



THE BATON ROUGE AREA FOUNDATION

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Q3/2009

GOING DEEP

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We are fortunate to know Leroy Hollins.

Mona Hull, too. You will understand why after reading their stories in this issue of *Currents*.

Hollins works double time. During the day, he is a technology expert for the state. In the evening, he gathers children

of North Baton Rouge to teach them about life by teaching them to play games. The day job pays the bills; the evening effort expands his spirit.

the river to Fifth Street.

Traditionally, town squares have been gathering places framed by important civic buildings. Baton Rouge’s town square will be just such a place. Around the site of the square are government buildings, mid-rise offices, a rising new state courthouse, the Old State Capitol and the Shaw Center for the Arts.

Once built, we believe Baton Rouge residents will be impressed by the square. It will be useful. With a flexible design, the square may be configured for festivals, foot races, art events, poetry readings. A media beacon at the center will be programmed to attract crowds to downtown. The square also will be for doing little. People will be able to eat boxed

I encourage you to show up and help to design the future of Baton Rouge.

Hull’s job is fulfilling as well. Like Hollins, she provides a service that can be measured in joy. For more than 40 years, she has nursed the sick in Baton Rouge and other towns. In the last four years, Ms. Mona has used her admirable nursing skills and wit to treat schoolchildren at Southdowns Elementary.

By being on the spot, she has saved a child’s life. Each day, she gives old school advice to the children before sending them off with a hug, which may be the only affection some of them will receive all day.

Leroy and Mona are among many exceptional people across our region. In their spare time, they volunteer at nonprofits, help their neighbors stack broken trees after storm and much more. They listen to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s request—“Be an opener of doors for such as come after thee.”

The Downtown Development District has unveiled the design for Baton Rouge’s town square, which will be constructed on North Boulevard from

lunches, sip coffee, lay down on a cool lawn in the square.

The parish has set aside \$4.5 million to build the square, with a late 2010 ribbon cutting expected. I congratulate the designers, community and civic leaders for giving the city a place for everyone and many things.

We do much planning at the Foundation. Our colleagues at the Center for Planning Excellence spend considerable time on land planning, keeping the goal of building better places in mind.

Some equate plans to dust catchers. Too often, the cynics are right, for plans are ignored or implemented with waivers that actually make things worse.

The Foundation’s first big plan was created with the help of residents to return life to downtown. Over a decade later, downtown is thriving partly because of Plan Baton Rouge. A second phase of PBR to spark the next wave of downtown rehab is nearly completed.

*Baton Rouge
Area Foundation*

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The Baton Rouge Area Foundation is a community foundation that takes advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of life in 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.

Currents is published five times a year by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 402 N. Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at (225) 387-6126 or email the Foundation at mverma@braf.org.

After Katrina, residents of Lake Charles gathered with Andres Duany, the Miami planner who created downtown's plan a decade ago, to make a plan for their waterfront and downtown.

The Foundation made grants to Lake Charles to pay for the Duany plan. Since then, the people of Lake Charles have gotten after it, building on the original blueprint and approving \$18 million in taxes for downtown and lakefront enhancements.

The transformation of Lake Charles is underway. In this issue, we include renderings and a construction update. Congratulations to Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach and the residents of the city for the work.

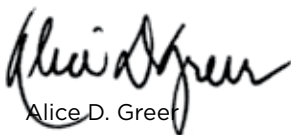
Baton Rouge, meanwhile, is ready to embark on its first parishwide master plan since the Horizon Plan. Fregonese Associates has been chosen to lead the designers. Later this year, the Fregonese team will begin community outreach, among steps culminating in a sweeping blueprint that will recommend where to build roads, how to integrate mass transit and where to create paths and trails.

Currents will follow the master plan. I encourage you to show up and help to design the future of Baton Rouge.

Meanwhile, CPEX has won the American Society of Landscape Architecture's Olmsted Medal, an award honoring Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture and the designer of Central Park. CPEX won the medal for environmental stewardship.

I thank the CPEX staff, led by Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas, for leading land plans upon which a thriving and enduring Louisiana can be built.

Sincerely,



Alice D. Greer

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Manship Theatre

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Ji-Yong



Olga Kern



David Sanborn

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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 \$15 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.

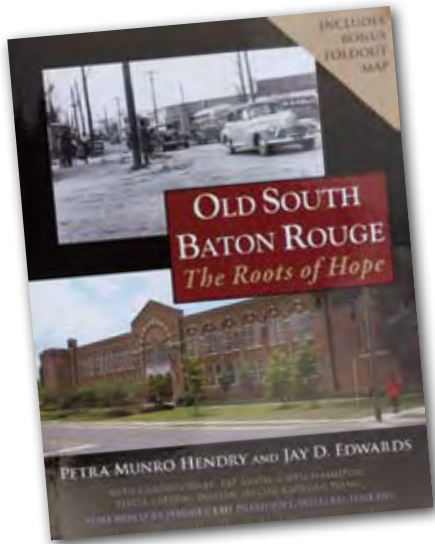
How we work: The Foundation is funded in several ways. One key way is through generous people who choose to start donor-advised funds at the Foundation to provide grants to nonprofit groups and community projects. Philanthropists can start a tax-deductible charitable fund for \$10,000. *To learn more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

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

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

What's our size: At year-end 2008, the Foundation had estimated assets of \$530 million, making it among the top-30 largest community foundations in the country. Donors of the Foundation have provided the assets over more than 40 years. Since 1964, the Foundation has issued \$225 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 or by calling Mukul Verma at 225.387.6126.



Recommended reading >>

OLD SOUTH BATON ROUGE, THE ROOTS OF HOPE

By Petra Munro Hendry and Jay D. Edwards
University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press
\$30 softcover

For a community situated on the route between downtown and LSU, Old South Baton Rouge is a mystery to most. Now, a book by Petra Munro Hendry and Jay D. Edwards provides a detailed account of Baton Rouge’s first predominantly black neighborhood, as well as its decline following the Civil Rights movement.

The book describes the ascent of Old South Baton Rouge, originally South Baton Rouge before the city continued to sprawl southward with construction of suburban neighborhoods in the

1960s and on. Petrochemical jobs provided the earnings that let workers build homes in Old South Baton Rouge. Businesses thrived there until the Civil Rights movement disbursed black earning to more businesses, undercutting those in OSBR.

A new story is being written for OSBR, as the Baton Rouge Area Foundation works with the Center for Planning Excellence, the city and a new redevelopment authority to rebuild and repopulate the area.

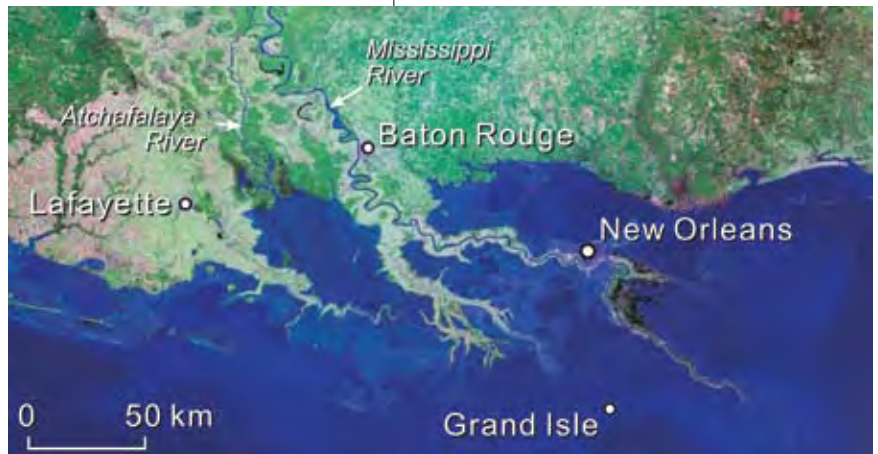
At the same time, the Louisiana State Museum is hosting an exhibition about Old South Baton Rouge. Called “Pride of Place: Stories of Old South Baton Rouge.” the year-long exhibition opened in June and is free to the public. It includes jazzman Herman Jackson’s drums, paintings by Emerson Bell, Buddy Guy’s guitar, a bus token from 1953, the year of the Baton Rouge bus boycott. •

Washing away >>

Another research study confirms a grim prediction: Most of New Orleans and vast portions of the Louisiana coastline will disappear under rising sea levels by the end of the century. Even if dams and other structures numbering more than 40,000 were removed, the Mississippi River wouldn’t deposit enough sediment to counter rising seas under global warming.

The research was done by Michael Blum, a former LSU geologist now employed by ExxonMobil Upstream Research, and LSU geology professor Harry Roberts. Their model predicts the state will lose another 4,054 to 5,212 square miles of coastline by 2100.

“We conclude that significant drowning is inevitable, even if sediment loads are restored, because sea level is now rising at least three times faster than during



Watery future: Louisiana 2100

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Percentage of East Baton Rouge residents who said racism is a problem in the parish, according to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's CityStats survey. Twenty-four percent do not think it is. Visit BRCityStats.org for more quality-of-life indicators.

delta-plain construction," say the researchers in the "Letters" section of *Nature Geoscience* magazine.

Says Blum in a report: "Tough choices have to be made, and they need to be made fast." •



Sun on their side >>

The kids at University of Louisiana at Lafayette are building a cool future. Under construction in Lafayette is the Louisiana Solar Home, which will travel by road to Washington, D.C., for the Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon competition.

We have written about the home before. The completed house will feature a cistern, porches, landscaping with native Louisiana plants, a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and "dog trot," which is a constricted passage through the house that forces the air to move faster for cooling.

Twenty houses from around the world are in competition. Each can be no more than 800 square feet and must be powered only by the sun.

The ULL team is shooting for completing the house in August. "We are going to practice the assembly and disassembly with teams and be ready to leave at the end of September for the competition," says Catherine Guidry, public relations officer for the student team.

The team will raise its goal of \$560,000 for building and transportation, housing the team in D.C. and other expenses. "The community has been very supportive," she says.

Watch a video of the home under construction at BeauSoleil.org. You can probably catch the competition on TV, as the event in the past has received

big coverage from around the world. •

What friends are for >>

Elton John can play the piano—and tennis.

His nonprofit, Sir Elton John's AIDS Foundation, and the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation are producing a tennis exhibition that includes former

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world No. 1 and current top 10 player Andy Roddick.

More tennis stars are expected to play in the exhibition, which is scheduled for Dec. 8 at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center to raise money for local HIV/AIDS organizations.

John and tennis great Billie Jean King have been holding Smash Hits since 1993. The singer of hits that include “Daniel” and “Candle in the Wind” has challenged Martina Navratilova and Anna Kournikova in the past.

The Pennington Family Foundation’s tennis exhibitions have raised money for several causes. *Duel Under the Oaks II* brought in \$216,000 for Hurricane Gustav relief and recovery.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation provides staff and office support for the tennis exhibitions. Tickets can be purchased at LSUSports.net starting Aug. 31. •

Mastering the future >>

Growth is good, unless it’s haphazard. Knowing this, Ascension Parish has launched a comprehensive master plan that is getting an assist from the Center for Planning Excellence.

