today, the company has more than 2,000 trucks and projects revenue of \$250 million in 2008.

Coatney's legacy, though, isn't limited to the continued success of his former business. He is a member of the Board of Counselors for Northshore Ochsner, has been the featured speaker at their Annual Founders Day celebration and has been honored as a Doctor of Philanthropy. His work with Ochsner includes the soon to be completed Coatney Wellness Park, including the Karen Coatney Memorial Labyrinth located in the park at the Ochsner Health Center in Covington.

The labyrinth was named to honor Coatney's wife, who died December 2005 after a long battle with breast cancer. Coatney describes his wife as a spiritual, artistic person who would love the idea of a place where patients and their families can find peace, meditate and pray or wander around in the quiet. He recalls a conversation with Candice Watkins, mayor of Covington, mentioning at an Ochsner board meeting that it would be nice for the Coatney park to have a labyrinth.

He has also been a devoted supporter of education, first setting up an education fund for his nieces and nephews to pay for making good grades on their report cards and college expenses. In 1992, Coatney endowed a scholarship to Blinn College in Brenham, Texas, where he was a member of the football, basketball, baseball and track teams. Each year a needy student from Coatney's alma matta, Montgomery High School, is chosen for this scholarship. Coatney personally reviews the applications and selects the student who will receive this award.

Coatney has also established the Coatney Leadership Center and Coatney Leadership Award at St. Martin's Episcopal School in Metairie. The Center's mission is to foster leadership skills in students through state-of-the-art pedagogical

## Coatney was optimistic about the potential for the new Foundation and asked what he could do to help.

research for faculty and sports-based character development programs for students. Coatney realizes the importance of leadership because of personal experiences. For example, after college, Coatney entered the army as a private. He was later selected to attend Officer Candidate school in Fort Benning, Ga. He graduated and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. Infantry Platoon Leader.

"I always believed that you've got to take care of your family first," he says, "and people and organizations that have helped you, and then you can branch out and give to your interests."

### BLAZING A TRAIL

The Northshore Community Foundation wanted a hub for local nonprofits, a place where they could go for technical assistance, training and other resources. Bonnett was quick to think of Coatney because, as she says, "Doyle gets it!"

Located in Mandeville, the new Coatney Northshore Center for Philanthropy is staffed through a partnership with the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations and will feature classes to teach community volunteers the value of philanthropy and service, and trainings to increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations serving the region.

"I could live anywhere," says Coatney, "but I choose to live here." •

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# Replicating Forum 35

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL GROUPS FORM ACROSS THE 10/12  
CORRIDOR >> by MUKUL VERMA

First-time visitors motoring to Baton Rouge are greeted by the lights on the Mississippi River Bridge. The lights do more than welcome people to Baton Rouge. They also speak of the energy of Forum 35, a young professionals group that raised the funds to light the bridge more than a decade ago, its first civic project to improve the region.

Now, Forum 35 has taken to the road. Across South Louisiana, the organization is helping young professionals establish or grow their own versions of the group. "We will all be working for the same cause, for our cities," said John Jackson, a Forum 35 board member.

Forum 35 started the initiative last year, but accelerated it this year, said Jackson. That has resulted in visits and conversations across the region. When they meet with young professionals, Forum 35 members share what they have learned and offer lessons in operations, which include bylaws 101.

A committee of Forum 35 members has talked with young professionals in Lafayette, Lake Charles and Mandeville. The early results are impressive.

Two of the groups have grown rapidly; the third—a much newer one—has gained solid footing for expansion.

## LAKE CHARLES REGION

In a region that includes Lake Charles, Courtney Heard heads the upstart young professionals group. It started over coffee meetings on Friday, when Heard, who owns an insurance agency with her husband, gathered with business owners to share experiences and conjure strategies.

"As my grandparents said, some of the best conversations in life happen over a cup of coffee," said Heard.

The conversations expanded; an organization was formed. Named Fusion 5, its goal is to gather people across five parishes—Allen, Beauregard, Cameron, Calcasieu and Jeff Davis—to "educate, facilitate and illuminate," said Heard.

Closely allied with the Chamber of Commerce for Southwest Louisiana, Fusion 5 meets to lunch and learn monthly. It also facilitates professional development. At a recent membership meeting, Fusion

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Want more information about Forum 35 and its plans? Visit [Forum35.org](http://Forum35.org).

5 entered the world of public policy, getting an update about the region from political and civic leaders.

