

FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

GREEN LIGHT CITIZENS COUNCIL Transition Committee Report

Mayor-President Melvin L. "Kip" Holden
City of Baton Rouge
Parish of East Baton Rouge

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City of Baton Rouge



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INTRODUCTION

In November, 2004, East Baton Rouge Mayor-President-elect Kip Holden, appointed the Green Light Citizens Council for the purpose of advising the orderly transition of governing the city-parish and establishing a framework of priorities and a vision document for East Baton Rouge Parish and the City of Baton Rouge.

In the ensuing 100 days, the “Green Light Planning Process” was implemented, involving hundreds of civic leaders and everyday citizens in an effort to offer ideas, the benefit of experience and advice to newly elected Mayor-President Holden and his administration.

The planning process was administered on the following schedule:

- € 11/10/04 – Green Light Citizens Council recommendations received and invitations completed
- € 11/12/04 – Green Light Citizens Council announced
- € 11/22/04 – Project scoping meeting held with Mayor Holden and all members of the Green Light Citizens Council
- € 02/09/05 – Green Light Plan presented to Green Light Citizens Council co-chairs for review
- € 04/13/05 – Mayor-President Holden releases a “Framework for Progress” and 100 day report

During the eight to ten weeks of consideration of issues and ideas by the transition team, the process involved delegation of responsibilities to eleven committees, including:

- € Public Safety
- € Quality of Life
 - Health
 - Physical Environment
 - Arts/Culture/Recreation
- € Inter-Governmental Relations
- € Human Resources
- € Traffic
- € Public Works
- € Education
- € Social Services
- € Risk Management
- € Budget and Finance
- € Economic Development

The committees were given a discovery task of reaching out to community leaders and organizations to learn what has worked and what has not worked in their areas of focus, to take site visits to model cities, to consult with local, regional state and national leaders,

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and to interview experts who might inform the process with their expertise and experience.

Each committee was asked to respond to a template of questions as they pursued their findings:

- € What is the scope of our committee's work?
- € What factors support (+) and/or inhibit (-) success in our community?
- € What has been done before?
- € What have other communities done?
- € What do we recommend?
- € What challenges or hurdles will our ideas face?

This report highlights the findings of the various committees and is intended to represent a framework that can guide progress for East Baton Rouge Parish and the City of Baton Rouge. It is not intended to be a formal strategic plan, but recommendations by citizens who care about their city and desire an access to government through a process that illuminates their priorities and ideas.

Common Themes

The Green Light Planning process identified a number of common themes and factors that can lead to stronger communities. Among the many commonalities, the following recommendations appeared central to many of the committee recommendations:

- € Develop partnerships for leveraging resources and seeking best answers to complex challenges so that change is sustainable;
- € Focus on short term and long term solutions to give citizens a confidence that their priorities are being addressed in a timely manner;
- € Make accountability a priority for all sectors of local government;
- € Operate and move forward with a realization that our current plan of government may be out of date;
- € Compete effectively with other communities in terms of grant development;
- € Establish a positive and polished image for our community; and,
- € Bring greater value to public education as a means of strengthening all in our community.

The following report is a work in progress. All recommendations will face the reality of city/county budgets that are tight without much room for growth, if any. The hard work of the many citizens who participated in the process, however, will help those who administer their local government better understand priorities for the future, as the work to design a government that meets public expectations.

Mayor Holden and his administration sincerely thank the Green Light Citizens Council and its Chairpersons who devoted serious attention and time to developing this Framework for Progress.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Public Safety Committee assessed the current state of public safety in East Baton Rouge Parish, and using this information offered practical, affordable and realistic solutions to programs and procedures the committee felt should be improved. The Committee also offered new programs, ideas and practices it felt would enhance and improve public safety in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Challenges:

- € Lack of coordination among public safety agencies in East Baton Rouge Parish
- € Public perception regarding professionalism and crime
- € Inadequate equipment and facilities for Baton Rouge Police

Opportunities:

- € New leadership in Baton Rouge Police; goodwill of new Police Chief
- € Public is focused on public safety and information
- € Availability of technology to support interoperability

Recommendations:

- € Support implementation and growth of community policing
- € Interoperability of Communications between First Responder Agencies
 - Mayor-President should take lead in supporting this initiative and encouraging greater cooperation among agencies
 - Utilize common parish-wide channels that are independently and easily accessed to include:
 - š one channel designed as a “pursuit” channel;
 - š one channel designated for “in progress” and “code 3” calls; and
 - š one channel designated for short-term “investigative” use
 - Coordinate communications assets and utilize best resources available
 - Standardize the 10-code and radio signals among first responders
 - Establish a “First 60 Minutes” Response Plan for disaster or emergency situations
- € Improve Technology for Baton Rouge City Police
 - Upgrade technology for patrol officers and detectives
 - Explore use of State Police Crime Lab to handle East Baton Rouge Parish case load more effectively
 - Utilize helicopters of State Police and neighboring agencies