CPEX, the statewide planning group supported by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, has granted

\$150,000 to Ascension and is consulting with Ascension leaders as needed. Winston Associates is preparing the master plan with input from Ascension leaders and residents. The plan will guide how Ascension is arranged in coming years, with creating an exceptional living environment in mind. Winston Associates is expected to deliver the plan within 18 months.

East Baton Rouge also has begun a master plan, as have other communities in South Louisiana. •

Guiding light

>> A team to model a future for Baton Rouge has been chosen. Fregonese Associates will lead a group of planners who will provide a

comprehensive plan for the parish, a master blueprint for arranging the parish to make movement more efficient and the built environment more livable.

Fregonese Associates has already worked in Louisiana. With Calthorpe Associates, the firm wrote a comprehensive plan for South Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

Baton Rouge’s current master plan—the Horizon Plan—is outdated. A new comprehensive plan is expected to be sweeping in scope, guiding where to build roads and greenways. A key component will be plotting out mass transit with a land use plan.

Fregonese Associates was recommended by a civic committee. Mayor Melvin “Kip” Holden

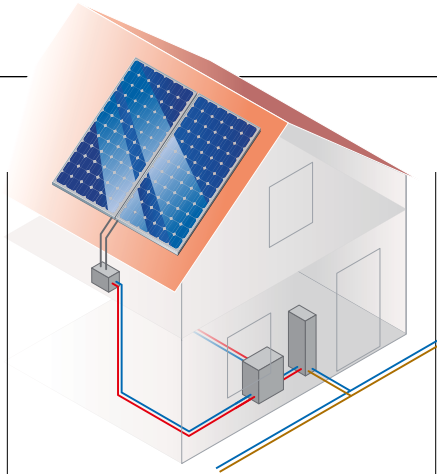


accepted the recommendation and a contract negotiation is under way with an expected signing date in August. Soon after, the comprehensive plan will begin, and it will include outreach to residents, who will get considerable say over the final document.

The Fregonese team is expected to deliver the plan in 18 months to two years. •

Hot leader >>

Louisiana may lead the nation in an innovative method for financing solar energy improvements. The state has



approved legislation that enables people to borrow money for the improvements and repay through property taxes.

Under the legislation—SB 224—local governmental subdivisions can create energy financing district. The dis-

tricts can issue bonds and create property assessment programs for energy improvements. People borrowing from the districts can repay over 20 years.

Justin Runnels, business development manager for Gulf South Solar, says the law puts solar improvements—and their savings—within reach of many people.

Rules for the programs at state and local levels must be written before they are launched. •





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Suzanne Turner Associates | The UPS Store Downtown | WHLC Architecture



Urban farmers

The schoolchildren from McKinley have expanded their inventory, selling vegetables beside their Old South Baton Rouge hot sauce.

A group of McKinley High School students were collaborating with LSU and Imam Fahmee Sabree of The Islamic Complex to grow peppers and cook them into a vinegary-good hot sauce. They sold the sauce in Old South Baton Rouge, where the Baton Rouge Area Foundation is running an ongoing revival project. This year, 17 students began selling vegetables as well, filling a bit of the need for a grocer in the neighborhood.

They harvest vegetables at LSU's Hill Farm and sell them at Thursday markets on East Washington Street, across from the Leo S. Butler Community Center. Frank Fekete, a Springfield farmer, supplies produce to round out the vegetable

supply.

Each student is paid \$500 for working the two-month market. They also get cooking lessons from LSU. Building on their ambitions, they want to start a small farm in Old South Baton Rouge to supply the market.

The Foundation has supported the school kids with \$38,000 in grants from three charitable funds—the Starbucks Fund, the Community Advancement Fund and the Commercial Properties Realty Trust fund. •

Checks out

They came in the guise of anonymity, checked into Hilton Capitol Center, ate at the restaurant, called room service. Weeks later, they declared that the hotel was among the best in the nation.

They were working undercover for AAA's hotel-rating service. Based on the inspections, AAA awarded the Hilton, a Baton Rouge Area Foundation asset managed by Ashby Hospitality, a 4-diamond rating.

Managers of the hotel credit the employees, and are counting on the rating to boost business, which has been brisk in the hotel's more than two years of service after a rehab by the Foundation.

The rating "allows us to compete with much larger cities that deliver an elevated level of service through experienced and well-trained employees," says Austin Van de Vate, general manager of the Hilton.

The Hilton is the only Louisiana hotel outside New Orleans earning a 4-diamond rating.

The Foundation and its real estate manager, Commercial Properties Realty Trust, invested \$70 million to renovate the former Capitol House, abandoned for more than two decades, into the Hilton. The hotel reopened in August 2006, extending the revival of downtown. •



Classical Institute forms

Look up. Those curves on that New Orleans building and that plantation home in St. Francisville reflect the Classical style. Such hidden touches of the past were revealed by experts at a spring symposium of the Classical Institute of the South, a new nonprofit that was assisted by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

New Orleans lawyer Paul Haygood created the institute to explore the Classical style and tradition in the South through the study of art, architecture, history and decorative arts. In April, the first symposium's topics included "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous in Early and Mid-19th Century Louisiana" and "Phyfe in the Felicianas." That's Duncan Phyfe, the furniture maker.

For more on the institute, visit <http://www.classical-instituteofthesouth.org>. •



THE CITY BANK

New membership level supported

Businesses and individuals have shown strong early support to a new membership level that enlists them to help shape the direction of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's civic leadership initiatives, the big projects that fundamentally improve the region.

At June end, six had joined to become Partners in Civic Advancement and nine more had pledged at the level, which is \$10,000. What's more, the Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation will grant \$100,000 to the Foundation when 10 new businesses sign to PCA.

Memberships in the Foundation are crucial to daily operations, enabling the staff to work each day on behalf of the Baton Rouge region. Last year, 680 people and businesses signed up as members of the Foundation. The membership drive started this year in March; nearly 300 had signed up as members by June, with an annual renewal rush expected in the fall and winter.

At the Partners in Civic Advancement level, members meet with Foundation leaders to discuss regional issues and to provide guidance on civic leadership initiatives. In recent years, these projects have included launching charter schools and spearheading a PriceWaterhouseCoopers report on improving health care after Katrina. •

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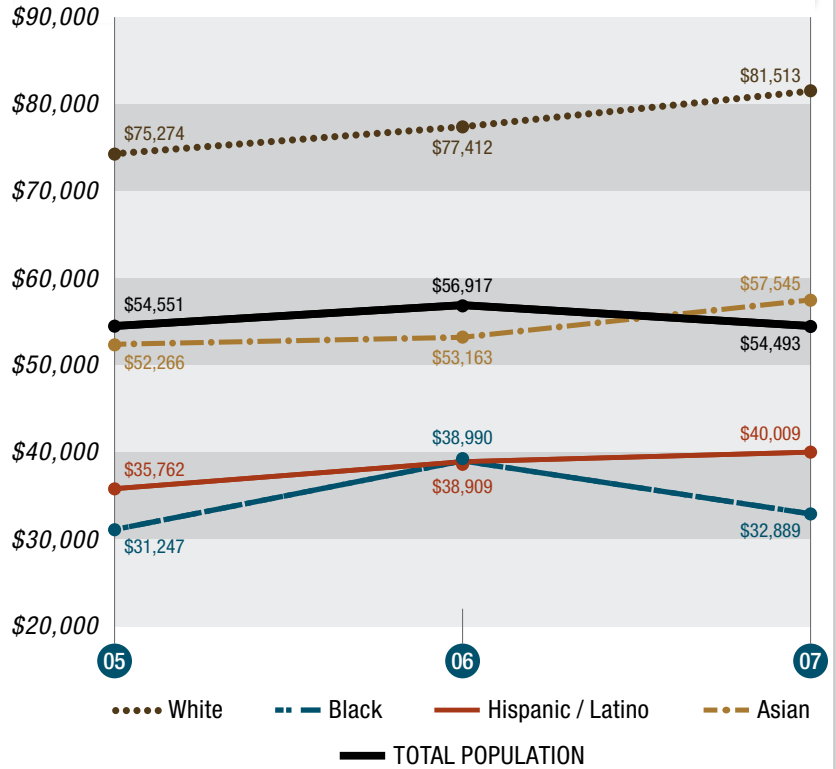
CITYSTATS

Indicators for tracking our quality of life



14

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

INDICATOR: Median family income

What it measures

Median family income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half with income above that amount and half with income below that amount.

How EBR is doing

It depends. The white population is doing well, with a rising median family income that reached \$81,513 in 2007. The black population, though, is facing a declining family income, which was \$32,889 in 2007. The difference between the two is dramatic—and should be a concern.

For more indicators, visit BRCityStats.org.



Foundation supports NOLA airport research

The LRA Support Foundation, created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to fund hurricane recovery and rebuilding, has approved \$100,000 toward a study of the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

State funds from the Department of Transportation and Louisiana Economic Development, as well as federal grants, are expected to round out the \$600,000 to \$700,000 cost of the study, which could be undertaken by Boston Consulting Group.

Leaders want a broad look at the New Orleans airport that includes recommendations for needed improvements and whether privatization would make economic sense. Combining the airport study with existing BCG research of the New Orleans tourist industry could trim the cost of the airport work.

After Hurricane Katrina, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation paid for a Booz Allen Hamilton study that showed Baton Rouge and New Orleans airports had enough capacity to satisfy demand for 25 years and should invest in their own operations. •

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Stopping skipping

BATON ROUGE EXPLORES SOLUTIONS TO TRUANCY'S DEEP ROOTS >> by **MAGGIE HEYN RICHARDSON**

On any given weekday in East Baton Rouge Parish, hundreds of students in elementary, middle and high school wake up and decide to skip school. In most cases, the choice is not isolated, like taking a day to goof off.

Instead, studies show many of these students believe their coursework is irrelevant, or they function so far below grade level they can't keep up in class. Some skip because they are bullied and threatened by fellow classmates. Others get pregnant, struggle with substance abuse or experience mental health issues. Many are overage and exhibit chronic behavioral problems. Often, their parents do not play a role in their education.

Truancy in East Baton Rouge Parish has a chokehold on schools. And because of its correlation to crime and workforce development, truancy affects the community at large, says Roxson Welch, education outreach coordinator for Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden.

Welch is part of a group of local officials and community activists proposing a new model for addressing truancy. Rather than focus solely on punishment, they are developing a comprehensive Truancy Center to address root causes through aggressive case management delivered at one place.

"The issue is much bigger than just missing

school," says Welch.

The former elementary school teacher and East Baton Rouge Parish Metropolitan Council Member has spent the last couple of years charting local truancy trends with data from the School System, the Department of Education and Department of Juvenile Services. "If you don't address this in a systemic sort of way, we do no good. In fact, we do everyone a disservice."

Truancy rates are especially high at underperforming schools in East Baton Rouge Parish. For example, Howell Park Elementary, a so-called "one star" school performer, fights a 31% rate, and Istrouma High School, considered academically unacceptable, has a 40% truancy rate, according to school system data.

Welch charted truancy rates geographically and found that a large portion of cases occur within three zip codes, 70805, 70802 and 70807—areas that collectively have almost 41% of juvenile crime.

"When we charted it, patterns just jumped out at you," she says. Welch believes by concentrating efforts initially in these high-impact zones, the city could see significant improvement.

"The good news is, the problem is manageable," she says.