“We have an opportunity to speak on what’s going on in the community,” said Hearod.

Fusion 5 is moving into philanthropy as well. The group is brainstorming a fundraising function to raise money for education.

The goal was to sign up 75 members this year; the group had 87 members in just three months. “It’s exciting to see like-minded individuals who saw a void in our community.”

### NORTHSHORE

To start a young professionals organization in St. Tammany and Tangipahoa, Michelle Avery was recruited. It made sense. She was a member of Forum 35 before moving to Mandeville, which was closer to her husband’s job.

An accountant, Avery has recruited a steering committee to begin creating a young professionals organization. The committee was set to discuss goals and choose a direction this summer.

She describes the area as three population centers, each separated by 20 miles of forests. “It’s a geographic divide, a challenge we have to overcome.”

Unlike the other areas of the corridor, the Northshore skews a bit older. Young professionals move from New Orleans to the area after they get married, says Avery. She expects to work with the St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce and the Northshore Community Foundation, a partner of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

“When it’s formed, we want a signature project

to kick things off.”

### LAFAYETTE

The idea for a young professionals group in Lafayette had been simmering for a number of years. Finally, Ben Berthelot joined a couple of peers to form a steering committee and get started.

“Our mission is to promote civic engagement and educate on the issues facing the community,”

said Berthelot, whose day job is assistant to Parish President Joey Durel.

“Ultimately, our goal is to give the younger generation a voice on key issues in the community. One day, key stakeholders would come to us for our ideas on issues and we would be involved in community decisions.”

The group is named 705, reflecting the zip code for Lafayette. Launched in

October, 705 has more than 200 members. 705 has already done civic projects, recently restoring and painting three houses in an area of town populated by the elderly.

Like the other groups, 705’s steering committee met with Forum 35 before launch. It also met with the group from Lake Charles.

“In different ways, we can work along the 10/12 corridor on different issues facing the state,” said Berthelot.

Adds Hearod: “I would love to see us create a young professional summit, a meeting of the minds, getting all the members together. There is power in numbers.” •

**FORUM 35 KEY PROJECTS**  
**(re)Inventing Redstick:** a community conversation about issues.  
**ArtMelt:** A juried art show in downtown.  
**Barton Community Leadership Program:** A leadership program for Forum 35 members named after philanthropist John Barton.

CODA

# Laura Souter

DOWNTOWN PIONEER

Her friends said she was crazy, but when Laura Souter launched a salon eight years ago, there was one neighborhood she wanted to be in: downtown.

“I was reading a book then about being a visionary,” she recalls. “It said when everyone is going in one direction, you need to turn around and go the other way. Then you’ll be ahead when the trend changes.”

Souter was a pioneer, among the earliest to gamble on the promise of a reclaimed downtown, which was sparked by the Plan Baton Rouge strategy. She figured her ace in the hole was a deep supply of business clients. She borrowed \$96,000 to open The Atelier on North Boulevard in December 2000.

“I figured that it made so much sense to open downtown it was scary,” says Souter, 46, a Baton Rouge native.

Reality was different.

“Within nine months, I lost half my customers because of parking,” she says. She hadn’t factored the resistance of her suburban customers to meters and pay lots.

But she chipped away and lured new clients, eventually needing more space. She got wind of the Capitol House Hotel’s renovation, and pressed hard to be its resident salon and day spa. The new Atelier Rouge opened in the Hilton Capitol Center in 2006.

Overall, it’s been a good move. Sales have grown annually. But despite valet services, customers still resist urban parking. Souter also finds most Baton Rouge residents think of other neighborhoods when they need a salon.


“More people are coming downtown to eat sushi, but they’re not coming downtown to shop or get their hair cut,” she says.

Nevertheless, Souter will remain, planning to edge out competition with strong customer service and a boutique vibe and hoping working folks will integrate her services into their weekday routines. And as downtown continues to draw more residents, she’ll be ahead of the trend.

“I’m not going anywhere.”

—MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON

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## Gwen Hamilton is among the believers.

Working with people who live in Old South Baton Rouge, she has led the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's project to revive the neighborhood between downtown and LSU—and Old South Baton Rouge is breathing again. With new homes replacing tired housing projects. With children studying at the new Head Start center and reading at the Carver Branch Library. With developers taking chances on a neighborhood once given up for gone.

Gwen's work is paid for by another set of believers—members of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Their generosity lets the Foundation spark the creation of experimental public schools, celebrate literature and the arts, and put a shine on Old South Baton Rouge.

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