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- € Explore and Implement Cost Effective Training Procedures
 - Bring trainers to East Baton Rouge Parish to eliminate costly travel and allow greater participation
 - Cross-Train Communications Personnel

- € Develop a Public Education and Public Relations Program
 - Develop a master plan for public education
 - Hire a communications professional to assist with implementation
 - Develop public/private partnerships
 - Consolidate budgets for public education
 - Improve media relations
 - Educate police, fire, EMS and OEP personnel in how to communicate with the public

QUALITY OF LIFE

Scope of Committee's Work:

The committee identified three key factors impacting "Quality of Life" in East Baton Rouge Parish and focused on challenges and opportunities in these areas:

- ∄ Health
- ∄ Physical Environment
- ∄ Arts, Culture and Recreation

The committee took advantage of experts by asking many who reside in Baton Rouge to broaden information based on their experience and professions. Select individuals appeared before the committee from a variety of disciplines including: the arts, recreation, environmental quality, neighborhood development, healthcare, human services and aging.

Health

Challenges:

- ∄ A Significant portion of the state's population is located in excess of 200 miles from a Level 1 Trauma Center. Each year, more than 1,000 Louisiana residents die from trauma-related deaths.
- ∄ The Greater Baton Rouge area has more than 125,000 uninsured citizens, second only to New Orleans in the state. Approximately 70% of public school students are considered to be living in poverty.
- ∄ Louisiana has a low percentage of physicians actively participating in Medicaid.
- ∄ Louisiana ranks last in state health rankings and is pegged as one of the poorest states, with 16% of our people living below the federal poverty level.
- ∄ Baton Rouge is one of the top ten communities in the U.S. with the number of confirmed new cases of HIV per capita.

Opportunities:

- ∄ Baton Rouge is served by two very stable acute hospitals (Baton Rouge General Medical Health Center and Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center.)
- ∄ Earl K. Long Hospital provides critical care at all levels for the indigent and uninsured.
- ∄ There are nine other hospitals or specialized healthcare centers in the region.
- ∄ LSU School of Medicine maintains a residency program at EKL that provides physician services at that facility. However, this program could be in jeopardy due to accreditation.
- ∄ There are strong school health services and nursing school programs in East Baton Rouge Parish.
- ∄ There is a strong children's coalition developing a framework plan for physical, mental and dental healthcare for children to be provided in a community healthcare clinic.
- ∄ There is a coalition of citizens, physicians, policy makers and civic leaders who have joined to research and propose options for solving our health care crisis.

Physical Environment

Challenges:

- ∄ Environmental interest is a priority only when consequences flow from non-compliance with environmental laws and regulations.
- ∄ The absence of an environmental champion or urban environmental expert.
- ∄ The heaviest burden of pollution falls upon minorities and the poor, those nearest the industry with the least political weight and the least ability to tolerate it.
- ∄ Local government has never expressed a preference for a cleaner environment nor explained the economic benefits to the public.
- ∄ There is little public education and awareness as to the environmental issues facing us and our community.
- ∄ There is a lack of information available on best practices of cities that have had traditional industrial economic bases and have changed their focus to information, technology and biomedical research.

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Opportunities:

- € A new Mayor with an understanding of how improving the environment can have a positive impact on our quality of life and economic development.
- € A Governor and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality who are receptive to new direction.
- € A population with a willingness to get involved and a growing understanding of the needs for a clean environment as well as the economic benefits that follow.
- € An Environmental Department within the East Baton Rouge Parish Department of Public Works, although limited in scope.
- € A good working relationship between City-Parish and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

Arts, Culture And Recreation

Challenges:

- € Lack of coordination and planning among leaders of various venues and programs
- € Need to develop public and private funding to capitalize on arts and culture assets
- € Need to get the word out about our assets so the community can appreciate what we have.

Opportunities:

- € Strong private investment in capital arts and cultural projects
- € BREC tax passed to invest in parks system
- € Opportunity to brand downtown as a strong arts, culture, tourism and recreation district
- € Develop downtown as a strong tourism and convention destination

Quality Of Life Committee Recommendations:

Health:

- € The Mayor should play a leadership role in the decision-making processes to secure a regional Trauma 1 Center and a comprehensive community health clinic for Baton Rouge.
- € Support increased care and services available for the mental health, substance abuse, poor and uninsured patients. Increase training of police to handle mental health patients.

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- € Support adequate funding for specialized services and medications for the poor and elderly to help reduce high numbers of Medicaid emergency room visits. Help address lack of education, preventative care, transportation and access issues for the elderly. Support efforts to allow state funding to follow the patient.
- € Improve community health education by creating appropriate health education programming and digital resources. Use existing community agencies, create community events and programs to promote healthy lifestyles, collaborate with local community partners to develop digital education resources.
- € Seek opportunities or best practices to reduce sexually transmitted diseases and HIV cases.

