

Currents

Summer 2006

A publication of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation



BOLD GAMBIT

FOUNDATION'S WING LOOKS TO HISTORY
TO OFFER NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE FUTURE

Letter from the Chair



Thomas H. Turner
Board Chair

On behalf of each of our members, let me open this issue by congratulating our new board members and Barton Award winners; our community is lucky to have such dedicated public servants. Thank you all for making our Annual Meeting such an extraordinary and well attended event.

This is already shaping up to be a remarkable year for the

Foundation. From our own grants and programs to the individual efforts of our members, donors, and directors, Louisiana benefits from the leaders and innovators who gather at the Foundation.

Around the state, efforts are underway to recover our neighboring communities from the effects of last year's devastating storms. Our displaced friends are stabilizing their lives, enrolling their children in schools again, and seeking new employment. Most of those who relocated, whether in Louisiana or elsewhere, are beginning to call other places home.

* * *

This Summer edition of *Currents* focuses on our community's housing situation, and highlights three projects that the Foundation is working on in this area.

With more than 217,000 homes destroyed and more than 38,000 severely damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Louisiana alone, housing and community planning have become top priorities for the Foundation. Thousands of Louisiana residents remain in shelters and temporary housing, both locally and across the nation; many others, including those unaffected by the storms, live in run-down or substandard housing.

The LRA Support Foundation, created at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation to support the planning functions of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, has funded several successful events in the Louisiana Speaks recovery planning process. The article on page 13 outlines that process, and provides a brief review of the recent charrettes held in Lake Charles, South Acadiana, and Arabi to gather community input for the future of those areas. Facilitated by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., these weeklong planning sessions were a huge success, and

communities are already taking the necessary steps to implement the designs.

The culmination of three years of community-wide planning, Plan Baton Rouge hosted the unveiling of the final Old South Baton Rouge Revitalization plan in February. As the plan is put into action, residents of Old South will benefit from improved housing conditions for homeowners and renters; upgraded commercial districts, streets, and historic sites; improved education and job training opportunities; and increased development opportunities for new housing, service businesses, and employment uses.

A third housing-related project, Smiley Heights, was announced in April as a partnership between the Wilbur Marvin Foundation and national community developer McCormack Baron Salazar. An example of a mixed-income, mixed-use community, Smiley Heights will feature between 800 and 1,200 houses, a neighborhood retail center, a 120-unit senior apartment facility, and possibly a new school. The 200-acre development behind Bon Carré Business Center on Florida Boulevard will feature homes from \$128,000 to \$350,000, and some government subsidized housing to make living in a quality neighborhood possible for lower-income households. This development is featured on pages 9–12.

* * *

On an unrelated note, page 7 of this edition showcases a photographic account of the Second Annual Red Stick International Animation Festival, held in April at the Shaw Center for the Arts. The event is a joint venture with the Foundation, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, City-Parish government, and LSU. Already a huge success in its second year, the festival continues to attract the interest of producers and production companies in digital arts to our community. Next year's event will be even bigger, and Baton Rouge will continue to see positive economic activity in this field because of its success.

On page 18, you'll find a brief review of the Foundation's recent hurricane relief grants. Through April, we have raised more than \$40.5 million and issued 2,387 grants totaling over \$18 million. The Foundation will continue to pursue informed decisions and best practices as we promote the recovery of all displaced people, especially addressing critical housing, education, mental health, and other needs.

Since Hurricane Katrina, the Foundation has grown considerably, and you'll find a staff update at the end of this newsletter. I'd like to welcome all of the new staff. Thanks for your hard work and commitment to the enhancement of our community.

* * *

In closing, I'd like to return to my initial focus: housing.

More than ever, the people of Louisiana deserve quality, affordable housing located in safe, desirable neighborhoods with access to excellent schools, hospitals, and other services.

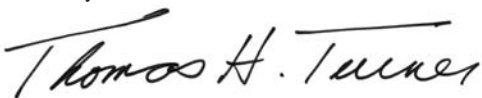
So at the Foundation, we've been asking ourselves and recognized, national experts questions like, "What does a good neighborhood look like?"

Most of us can agree that those neighborhoods should be good, safe places to live and raise children. They should feature a wide range of housing options and welcome cultural diversity. The schools should have good academic and after school programs, with both parents and teachers taking active roles in education. Businesses should complement the neighborhood, and employers should look to hire residents from within their community. There should be a shared sense of belonging and acceptance among neighbors.

Clearly "good neighborhood" means more than just affordable housing. Too often, though, the income-based neighborhood model popularized in the 1950s—where people of similar income reside in the same community—has resulted in stratified services, where the rich receive far superior, or the poor far inferior, services. It's a demonstration of how important choosing a house can be, and how a particular location can lead to inequality. It is not a trend that our community should continue.

For the health, well-being, and stability of every Louisiana family, we must ensure that decent neighborhoods are available to every resident, regardless of status. All of our children deserve communities with strong education systems, opportunities for achievement, and cultural diversity. The Foundation is pursuing that vision.

