FOCUS GROUP: Preserving Community Assets – Jo-anna Jones

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1) GOAL: Improve Pedestrian Access
    a. OBJECTIVE: More sidewalks to increase connectivity
    b. Create Pedestrian Access Plan
    c. Hire Consultant to develop plan
    d. OBJECTIVE: Connect various population centers
2) GOAL: Restoration and demolition in blighted areas
    a. OBJECTIVE: Resolution/determinations on adjudicated properties
    b. OBJECTIVE: Develop working relationship with Neighborhood Associations
    c. OBJECTIVE: Utilize inmate work assistance programs
    d. OBJECTIVE: Utilize regional Brownfields Program
3) GOAL: Ensure public safety of all Hazardous Materials and Waste transported through parish
    a. OBJECTIVE: Regulate use of River Road by Hazardous Materials transporters and/or designate alternate transport routes
    b. OBJECTIVE: Potential alternate routes LA 3125 and LA 3127 need resurfacing to ensure safety and reduce risk of accidents in transporting Hazardous Materials
    c. OBJECTIVE: Identify other roads that need structural and surface improvements to safeguard public safety.
4) GOAL: To re-establish and energize Parish Historical Society
    a. OBJECTIVE: To establish Historical Society as a center for focusing interest in local history, architecture, etc.
    b. OBJECTIVE: To digitally and physically archive Parish's historic assets
    c. OBJECTIVE: To assist in maintaining tradition of Christmas bonfires on the levees
    d. OBJECTIVE: To support and encourage actions leading to Main Street Programs to encourage revitalization of central business district areas in the Parish
5) GOAL: To Preserve the Parish's Food and Agricultural Traditions
    a. OBJECTIVE: Support Crawfish cultivation and fisheries
    b. OBJECTIVE: Agriculture (Tobacco—only area in US producing perique tobacco (3 local families still involved)
6) GOAL: Greater accessibility to food stores and other services
7) GOAL: Improve/emphasize gateways into the parish
    a. OBJECTIVE: Improve signage indicating entry into St. James Parish

FOCUS GROUP: Human Services – Jo-anna and Cullen

1) GOAL: Improve Awareness and Accessibility of Educational Opportunities to Improve Vocational Workforce Development
    a. OBJECTIVE: Strategy—Marketing Campaign to increase awareness of available educational services (include churches)
    b. OBJECTIVE: Develop Articulation Agreements between the St. James Parish School System and Nicholls State University, USL in Hammond, LA Community and Technical College in Reserve, etc.
        i. OBJECTIVE: Continue and expand on dual enrollment and other programs to help students accelerate their educations.
    c. OBJECTIVE: Expand Transportation Services to provide access to educational institutions within the region.
2) GOAL: Improve Awareness and Accessibility of Human Service Opportunities
    a. OBJECTIVE: Marketing Campaign to raise awareness of human services that are available (include churches, use flyers and other basic marketing methods, as well as electronics)
    b. OBJECTIVE: Develop and distribute Resource Directory
    c. OBJECTIVE: Match Need to Access RTP [Focus Groups to Accomplish? NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS]
    d. OBJECTIVE: Use new/multi-media, including electronic media, to raise awareness of available human services.
3) GOAL: Improve Accessibility and Affordability of medical services throughout the parish
    a. OBJECTIVE: Increase access to medical services throughout the parish
    b. OBJECTIVE: Bring back medical services, such as parish health clinics, on both banks of the Mississippi River
    c. OBJECTIVE: Encourage LSU Rural Services program to partner with the parish hospital to expand access to medical services in the parish.
    d. OBJECTIVE: Market available human services, especially the new hospital.
4) OVERALL GOAL: All of the above would improve, if population decline were stopped or reversed.

FOCUS GROUP: Housing Alex Wesley- Smith and Leo Marretta

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1). GOAL: Support a needs assessment to determine quality of available housing stock and recommend strategies for development.

a). OBJECTIVE: Contract with a qualified firm to perform a parish wide needs assessment5 for housing

i). STRATEGY: Develop and inventory of public housing, below market rate housing, subsidized housing, market rate apartments and single family homes..
ii). STRATEGY: Assess market conditions to develop a long term housing develop plan.

iii). STRATEGY: Make recommendations regarding locations of new neighborhood development in cooperation with the comprehensive land use plan team.

2). GOAL: Strongly encourage & develop a mix of adequate, abundant, and affordable housing types on both sides of the Mississippi River

a). OBJECTIVE: Ensure that market rate and below market rate housing selections are available.

i). STRATEGY: Coordinate housing planning and strategy efforts with local economic development plans to ensure sufficient housing availability for work force.

ii). STRATEGY: Develop action plan to challenge" NIMBYISM" from established neighborhoods

b). OBJECTIVE: Encourage Workforce housing & starter homes for teachers, fire and police and government employees.

c). OBJECTIVE: Encourage accessible, affordable, attractive senior housing adjacent to retail amenities and governmental services.

i). STRATEGY: Create a public private partnership to study the feasibility of senior housing.

iii). STRATEGY: Develop a demonstration project with parish support for implementation.

iv). STRATEGY: Create a neighborhood mix of cottages and senior housing.

d). OBJECTIVE: Support quality public housing with adequate funding and management training.

