

Areas targeted for development plans

1 North Baton Rouge

Many want entertainment and retail options so residents won't have to travel to the southern end of the parish to go to a movie.



Areas created from public input process

- 1 North Baton Rouge
- 2 Midcity
- 3 Broadmoor/Cortana
- 4 South Medical District

Areas previously identified in existing plans

- 5 Downtown
- 6 Old South Baton Rouge

Smaller area plans put together by redevelopment authority

- 7 Scotlandville Gateway
- 8 Zion City/Glen Oaks
- 9 Northdale
- 10 Choctaw Corridor
- 11 Melrose East



Advocate graphic

6 Old South Baton Rouge

One new component proposed in conjunction with existing plans calls for developing Nicholson Drive as a corridor that could include a street car connecting LSU to downtown.

3 Broadmoor/Cortana

The focus here is on the strong residential base in the Broadmoor area and Florida Boulevard, an important retail and transportation corridor.



Advocate staff photos by RICHARD ALAN HANNON

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Plan focuses on compact areas for action

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While Future BR aims to become the master plan for all of East Baton Rouge Parish, it treats a number of areas within it as self-contained units.

Planners created four so-called small area plans, specifically for Broadmoor/Cortana; north Baton Rouge; Midcity; and a “medical district” around Bluebonnet Boulevard and Essen Lane.

The consultants also coordinated their activities with the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, which has the task of returning abandoned and blighted property to residential and commercial uses. The authority last year was gathering information from residents and business owners in five distressed neighborhoods in the parish, and conducted its public sessions with Future BR in mind.

Finally, two areas of town with well-established plans — downtown and Old South Baton Rouge — have been folded into the concept, producing a map of the parish dotted with areas the planning team sees as ripe for action.

"You can't address the whole parish at once," said lead planner John Fregonese, of Portland, Ore.-based Fregonese & Associates. "You've got to be able to bore down to a higher level of detail to accomplish anything, developing specific actions that would bring the plan's ideas to life in that area." City-Parish Planning Director Troy Bunch said that while the Horizon Plan that is being replaced does have certain designated "growth centers," Future BR takes the concept further by having very detailed plans, shaped by public input for those areas.

"Each of these areas were chosen because they appeared to have the most potential with key issues that would be instructive about the plan," Fregonese said.

ESSEN/BLUEBONNET: The focus there is on its hospitals and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. So, planners asked stakeholders what kind of supporting development, even housing options, should be encouraged there.

Participants, including representatives from Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Baton Rouge General Medical Center, proposed a new road off of Interstate 10 between the hospitals. This, they said, would ease traffic congestion and allow for some denser retail development. Empty land near I-10 between Essen and Bluebonnet was seen as a possible home for a children's hospital.

Fregonese said it is important that the plan recognizes the concentration of medical, research and biotech assets in the area and looks at how they interrelate and contribute to the whole.

"Developing that into an integrated campus will provide benefits not just to (individual institutions) but for the economic development of Baton Rouge," he said.

MIDCITY: Residents there are trying to make the area more pedestrian friendly, while building up retail and other services along the Florida Boulevard and Government Street corridors to support the surrounding neighborhoods.

Fregonese said Midcity was the one area that really jumped out at him as discussions began with Baton Rouge General Medical Center, Baton Rouge Community College and stakeholders on and around Government Street and Florida Boulevard between Airline Highway and downtown.

"Even now, it's at the top of my list for a place to move ahead on," he said.

BROADMOOR/CORTANA: The focus there is on the strong residential base in the Broadmoor area; Cortana Mall, which planners say is likely to evolve away from a traditional mall concept; and Florida Boulevard, an important retail and transportation corridor that could include a rapid bus transit line.

NORTH BATON ROUGE: There are a number of institutional players,

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such as Southern University, Metro Airport and the Coca-Cola bottling plant, who already had been master planning for the area.

The East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority has been working on some plans for specific neighborhoods in the area, while Southern University's landscape architecture students helped fill the ranks of participants who contributed to the north Baton Rouge district.

Many participating in public hearings want more entertainment and retail options. For example, so residents won't have to travel to the southern end of the parish to go to a movie.

A greenway tying parks and green space together with bike and walking paths was recommended by participants, as was creating a truly pedestrian- and retail-friendly experience at the entrance of Southern University.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS: Beyond the four small-area plans are five areas already under the stewardship of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority. They are Scotlandville Gateway; Zion City/Glen Oaks; Northdale; Melrose East; and the Choctaw Corridor.

Mark Goodson, vice president of the redevelopment authority, said the agency worked with the Future BR initiative to ensure the RDA's efforts would be well integrated with the parish's master plan.

"We had always envisioned that our plans would work together and at the very least complement each other," Goodson said.

Some of RDA's community improvement plans will fall within the boundaries of the larger small area plans, particularly those for north Baton Rouge and Midcity, depending on how the final draft of Future BR draws those boundaries.

DOWNTOWN/OLD SOUTH BATON ROUGE: These two crucial areas of the city were not given small area plans because they already have intensive plans in place.

Fregonese said the idea with downtown and Old South was to not reinvent the wheel.

Downtown's "Plan Baton Rouge II has got a lot of life in it still and just needs to be integrated," he said. "We're building off of all that. We're not doing anything from scratch we don't have to."

As for Old South, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, working in conjunction with local stakeholders that include LSU and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, completed a comprehensive plan in 2006 for the area between downtown and LSU.

Future BR sees that plan, which envisions four districts primed to attract businesses and improve parks, streets sidewalks and housing, as providing the blueprint for Old South.

However, one new component is developing Nicholson as a corridor that could include a street car connecting LSU to downtown.