



NEWS MAG

BLOGS

GAMEPLAN

GALLERIES

PROMOTIONS

DIG CLASSIFIEDS

Register Login

MAGAZINE: CITY



The 22,000 square-foot ExxonMobil YMCA at Howell Place in North Baton Rouge, which was partly funded by financing from the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. Photo courtesy of East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority

BR BLIGHT FIGHTERS

THREE YEARS OUT, REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
TOUTS ITS FLEDGLING REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

0 COMMENTS

BY JEREMY HARPER

POSTED OCT 24, 2012

Like 0

Tweet

Three years ago, when a group of local government officials started to take a close look at the hundreds of blighted properties scattered throughout Baton Rouge, they realized there was no way under the current city system to tackle such a vast problem.



DIG Baton Rouge

DigBatonRouge

DigBatonRouge Whose ready for Halloween??? Our Marketing Director is...what are you going to be??
pic.twitter.com/iNUs72JW
22 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

DigBatonRouge @BethanyStraker this book made our day....it was passed around the office like the favorite toy in a Pre-K classroom.
#GRatedComparisons
22 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

DigBatonRouge Want to go to the Reblution show tonight Varsity Theatre - Baton Rouge, LA? What about The 13th Gate? Or how...
fb.me/2kesnKmIR
yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite

DigBatonRouge MUTEMATH is SOLD OUT tonight at Varsity Theatre - Baton Rouge, LA.....but look who still has tickets.....register...
fb.me/26SQhPG26
2 days ago · reply · retweet · favorite



Join the conversation

GET ON THE LIST!

Exclusive DIG Invites and giveaways and weekend Gameplan sent to your inbox every week.

Instead, they opted to create a new organization from the ground up. The result was the East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority, which set off in 2009 with the goal of revitalizing the city's blighted areas by assisting public and private investment in poor areas struggling with blighted and abandoned properties.

The RDA marked three years of operation last week by releasing a report that says the group helped create 3,350 jobs, supported the creation of more than 700 affordable housing units, and boosted local and state tax collections by a combined \$17.7 million.

"The needs of our community remain great, but we are extremely proud of what we've been able to accomplish in such a short period of time," said Executive Director Walter Monsour, who served as Mayor Kip Holden's second-in-command for several years before taking over the RDA.

The choreographed report presentation at the Old State Capitol was a prelude to a push for more permanent funding for the RDA, which has survived on one-time donations from other public agencies and a combination of federal grants and tax credits. The RDA, which has a staff of 12, spent \$4.6 million and generated \$7.4 million from 2009 to 2011.

John Nolan, who chairs the RDA board, said the three-year report allows taxpayers to make an informed judgment about whether or not the RDA is what the community needs.

"I believe that most of the people of this parish, when informed about the depth of the blight and the distress in some of our neighborhoods in the community, feel like this kind of work is good public policy," he said.

The mayor's office and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation led the creation of the authority. Early on, the initiative received a financial boost from \$1 million in seed money from the East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority and \$500,000 in matching money from the city-parish. Community leaders and RDA staff visited Portland, Ore., Richmond, and other cities to see first-hand how older and better-developed revitalization programs were working.

Building on a series of public meetings, the RDA and a group of consultants created community improvement plans for five problem areas within Baton Rouge: Choctaw Corridor, Northdale/Standard Heights, Melrose East, Scotlandville Gateway, and Zion City/Glen Oaks. It also created a database that will include the thousands of blighted and adjudicated properties in the city.

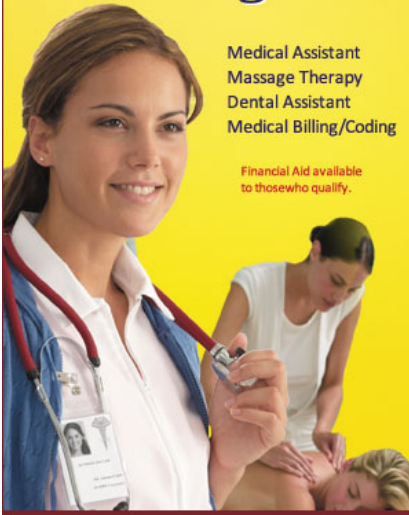
The RDA estimated that the parish had a deficiency of 1,500

Your Future - Start NOW!
A New Career in Less Than a Year

Medical Training College

Medical Assistant
Massage Therapy
Dental Assistant
Medical Billing/Coding

Financial Aid available to those who qualify.



926.5820 **mtcbr.com**

READER POLL

Who won Monday night's presidential debate on foreign policy?

- ☐ Mitt Romney
- ☐ Barack Obama
- ☐ Israel, for being mentioned more often than any other nation.
- ☐ The only contest that mattered Tuesday night was the Tigers-Cardinals game.

VOTE

affordable housing units – a difficult obstacle to overcome for families and individuals seeking safe and affordable housing.

Monsour said developers consistently cited the lack of available capital as the top obstacle to developing more affordable housing projects in lower income areas of Baton Rouge.

RDA officials said the organization has invested \$19.7 million in housing and economic development projects in poor areas – helping facilitate \$200 million in total project costs.

Those dollars ranged from \$4.8 million in gap financing for projects such as affordable housing for seniors to the Hampton Inn and Suites hotel set to open in downtown Baton Rouge next year.

The RDA also provided funds for the ExxonMobil YMCA, a 22,000 square-foot facility that is the first YMCA fitness center in North Baton Rouge.

Other RDA-financed projects in the works include The Elysian, a large apartment development on Spanish Town Road near I-110 that is under construction, and Smiley Heights, a 190-acre site north of Florida Boulevard acquired by the RDA for the development of an urban village that will also house an automotive training center for The Louisiana Technical College System.

“This project will absolutely transform the surrounding community,” Monsour said.

In the meantime, RDA officials will continue to seek a more reliable source of funding.

The project has the full backing of the man who is currently the most influential person in Baton Rouge government: Mayor Kip Holden, who praised the RDA for its work.

“They are proof of what our city parish can accomplish when we work together,” Holden said.

Like

0

Tweet

BE THE FIRST TO COMMENT

Email Address (We will never spam or share)

Display Name

Comment



Deal of the Day Thu 10/25

\$5 for \$10 Worth of Famous Gelato, Panini Sandwiches, Crepes, Coffee & More

Bacio di Roma



Original Price

~~\$10.00~~

Our Price

\$5.00

Wow, that's 50% off!



MOST COMMENTED

All Time | Recent

WHERE'D THE ROCK GO?

POSTED: FEB 2 | 49 COMMENTS

BALSAMIC 101

POSTED: JUL 11 | 41 COMMENTS

A BIG BOOK DEAL

POSTED: JUN 13 | 31 COMMENTS

CALL L.A. STUNTS FOR A GOOD TIME

POSTED: FEB 2 | 28 COMMENTS

AWESOME ASPARAGUS

POSTED: JUL 18 | 28 COMMENTS

SHUSH NO MORE

POSTED: MAY 25 | 24 COMMENTS

OLIVE OIL 101

POSTED: SEP 5 | 21 COMMENTS