3). GOAL: Encourage mixed used development to create town centers and villages developments on both sides of the Mississippi River

a). OBJECTIVE: Develop appropriate land use regulation for mixed use developments,

b). OBJECTIVE: Support financial incentives for the development of town centers composed of needed retail and housing.

c). OBJECTIVE: Encourage the creation of public private partnerships to identify and support sustainable housing and economic development.

4). GOAL: Create strong neighborhoods with access to amenities and provide sufficient resources for healthy communities

FOCUS GROUP: INFRASTRUCTURE – Leo Marretta and Kevin Belanger

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1). GOAL: Capitalize on the natural resources within St James Parish by encouraging the building of new and the enhancing of existing built infrastructure

a). OBJECTIVE: Focus on development of multi-modal transportation infrastructure to promote connectivity of modes of transportation including port facilities, rail and freight compatible roadways

i).STRATEGY:_Assure adequate interstate access by improving Interstate interchange and connecting roads between the port, rail and interstate.

ii). STRATEGY: Coordinate Parish Comprehensive Planning with the Port of South Louisiana

iii). STRATEGY: Investigate the possibility for expanded rail terminals at oil storage facility and at sugar refinery.

iv). STRATEGY: Prepare for the completion of the Panama Canal Widening Project by creating a cargo container break bulk facility within the Parish

- Airport
- Truck Access
- Bridges

v). STRATEGY: Investigate whether or not the residents of the Parish would support a tax to finance transportation and/or infrastructure improvements.

vi). STRATEGY: Investigate opportunities to finance improvements through requiring impact fees for new development.

vii). STRATEGY: Investigate the possibility for expanded rail terminals at oil storage facility and at sugar refinery.

2). GOAL: Improved mobility /connectivity especially for transit dependent households

a). OBJECTIVE: Feeder transit system (light rail?) from west bank (Bridge?) and points south (LA 20?) to high speed rail line along I-10 corridor

i). STRATEGY: Corridor perseveration process for light rail transit

ii). STRATEGY: Park and Ride lots for transit connectivity

iii). STRATEGY: Work with neighboring transit systems in St John Parish, St Charles Parish and look towards expanding the RPTA into a regional transit system with connectivity to New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Thibodaux / Houma.

iv). STRATEGY: Complete the proposed North South Corridor Roadway connection between Houma / Thibodaux and the river.

v). STRATEGY: Include provisions for enhanced pedestrian connectivity requirements within the Parish's existing subdivision regulations

3). GOAL: Improve upon and increase recreational opportunities within the Parish

a). OBJECTIVE: Create regional recreational facilities which will draw from the New Orleans and Baton Rouge markets as well providing recreational opportunities for the residents of St James Parish.

i). STRATEGY: Develop / continue regional multi-use levee top recreational trail on both sides of the river throughout St James Parish.

ii). STRATEGY: Create camping, hiking, biking and motocross opportunities within the Parish.

iii). STRATEGY: Provide for facilities to encourage and enhance public use of the natural amenities at Pleasure Bend

iv). STRATEGY: Investigate to possibility of a regional sports-plex facility featuring baseball, soccer and other sports which is capable of accommodating regional tournaments to draw from the New Orleans and Baton Rouge markets. Might be able to incorporate a auto racing component.

v). STRATEGY: Include provisions for enhanced pedestrian and greenspace requirements within the Parish's existing subdivision regulations

4). GOAL: Prevent Point and Non-Point Source pollution especially with regards to sewer treatment.

a). OBJECTIVE: Control pollution created by improper maintenance of individual sewer treatment plants.

i). STRATEGY: Support existing efforts and work with DHH to provide parish wide sewer treatment facilities.

ii). STRATEGY: Investigate ways to be more proactive in ensuring compliance with current regulations regarding maintenance of sewer plants.

iii). STRATEGY: Include provisions for enhanced utility requirements within the Parish's existing subdivision regulations

FOCUS GROUP: LAND USE FOCUS GROUP – Simonne Caesar and Mart Black

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

This Focus Group's purposed was to build on the previous session by developing goals and objectives for land use in St. James Parish. The previous session, held on July 26 in Romeville, discussed issues and developed a SWOT analysis for land use in the Parish. The results of this session was used as introductory material for the August 9 Focus Group.

The facilitator began by a round of introductions and then opened the discussion by explaining what is meant by a goal and an objective in the planning context and providing definitions and examples of each. Focus Group participants were also provided with a graphic illustration which helped to explain the concepts and their definitions.

Next, the results of the July 26 session were presented to participants. In summary, there was mention that much of the land held in private parcels or tracts was suitable only for agriculture or for sale to adjacent industry, due primarily because of the size and shape of the parcel, i.e., relatively narrow roadway frontages with considerable depth, but usually coming to a point. It was economically difficult to develop such a narrow tract for residential subdivisions. Such tracts either ended up in family partitions, or were eventually sold to adjacent industry. There was some concern that since industry usually paid top price for adjacent land; it was difficult for the land to be purchased for less by a developer. This situation tended to restrain housing development in flat market and on in which affordable housing was seen as a pressing need.