The connection between truancy and crime,

along with a passion for reducing the juvenile crime rate, motivated East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore III to play a major role in pushing for the new Truancy Center.

“We need one place where you can send everybody for services,” he says. “We can start referring them when they’re young, and stop it before they get older.”

In the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, truancy is defined as five or more unexcused absences per semester. Ideally, parents are notified by the school principal when a student accrues three absences. In some cases it works, since parents are held directly responsible. Local statutes stipulate they must pay a monetary fine of not more than \$50 or commit to community service when their children are found truant.

But the numbers overwhelm the school system’s ability to pass cases on to the court system, and often, enforcement does not address the real issues that keep children from succeeding, says Jennie Ponder, executive director of the Baton Rouge Truancy Assessment and Service Center, a state-funded model program developed to prevent truancy among kindergarten to fifth grade students. While TASC only serves elementary students and focuses chiefly on prevention, it is held up as an example of what a comprehensive strategy can do.

Ponder’s staff of seven focuses on 21 at-risk elementary schools and currently has a caseload of 1,400 students. Even with the overwhelming ratio, Ponder says TASC has seen substantial progress. When her office is given cases quickly and immediately from schools, Ponder says her team has held truancy rates to about 15% because they are able to address the barriers to attendance each family is experiencing.

Ideally, Ponder says, the facility would provide students and their parents access to a variety of social services under one roof, including mental

health, food stamps, prescription assistance, workforce development, housing assistance and more.

“The model works. It’s the only thing that works, and it needs to be replicated on a grand scale,” she says. “Truancy is a problem that needs to be resolved case by case.”

In early June, project organizers held the first of a series of community meetings to gather feedback from community and school leaders about the Truancy Center’s design.

Ponder feels hopeful.

“We have a much better understanding of this issue and its impact on the community,” she says.

“It’s just the right time to do something like this. •





Grace Before

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A life sentence means life at Angola, the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Because Louisiana has some of the toughest sentencing laws in the country, more than 85% of the 5,100 prisoners at Angola are expected to die there. Until the hospice program was created in 1998, prisoners died mostly alone in the prison hospital. Their bodies were buried in shoddy boxes in numbered graves at the prison cemetery. But a nationally recognized hospice program initiated by Warden Burl Cain and run by one staff nurse and a team of prisoner volunteers has changed that.

Now, when a terminally ill inmate is too sick to

live in the general prison population, he is transferred to the hospice ward. Here a team of six volunteers works shifts to take care of the inmate. The volunteers, most of whom are serving life sentences themselves, try to keep him as comfortable as possible. Then, in the last days of dying, the hospice staff begins a 24-hour vigil. The volunteers go to great lengths to ensure that their fellow inmate does not die alone.

Hospice volunteers plan a memorial service and burial. The casket, made by prisoners, is taken from the prison to the cemetery in a beautiful hand-crafted hearse, also made by prisoners. The hearse



A prison security guard watches from the levee as prisoners walk in lines from a prison dormitory to a pickup point at Angola, Louisiana's maximum security prison. Angola is a massive top-security prison, occupying flat delta land equal to the size of Manhattan. Prisoners walk or ride in buses to and from their jobs every day.

Dying

>> A PHOTO ESSAY BY LORI WASELCHUK

is drawn by two giant Percherons and is followed by a procession of friends and, sometimes, family members who sing and walk behind the hearse.

Dying alone in prison is no longer one of the deepest fears of inmates at Angola. The hospice volunteers' commitment to create a tone of reverence for the dead and dying has touched the entire prison population. Prison officials say that the program has helped to transform one of the most violent prisons in the South into one of the most peaceful maximum-security institutions in the United States.

Grace Before Dying is inspired by the volunteers

and the patients as they go through the days of death together. The volunteers have to go through a difficult process to find the love within themselves in order to do this work. Underneath the volunteers' serenity and devotion to patients, I sense the emotional undertow of the knowledge that they will one day be patients in the hospice program that they created. The caregivers have discovered their own humanity and courage within an environment designed to isolate and punish.

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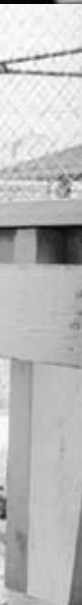
Felton Love, below, watches Timothy Minor closely in the hospital courtyard at Angola Prison. Love has volunteered to care for Minor, who is dying from a brain tumor. Minor has lost much of his muscle control. To get Minor out of his bed, Love has tied Minor to his wheelchair using sheets from his bed.





Hospice volunteer George Brown places his hand lightly on Jimmie Burnette's chest for comfort and reassurance. His breathing has slowed and become shallower. Brown stays close to his patient during his shift.

Hospice volunteer Randolph Matthieu prays as he waits for the prison doctor to pronounce Jimmie Burnette dead. The hospice team that cared for Burnette needs to wait for the doctor's pronouncement before they can begin their post mortem rituals.



Paul Krolowitz, 53, says goodbye to his friend Richard "Grasshopper" Liggett, 55, who is fighting advanced liver and lung cancers. Krolowitz and Liggett worked for many years together in the Angola State Penitentiary carpentry workshop. Liggett spent the last months of his life under the care of the Angola hospice program. Krolowitz came to see Liggett just hours before Krolowitz was released from prison on a work release program.



Calvin Dumas, 53, turns his longtime friend and fellow prisoner George Alexander, who is fighting brain and lung cancers. Dumas stayed with Alexander 24 hours a day in the hospice ward.



Longtime friend Calvin Dumas, 53, pauses a moment in front of the photo of George Alexander at the end of a memorial service held in honor of Alexander. The Angola hospice volunteers plan memorial and burial services for its patients.



Hospice volunteers roll George Alexander's coffin from the prison hospital to an ambulance that will drive it to meet the hand-carved wooden hearse and the procession of mourners. The hospice volunteers' commitment to create a tone of reverence for the dead and dying has touched the entire prison population.



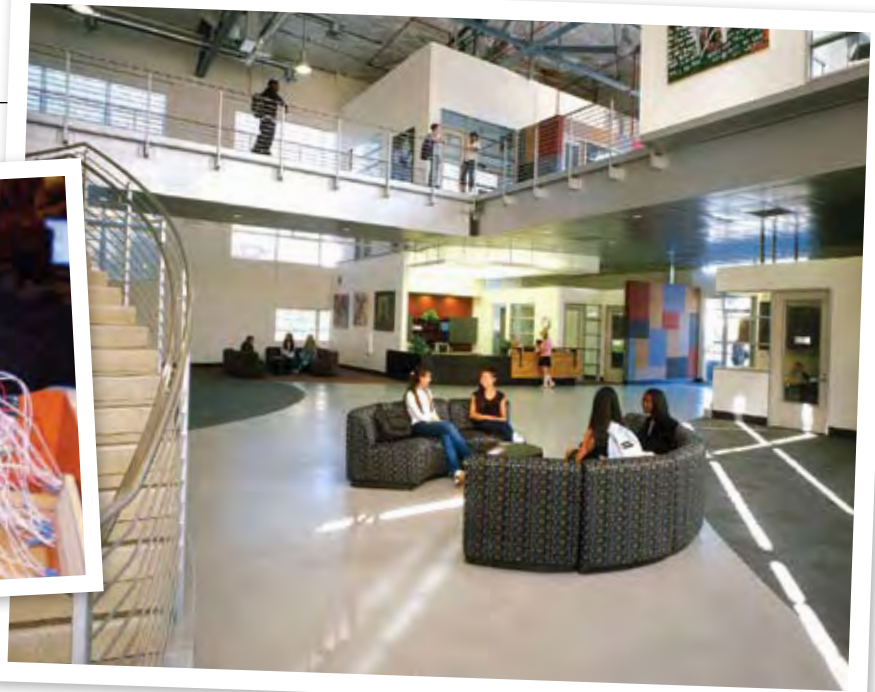
Rosa Mary White, the aunt of prisoner George Alexander, sits next to Alexander's coffin during his burial ceremony at the Angola State Penitentiary cemetery. The Louisiana State Prison's hospice program is responsible for planning memorial services and funerals for its patients. These services allow for family members to grieve alongside the inmate's prison friends.



Lloyd Bone, a prisoner at Louisiana's State Penitentiary, rides atop a horse-driven hearse carrying the body of fellow prisoner George Alexander, who died at the age of 56. Bone and the hearse he hand built with prison carpenters is an example of how prisoners, with the support of Burl Cain, Angola's warden, have created dignified funerals for inmates who are buried at the prison graveyard.



Several High Tech Highs operate as charter schools in San Diego. HTHs are inquiry-based liberal arts schools that blur lines between the technical and academic. The HTH media arts school is a model for a charter school expected to open in Baton Rouge next year.



Reading, writing, radical

BATON ROUGE CHARTER SCHOOL WILL BREAK CONVENTIONS >> by **SARA BONGIORNI**

A regional charter high school pegged to open in fall 2010 will chart new territory in Baton Rouge, starting with the site for its first year of operations. The school will spend its first year inside downtown's Shaw Center, where the school day will be split into two shifts to accommodate a freshman class of 200 students from across the metro region.

Eventually, the public charter school—still unnamed—will have its own permanent site, says Kristy Hebert, executive director of Advance Innovative Education, which was spun off from Advance Baton Rouge, a group that is running charter schools in East Baton Rouge and Point Coupée.

But the unconventional setting is perhaps fitting for a public charter school that draws inspiration from a Southern California high school with a cam-

pus on a former Navy base.

"Eventually, we'd like to have an (open, airy) space like that," says Hebert.

The new Baton Rouge school will upend many aspects of traditional high schools, from its inquiry-based pedagogy to flexible student schedules and a big focus on cutting-edge technology. It won't really even be just one school, but a single campus divided into two schools, one focused on digital media and the other on science, technology and engineering.

"This will change the focus not just of what students learn but how they learn," said Stacy Simmons, director of economic development for the Center for Computation and Technology at LSU, which has worked closely with Advance Innovative Education and LSU's College of Education to develop the curriculum and other as-

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“We want our students behaving like engineers and scientists and historians ... (because) engagement precedes learning.”

—LARRY ROSENSTOCK, HIGH TECH HIGH'S CEO

pects of planning. A grant from BP America provided critical support for the effort.

The method of learning at the new school will be “revolutionary,” Simmons says. “Older generations sat in desks and took notes, but students learn differently now.”

The school here will be modeled in part on a California charter school that has bucked convention, with great success. San Diego’s High Tech High has a former elephant trainer on its staff, a carpentry teacher turned Harvard law professor as its CEO and an administrator with the title Emperor of Rigor.

One of its three campuses produces all its own energy through solar panels aimed at the area’s dependable sunshine.

How students learn at 10-year-old High Tech High has prompted visits by the education ministers of a dozen countries, eight state governors and school reformers from across the U.S., including a trek by Advance Baton Rouge this spring.

Plans for the new school in Baton Rouge, which goes before state officials for approval this summer, “ended up looking a lot like High Tech High, only with a bit of Louisiana flavor,” says Hebert.

Recent student projects at High Tech High include a bike that, when peddled, produces the energy to toast a bagel, and student artwork inspired by masters like Picasso and then digitally reconfigured using sophisticated computer tools.

LEARN BY DOING

School days are flexible and fluid. High Tech High students spend comparatively little time sitting in chairs listening to their teachers, instead delving into projects and problems they take the lead in tackling.