Sincerely,



Thomas H. Turner

In this Issue

A New Shine



An urban plan to reinvent Old South Baton Rouge while maintaining its history is unveiled. Working with neighbors and the city, Plan Baton Rouge is executing the urban blueprint. **Page 3.**

All winners

Three nonprofit leaders were honored at the Foundation's annual meeting with The 2005 John W. Barton Sr. Fellows in Nonprofit Management Award. How will each spend the \$10,000 accompanying prize? **Find out on Page 5.**

Drawing a crowd



In its second year, The Red Stick International Animation Festival was a blockbuster, drawing overflow crowds to big and little features.

See a photo essay on Page 7.

Bold Gambit

The Wilbur Marvin Foundation has teamed with national developers to take on the most ambitious project in Baton Rouge—a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood on 200 acres in Mid City. **Page 9.**

Growing Influence

The storms have swept Plan Baton Rouge into a new realm. The Foundation's planning organization is now on its own as an urban planning force across South Louisiana, where it is working with renowned consultants to craft a new vision for the region. **Page 15.**



The Details

The gears keep turning. An update on the happenings and a look ahead to what is in the works. **Page 16.**

Fresh Faces

Jessica Foley used to work for the ballet in New Orleans, but Katrina forced her to leave New Orleans and join the Foundation as a staff member. Meet her and other new staffers. **Pages 17.**

A New Shine

An urban plan to reinvent Old South Baton Rouge

A dirty canal runs through Old South Baton Rouge.

But urban planners look at that cement channel and envision it as a jewel for the area, which sits between LSU and downtown. The idea for converting the canal into a greenspace is one of many that energizes Gwen Hamilton of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

Hamilton knows Old South Baton Rouge well because she was raised in the community and still lives there. For years, the canal has been a dumping ground for trash. Hamilton says it has also been used by thieves to run from the law and to dump goods when they are near capture.

Last year, urban planning firm RKG, hired by Plan Baton Rouge, began crafting a design and economic development plan for the historic neighborhood. Like for Plan Baton Rouge's downtown revitalization plan, RKG held public meetings to get input before delivering a final blueprint.

Hundreds of Old South Baton Rouge residents and business owners showed up for several meetings, crowding into Polk Elementary to offer their ideas and concerns.

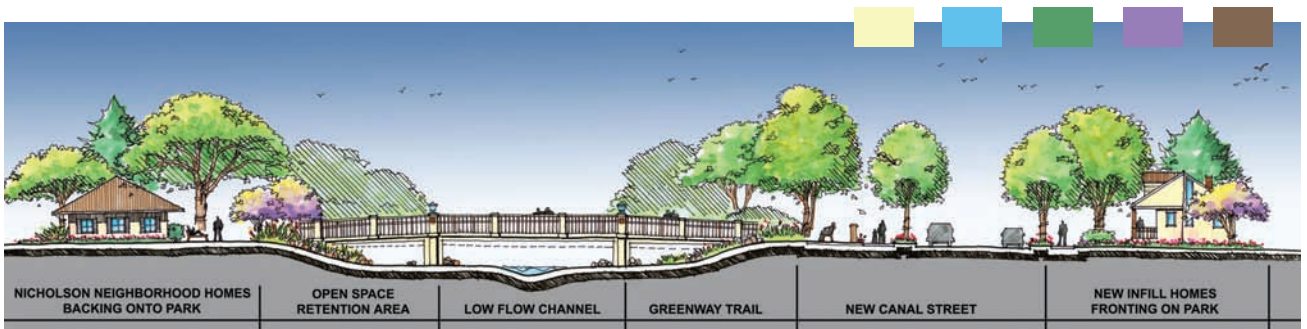
The plan is completed, and the reinvention of the canal is one of the dozens of recommendations.

Turn that cement canal into a stream dotted with ponds, transforming it into a lure for the neighborhood instead of a reason to avoid it, say the planners. Thinking big, they even see houses lined on the new waterway and people using it for fishing and swimming.

All this is not a dream, as evidenced by the continued progress in Old South over the past five years. It started with a HOPE VI federal grant of \$18.6 million for the East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority secured with assistance from the Foundation. So far, the money has been used to tear down tired public housing complexes, buy land, and start building the first new neighborhood in Old South.

What's more, the historic McKinley High School has been rehabbed as a community center, the EBR library has opened a new branch on Terrace Street, the school system is building a replacement for McKinley Middle School, and BREC is spending more than \$4 million to upgrade parks in the area.

To bring together all these moving parts, RKG provided the overall vision. Unveiled in spring, the consultant's sweeping strategy calls for turning main thoroughfares like Nicholson and Thomas Delpit into tree-lined



Water World

RKG consultants envision ripping out an Old South cement canal and turning it into a landscaped stream, dotted with ponds. The canal would be widened, footbridges would connect neighbors and flooding would be eliminated.

boulevards, integrating LSU with the neighborhood, and creating parks from abandoned property in underserved areas. Also, the plan recommends a variety of infill housing, an end to dead-end streets, rezoning of Highland Road to reduce the number of retail spaces while increasing housing, a community co-op grocery store, new lighting, and a mixed-use development along the riverfront.

Many plans become dusty on shelves or are undermined by people who don't want change. Not this one, says Hamilton. She's expecting the community to remain engaged in rebuilding the area, particularly through the Neighborhood Partnership Board, a new group formed to implement the plan.