Physical Environment:

- € Focus on environmental management and planning to enhance quality of life.
- € Develop and implement a public education campaign to inform citizens of standards for a cleaner environment.
- € Consider alternative plans for sewer improvements.
- € Work with the legislature to redirect property tax subsidies for manufacturing industry to fund public education efforts as described in best practices research from other cities.
- € Partner with industry, neighborhood groups and citizen groups for a better recycling program of household hazardous waste.
- € Encourage, reward and recognize local industry for emission reductions, environmental education and public outreach.
- € Ensure that local emergency preparedness and response time is a visible and properly funded priority for East Baton Rouge Parish.

Arts, Culture And Recreation:

- € Support the location of a proposed Main Library downtown and the development of an adjoining BREC park.
- € Continue to promote the highest and best use of properties downtown. Encourage development of DeSoto Park and the Old Municipal Dock.
- € Increase the availability and opportunities for use of Memorial Stadium.

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- € Support BREC's Capitol City Improvement Plan to create 12 "community parks" and upgrade neighborhood parks parish-wide. Support increased use of City Park by considering options for developing and diversifying the park.
- € Encourage more partnerships between BREC and City-Parish schools.
- € Support and seek recognition for the downtown arts district, museums, Shaw Center for the Arts, arts organizations and the Greater Baton Rouge Arts Council's Community School for the Arts.
- € Increase marketing of Baton Rouge as a city for film, music and video production.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Scope of Committee's Work

Committee discussed better level of cooperation among public officials, governmental departments and agencies who have impact on the City of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish.

Challenges:

- ⊘ Maintaining boundaries in legislative or council matters because of experience in both council and legislative issues
- ⊘ Need to stay ahead of the legislative and Congressional schedules with packages of City-Parish priorities
- ⊘ Need to build broad consensus among local elected officials to be successful

Opportunities:

- ⊘ Mayor's long-term strong relationships with other elected officials
- ⊘ Experience with legislative process and parish government
- ⊘ Opportunity for greater cooperation based on knowledge of the system

Recommendations:

- ⊘ Communicate priorities effectively through informal meetings and briefings with Executive, Legislative and Congressional delegations
- ⊘ Seek briefings from state and federal officials to determine available funding opportunities and how to best leverage opportunities for the City-Parish
- ⊘ Utilize members of the Green Light Citizens Council, including elected officials, civic leaders, ministers, citizens, etc., as a resource for advancing the City-Parish legislative agenda.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Human Resources Committee evaluated the organization, policies, practices and functionality of the City-Parish Human Resources Department and its relationship with other Departments of City-Parish Government.

The Committee explored the following areas with department heads:

- ∅ Job Description/Responsibilities
- ∅ Productivity/Performance goals
- ∅ Departmental Evaluations and methods
- ∅ Employee Evaluations and methods
- ∅ In-service training and Professional Development
- ∅ Inter-intra Departmental Communications/Relationships
- ∅ HR Departmental Policy Development
- ∅ Relationship with Mayor's Office

The Committee interviewed the Deputy Director of Human Resources, the Assistant Director, two Senior HR Specialists and the HR Division Managers in the areas of: Recruiting/Examination; Payroll and Benefits; Civil Service; Training and Employee Development/Health and Safety; and Employee Relations/EEO/ADA.

The City-Parish Diversification Plan, Organizational chart and proposed reorganization chart were used as resources by the committee.

Challenges:

- ∅ Duplication of services; overlapping duties
- ∅ Communication among departments relies on personal relationships/one-on-one communications
- ∅ Policies and rules of civil service inhibit individual success
- ∅ Employees are reluctant to change because of lack of clarity in goals and vision
- ∅ Lack of recognition systems and flexibility lower morale
- ∅ Very high turnover rate among HR staff

Opportunities:

- ∅ Assessment of current and best practices
- ∅ Opportunity to improve quality of city-parish workforce through new hires, professional development and training, expanded promotion, reassessment of skills.

Recommendations:

- ∄ Assess current system of performance evaluation for employees to improve moral and provide a clear appraisal of work performance. The current system allows only for “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” ratings.
- ∄ Improve in-service training and career development to diminish turnovers and improve morale and efficiency.
- ∄ Create better awareness of job openings and better recruiting for positions.
- ∄ Improve communication among departments with a clear and effective communication process.

TRAFFIC

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Traffic Committee was challenged by an extremely complex issue that includes conflicting public and political interests, organizational hurdles and funding shortfalls. The Committee followed a process that included meetings, interviews, presentations and debates to arrive at numerous recommendations for both short-term projects as well as long term solutions and a vision for Baton Rouge's transportation needs.

The Committee recommends a transportation vision statement for Baton Rouge to inspire and guide transportation planning and implementation:

"To invest in transportation systems with superior planning, funding, and political willpower so that Baton Rouge can meet its current needs, establish a clear and consistent vision of its future, and be second to none in moving people and promoting quality of life."