“We were just amazed,” Hebert says. “It is a self-

disciplined culture ... (where students) feel they have real ownership of the school.”

High Tech High’s students aren’t just creative. The school has an enviable record when it comes to the gauge its leaders say matters most: college admissions. All students go on to college, and last year 12% of seniors were accepted into the University of California at Berkeley, the top campus in the best public university system in the country.

Engaging students in learning that really interests them is the critical element of success, says Larry Rosenstock, High Tech High’s CEO. “Our pedagogy is doing and building and making things. We want our students behaving like engineers and scientists and historians ... (because) engagement precedes learning.”

As in San Diego, the new charter school here will focus on turning out college-ready students. But it also will have a strong real-world connection and help develop future workers for key sectors of the economy.

The focus on digital media, for instance, corresponds to multi-pronged local efforts to cultivate and expand an animation sector using tools like LSU’s supercomputer and the Red Stick Animation Festival.

The skills the new school will stress—creatively unraveling problems using finite mathematics and an understanding of architectural principles, for example—correspond to those that animation firms seek in their employees, according to Simmons, who also oversees the Baton Rouge Area Digital Industries Consortium and organizes the annual festival.

“As a city, we really have to be able to compete on a global level, and this helps us do that,” she says. •

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COVERSTORY



Scotlandville Hornets baseball players practice at the 72nd Street BREC park. Baseball, basketball and football are the three sports organized by the Scotlandville Sports Academy.



Going deep

RETURNING HOME, A MAN FORMS A SPORTS ACADEMY THAT TEACHES THE KIDS OF NORTH BATON ROUGE

>> by **CARL DUBOIS** photos by **TIM MUELLER**

On an unseasonably cool mid-May afternoon, with spring refusing to yield quietly to the inevitable summer swelter, cars begin to arrive at the 72nd Street Park baseball field before 5 o'clock. The most eager ballplayers, more than 30 minutes early for practice, explore the area.

Shawn Bates is the first coach to arrive. A boy no taller than the 5-foot-high chain-link fence around the ballpark asks if today's the day the coaches will hand out uniforms. The answer is no, and the question will be asked again and again until the answer is yes.

Baseball is the carrot bringing the Scotlandville Hornets outdoors for fun, exercise and a series of life lessons. Scotlandville Sports Academy director and team manager Leroy Hollins says his rules to live by are easier to convey when the reward for listening—and for the willingness to follow those rules—is participation in sports.

On this day the uniforms, and the promise of them, are the baby carrots.

Bates, younger brother Marlon and Hollins began coaching together in 1993 and formed the Scotlandville Sports Academy in 1999. They instruct boys and girls ages 5-13 in football, 6-13 in basketball and 7-13 in baseball. They play in BREC leagues and Louisiana Youth Football.

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Trees hug the 72nd Street Park field, casting shadows over most of the infield and half of the outfield. The diamond is directly below the final approach of a plane arriving at Baton Rouge Metro Airport. The route from the interstate to the field approximates a first-time ballplayer racing enthusiastically around the bases in the wrong direction. The Hornets have made this their home, tucked away and hidden by strategic foliage from the world around them.

“You’d never know it was here,” Shawn Bates says.

Donors of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation have given \$7,500 to the Scotlandville Sports Academy. To donate or start a charitable fund, call Stewart Jones at 225.387.6126.

Some parents sit in the car and watch their children practice. Catherine Key, a former resident of the Banks area who’s had sons and grandsons in the program, gets out of her car to visit with the coaches. She says she could stay closer to home in Baker, but she prefers the instruction the players receive from Hollins and his coaches.

“I don’t want to just come back on Sundays when I go to church and look at the community and say what I think needs to be done. To understand the problems in the community, I need to be here to see.”

—LEROY HOLLINS

“They teach them how to play the game,” Key says. “They teach them the basics. I like that. They’re good. That’s why I drive them here every day. When my van was broken, we had to go get a car out of the backyard, but we came anyhow. We had an old car in the backyard. That’s how I got them here.”

To be eligible to play, boys and girls “have to make their grades.” She likes that. Sometimes ineligible players’ parents bring them anyway, so the coaches give them punishment drills to remind them to work harder in school.

Key confirms what Hollins says, that playing ball helps with behavioral problems too. The normally aggressive boy who “terrorizes a classroom” saves his energy for the ball field, and in concert with the mind-body benefits of exercise, that boosts his concentration in class.

Hollins says it’s all about knowing what motivates young people and knowing how to sharpen their focus by offering what’s important to them. “It’s basic human nature. I’ve got that carrot. If you want to play, you have to behave and make the grade.”

JOB FOR BLESSINGS

Hollins graduated from Southern University in 1992 and moved to Arizona. He soon came back home, settled into his occupation and began searching for a supplementary vocation.

“I tell people all the time I have two jobs: one for my blessings, one for my benefits,” Hollins says. “My benefits job is IT director for the Louisiana Racing Commission—horseracing. I travel around the state every day going to the racetracks.

“Then I try to get here every day at 5:30 for my blessings job.”

Hollins says he could move elsewhere, but he thinks the kids need him.

“Everybody who’s able is leaving, going to better neighborhoods in Zachary and Gonzales and Prairieville,” Hollins says. “When they leave, who’s left to run the community? The people we’re trying to fight: the drug dealers, the people who are showing them the wrong things.”

“I don’t want to just come back on Sundays when I go to church and look at the community and say what I think needs to be done. To understand the problems in the community, I need to be here to see.”

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Southern baseball coach Roger Cador, like Hollins an alumnus of the school, is a longtime advocate of programs that put children on playing fields where there might not otherwise be any serious effort to provide organized sports to African American neighborhoods.

“These are the unsung heroes that are left, especially in the minority community, that are taking a stand and an interest in trying to do something positive,” Cador says.

The payoff has little or nothing to do with the scoreboard.

“Kids are busy in an organized, supervised situation, and they have less time to get in trouble,” Cador says, “and baseball teaches such great life lessons. Kids are usually very productive when they come out of those types of programs.”

One reason, Hollins surmises, is baseball teaches you how to handle failure. A .300 hitter fails to get a hit 70 percent of the time, but that’s a Hall of Fame success rate in the major leagues.

Batting averages aren’t why Hollins chose to coach youth sports. Other numbers were involved.

“Someone helped me not to become a statistic, a negative statistic,” he says. “I wanted to give something back to my community for doing that for me.”

Hollins doesn’t throw around the word “community” like it’s a ball in political pitch and catch. He speaks with pride about attending school in the same neighborhood from start to finish, elementary grades through college graduation.

“I walked to every one of the schools I went to, from primary on up,” he says.

That’s part of why he beams when talking about former players in the Scotlandville Sports Academy, such as Keithen Valentine, a Kansas State running back, and A.J. Harris, who finished his career at Northern Illinois and played in 2008 for the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League.

SMALL BALL

The technical precision of the higher levels of sport are not on display during practice at the 72nd Street Park. Thrown balls skip past the first baseman and bounce to the fence. The chase is good exercise, and it’s repeated frequently.

Marlon Bates, 41, coaches ages 11 and 12. Shawn Bates, 44, coaches ages 9 and 10.

“We have to nurse them,” Shawn Bates says. “There’s a lot of teaching. That’s why we start in March for a season that starts June 1.”

Alana Colligan, 9, started in March. She wanted to be with her friends, other girls on the team. Her dad’s a coach, and she says baseball is fun when it’s not always about winning and losing.

“I wanted to be out here playing and being with my friends instead of sitting inside watching TV,” she says.

She is not a big baseball fan, a fact she does not hide. “I play outfield. I think it’s either right or left.”

She is also not reluctant to rat out the boys for failing to make the girls feel accepted. “They’re making fun of us,” she says, perking up at the question, “and they’re always saying, ‘You throw like a girl.’ I don’t like that.”

She says she doesn’t let words or race or gender get in the way of her enjoyment of something she wants to do. She says it with a determined look on her face and a conviction that suggests she is doing more than parroting one of Hollins’ sermons.

Travion Alexander, 13, says he prefers football but decided to play baseball this summer.

“My friend had told me about this team, and I had come out with him, and I just started liking it,” he says, agreeing with others that it’s more fun than staying home and watching TV or playing video games.

Joshua George, 19, played in the program for 10 years, until he was 16. Now he’s one of the coaches.

“It can be a headache trying to teach them the fundamentals,” he says, shaking his head at the



Scotlandville Hornets baseball players practice at the 72nd Street BREC park. Baseball is one of three sports the Scotlandville Sports Academy organizes.

memory of some of the harder cases. “You have to be patient, but as long as we have kids that work with us and listen, we don’t have a problem. You can teach them the game of baseball in a week.”

Two months after the start of practice, the kids are doing OK but it’s obvious that more instruction is needed. George is drawn to the challenge. “I like being around the game, all three sports, and around kids who like being out here. Some kids have nothing to do. It’s better than being in the street.”

EVERY KIND OF PEOPLE

Some streets are better than others, and some generations have better streets than others, Hollins says. He’s a firm believer in the Scotlandville Sports Academy’s motto: “It takes a village to raise a child.” He explains he grew up at a time when your

friend’s mom became your surrogate mom the minute you walked into her house or yard to play.

“You could walk down the street,” he says, looking out in the distance perhaps to see it all again in his mind’s eye, “and someone would tell you to act right, and you behaved because you respected your elders—or you were so frightened of your own parents, that they’d find out you did something wrong, so you knew to act right.

“The community raised my generation.”

Hollins says he used to interact with mostly single-parent families. Now, he says, grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

“The parents, in those cases, are not available due to incarceration or drugs, or the grandparent is still raising their child and their child’s child,” he says.

There are relatively few majority-black high

schools with baseball teams. Traveling AAU basketball teams stole a lot of kids from would-be feeder programs, but baseball's numbers are rising, coaches say. Major League Baseball is helping to promote inner-city programs. Hollins says being in a city with successful college programs, LSU and Southern, helps keep interest up.

Still, the players don't come from communities where their parents have affluent networks that could more richly support the academy.

"We don't have the Cleo Fields kids," Hollins says. "We don't have the doctors' and the lawyers' kids. We have the Leo Fields type of kids, the children of the guy that cleans up the state Capitol and the hospitals and the different law buildings and courtrooms.

"The parents of these kids don't have the avenue to tell their friends, people who can help, about this program. They don't have a person who can tell the CEO of another company who might be interested in helping. Their friends make minimum wage like they do."

The Scotlandville Sports Academy gratefully accepts the donations that come its way, he says, and yet Hollins estimates he spends 70 percent of his time marketing, selling, preaching the program's gospel to anyone who will listen. He prefers to focus more on "my time with the kids than the song and dance of selling" because he always wanted it to be about them.

At the start, if a dollar fell into his hand when he needed 10, Hollins tried not to let it deter him.

"Let's show the world what we can do with what we have," he recalls telling his coaches and other volunteers. "Let's do what we can with a small amount, and just imagine what we could do with a larger amount."

So they made \$1 work in a modified \$10 plan. Before there were restrooms at 72nd Street Park, parents drove kids and their biological sense of urgency across the overpass to the McDonald's on

the other side of I-110. Lacking first-rate batting tees, Hollins cut the goals off basketball poles and modified them for solitary batting practice.