That group includes real estate agents, urban experts, lawyers, and the neighbors who claim Old South Baton Rouge as their home. They have vowed, says Hamilton, to move quickly on implementing the plan.

To help them, the Baton Rouge police department is inventing a new crime-fighting strategy—a key in ensuring people believe the area is safe enough to invest in a home. That strategy will include more police presence, neighbors watching out for each other, and landlords keeping criminals from renting their housing.

Some of the empty houses, meanwhile, are expected to return rapidly to commerce. That's because a bill currently moving through the Legislature would permit the creation of a development authority with the ability to buy and consolidate dilapidated properties, then sell them to people willing to build anew. It's all part of the plan to turn Old South into a spirited community again. •



Comeback

A team of Chase bank employees fixed up Lizzie Fisher's home in Old South Baton Rouge. Other signs of renewed life are the new Carver branch library on Terrace Avenue and one of 126 new housing units being built with a HOPE VI grant.

More information

Plan Baton Rouge
www.PlanBR.org

RKG Associates
www.RKG1.com

Baton Rouge Area Foundation
Gwen Hamilton (225) 387-6126

2006 Annual Meeting



Jacqueline Vines, Janet Ketcham, Candace Wright, Thomas L. Frazer, Deborah Roe, Katherine Martin, and Thomas H. Turner

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation held its 2006 Annual Meeting in March in the Manship Theatre at the Shaw Center for the Arts. Chair Thomas H. Turner hosted the meeting and recognized outgoing board members Dr. Fred Cerise, Dr. David Fourrier, L. Lane Grigsby, Cornelius A. Lewis, the Reverend Charles T. Smith, and Ralph J. Stephens for their years of service and continued support. The Foundation's Board elected its officers at the meeting, returning Mr. Turner as Chair for 2006. Other officers elected were Christel C. Slaughter, Ph.D., Vice Chair; Brace B. Godfrey Jr., Secretary; and Thomas A. Cotten, Treasurer. Warren O. Birkett Jr., Thomas L. Frazer, Jacqueline Vines, and Candace Wright were elected to the Board for a first term in the Class of 2009, and Richard F. Manship was elected for a second term.

Annette Barton, daughter of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's founder, John W. Barton Sr., joined Mr. Turner in awarding the John W. Barton Sr. Excellence in Nonprofit Management Awards. Recipients are nonprofit leaders who are outstanding and exemplary executives in the service community. They have been catalysts for significant improvements in the Baton Rouge area. Each recipient received a check for \$10,000 with one restriction: it cannot be donated to their charity, it must be spent on themselves or their families.

The 2005 John W. Barton Sr. Fellows in Nonprofit Management Award recipients are: Janet Ketcham, McMains Children's Developmental Center; Katherine Martin, O'Brien House; and Deborah Roe, Catholic Community Services.

Janet Ketcham is the Executive Director of McMains Children's Developmental Center, an organization aimed at providing independence and educational potential for children with cerebral palsy, developmental delays, and learning disabilities. "We're the only nonprofit one-stop shop in the community for people with children who have developmental disorders," Janet explained. "McMains has been in existence for more than fifty years, and we've just taken on our 4,000th child. Above all, we promote independence in the children we serve, not only through traditional therapy but also with special activities held throughout the year, like our canoe trip and our art show."

Janet described her deep appreciation for the existence of the Barton Award. "It's amazing that the Baton Rouge Area Foundation has an award to honor those in the nonprofit field. We certainly don't do it for the recognition, but it's so nice to be recognized. I'd like to thank the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, both for the award and for its continued support of McMains."

As for how she'll spend the award money, Janet mentioned her daughter's upcoming wedding. "The money will certainly make things easier and allow for a lot more fun. Apart from that, some of the money will go toward our new home, and I'd also like to take a special vacation. I'm not yet sure about the destination, but I've always wanted to go to Costa Rica."

Katherine Martin has served as Executive Director of O'Brien House since 1995. Under her leadership, O'Brien House has evolved from a shelter for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts into a halfway house with a six-month rehabilitation program, making it one of the state's premier institutions for the effective treatment of substance abuse. "Since its establishment in 1971, O'Brien House has worked to address the ever-present problem of homelessness and addiction in our community," Katherine said. "People come here to get sober, so that they can rejoin our community as productive citizens. In my eleven

years here, we've expanded our program, enabling us to serve 55 clients a day."

Recently, Katherine's interest in community programs has resulted in the implementation of both the Millennium Kids Club, which operates in four Housing Authority apartment complexes in Baton Rouge, and the Strengthening the Family Program, which offers life skills training, parenting skills sessions, and family activities.

"I'm overwhelmed and extremely humbled by the recognition of my efforts with O'Brien House and in the nonprofit sector," Katherine said of the honor. "I'd like to thank the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and everyone involved in the Barton Award process." She also expressed her gratitude for the Foundation's support of O'Brien House over the years.

Katherine commented that she's thought a lot about how to spend the unexpected award. "I've never had the extra money to buy original artwork, but I do now! That's a joyous thought. I would also love to take a quiet retreat."