Challenges:

- ∅ 20 years of increased traffic volumes and congestion in Baton Rouge and surrounding area in the fastest growing metropolitan area in Louisiana; zoning decisions have not mirrored the Horizon Plan, Baton Rouge's land use plan.
- ∅ Parish and State agencies have not been successful in either relieving existing traffic congestion or planning and building new transportation systems to accommodate future land use and traffic growth.
- ∅ The lack of a cabinet level voice for transportation issues has caused sound engineering expertise to be overruled by political considerations, with the cumulative effect over the past several decades being a failed transportation system.

Opportunities:

- ∅ Traffic issues are consistently near the top of citizens' concerns in Baton Rouge.
- ∅ Baton Rouge is the capital city and fastest growing metropolitan area in Louisiana, emerging as a vibrant urban center.
- ∅ Mayor-President Holden made solving the parish traffic and transportation problems a key part of his campaign platform and moved quickly to provide expertise to that area.

Recommendations:

- € *Create a Transportation Department in City-Parish government.* The Committee recommends a department level position on par with DPW that would provide traffic planning, traffic engineering, traffic operations and maintenance, and transportation capital improvement projects.
- € *Develop a Transportation Action Plan (TAP).* The TAP should be a comprehensive transportation plan developed to identify long and short term needs for highway and transit, with a funding plan for implementation. This master plan should focus on the needs of East Baton Rouge Parish with the idea that it can be rolled into the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) four-parish comprehensive plan study administered by the state Department of Transportation and Development and the MPO.
- € *Identify new funding mechanisms and a compatible Capital Improvements Program (CIP).* With dedicated and scheduled improvements that can be easily explained to the voters, this plan should be developed simultaneously and compatibly with a funding program that includes new sources of revenue. These sources could include reallocation of the ½ cent sales tax, toll roads, standardized parish-wide development impact fees, a bond program, and other sources, for which new state legislation may be needed in some instances.
- € *Develop and implement a Public Trust and Accountability Program.* In order to gain the trust of the voters who would be asked to adopt a Capital Improvements Program and funding program as discussed above, the City-Parish should develop an outreach program designed to gain input from citizens on needs and educate them about the transportation process. This program should be a continuing process, implemented systematically to inform the public of scheduled priorities. The citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish have not voted for a bonded capital improvements program with a dedicated revenue source in approximately 40 years, so this is needed to assure public confidence in the program and assure its success.
- € *Good Planning leads to well-coordinated communities.* The City-Parish Unified Development Code should be followed to the extent possible. Development proposals should be evaluated by the Planning Commission's professional staff, with access to the staff at DPW for expert and technical assistance, in a professional and apolitical manner as to the impact on the community's character, sustainability, infrastructure, quality of life and traffic.
- € *Develop a Mass Transit System and a Public Acceptance of its Use.* Mass transit is a recognized contributor to the transportation well-being and quality of life of vibrant urban areas. As Baton Rouge continues to emerge as a premier city of the south, it will be important to develop a culture of acceptance and usage of mass transit beyond what has been traditional.

- € New transit initiatives with records of success are encouraged, which could include Bus Rapid Transit and Commuter rail. The ability to secure Federal Transit Authority and other funding for these systems will be an important factor in the process.

The committee recommends that responsible departments also consider these other issues:

- € *Access Management Policy.* Implement a parish-wide ordinance.
- € *Develop Impact Fee Schedule.* Parish-wide, predetermined, consistent to all developers.
- € *Develop a Regional Freeway/Tollway System.*
- € *Identify and provide improvements at Regional “Hot Spots”, with I-12/Sherwood Forest, I-10/Essen Lane, and I-12/O’Neal Lane being examples, though not all inclusive.*
- € *Better Coordination of Existing Traffic Signal Systems.*
- € *Place a Priority on New, Modern, Traffic Signal Systems Where Needed.*
- € *Consider Narrower Width of Traffic Lanes (equals more lanes with little costs).*
- € *Transportation System Management.* Park & Ride, High Occupancy Vehicle or commuter lanes, new managed lanes on freeways, better use of Automated Traffic Management.
- € *More and Better Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans.*
- € *Provide Transportation Planner for City Planning Commission.*

PUBLIC WORKS

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Public Works Committee evaluated the current Department of Public Works; its structure, duties, staffing, budget and role within the community to identify its strengths and weaknesses and provide short term recommendations.

Challenges:

Organizational structure which leads to communication and function challenges
Lack of guidelines and procedures for planning across departments
Existing contracts that adversely impact budget (Sewer consent decree)
Loss of institutional knowledge through staff retirement and attrition
City-parish pay scale and opportunities for advancement
Managing an overly decentralized staff
Plan of government written in 1949 inhibits flexibility of DPW

Opportunities:

Have ability to reorganize based on attrition in current workforce
Presence of professional engineering and academic resources
Restructuring can focus on current needs of the city

Recommendations:

- € Access organization structure and restructure chain of command within DPW
 - Should be clear and effective
 - Should establish and promote accountability
 - Critical environmental management responsibilities should be centralized

- € Reevaluate the approach to all sewer projects
 - Research renegotiation of consent decree
 - Determine true costs of proposed projects, including staff, finance and interest costs, contingencies

- € Develop a staffing policy that offers a competitive pay scale, professional development and advancement opportunities
 - Develop and implement policies to make the department more “citizen friendly.”
 - Duplication of complaints due to overlapping responsibilities
 - Recommend a “Citizens Council” to help DPW become proactive and more responsive to citizen needs

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- € Develop a strategy to minimize unneeded delays in projects in order to promote coordination among various services
- € Establish a citizen services hotline for traffic, sewer, drainage, traffic signal problems.