They've always recycled uniforms. They use ball-park lights sparingly, which is easier to do in baseball season than in football, when it gets dark earlier. Hollins says BREC charges a nominal hourly rate for the lights, but it adds up.

"Daylight Savings Time is the best time of year for us, coming into spring," he says. "We know we have a lot of daylight."

That changes in midseason for football.

"That's when we start passing the hat around for a few dollars," he says. "We've got to have light."

They've practiced under parking lights in a grassy area between the F.G. Clark Activity Center and Mumford Stadium at Southern so they could see. "They're yellow lights, so after awhile that ball starts to look yellow," Hollins says.

It takes a village, and sometimes the village has parking where there is no pavement, which is not ideal for cars but suitable for youth football. If the ball has to look yellow, so be it. At least they can see it, Hollins says.

If they stay at it long enough, piecing together dollars with ingenuity, Hollins says, more help will find them in the form of grants and donations. In the spirit of doing what is necessary, he calls the teams and their coaches "squatters," setting up camp wherever they can call home.

"That's a great way of looking at what he does," Cador says. "He's taking advantage of what meager opportunities are available and gets it done, and when you do that, there is a God, and He finds a way to help you get through it." •

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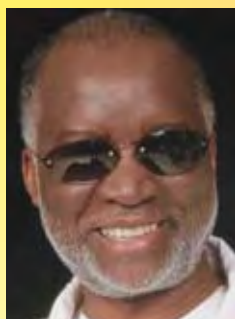


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Gather around

NEW TOWN SQUARE READY NEXT YEAR FOR FESTIVALS, LOAFING >> by MUKUL VERMA

Baton Rouge has a makeshift town square. North Boulevard is co-opted for festivals and other civic gatherings, but the events bow to the road's helter skelter design.

In a little more than year, a new town square will reinvent the area. Stretching from the river to Fifth Street, the square will include lawns, sitting areas, a fountain and a media tower that can be programmed to pull people downtown.

In late May, after several refinements, planners unveiled the latest design for the square. The city-parish has already approved \$4.5 million for the square, a first step in a downtown riverfront plan that includes more connections to the Mississippi River, expanded and connected green spaces and a remade River Road.

The square has been designed with flexibility in mind. It will accommodate road races, festivals and just about anything that people can dream up.

During events, the expanse will be sealed off to cars. At other times, pedestrians will get preference over vehicles, though automobile circulation will be improved with the conversion to two-way streets. Reconfigured streets will reclaim almost an entire acre of extra public space for pedestrians.

The square will have three areas. The West Promenade will be a tree-lined pedestrian corridor along the widened walkway in front of the Old State Capitol leading from River Road to The Square. The East Promenade will have a pedestrian corridor under mature live oak trees leading to the

THE HIVE

The future town square is expected to be a buzz of activity because more people will be working next to it. Recently opened on Fourth Street is City Plaza II, developer Mike Wampold's 260,000-square-foot Class A office building. A new district courthouse is under construction on North Boulevard. When judges and staff move, the city-parish is expected to renovate its five floors in the governmental building. Mayor Kip Holden's bond issue, if approved, would build parking garages that could add two hotels within a few yards of the square. Meanwhile, the library system may remake the downtown branch—on the square—into a more active space.

Fourth Street Plaza and Hebe Plaza. The Square will be the focus of activity. All three spaces will include a sound system and WiFi for outdoor internet access.

With construction beginning by year-end, the square should be ready for gatherings or loafing by September 2010. >>

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The sidewalk next to the Old State Capitol will be widened and new trees planted.



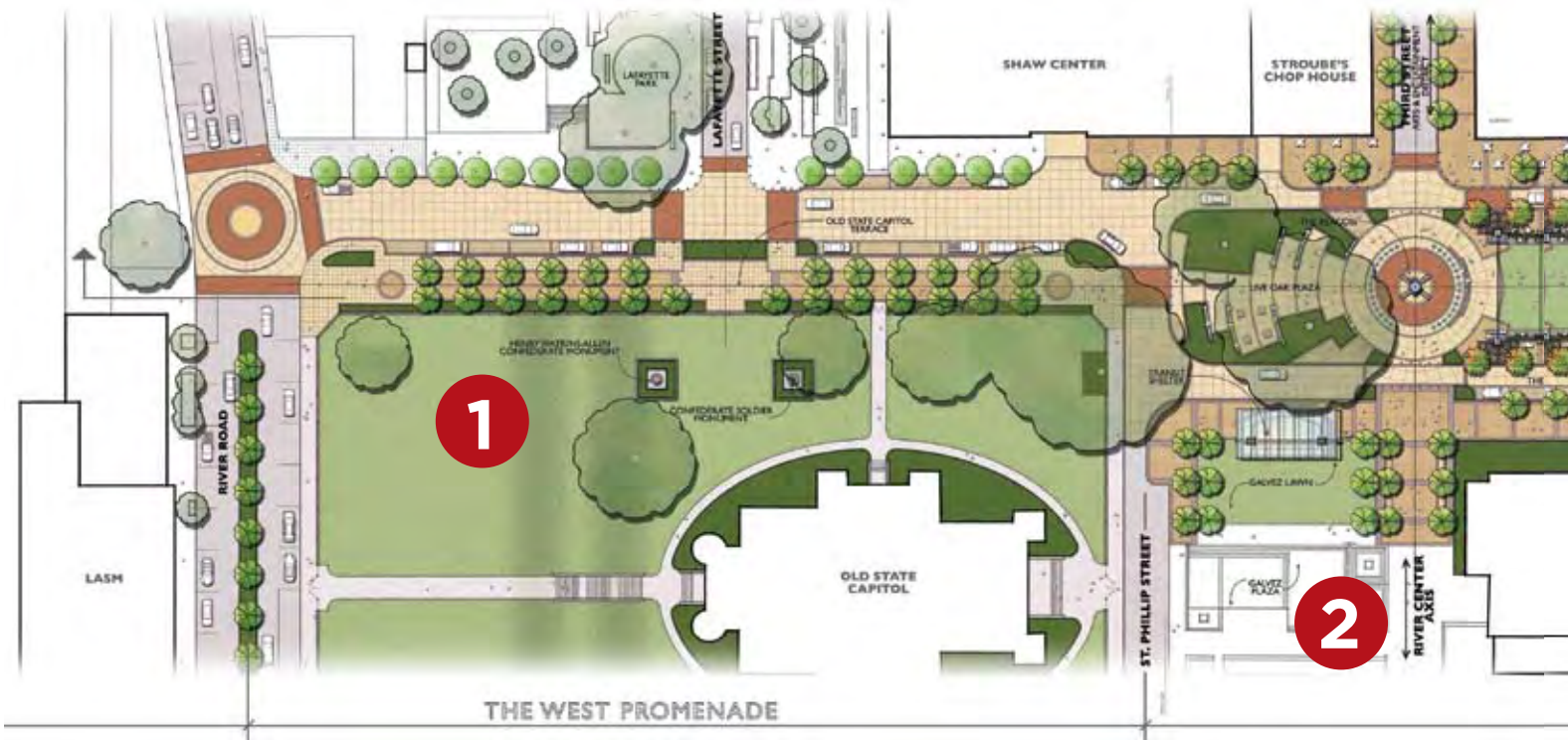
A grove of trees will frame the square.



The media tower will broadcast movies and other programs while doubling as a beacon during events.



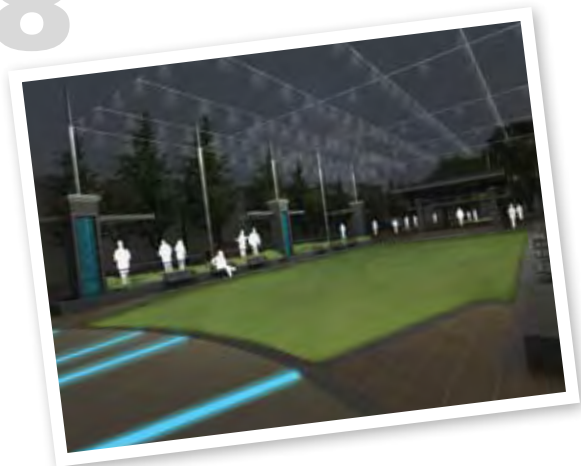
An oak alley with benches and a footpath is the feature between Fourth and Fifth streets.

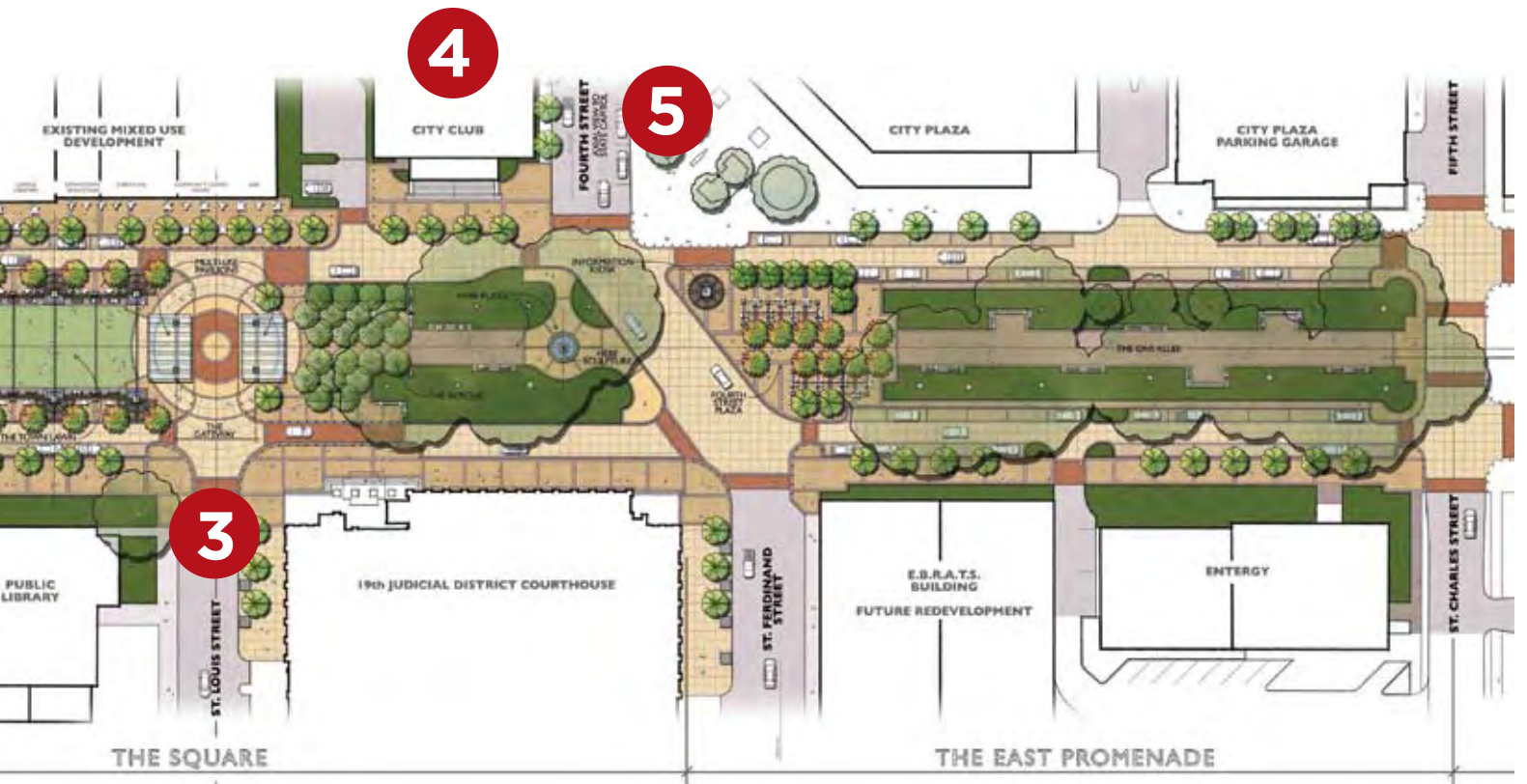


1 From the river to the Shaw Center for the Arts, trees will frame an expanded walkway on the side of the Old State Capitol. The Confederate soldier statue will be relocated from North Boulevard to the Old State Capitol grounds. The overall riverfront master plan, of which the Town Square is the first part, calls for a pedestrian crossing over River Road at North Boulevard to link with the river.