Deborah Roe is the Executive Director of Catholic Community Services, and is credited with instituting the agency's involvement in emergency assistance, migration and refugee services, senior employment, citizens' advocates for disabled persons, prison ministry, foster grandparents, transitional housing for ex-offenders, intact homeless families, and aiding pregnant women. She also assisted in the establishment of various community programs, including the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank and, more recently, the Human Services Consortium, a response to welfare reform. "Since its inception 42 years ago," Deborah said, "this agency's mission has been to provide direct, faith-based service and social advocacy, to help families in poverty, and to address unmet needs in the community."



*The 2005 Barton Fellows:
Deborah Roe, Janet Ketcham, and Katherine Martin*

Deborah thanked the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for the honor, "The evening was absolutely delightful. There were so many people in that room that I've worked with over the years—so many friends—and it was amazing to share the experience with all of them." She also thanked her wonderful staff and board. "They all have such positive, 'can-do' attitudes, and that's what sets our agency apart."

Deborah admitted that she's had difficulty grasping the unusual condition of having to spend the award money on herself. "But I've given it a lot of thought," she explained, "and I think I'll spend it on home repair and travel. The money will help with a minor renovation in my house, and I plan to meet my sister somewhere in the Southwest for the anniversary of my mother's birthday." She also mentioned her dream vacation—Louis Miller's Costa Rica trip—as a definite possibility. •



RED STICK

INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL
APRIL 20-23 www.redstickfestival.org

Mel Blanc would be proud.

The joy of animation lured thousands to the Red Stick International Animation Festival, which is becoming a signature event for the region. A main attraction was the appearance of Baton Rouge's Karey Kirkpatrick, the director of Dreamworks' "Over the Hedge," which went into wide release in mid-May but was offered in a sneak peek at the festival.



The festival is modeled after AnimeX, an animation gathering in Middlesbrough that doubles as an economic development tool for the community in Northeast England. The Red Stick event is the only other animation festival becoming a vehicle to lift the economy.

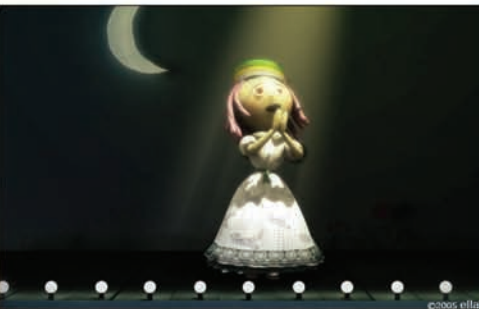
Organizers report more than 2,000 attended the Red Stick festival in its second year, a 30% increase. Plus, more than 150 entries were submitted from animators in 28 countries. The festival, which was supported with a grant from the city-parish and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, included 50 events, from screenings to workshops to lectures on topics ranging from character design to human movement to video gaming.



That's not all, folks. Next year's festival is scheduled for April.



Karey Kirkpatrick



Currents Summer 2006





BOLD GAMBIT

FOUNDATION'S WING LOOKS TO HISTORY TO OFFER NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE FUTURE

The Wilbur Marvin Foundation is tilting at windmills. That is being whispered about a foundation project aiming to set a higher standard for real estate developments in Baton Rouge. The foundation, a wing of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, plans to build a mixed-income, mixed-use community on 200 acres behind Bon Carré Business Center on Florida Boulevard.

A recent article in a business publication wondered if the project was “implausible” because it would mix incomes in a project and be located near a perceived high crime area. Say the skeptics: Why would someone buy a \$350,000 house in the neighborhood, now named Smiley Heights, to live next to the working poor?

Why not? counters Bardwell Development’s Scott Bardwell, who is working on the project with Commercial Properties Development Corporation, the real estate arm of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation. “If we don’t try it, it isn’t going to happen.”

Bardwell’s got evidence that Smiley Heights will succeed. In Pittsburgh, St. Louis and other cities, the project’s other partners—developer McCormack Baron Salazar and Maryland-based Torti Gallas—have built neighborhoods that blend houses at different

price points with retailers in a walkable community. In Pittsburgh, a development similar to Smiley Heights was so well received that residents wanted to buy housing even though the dwellings were only available for rent, says Bardwell.

Because it’s a traditional neighborhood development, Smiley Heights will also get a lift from the rising popularity of such mixed-use developments, which have moved from fad to mainstream in the past decade. About 500 TNDs have either been built or are now under construction across the U.S., reckons the *New Urban News*.

LOOKING BACK

Smiley Heights isn’t a new idea. Mixed-income neighborhoods were popular before the 1950s, when their pattern was overtaken by same-same communities with houses priced at like levels.

In Baton Rouge, there are still several thriving areas where people of different incomes live as neighbors. An example is the Garden District, a lush Mid City neighborhood in which college students rent apartments near people with \$1 million mansions. “That was good planning,” declares Bardwell.



Smiley Heights will replicate this pattern and use a powerful incentive to get residents to buy into the neighborhood. Bardwell, Camm Morton of Commercial Properties, and representatives of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation are talking to EBR school Superintendent Charlotte Placide about adding a new school in the heart of Smiley Heights. The school being discussed would teach kindergartners to eight-graders. In a nod to the past, Bardwell expects kids living in Smiley Heights to walk to the school.