EDUCATION

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Education Committee felt its charge was to recommend cost-effective approaches that will maximize our community's resources, enhance student academic achievement, garner community support and optimistic perceptions of public education, establish collaborative partnerships, and solicit financial contributions leading to continual improvements in the school districts of East Baton Rouge Parish.

Further, it chose to propose programs and initiatives wherein the Mayor-President takes a leadership role in:

- € identifying and analyzing issues;
- € establishing governmental, civic, religious, and business partnerships;
- € functioning as a consensus builder among educational partners; and
- € utilizing the Office of the Mayor-President to persuasively advocate an agenda for educational excellence and the value of public education, establishing the City of Baton Rouge and the Parish of East Baton Rouge as a true learning community.

Challenges:

- € Need for improved communication and collaboration between public and private entities
- € Lack of physical space, finances, resources, equipment, materials, staffing to facilitate program/services
- € Determining funding priorities
- € Short-lived commitments from individuals and organizations
- € Lack of cooperation from other governmental and private organizations/agencies
- € Need for measurable results

Opportunities:

- € Mayor-President's "Bully Pulpit"
- € Mayor-President Holden's continuous commitment to education
- € Early commitments of financial contribution and volunteerism from Mayor-President, private businesses and civic leaders
- € Willingness to think outside current roles
- € Potential for state and federal grants
- € Renewed community interest in public education and efforts, programs, services by non-profits to improve education, literacy, etc.
- € Business and community understanding that a strong public education system is vital to economic growth
- € Good things that are happening in Baker, East Baton Rouge and Zachary schools

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- € New construction of East Baton Rouge schools
- € Collaborative spirit among all three school districts, BR Community College, LSU and Southern University

Recommendations:

- € Establish a Theme: Baton Rouge: A Learning Community
- € Increase Literacy
 - City-Parish Literacy Campaign, Directory and Coalition
 - Mayor-President's Essay Contest
 - Mayor-President's Book Club
 - Home Reading Library
 - Promote EBR Public Libraries, including a media campaign encouraging children and families to obtain a library card and access services
- € Decrease Truancy
 - Facilitate the establishment of a truancy coalition, including representatives from all branches of law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, and the Department of Juvenile Services
 - Assist School Districts in identifying and securing resources to address truancy.
- € Encourage partnerships in Education
 - Encourage a TV program, "Mayor-President's Spotlight on Educational Excellence"
 - Partners in Education Coalition
 - Public Education Investment Partners to provide financial support for literacy, academic excellence, technology and professional staff development efforts
- € Volunteerism
 - Grant public employees 8 hours per year to volunteer in schools
 - Encourage other government entities and private business to join with similar program for employees to volunteer
 - Establish Mayor-President's annual Volunteer Award
 - Collaborate with other volunteer agencies in solicitation and monitoring of volunteer activities
 - Promote Character Education
 - Establish City-Parish "Children and Family Service Directory"
 - Mayor-President's Children's Cabinet
 - Encourage corporate partnerships with schools

SOCIAL SERVICES

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Social Services Committee carried the responsibility of examining the City-Parish Department of Human Development and Services which includes the following departments:

- € Office of Social Services
- € East Baton Rouge Head Start Program
- € Workforce Investment Area (LWIA21)
- € Office of Community Development
- € USDA Food Program

The DHDS Department Director and all division managers were offered direct access to the transition process via 10-15 minute separate presentations to the committee. Additionally, the Social Services Committee examined the funding streams for the department including an additional independent presentation from the City-Parish Finance Department. The Committee also received a formal report on Community Action in Neighborhoods Developing Opportunities!, otherwise known as the CAN DO! Program.

Two public input sessions were established:

- € to gain first-hand knowledge and data on the need for social services and crises pending in parts of the parish, and
- € to harvest the specific requests from a cross-section of service providers on innovative ways to build government partnerships and expand future public-private coordination in service delivery and the helping of more EBR residents.