2 Galvez Plaza, behind the Old State Capitol, will be converted from a hardscape into a lawn. In front of it will be the main section of the square: A live oak plaza, a media tower and a town lawn. The town lawn will be lit with an LED canopy that can be covered. Sitting and eating areas will surround the lawn. At the center will be a 35-foot high multimedia tower for projecting movies, showing football games and other programs on high-definition sets. The media tower will double as a beacon to draw people downtown for events.

The town lawn can be lit with an LED canopy. The canopy can be covered as well.





3

A gateway will be flanked by multi-use pavilions. St. Louis Street will be turned into a two-way street. Traffic will circulate slowly through the gateway and onto Third Street. During events, bollards will close the square to traffic. The gateway will have a bosque, a ribbon of vegetation.

4

In front of the City Club, the plan calls for building the Hebe Plaza, where the Hebe sculpture will be relocated and become the centerpiece of a fountain. Hebe, the daughter of Zeus and Hera, is the goddess of youth.

5

The Fourth Street Plaza will have sitting areas at Fourth and a walkway with seating that leads to Fifth Street.



A lawn at the Hebe Plaza is meant for doing little.

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Episcopal goes green

TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PLANET STEWARDS >> by **SARA BONGIORNI**
photos by **TIM MUELLER**

The earth-friendly mantra “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” may bring to mind small-scale actions, say reusing paper clips, tossing soda cans into bins or bringing a cloth tote to the store instead of hauling home groceries in paper or plastic bags.

At Episcopal High School, a comprehensive and fast-growing green movement extends beyond such traditional means of reducing negative environmental impacts. The greening of Episcopal includes the transformation of an old school bus into a traveling science laboratory, construction of a sprawling rain garden as an answer to longstanding drainage headaches and a curriculum that is changing the way the school teaches everything from mathematics to leadership across all grades.

A comprehensive assessment of the efficiency of Episcopal’s plant operations—everything from windows to insulation—will likely prompt further changes. Even emerging fuel technology could eventually play a role in the school’s green effort; officials hope to one day reprocess used cooking oil from the kitchen into biodiesel.

“We’re trying to embed this in everything we do,” says Kay Betts, head of school.

CONNECTING THE GREEN DOTS

The effort is altering the look and feel of the campus, both inside and outside the classroom. And while minimizing damage to the environment is clearly the central goal, so, too, is making learning





Fifth-grade Episcopal School science teacher Sonny James hangs out of the school's Eco-Bus with students, from left, Natalie Heath, 10, Miranda Heath, 12, and Lily Sims, 12. The bus is used for transport to green field trips.

more hands-on for students.

Each week, fifth-graders collect and weigh paper tossed in collection bins outside classrooms. Students calculate how many trees they save each week—typically 800 to 1,000 pounds, according to 10-year-old Katherine Brumund, who adds that the collected papers saved about 170 trees during the most recent school year.

“The way we teach science is becoming more hands-on...as a result of the school’s greener focus.”

—KAY BETTS

Another group of students recently traveled to Texas to take part in a national competition to find ways to lower their electrical use. In preschool classes, pint-size gardeners cultivate tomatoes and other edible plants, then harvest and prepare them to eat.

“The way we teach science is becoming more hands-on ... as a result of the school’s greener focus,” says Betts.

The converted school bus—known around campus as the “eco-bus” and covered with a colorful plastic shrink-wrap that features student drawings of Louisiana wildlife—will play a growing role in the curriculum. The bus transports students to local sites like Bluebonnet Swamp, where students test water samples at multiple points to measure for themselves the cleansing effect of the murky habitat on water that flows through it.

“This allows students to see what the swamp does,” says Bruce Bowman, the physics, chemistry and environmental sciences teacher who did the

bus conversion in summer 2008, yanking out several rows of seats and installing lockers for hauling testing equipment and other field gear.

Students are encouraged to find connections between what they do on the ground at Episcopal and larger impacts around the state and beyond. Fifth-grader Clayton Talbot, 11, points out that saving trees ensures habitats for wildlife and is especially important in Louisiana, where wetlands serve as an important—and vulnerable—buffer against destruction from big storms like Hurricane Katrina.

“Without wetlands the coast would flood,” Talbot says.

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY

The sprawling new rain garden in the heart of Episcopal’s campus is the most obvious sign of the changes under way. The garden, which features rocks, bridges and native plants like irises, was the school’s solution to a long-running drainage problem, and it provided a cheaper, greener alternative than the traditional option of piping more overflow into nearby Jones Creek.

Old school photos show vast pools of muddy water that killed extensive sections of lawn and prompted school officials to sometimes lay down wooden planks to allow students to walk across the center of the school after downpours.

Those images stand in contrast to the year-old garden. Its rock- and plant-lined channels, called bio-swales, direct water into a holding pond. From there, water seeps slowly into the ground in a way that minimizes erosion and other environmental problems tied to heavy rains, including chemical runoff into the creek.

“It’s (been) very satisfying economically, aesthetically, scientifically and ecologically” to address the drainage issue this way, Betts says.

The garden’s evolution helps tell the story of Episcopal’s deliberative embrace of environmental stewardship, a transformation that has several



Natalie and Miranda Heath pH test water in the school's rain garden. The garden is a solution to a drainage problem.

sources of momentum.

The devastating effect of 2005's Hurricane Katrina, including the role of wetlands loss in making the storm's damage more severe, was a key element in raising the idea of environmental awareness across the state, Betts says.

But she also sees a cultural affinity to the natural world, given Louisiana's tradition of hunting and fishing.

Other factors in the school's green momentum have more specific ties to the campus. As part of a long-term planning process several years ago, Episcopal's board of trustees visited comparable East Coast schools where environmental awareness played a key part in an interactive approach to teaching science and other subjects.

Meanwhile, the Episcopal Church's embrace of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, which include stewardship of the natural environment, built on growing awareness of environmental issues, Betts says.

Those influences manifested themselves in the school's 2007 master plan, which recommended the idea of the rain garden instead of a traditional strategy of deploying more drain pipes.

The course of action offered enticing lagniappe to those charged with carefully using the school's funds: the rain garden, completed in 2008, wasn't just good for the local environment, but also less expensive than a traditional solution.

Betts hopes the changes under way will serve still another purpose: providing ideas for green solutions to members of the Baton Rouge community in search of them. This spring, a group of LSU architecture students visited the campus to learn more about its green practices.

"We'd like the campus itself to become an example of our mission of service to the community," Betts says. •

Bike city

TOWN OF DAVIS PUSHES PEDALS LIKE NO OTHER PLACE >> by MUKUL VERMA

Local leaders are beginning to give people what they have asked for in surveys and public meetings—bike trails.

In spring, the city-parish, BREC and LSU an-

RIDE, BR, RIDE

Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden, BREC and LSU announced \$2.5 million in bike paths and lanes will be built in about a year. Part of the money comes from BREC, which has earmarked \$4 million to start building paths. One mile of new paths cost about \$350,000. For details about the new paths, visit HealthyBR.com and click on “Active Places.”

nounced 44.2 miles of new paths, lanes and bike routes will open by June 2010, adding to the 23.4 miles of existing bike paths and lanes. Civic leaders have pledged to keep expanding lanes and walking paths.

Wondering where this might lead, we looked at Davis, Calif., which received the first Platinum award from the League of American Bicyclists. Located near Sacramento, Davis has more bikes than cars, has city bike coordinators and operates two bike advisory committees. Ninety-five percent of city streets have bike lanes.

The city estimates that 17% of commutes to work are made by bicycle, reducing road traffic. “Why Davis?” we asked John Berg, chair of the Davis Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Is there something in the water that made the city a pioneer in building bike paths and trails?

If you tried Davis water, you'd know it had nothing to do with it. The pioneering part occurred in 1967, when the central core of the University of California-Davis campus was closed to automotive traffic and the first bike lanes were striped on streets as an experiment. A number of experiments were tried until we have the configuration used today, here and in many other cities. State law had to be changed to make the striped bike lanes legal.

Has Davis saved money on road building because people use bikes instead of cars?

The quick answer is no, since roads are required into all new developments to provide for all modes of transportation. However, the savings appear when people feel it is safe to ride their bikes to work and school, and also encourage their children to ride to school. The savings can be measured in reduced auto usage, which results in gas savings and lowered emissions.

Describe a weekend bike ride in Davis. Where would you go? What would you do?

Davis is surrounded by agriculture, and 15 miles away are many hills that draw recreational cyclists. A particular destination is the town of Winters, which has many art galleries and cafes that attract cyclists. Since Davis is pretty much equidistant between the coast and the mountains, and is just over the hill from the Napa Valley, there are many possibilities for avid cyclists. Of course, many people just ride to the very popular Farmers Market in Central Davis, or around town on the marked bike loop.



Baton Rouge will create a bike lane on East Lakeshore from May Street to Stanford Avenue, a 1.1 mile link in a new path project.

What are the benefits of being a bike city?

The primary benefit is quality of life. You can use your bike for any purpose—commuting, errands or recreation. If you use your bike at all for any of these purposes, you automatically get exercise.

When you build trails where people live, do you get opposition? If so, how do you overcome it?

We have not had this problem, generally, because the bike lanes and infrastructure have been built as the town has grown. The primary opposition to bike lane expansion has come from the business community downtown. This is ironic, because they have so much business that auto drivers have difficulty finding places to park, which means that business potential downtown is capped at its current level.

Other than bike paths, how does the city invest in biking as transit?

Generally, encouragement in many ways. We just attracted the national Bicycle Hall of Fame due to very strong efforts by the city to place it here. We have education and enforcement programs that teach cyclists their role in the transportation network. And we are exploring other ways to encourage people to use their bikes as transportation. The biggest single secondary investment is secure bike parking. If people have no place to secure their bikes while shopping, going to work or school, or at other destinations, they are less inclined to ride. The parking should not only be secure, but should be in close proximity to the destination and should not be a hassle to use. We—the city and the university—have standardized on the Lightning Bolt racks, which work very well.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Has the bike movement kept its momentum over time?