The school will provide a shared value for the neighborhood, and shared values will be the reason people will want to live in the community, says Patrice McGinn, the lead Torti Gallas architect on the project. “It’s finding common threads that link people—whether it’s a community center that has some historic relevance, an urban park, or a school.” Education of children is not the only shared value for Smiley Heights. “Everyone wants a good education for their children, good housing, a safe neighborhood,” says Bardwell. “That transcends all demographics.”

Another shared value is the desire to live in a traditional neighborhood development, particularly one in which the people provided ideas in the design

process. Like for its other TNDs, Torti Gallas held town meetings to get buy-in from the surrounding neighborhoods and from people who are interested in living in Smiley Heights. “When people have the opportunity to become a part of the design process early on, there is a sense of pride and ownership that brings them together,” says McGinn. “All of a sudden, it doesn’t really matter who makes more money and who gets to live next to whom.”

continued

SMILEY HEIGHTS

Location: 200 acres off Ardenwood near Florida Boulevard. The land was donated to nonprofits by the late Paul Perkins.

Purpose: The goal is to build a mixed-income, mixed-use development anchored by a public school. It would break with modern patterns in Baton Rouge, where residents align along income and race lines.

Details: The project will include 800 to 1,200 housing units, depending on demand. Homes, apartments and senior living units will be blended, with some homes subsidized for low- to moderate-income households. Housing will cost from about \$128,000 to \$350,000.

IN THE DETAILS

The success of TNDs is in the details, from the narrow streets to the common areas for gathering. You can see this at River Ranch, a flourishing TND in Lafayette. It includes shotgun houses, row houses, apartments, work-live space, and mansions surrounding a common gathering area. Shops and a small grocer are the heart of the community, which can be crossed on foot in just 10 minutes. A hotel and more retailers are coming to River Ranch.

In Baton Rouge, Smiley Heights will follow Willow Grove as the second TND in town. What distinguishes Smiley Heights from Willow Grove and River Ranch is the goal of truly mixing people of all incomes in the neighborhood. Other TNDs have failed on this key measure of TND accomplishment because strong demand for housing in TNDs escalates prices beyond the means of low- and middle-income buyers. But Smiley Heights will be available to the working poor because part of the project will have government-subsidized housing, thanks to federal tax credits and other aid, says Bardwell. The subsidized housing, he says, will be for someone with a household income of less than \$48,000, such as a single mom with children.

That single mom and her kids will live in a great, modern neighborhood. Smiley Heights will have lakes, a canal transformed into a green waterway, walking trails, and a community center. A neighborhood retail center will be on Ardenwood. Housing will include a 120-unit senior apartment facility. The project will have 800 to 1,200 housing units, depending on demand. At the less expensive end, a 1,300-square-foot house will cost \$128,000 and the top home will be about \$350,000.



“The energy will be contagious throughout the development and will revitalize the area.”

Patrice McGinn
Torti Gallas

In total, the project is expected to be worth \$300 million when fully built by the middle of the next decade. Construction should begin this year.

The land for Smiley Heights is owned by nonprofits, including the Boy Scouts, Tulane University, and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center. The late Paul Perkins donated the property to the nonprofits, which will share in the success of the development. The developers are working on the financing and expect to have it completed in coming months.



“If we don’t try it, it isn’t going to happen.”

Scott Bardwell
Bardwell Development





A CAROM SHOT

Bardwell says the neighborhood will get a boost from the rebounding Florida Boulevard corridor. Bon Carré, the Commercial Properties' remaking of Bon Marché Mall into an office park and technology incubator, is around the corner on Florida and Lodbell Avenue. Baton Rouge Community College is rising on Florida and Foster Drive. BREC is renovating the old Sears building into a new headquarters with plans to build a park near Smiley Heights. Capital Area Transit System is strongly considering its first rapid transit bus line along Florida, from Livingston Parish to downtown. Smiley Heights will add to the area by bringing a few thousand more residents—spurring even more retail and life in the area, says McGinn.

“The energy will be contagious throughout the development and will revitalize the area,” she says. •

STREETSCAPE

As envisioned by Torti Gallas, housing types and styles for Smiley Heights. The housing styles are based on existing Baton Rouge architecture.

THE DEVELOPERS

Commercial Properties Development Corp.

A for-profit real estate company that is the main asset of the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, which is under the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The company, which is also renovating the Capitol House, put the Smiley Heights deal together.

Website: cpdcbr.com

Bardwell Development

Run by Scott Bardwell, the firm is the local liaison on the project.

Website: bardwelldevelopment.com

Torti Gallas

A Maryland-based design firm that provided the plan for Smiley Heights. Other projects include Baldwin Town Center in Orlando, and 5th and K Street revitalization in Washington, D.C.

Website: tortigallas.com

McCormack Baron Salazar

The developer of Smiley Heights specializes in rebuilding deteriorating urban areas. Projects include Centennial Place in Atlanta and Crawford Square in Pittsburgh.

Website: mccormackbaron.com

LRA SUPPORT FOUNDATION COVERS COSTS

New Orleans, Lake Charles and other coastal communities were built over generations. Two hurricanes damaged and destroyed the areas in hours. From the chaos of Katrina and Rita was born this idea: Rebuild Louisiana better than before, not only to imprint an improved urban landscape, but also to create a fortress from future storms.