The committee heard presentations from the following entities:

- € Capital Area Human Services District
(A state entity with board appointment/nominees by Mayor/Metro Council)
- € Capital Area United Way
- € Earl K. Long Hospital
- € Homeless Coalition
- € Human Services Consortium
- € Baton Rouge Health Forum (written presentation only)
- € Equity Baton Rouge
- € YWCA Dialogue on Race
- € YWCA Early Head Start

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- € Crisis Intervention Center and 211 Infoline
- € Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana
- € Baton Rouge Children's Coalition
- € Family Road
- € A private sector "in-fill" real estate developer: George Jenne

Challenges:

- € *The Poverty Rate.* In the formal presentation of the *Governor's Solutions to Poverty* summit, East Baton Rouge was identified at a poverty rate of 21.9%, with 26.6% of all youth under 18 in East Baton Rouge Parish living in poverty. Among African-American youth, some 47.3% are impoverished.
- € *Reduced housing stock.*
- € *Shrinking municipal funding sources.* The City-Parish Finance Department suggests the administration especially scrutinize a recent reduction in Head Start monies for the parish.
- € *Rise in health care challenges in treatment.*

Opportunities:

- € *New State Leadership and Policy Initiatives.* Governor Kathleen Blanco has charged the leaders of state departments with policy reform which will directly benefit efforts of the administration to improve social service delivery. The first reform initiative specifically focuses on the elimination of poverty, and the second is the health care crisis in the state. As these two major areas impact social services statewide, two efforts underway within state agencies are worth noting:
 - *No Wrong Door.* An initiative of the Department of Social Services of Louisiana to foster service integration, single point of entry, joint planning for services and comprehensive team case management. This model could be used for service delivery on the local level.
 - *Coordinated School Health Plan.* A joint program of the state Departments of Education and Health and Hospitals aimed at prevention and intervention for up to 700,000 public school students statewide. It calls for the expansion of school based health centers located in EBRP and other parishes, and suggests the school could be one access point for social service delivery.
- € *Coalitions and Collaboration Underway.* The Committee was impressed by the willingness and track records of local social service networks to cross "turf" lines to deliver effective partnerships. Some have been used as models for other areas of the state, others recognized nationally for their success.

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- € The Committee believes the Mayor has a local social service network of collaborating providers who stand ready to share in the decision-making of service delivery.

Recommendations:

- € *Engage in a planning process for social services.* The Committee recommends a comprehensive social service plan to be completed in 2005 that would be jointly designed with client and provider input, publicly declared by the Mayor-President as a community priority, and uniformly disseminated to each neighborhood of the parish. The plan should serve as an education tool on the community's priorities, set policy on the leveraging of local government dollars, foster private sector partnerships around specific areas, and give the public a barometer for measuring poverty, health, housing, and other basic needs issues. The process should:
 - Gather professional research and data surrounding key poverty indicators
 - Allow for service provider, academic and community input.
 - Have a comprehensive approach to connect areas of education, economic development, public transportation, law enforcement, health and special needs assistance.
 - Encourage City-Parish lobbying team to check funding formulas to ensure EBRP its legal share of CDBG dollars.
 - Expand the functions of the CAN DO! Program to encourage social service planning and information sharing.
- € *Develop a Constituent & Neighborhood Services Program.* Elevate the work of "Can Do!" and the Anti-Drug Task Force, working in various council districts to:
 - provide access and coordination of city services
 - consider citizen recommendations to enhance neighborhood
 - alleviate problems through citizen volunteer monitoring
- € *Expand Access to Services.* The Committee recommends the Mayor and Metro Council declare "community service hubs" of a designated geographic area and set standards for uniform service for each hub to deliver efficient, effective delivery of quality social services with evaluation and standards.
 - Important that social service policy be placed in writing so that each of the city-parish community centers has standard and equitable services.
 - Each community service hub should maintain updated service information and notify local community leaders on access points for services.
 - Communication with other local centers such as BREC and the libraries, as well as a coordinated public information effort are critical for success.

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- € *Invigorate leadership, policy and standards of service to improve quality of social services.* The Social Services Committee recommends new standards of quality for the Department of Human Services and Development including:
 - The selection of DHSD leadership to change both the culture and the philosophy within the organization. The new standard for daily job performance should be consumer oriented; guarantee that all social service clients be treated with respect, dignity and confidentiality; include policy innovation that establishes comprehensive, inclusive services; and foster a creative, holistic approach through leadership.
 - Employing accountability measures and evaluation and enforcing standards to assure efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service delivery.

Additional Recommendations:

- Hold regular roundtable discussions with front-line social services representatives
- Increase General Fund commitment to social services by 20 percent annually.
- Examine hiring standards, job reviews and improved training for social services staff
- Consider a reorganization of DHDS once a master plan is established, utilizing the Committee as a resource for restructuring.
- Create citizen and neighborhood volunteer networks
- Access inventory of crime statistics from U.S. Attorney's Office for "Project Exile"

RISK MANAGEMENT

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Risk Management Committee met with the Parish Attorney and the attorney in the Parish Attorney's office responsible for the litigation of risk management to discuss outstanding judgments against the city-parish and policies and procedures for payment of judgments. The committee conducted a review of documents from the Parish Attorney's offices and met numerous times to discuss the existing procedures and ways to restructure the city-parish method of handling risk management.