No. Davis became complacent about cycling over the last 15 years, and we are just now recovering that momentum. Mode share dropped during this period. Many people moved to Davis because they liked the idea of cycling, but didn't do it themselves, in many cases because they commuted to other cities.

How could Davis improve the bike experience?

We're not sure—we're exploring that right now. For example, too many parents drive their children to school, which creates safety problems at the

drop off areas, which then inhibits kids who want to cycle. We're trying to raise awareness that this kind of behavior is counterproductive to teaching kids to ride their bikes to school. In a town the size of Davis, there's no reason that any fit child could not ride his or her bike to school.

In the next decade, what is Davis doing to improve the bike infrastructure?

That's a huge question, which depends on resources and money. The road map is contained in Davis' Bike Plan, which you can find at http://cityofdavis.org/pw/pdfs/2006_BikePlan_withMaps.pdf.

PATHS OF PROGRESS—BR

NEW SHARED-USE PATHS

- **Levee Trail Phase 2** (Skip Bertman Drive to Farr Park) – 1.8 miles, extending the existing Levee Trail from downtown to Brightside Drive and Farr Park
- **Sevenoaks Path** (Goodwood Blvd. to Lobdell Ave.) – 1.1 miles, constructing a new path in the treelined right-of-way
- **Valley/Balis Connector** (Valley St. to Balis St. through Nairn Park) – 0.2 miles, constructing a new bike-friendly connection across I-10
- **WaRoads Creek Linear Park/Pathway** (Bluebonnet Blvd. to Siegen Ln.) – 4.3 miles, BREC CAPP project
- **Medical Mile** (Essen Ln. to Bluebonnet Blvd.) – 1.2 miles, BREC CAPP project
- **Farr Park Trailhead** (River Road to Farr Park) – 0.2 miles, BREC project

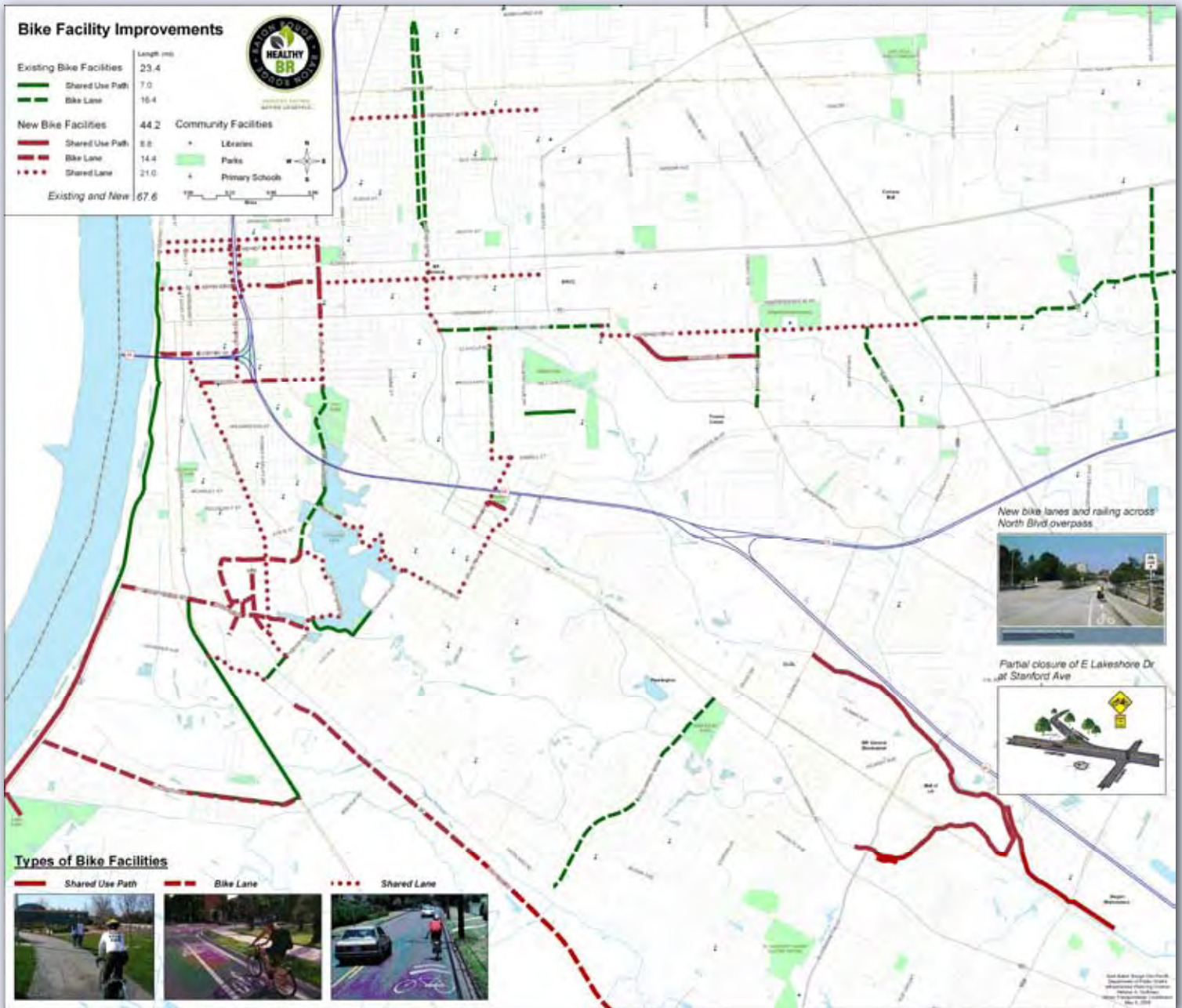
NEW BIKE LANES

- **19th St.** (North St. to Government St.) – 0.6 miles, part of the north/south route from downtown to Mid City and LSU
- **Burbank Drive** (approx. Jennifer Jean Drive to Siegen Ln.) – 6.8 miles, providing bike lane markings at all intersections to enhance the new shoulders

- **Brightside Ln.** (River Road to Nicholson Drive) – 2.1 miles, replacing and extending the existing path from the Levee Trail to the path along Nicholson Drive
- **South Blvd.** (River Road to East Blvd.) – 0.2 miles (plus 0.4 miles of shared lanes), providing southern downtown connection to the Levee Trail
- **Terrace St.** (Highland Road to Park Blvd.) – 0.7 miles (plus 0.3 miles of shared lanes), east/west connection through Old South Baton Rouge
- **LSU Easy Streets II** (various streets on and through campus) – 3.7 miles (plus 1.2 miles of shared lanes), LSU project

NEW SHARED LANES

- **Acadian Thruway** (North St. to Capital Heights Ave.) – 0.8 miles, connecting existing bike lanes
- **Balis Drive/Stuart Ave.** (Ferrett St. to Hyacinth Ave.) – 0.9 miles, providing a bike-friendly connection across I-10 and Perkins Road
- **Burbank Drive** (Nicholson Drive to E. Parker Blvd.) – 0.5 miles, connecting existing bike lanes
- **East Lakeshore Drive** (May St. to StanfoRoad Ave.) – 1.1 miles, providing restricted vehicular access to improve bike and pedestrian safety around the LSU lakes



- **Fairfields Ave.** (Plank Road to Foster Drive) - 1.5 miles, east/west connection to existing lanes on Acadian Thruway >>
- **Glenmore Ave.** (Capital Heights Ave. to Claycut Road) - 0.2 miles, connecting existing bike lanes
- **Glenmore Ave./Valley St.** (Wells St. to Perkins Road) - 0.9 miles, providing a bike-friendly connection across I-10
- **Goodwood Blvd.** (Rapides St./Jefferson Hwy. to Airline Hwy.) - 2.6 miles, east/west route connecting 4 existing bike lanes
- **Highland Road** (South Blvd. to E. Parker Blvd.) - 2.6 miles, connecting downtown and LSU via Old South Baton Rouge
- **Hyacinth Ave.** (StanfoRoad Ave. to Stuart Ave.) - 0.5 miles, east-west route through Southdowns connecting to LSU lakes route
- **Main & North St.** (River Road to 19th St.) - 2.5 miles, east/west downtown route connecting to LSU via 19th St.
- **N. 9th St./N. 10th St./East Blvd.** (North St. to Terrace St.) - 1.7 miles, north/south downtown route in I-110 corridor
- **North Blvd.** (River Road to Foster Drive & BRCC) - 2.7 miles (plus 0.3 miles of bike lanes on the overpass), providing a connection from downtown to BRCC through Mid City
- **Park Blvd.** (Government St. to Dalrymple Drive) - 0.6 miles, part of north/south route between downtown and LSU

LEDs at home

By year-end, you will be able to buy a bulb that lasts about eight years, consumes one-fifth of the energy of an incandescent bulb and is safer for the environment than compact fluorescent lighting. Manufactured by Nexxus Lighting with research from QD Vision, the bulb uses light emitting diodes with a quantum dot cover to create light that is pleasingly white. Dots, just nanometers in diameter, are the breakthrough. When excited by the LED light, they emit light in distinct colors depending on their size.

Unlike other LED lighting for the home, the bulbs fit in existing fixtures. And unlike fluorescent bulbs, they don't contain mercury that can harm the environment upon disposal.

The innovative bulbs are cheap to operate, but you will have to dig out a lot of change to buy one. Bulbs are expected to cost \$50 to \$100, depending on size; QD Vision claims the cost is recovered over the life of the bulb. Nexxus will begin marketing the bulbs through its resellers by the end of 2009. For more, visit nexxuslighting.com •



Energy CEOs tremble

Bloom Energy is in hiding. Even on its website, the company is cloaked, peeking to the world only through a beautiful logo and the message "BE the solution." But a company that has lured \$250 million in venture capital and counts itself as the first green investment by legendary investing firm Kleiner Perkins can't remain totally invisible. The firm reportedly has developed and tested a fuel cell for homes and businesses.

Natural gas and other fuels are used by the solid-oxide cell to generate hydrogen that is burned to create lower-cost and cleaner power. In tests, the cells were twice as efficient as a gas boiler and reduced carbon emissions by at least half. Bloom Energy is attempting to deliver a product

for a house for less than \$10,000. When the Bloom Box will come to market is unknown, though one report has the system available by late 2010. •



Say goodbye to the library?

Sony had an e-reader first, but Amazon's Kindle showed there was a market for reading books and magazines on an electronic gadget. A bigger version of the Kindle for textbooks is among the reasons an analyst estimates \$4 billion in sales in just three years for the Amazon book reader division. Other companies are readying book readers to compete against Amazon.

But the book reader market is restricted for now: The displays use e-paper, a technology that only works in black and white. That hitch could be overcome soon. Philips Research and E-Ink, which makes the displays for current readers, are among companies developing color e-paper. Color e-paper is at least three years away, but it would expand the electronic word market to include paper magazines.