So the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Plan Baton Rouge, now Center for Planning Excellence, sought the best urban planners in the country and deployed them across the state.

The planners worked for the Louisiana Recovery Authority, which, because it had no funding, could not pay for the work. The Foundation created the LRA Support Foundation, raising millions from private donors to pay for LRA urban planners.

Three planning firms were hired: Urban Design Associates to compile a pattern book of vernacular architecture and a toolkit for urban planning of parishes and cities; Calthorpe Associates for a comprehensive design for South Louisiana; and Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) to create plans for three parishes. Their work was conducted under a project called Louisiana Speaks, a planning process to develop a vision for the coastal region's future.

If the Duany name seems familiar, it's because Andrés Duany has worked in Baton Rouge. Plan Baton Rouge hired his Miami design business to fashion a downtown revitalization plan, which engendered the rebirth of the city center.



Urban Design Associates and Calthorpe are deep into their plans, while Duany has practically concluded his work. Here's a look into his proposals, which were born from public input at town meetings known as charrettes.

The Lake Charles Charrette (February 6-11)

During the Lake Charles charrette, Duany revealed his master plan for a redeveloped downtown, and placed a special emphasis on the city's waterfront, an essential asset that is not being used to its

full potential. Following the planning sessions, the City Council of Lake Charles unanimously endorsed DPZ's vision, and immediately began the process of adopting a rezoning plan for downtown based on its design standards.

In a letter to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation in March, Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach wrote, "On behalf of the City of Lake Charles, please allow me to express our appreciation to the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for giving Lake Charles the opportunity to participate in the series of charrettes conducted by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company to assist communities in the development of a long-term recovery plan for communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The citizens of Lake Charles were excited to see their ideas and visions come together in a plan for our Downtown and Lakefront. We have begun work to implement the ideas presented in the DPZ Master Plan for Downtown Lake Charles. The Lake Charles City Council endorsed major components of the Master Plan at a Special Meeting on February 11, 2006."

OF NEW VISION FOR SOUTH LOUISIANA

The New Iberia Charrette (February 13–19)

At the beginning of the New Iberia charrette, Duany introduced the bold and radical idea of relocating the regularly flooding town of Erath a few miles north to higher, drier ground. After speaking with residents of Erath over a week, Duany shifted his focus from relocation to expansion, exploring the possibility of creating a new neighborhood north of Erath. The city's mayor, George Dupuis, commented, "We are lucky to have a team of experts listen to our suggestions and show us how to rebuild our community in a way that allows us to remain in the homes we love and cherish. Now it's our responsibility to make these plans come alive."

In Delcambre, Duany proposed making the city's underutilized shipping port the new center for business, festivals, and entertainment. Excited about the possibility, mayor Carol Broussard said, "This is going to be an active port that will bring life back to our economy."

Duany noted that Abbeville suffered much less damage than its neighbors, making the rebuilding of a vibrant downtown with affordable housing a "fairly simple" task. At the close of the New Iberia charrette, Abbeville mayor Mark Piazza voiced the hope that the region continues to exhibit "the same devotion and conviction about our communities in the days to come as our DPZ friends did over the past week."

The St. Bernard Charrette (March 7–13)

Due to the catastrophic flood damage in St. Bernard, plans for long-term recovery must span the entire parish, while remaining attentive to the physical and cultural identity of each and every neighborhood. In the charrette process, Duany's team scouted the parish's neighborhoods and relied heavily on the input of residents to create a concrete plan. Duany also addressed the opportunity of rewriting a dysfunctional zoning code that is halting economic growth in the community. He pointed specifically to the sprawling mix of commercial and residential properties along Judge Perez, which should be the parish's main commercial thoroughfare. As for the city's flood problem, Duany proposed an in-depth plan that involves "walkable" cities built along new canals. Duany stated that a bold 21st century plan that

makes the most of St. Bernard's geographic advantage—minutes from the French Quarter—will attract new residents and new economic opportunities.

According to the Times-Picayune, more than 1,000 citizens and 20 designers and planners attended the sessions, incorporating expert and local opinions into the neighborhood-specific plans. On March 21, the Parish Council of St. Bernard approved several of the planner's ideas and announced its intent to hold neighborhood-level meetings, as Duany's plan calls for specifics to be based on comments from residents in each neighborhood. •



Katrina Cottages

Architecture's solution to the trailer problem is the Katrina Cottage. Architect Andres Duany challenged 200 professionals gathered in Biloxi to create designs for immediate and affordable housing that would maintain a sense of regional identity. New York architect Marianne Cusato created the Katrina Cottage—a real home that is also less expensive than a trailer. Made of hard foam with concrete-siding and roofs of insulated steel siding, the cottage doesn't budge when struck with even 200 mph winds. A two-story, two-bedroom prototype was built in a Chalmette Wal-Mart in March—to great applause. For more, visit LouisianaSpeaks.org.

A Growing Influence

Plan Baton Rouge becomes Center for Planning Excellence

Katrina turned Louisiana sideways. She also created this myth: The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's urban planning and design arm—Plan Baton Rouge—was changed by the storm into a group overseeing planning efforts across South Louisiana.