Challenges:

- ∓ There is no policy on what types of claims the City-Parish will pay. As a result, the City-Parish is not self-insured; but, rather it is uninsured.
- ∓ There is no coordination between first responders and City-Parish investigators to allow for timely on-scene investigations of accidents even when the report indicates potential liability on the part of the City-Parish.
- ∓ Contractual review for indemnity provisions is inconsistent and even non-existent in some cases.
- ∓ Lack of organized data to secure insurance for City-Parish.

Opportunities:

- ∓ Risk management can be organized.
- ∓ There is the potential for significant savings in the risk management operation for the City-Parish.

Recommendations:

- ∓ Raise the position of Risk Manager to allow sufficient authority and support to do the job effectively.
- ∓ The City-Parish should investigate purchasing insurance to cover all or part of its risk. The insurance could cost less than the City-Parish is paying as an uninsured defendant, and the insurance company lawyers would reduce the need for assistant parish attorneys to defend the City-Parish.

- € City-Parish should investigate privatizing all or part of the parish attorney's office, as is the case in most parishes. Based on the current 37 lawyers in unclassified positions in the Parish Attorney's Office, privatization could save the City-Parish at least the amounts paid in benefits, approximately \$350,000 annually, excluding the City Prosecutor's Office from the privatization. Reduction in staff positions related to the defense of the City-Parish could easily exceed \$650,000, producing an approximate \$1 million savings annually.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Budget and Finance Committee examined the original proposed budget, the current year budget and five years of audits for the City-Parish. The committee was charged by Mayor-President Holden with finding ways to save monies by examining efficiencies and determining waste. The committee met with the Finance Department many times as well as the Fire Department, Police Department, EMS, Department of Public Works and with the sewer contractor, MWH. The committee attended a Metro Council meeting, contacted national organizations such as the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB); Council of State Governments, National Conference of State Legislatures and the Urban League. Extensive study was conducted via the internet of successes in local governments throughout the country on both a county and municipal level. The committee co-chairs met with David Osborne, author of "Reinventing Government," and also examined contracts from every department relative to delivery of services.

Challenges:

- ∅ The demand for services outstrips the revenues available.
- ∅ The budget is not a user-friendly document for the citizens.
- ∅ Difficult to track expenditure of funds to delivery of services in existing budget
- ∅ Difficult to monitor and evaluate contracts because of deficiency in specifying deliverables
- ∅ Bonding capacity, especially considering today's favorable market environment, was underutilized
- ∅ Like local governments throughout the country, the revenue system is under great pressure for future governmental needs

Opportunities:

- ∅ Environment exists for building public participation if budget is made user-friendly due to community enthusiasm over Mayor's election.
- ∅ Better management of existing resources may result in finding funds for the Mayor's initiatives.
- ∅ Opportunity existed for reinstalling management of government activities and funding in the Mayor's office to provide better oversight of budget.

Recommendations:

- ∅ Implement managing for results and performance based-budgeting with a process that encompasses:
 - Policy Development and Strategic Planning
 - Performance-based budgeting for both operational and capital budgets
 - Performance accountability
- ∅ Publish a Citizens' Guide to the Budget

FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

- Improve the process for awarding and monitoring contracts
- Understand needed changes in the contract review process based on issues from the previous administration where contracts may have not been reviewed to assure that:
 - š There was a need for the contract
 - š The service to be performed implemented the goals and objectives of the City-Parish
 - š That the contract adequately defined the work to be performed and the deliverable to be received
 - š Proper monitoring of the contract was provided for
- € Address the future vitality of the revenue base of the City-Parish
 - Work with both universities to monitor the effectiveness and fairness of the revenue system and look toward necessary changes to assure the continued vitality of the system
 - Rely on studies from national organizations that assess issues of revenue base and community viability

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scope of Committee's Work:

The Economic Development Committee approached its charge with the realizations that:

- € Its task and scope was inextricably linked to issues being examined by every other transition team.
- € The existing economy, its barriers and solutions to improving conditions for existing businesses had to be addressed.
- € The sectors that comprise our economy vary, sometimes dramatically, in their perspectives on barriers and solutions; need to select sectors that would provide a representative sample of perspectives for input and then go about getting extensive input.
- € The Mayor-President needs recommendations on economic development for taking the city-parish and the region into the future.
- € The industry sectors that built Baton Rouge into a midsize city will not be the ones that lead our state in the future.

The Economic Development Transition Team established seven resource groups to assist in collecting input on the selected economic sectors:

- Petrochemical
- Tourism/Sports Travel
- Technology
- Building/Contracting
- Transportation
- Small Business
- Healthcare
- Inner City Revitalization (Included DDD)

Challenges:

- € Workforce Readiness – A common concern expressed by existing and prospective businesses considering investment or expansion in Baton Rouge is that the “readiness” level of our existing workforce is insufficient. This can range from literacy level and soft work skills to more advanced management skills.

FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

- € Over-reliance on the petrochemical industry, government and education to fuel the capital-region economy – Each of these sectors contributed greatly to our city’s historical growth; however, all three will provide very limited growth opportunities in the future:
 - High-wage manufacturing jobs in the petrochemical sector have been under pressure for a long time largely due to increasing productivity connected with technological advances; high natural gas prices only add to the malaise
 - State and local government, as well as our educational institutions, offer limited growth potential in the future; moreover, they constantly are under threat by state budget crises like the current one connected with the rapid growth of Medicaid expenditures.
 - Capacity of Baton Rouge to build partnerships to reach ozone attainment goals.

Lack of emphasis on small business development

Opportunities:

- € Strategic location with access to deep water port, interstate and air transportation
- € The presence of Louisiana State University and Southern University, the Pennington Biomedical Research Center and CAMD provide potential to attract biotech, biomedical and other high-paying jobs to build an economy of the future.
- € Facilities and location provide an opportunity to develop tourism as a destination for amateur sports and eco-cultural tourism, building an industry that is family oriented and environmentally friendly.

Recommendations:

- € Increasing academic achievement levels in our public school system (K-12)
 - The Mayor-President’s Office will take the leadership in coordinating the effort to identify technology and industrial workforce gaps
 - Target and bring together employers and education leaders to effectively develop curricula and programs to train future workforce
- € Improve city-parish infrastructure with a clear understanding that most of this infrastructure must have regional coordination to be effective

FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

- Make government coordinating and management a major priority
 - § Streamline processes for permitting of building/contracting
 - § Simplify, cut red tape for starting up/expanding businesses
 - § Train enforcement officers to ensure uniform enforcement of codes and code violations
 - § Cross-train city-parish personnel to provide expanded service
- Establish regional priorities and determine cooperative opportunities for the capital region.
- € Creating an Economic Development initiative responsible to the Mayor-President with a focus on coordinating with other economic development agencies; coordinating the Mayor-President's personal recruiting efforts; coordinating economic-development related changes in any government agency
 - Utilize the Office of the Mayor in marketing East Baton Rouge Parish.
 - Utilize independent studies and analyses in specific cases, rely on studies on issues that have been completed or published, review and update items that can be fast-tracked
 - Review, Assess and Update of the Horizon Plan, the twenty year comprehensive land use and development plan for the City of Baton Rouge and Parish of East Baton Rouge.
 - Coordinate public/private sector leaders, including the Chamber of Greater Baton Rouge, regional parish presidents, and other economic development officials to ensure that a first-class recruitment, retention, and marketing effort is developed for the capital region, designed to include the best elements of the Cap Strategy initiative for regional economic development
 - Seek opportunities to develop and expand the cultural economy, capitalizing on the major investments made recently
 - Support growth of small business by women, minorities, young professionals and start-up entrepreneurs.

Green Light Tour Dates

Thursday, January 20

District 3 Meeting with Councilman Pat Culbertson

Tuesday, February 1

District 11 Meeting with Councilman David Boneno

Tuesday, February 1

District 1 Meeting with Councilman Wayne Carter

Wednesday, February 9

District 4 Meeting with Councilman Joseph Greco

Wednesday, February 9

District 2 Meeting with Councilman Ulysses “Bones” Addison

Thursday, February 10

District 8 Meeting with Councilman Mike Walker

Tuesday, February 15

District 12 Meeting with Councilman Mickey Skyring
William Daniel was also in attendance

Thursday, February 17

District 6 Meeting with Councilwoman Martha Jane Tassin

Monday, February 21

District 10 Meeting with Councilwoman Lorri Burgess

Monday, February 21

District 7 Meeting with Councilman Byron Sharper

Tuesday, February 22

District 9 Meeting with Councilman Darrel Ourso

Monday, February 28

District 5 Meeting with Councilman Charles Kelly
Chief Jeff LeDuff was also in attendance

Green Light Tour Highlights

Traffic

- € Gridlock
- € Delays in previously announced improvements
- € Building out highly developed areas without creating the needed infrastructure
- € Speeding
- € Lack of synchronization of traffic signals
- € Running of red lights and cars blocking intersections
- € Possibility of creating a north or south loop

Crime

- € Lack of interaction with local police and long delays in response time
- € Drug dealing and use
- € Prostitution
- € Burglary
- € Litter

Planning and Zoning

- € Excess number of exemptions granted
- € Lack of willingness to follow Horizon Plan
- € Developments do not do enough to mitigate traffic and flooding
- € Need for green spaces
- € Blight and vacant lots
- € Light pollution and lack of lighting in some areas
- € Create special planning/overlay districts for areas in need

Economic Development

- € Create opportunities for woman- and minority-owned businesses, as well as small businesses in general
- € Job Creation
- € Encouragement to look into federal programs available through HUD and SBA
- € Encourage creation and work of redevelopment districts in areas in need

Sewer System

- € Concerns about cost

Healthcare

- € Location of new charity hospital