At this meeting, there was also a great deal of discussion about zoning issues and many participants expressed an opinion that zoning would help to avoid industrial-residential conflicts, but some were also concerned about the restrictions zoning would place on private property. The facilitator explained that before zoning could be implemented and sustained legally, it needed to be reflective of a future land use plan.

Following this discussion, the facilitator presented the results of the SWOT analysis on land use held with the Steering Committee a few weeks before.

Participants were next asked to consider appropriate land use goals for the Parish. After much discussion, no clear direction emerged, so the facilitator asked those present in the group to think about how they wanted the Parish to look, what one would see while driving around the Parish in 20 to 25 years, where they believed would be the most appropriate areas and locations for specific land uses. After more general discussion, the following land use goals and objectives for the Parish emerged:

1) . <u>GOAL</u>: Encourage new industrial development in the Parish to locate or take place immediately upriver of the Convent area (Manresa), on both sides of the river to the Ascension Parish line. This is the general location for a great deal of existing

industry as well as announced expansions. It was noted that there was sufficient land to accommodate this type of growth. It was also noted that this area was well served by water, rail, and highway access on both sides of the river. The Nucor, Inca, and hydrogen plants were mentioned as specific examples of new industrial expansion in this area. It was also suggested that the most attractive industrial sites would be those adjacent to deepwater anchorages in the river. (NOTE: The group asked the Planning Team to contact South Louisiana Port for the locations of existing deepwater anchorages in St. James Parish.)

a). OBJECTIVE: In this area of the Parish to be set aside for industrial development, industrial-residential land use conflicts should be discouraged.

b). STRATEGY: Require industry to provide buffer zones of sufficient depth around plant sites.

2). GOAL: Preserve historic properties and traditional land uses (residential and agricultural) on both sides of the river, downriver from the Convent area.

a). OBJECTIVE: Discourage industrial growth or expansion in these areas

b). STRATEGY: Encourage lower development densities to preserve rural character of Parish.

3). GOAL: Encourage residential development and higher densities in specific areas of the Parish, particularly along both sides to the river in a downriver direction.

a). OBJECTIVE: Focus on the incorporated communities and existing communities in the Parish for housing development

b). STRATEGY: Promote infill development in these areas to reach higher densities

c). STRATEBY: Promoted mixed use development to take advantage of existing buildings for both commercial and residential uses.

4). GOAL: Encourage commercial and mixed use development in the LA 20 corridor between the river and South Vacherie.

5). GOAL: Identify major highway intersections that could be used as commercial nodes as well as convenient location for higher density development through mixed use development.

The session ran considerable over its allotted time and drew additional participants as other Focus Group sessions ended.

FOCUS GROUP: INFRASTRUCTURE – Leo Marretta and Kevin Belanger

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

HIGHWAY

1. GOAL: provide better connectivity inter and intra parishwide

   a. OBJECTIVE: develop parish transportation master plan or thoroughfare plan

      i. STRATEGY: hire consultant to do plan

- Task: find funding
- Task: procure process

2. GOAL: Have new Comp Plan sync up with new Parish Transportation Master Plan, especially with future land use plan

3. GOAL: Regional Transportation Plan that syncs up with parish transportation plan and state transportation plan.

a. OBJECTIVE: facilitate communication and coordination amongst all parties involved

i. STRATEGY: have the Parish Planning Commission and Council adopt the Parish Transportation Master Plan and refer back to it when making decisions especially land use decisions.

ii. STRATEGY: Participate in transportation planning process at regional and state level to insure St James Parish is represented

TRANSIT

1. GOAL: Connection to Terrebonne, Lafourche and Assumption – Regionalize

   b. OBJECTIVE: develop multi-modal facilities (water, rail, and highway)
   c. OBJECTIVE: high speed rail node development, buy and land bank sites
   d. OBJECTIVE: increase ridership of existing transit services, advertising budget

COMMUNICATIONS

Cable TV

1. GOAL: improve availability

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

1. GOAL: improve availability
   a. OBJECTIVE: AT&T to invest in infrastructure

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Decentralized

Libraries: too remote

Senior Centers: Good

Public Aid Distribution: too far to travel

Recreation: nothing for kids to do, sports being the only exception. Need summer camps (indoors), pools, … internet café for adults while kids in summer camp

Sports-Plex facility: regionalize, draw from both Baton Rouge and New Orleans markets

YMCA: encourage to locate here

Recreation Plan: do we have one?

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE

1. GOAL: sustain currently adequate service provision
   a. OBJECTIVE: increase volunteer membership
   b. OBJECTIVE: transition to paid firemen

SEWERAGE

1. GOAL: Parish-wide Sewerage
   a. OBJECTIVE: fund parish wide sewerage facilities
   i. Strategy: educate public to create funding opportunities (tax)
   ii. Strategy: pursue federal and state grant funding for sewerage projects
   iii. Strategy: complete and adopt parish wide sewerage plan