Partly not true. The planners of the group are now working with a broader brush, but the idea to go regional was a twinkle years before Katrina. Back in 2001, after Plan Baton Rouge had spearheaded a plan for reinventing downtown Baton Rouge, director Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas and her full-time planner, Rachel DiResto, went with local leaders to visit Chattanooga's urban design center. In conversations, Rachel and Boo had already begun to dream up a think tank that would provide design resources for South Louisiana.

“The visit to Chattanooga cemented it for us,” says Thomas. “We saw it and said that’s what we are talking about.” Staffed with urban professionals, the Chattanooga center advised builders, architects, and planners who were working in the region.

Thomas and DiResto returned to Baton Rouge, where they worked with The Baton Rouge Area Foundation's Gwen Hamilton to provide a new urban pattern for Old South Baton Rouge, all the while advancing smart growth concepts in the area and keeping their eyes on the regional goal.

Their work got more and more notice. Requests for urban plans outside the area poured in, but Plan Baton Rouge resisted speeding up its goal to go regional, taking measured steps instead to ensure a foundation existed before marking new boundaries.



*Alicia Hawkes, Herpreet Singh,
Boo Thomas, Rachel DiResto, and Hal Cohen*

Then the storms hit. Katrina flattened big sections of the New Orleans region; Rita did extensive damage to homes and businesses in Lake Charles.

Realizing there was a keyhole to accelerate the urban planning effort that had remade downtown Baton Rouge, the Foundation raised millions to fund the LRA Support Foundation, which hired Urban Design Associates, Duany Plater-Zyberk Co.

and Calthorpe Associates to conduct neighborhood, parish, and regional plans.

In January, with a wider scope thrust upon it, the Center for Planning Excellence was born as its own non-profit, spun off from the Foundation umbrella. Since then, the center has hired urban planner Hal Cohen, a New York University graduate who is working as a liaison with the Louisiana Recovery Authority, the group charged by state government to rebuild Louisiana.

The Center for Planning Excellence was contacted by Sen. Mary Landrieu before the storms. She offered federal help to provide urban plans for more communities. The Center expects \$500,000 from the EPA for planning, but will have to find additional, regular funding to fulfill its expanding mission.

The list of projects includes two more parish plans in the Baton Rouge region. Port Allen and West Feliciana are under consideration for these plans, which would partially be funded by local contributions.

Another myth denied: The rise of the Center for Planning Excellence does not signal the demise of Plan Baton Rouge, which continues to provide urban planning leadership in the Baton Rouge area. •

The Foundation Transfers Katrina Fund to New Orleans Nonprofit

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation established the Hurricane Katrina New Orleans Recovery Fund to help rebuild the infrastructure necessary to provide basic services to residents of devastated areas. In March, the Foundation reached an agreement with the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) to transfer the fund for their oversight. GNOF will disburse the more than \$4 million raised through the Hurricane Katrina New Orleans Recovery Fund according to our donors' original intent.



Greater New Orleans Foundation Staff

For the first two months following the storm, the GNOF was hosted by the Foundation in our conference center, along with Greater New Orleans, Inc. and the International Rescue Committee. Since returning to its city, GNOF has started the Rebuild New Orleans Fund, which focuses on excellence in education, economic expansion and job training, affordable housing, race and equity, and sustainability and developing nonprofit capacity. The Hurricane Katrina New Orleans Recovery Fund will be administered with the Rebuild New Orleans Fund. We look forward to seeing GNOF's work in that community. •

Membership Drive

The magic number for the donor services department is 1,000. Headed by new hire Jessica Bishop, the department's goal is to reach that number of members for the first time in history. It's an important mark: "By supporting the Foundation's staff and administrative costs, membership contributions make good works in our community possible," says Alice D. Greer, membership chair.

At year end, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation counted 736 members, a rise over the previous year. Membership peaked in 2001 at 822 members. Katrina required the donor services department to shift resources to help victims. After the storm, the department refocused efforts to engage members and to seek new ones. Among the initiatives was a reception on the beautiful terrace of the Shaw Center for the Arts, an opportunity to welcome new 2005 members and discuss the Foundation's projects, including the renovation of the Capitol House into a Hilton hotel.

New events being planned by donor services for members include the annual community forecast and an exclusive look behind foundation projects. Plus, Founder Forum members are invited for an annual dinner, which last year was held on the Cajun Queen paddlewheeler on the Mississippi River.

To make it easier to join, donor services has made giving more flexible by replacing a tiered giving system. Members can now join for \$100 but also give at any increment above that amount. Bishop says the switch has let new and existing members increase their gifts, but also match what they can afford.

To reach its goal, her department is also seeking help from area residents who want to improve the quality of life in our community. The membership committee is contacting people it believes are keen on joining the Foundation. Some of them are directing their friends to the Foundation's website, where joining as a member is simple.

The site is www.braf.org.

FRESH FACES

The Foundation has grown by one-third in size since late last year, largely because the hurricanes have resulted in an expansion of our mission. Meet the newest members of our staff.