Meanwhile, Apple is said to be working on a media tablet that could scramble the mar-

kets for electronic books. Sized between an iPhone and a laptop, the Apple device is said to do videos as well, including HD movies. •



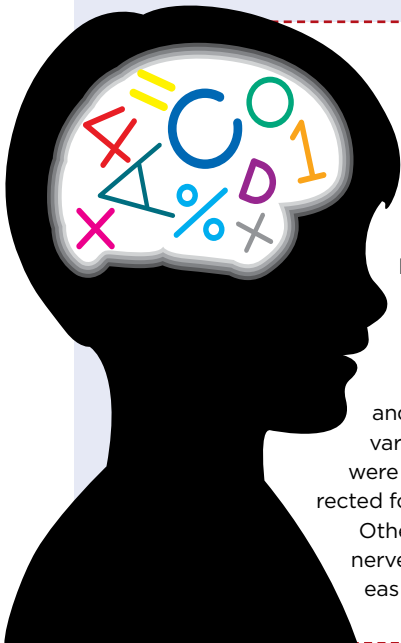
The poor's brain drain

Education has been advocated as a solution to poverty, but mounting evidence indicates that a negative force may be offsetting book learning.

Over the past three years, accumulated research shows poor children have a diminished capacity for working memory, an important component for reading comprehension and solving problems. Plus, information that moves into long-term memory must first be processed by the working memory.

Blame it on the stress of living in poverty, says a study by Gary Evans and Michelle Schamberg of Cornell University. Their study found six stress variables—blood pressure and stress-related hormone levels among them—were all higher in poor children. To confirm their results, the scientists corrected for other factors, such as birth weight and family education level.

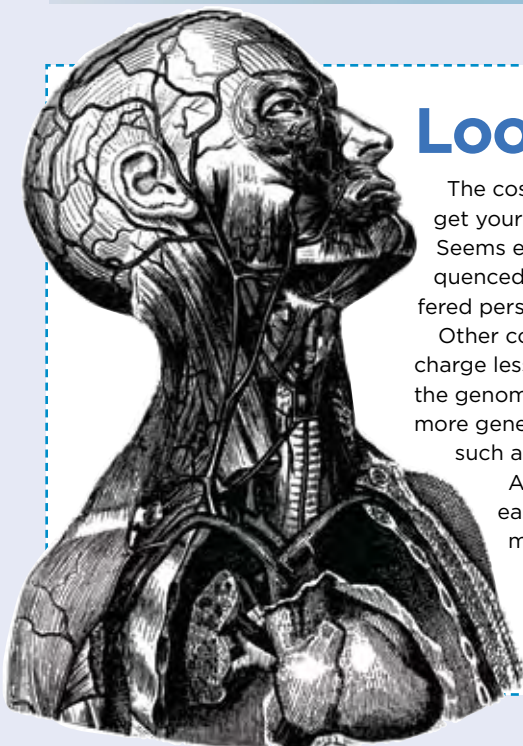
Other studies have shown that stress suppresses the generation of new nerve cells in the brain and shrinks the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, areas of the brain associated with working memory, reports *The Economist*. •



Back to work—now

Recessions provide opportunities. North Carolina's Department of Commerce and the state's community college system have launched 12 in 6, a program to quickly train the growing number of unemployed for available jobs.

The community college is creating 12 career training programs that require six or less months to complete. Careers in the program include nursing assistants and carpenters. North Carolina is using \$13.4 million in federal stimulus funds to create the program at 58 community colleges. The new training programs launch in September. •



Look inside you

The cost of genome sequencing is dropping fast. You can get your entire genome sequenced by Illumina for \$48,000. Seems exorbitant, but James Watson's genome was sequenced in 2007 for \$2 million and a company recently offered personal genome services for \$100,000.

Other companies in the consumer sequencing business charge less than \$1,000, but they only sequence a fraction of the genome. Illumina's whole-genome sequencing service grabs more genetic information and provides genetic variation data, such as deletions of a segment of the genome.

A sequenced genome offers up clues to risk for disease, reactions to different medications, heritage and much more.

Illumina is writing an iPhone application that will let people interact with their genetic information. Customers could, for instance, dial up the optimal dose of a drug. •

Integrated solar

Two companies have combined their technology to produce a seamless solar roofing system that looks good and is easy to install. United Solar Ovonics of Michigan produces thin film solar cells, which have an adhesive backing. Centria Co. integrates the solar cells into metal roofing systems that withstand windspeeds of up to 160 miles per hour. The Energy Peak system comes in several configurations.



The companies say that the solar roofing system pays for itself in 10 years, depending on tax credits. Louisiana offers a maximum \$12,500 income tax credit for home solar installations.

The prefabricated systems can be used on homes and offices. Seven systems range in capacity from 3 to 120 kilowatts. One drawback—the systems can only be used in new construction or when roofs are being replaced. •

Cool air conditioner

Inventing a solar air conditioner seems far-fetched. But Chromasun has done just that. Placed on a roof, the device uses heat to boil a refrigerant that is turned into a cold liquid through heat exchangers and pressure. The cold liquid is the source of cold air. The company doesn't say much on its website, only that it "will change the way you think about rooftop solar."

In one report, Chromasun does say that mass production will begin next year. The firm will have competition, as others are working on similar concepts.

Solar air conditioners won't provide free cool air, but could cut the cost of air conditioning in half. That would be a considerable advantage, as 16% of U.S. energy use is for building cooling. •



600 gallons

Water gathered from 1 inch of rain on a 1,000-square-foot roof

Healthy food for all

Residents of poor areas have too many fast-food restaurants and few—if any—grocery stores. New York has solved this problem, offering permits to operate Green Carts, which are street carts that offer more fresh fruit and vegetables to underserved areas.

The city says 75,000 residents now have access to healthier food through the carts, which are growing in number. About 200 carts are operating and a total of 1,000 permits are available.

Meanwhile, some cities and states are providing wireless card readers to farmers markets in underserved areas so food-stamp cardholders can buy fresh vegetables. •



Keeps going and going

IBM Research—the smarter planet company—is affiliating with national researchers on a trek to build batteries that store up to 10 times the energy of current batteries. The ambitious goal is to sell the batteries within a decade.

IBM's focus is lithium metal, which reacts with oxygen. The firm must learn to control the volatile lithium metal, which is highly flammable, and also find a way to extract water from air for the chemical reaction.

The payoffs, though, are considerable for the planet. Light and powerful lithium-air batteries could power automobiles and provide backup power for solar and wind power. IBM hopes to produce a battery that can power a family car for 500 miles without recharging. •

3Li
80

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The Bord Du Lac Marina is under construction.

On the waterfront

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LAKE CHARLES BEGINS AMBITIOUS REHAB OF LAKEFRONT, DOWNTOWN >> by MUKUL VERMA

In its downtown, Lake Charles built a civic center. Poor decision, as the center and its vast parking lots consumed desirable lakefront and all but killed activity in the area.

In June, the city began to reverse decades of downtown flubs, starting an ambitious program to charge up the city center and the lakefront by executing an Andres Duany plan funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation through hurricane relief

grants after Rita.

Lake Charles broke ground on two projects worth \$5.3 million, using a combination of tax money from bonds and federal grants for hurricane recovery to do so. The city has \$18 million in total bond money for downtown redevelopment, and leaders will tap \$14 million more in federal and state grants for additional projects there, says Lori Marinovich, who oversees downtown work.



The Lake Charles waterfront is getting a promenade.



After remaking Ryan Street, the city will work back to the waterfront.



With the first two projects, downtown Lake Charles will get a new lakefront marina and a promenade. Construction has begun on the undertakings, which spring from a design by New Urbanist planner Duany that has been updated with an implementation scheme by Moore Planning Group.

Duany's original plan saw the waterfront as a walkable area of cafes, restaurants, clubs. The

“It’s very exciting being in Lake Charles these days.”

—LORI MARINOVICH

Moore, who adds his firm is “leading a great team of people to take the (Duany) vision and turn it into reality.”

Under construction now is a \$3.6 million lake-

civic center parking lots would be replaced with hotels. Greenspace would be added and the street grid reconnected.

“Their lakefront, the natural asset there in everyone’s mind has never been captured for its fullest value,” says Patrick

front promenade that includes a 60-foot walkway, enhanced decorative lighting, benches, trees and other landscaping. The promenade will provide more amenities for annual festivals and events and be an incentive for private development. The proj-

Charles area,” says Marinovich.

The amphitheater and adjacent park are being reconfigured as well.

Moving inland, the city is remaking about 12 blocks of Ryan Street. From there, Moore says the aim is to stitch together the streets between Ryan and the lakefront to activate more of downtown.

The second phase will begin with Ryan Street, a main focus of the downtown, much as Third Street is to Baton Rouge. Traffic calming—techniques to slow motoring—will make the street safer for pedestrians. The streetscape will be improved with decorative paving.

Moore says the reinvention of Ryan has three purposes—make the street safer, walkable and beautiful. “Those three equal economic development.”

Unfortunately, private investment probably won’t come quickly. Marinovich says the economy’s struggles have generally put investment interest on hold, including negotiations

with a hotel developer.

She’s countering the slowdown by seeking smaller projects for downtown. “We are rethinking and redesigning based on today’s economic conditions. We might do some incremental development instead of a big master plan of 65 acres.”

“Yet,” adds Marinovich, “It’s very exciting being in Lake Charles these days.” •



Planning meeting with Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach.

ect is scheduled to be completed in May 2010.

Also under construction is a \$1.7 million floating marina and docking facility near the convention center. The Bord Du Lac Marina will have 50 boat slips and accommodate vessels as large as 80 feet. The facility will include dockside electricity and water for transient, short-term use.

Marinovich says the marina will let boaters on the Intracoastal Waterway dock in downtown, creating a unique destination not seen between Houston and Mobile. With future development, boaters could tie on to the dock and dine at lakeside restaurants. The marina is to be finished by March 2010.

“The marina project is going to be really one of the first projects to draw new visitors to the Lake



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TIM MUELLER

Mona Hull

THE FIXER

There are terrifying moments in Mona Hull's life. But tested by decades of nursing, she relies on her wits and calm when schoolchildren are in peril.

In a classroom, a girl is down; her breathing tool accidentally yanked from her throat. Hull rushes to her side, pops in the device—and the girl breathes deeply.

Bee stings send allergic kids to near-death. Hull brings them back with a stab of an antidote pen. A cut requires stitches. Hull pulls out thread and needle.

So it goes at Southdowns Elementary, where Hull is ready for her fifth year as a head nurse for Health Centers in Schools, a nonprofit caring for children on the spot, keeping them in class so they don't miss their lessons.

This is not what Mona Hull wanted in 1962, when she accepted her first nursing job at Our Lady of the Lake in downtown. "I never wanted to be an ER nurse, but school nursing sometimes is like an emergency room."

Victories are her fuel. "I fix something right away, that's good. When I'm dead on with a diagnosis and the kid really did need attention from a doctor, that's good."

Not all days are jangled. There are calm moments, when kids just show up for a Mona hug, some days all the love they will get.

Her son wants her to retire. No, says Hull, 47 years with more kids to fix. "I keep telling him that they will have to take me out on a stretcher. As long as my body works, my brain moves, I'll keep doing it."

—Mukul Verma

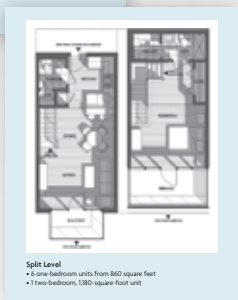
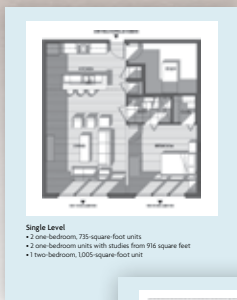
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