Jessica Bishop,
Director of Donor Services
Jessica's job is to foster strong relationships with donors and members. She graduated from LSU in International Trade and Finance with a minor in Economics. For six years, she worked in the

energy industry, from trading power to supporting mergers and acquisitions. Most recently, she served as a marketing coordinator for The Shaw Group. She enjoys traveling, trying new restaurants with her fiancé, and spending time with her family.



Janette Blackwell,
Grantmaking Administrator
Janette joined our Grantmaking Programs Department fairly soon after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to help manage the unprecedented flurry of grantmaking activity.

Janette has a degree in Communications from the University of Houston, with concentrations in both Nonprofit Organization Leadership and Business Management. Before accepting her position at the Foundation, Janette held four internships with Habitat for Humanity in Victoria, Texas. Janette has written poetry, short stories, and even a cookbook. She's also interested in stained glass, and Scherenschnitte—a paper cutting art.



Jessica Foley,
Executive Liaison
Jessica shadows President John Davies and Executive Vice President John Spain, keeping files current on their activities and attending meetings on their behalf. She has a dual degree from LSU in

English, with focuses on Creative Writing and Theatre, and a Master's in Arts Administration from the University of New Orleans. Jessica was a development associate with the New Orleans Ballet Association before relocating to Baton Rouge after Katrina with her husband, Stephen, and kitty, Stella Blue. She is an avid reader, live music supporter, arts enthusiast, intrepid traveler, and LSU football fanatic.



Twanda Lewis,
Program Officer
Twanda is the newest program officer in the Grantmaking Department. She holds a Master's in Behavioral Studies from Southern University and has worked locally and

internationally in social services, mental health, community development, and program management. Twanda comes to us from Brussels, most recently, where her husband was stationed with the U.S. State Department. Prior to living in Brussels, Twanda and her husband were posted throughout eastern and southern Africa.



Bonita Malbrew,
Grantmaking Assistant
Bonita came to the Foundation to assist with the overflow of post-Katrina grantmaking activity. She received an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from Baton Rouge Community College, and she is currently attending BRCC to get a degree in business. Next year, she plans to begin study at the University of Phoenix for a bachelor's in business administration. Before joining the Foundation, Bonita worked as an administrative assistant with Early Steps, an organization that provides free services and funds for young children with disabilities. Bonita's hobbies include writing plays and walking.



Erin Percy,

Communications Intern

Erin assists with researching and writing many of the Foundation's documents and publications. She attends LSU, and is currently pursuing a bachelor's in journalism, with a minor

in English. She joined the Foundation after studying abroad for several months in Norwich, England. When she's not working at the Foundation, Erin is reading, watching movies or studying for the LSAT.



Casey Self,

Accountant

Casey holds a new position at the Foundation that was created in response to the extra influx of gifts and donations that poured in after Katrina and Rita. Casey graduated from Auburn with a Bachelor's

Degree in Theater, and is currently pursuing a Master's in Public Administration. She transitioned to our finance department after working as a bookkeeper and house manager at the Shaw Center's Manship Theater. Casey enjoys reading, but her new baby boy, Connor, takes up most of her free time.



Mukul Verma,

Director of Communications

Mukul filled the open Director of Communications position, overseeing the creation of the Foundation's printed and online documents, and other communications material.

He was Web Editor for the Baton Rouge Business Report, where he created and managed Daily Report, and launched the web-based 225BatonRouge.com. Mukul has an undergraduate degree from LSU in Business Administration and an MBA from LSU. In his spare time, he plays soccer, runs road races, relishes cooking and food, and reads too much about stem cell science.

Hurricane Katrina Displaced Residents Fund Grants Update

On March 16, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation issued the sixth set of grants from the Hurricane Katrina Displaced Residents Fund, totaling \$724,800. To date, more than \$4.9 million has been issued from the fund to organizations working to assist people impacted by the storm. Through April, the Foundation has received \$40.5 million in contributions to hurricane relief funds, including \$12.7 million to the Displaced Residents Fund, \$4.6 million to the New Orleans Recovery Fund, and \$2.9 million to the LRA Support Foundation. Over \$18.1 million in grants have been issued from the Foundation's hurricane relief funds, including almost \$3.5 million from employee assistance funds. In all, 2,387 hurricane relief and employee assistance grants have been issued. More information is available at [www.FOUNDATIONSforRECOVERY.org](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforRECOVERY.org).

The Capital Area Corporate Recycling Council
\$5,000

Family Services of Greater Baton Rouge
\$48,000

Health Care Centers in Schools
\$150,000

Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network
\$75,000

Louisiana Primary Care Association, Inc.
\$235,000

**Pointe Coupée Better Access
Community Health**
\$75,000

St. James-Dufrocq School Partnership
\$4,800

Volunteers of America
\$77,000

Calendar

May 29

Memorial Day Office Closed

July 1

Grant Application Deadlines:
Neighborhood Initiative Program

July 4

Independence Day Office Closed

August 1

Grant Application Deadlines:
Fund for Bogalusa
Healthcare Grantmaking Program
Powell Group Fund
YWCO Fund

August 15

Grant Application Deadline:
Ourso Family Foundation

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If you would like to be added to our distribution list, please contact us at (225) 387-6126, or email the Foundation at mverma@braf.org.

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