

Land Use Issues & Key Plan Initiatives

Envision Jefferson 2020 describes Jefferson Parish’s responses to existing and anticipated land use issues. The issues listed in this section were identified by:

- The public in workshops conducted between January 2002 and March 2002;
- The Element and Steering Committees in meetings conducted throughout 2002 and the first half of 2003;
- Parish representatives;
- The *Jefferson EDGE*; and
- The 2002 University of New Orleans Quality of Life Survey.

Enhancing the quality of life is the central theme of Envision Jefferson 2020. The key initiatives to achieve this are established in Plan goals, objectives, policies, and tasks that will:

- Improve and protect existing residential neighborhoods through an increased focus on compatible design and improved access to goods and services;
- Capitalize on the Tournament Players Club (TPC) Golf Course by establishing high quality planned developments on the West Bank that will attract residents from throughout the region;
- Strengthen and diversify commercial areas to provide goods and services for residents throughout the region in commercial and mixed use centers;
- Protect and expand economic development opportunities by protecting and improving services to existing industrial areas;
- Create new economic development opportunities in a new technology park that will be jointly developed by the public and private sectors;
- Develop the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline to improve recreational opportunities and other water bodies with appropriate water-oriented development;
- Use regional transit and transportation system improvements to stimulate

development and redevelopment that will improve the Parish’s fiscal health.

Future Land Use Element Major Issues

Issue 1: Land Use Compatibility and Buffering

Jefferson Parish citizens have indicated that land use compatibility is one of the most important issues facing existing neighborhoods in Jefferson Parish. Greater focus on compatible design and the effective use of buffers between incompatible uses will strengthen and preserve residential neighborhoods in Jefferson Parish. Compatibility, as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, refers to the ability of adjacent land uses to co-exist without significant interference with the normal activities of either use. The intent of this definition is to ensure that where different uses are established adjacent to one another, any negative impacts of those uses are mitigated through buffers or other techniques. Citizens indicated in planning workshops that buffers are needed between large-scale commercial development and residential areas. Citizens are not opposed to limited neighborhood scale businesses in the area that compatibly bring convenient goods and services close to home.

Envision 2020 Responses: Improve compatibility standards in the zoning regulations to ensure that land use, design, scale, and buffer standards increase the appeal of Jefferson Parish residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Issue 2: Design

Jefferson Parish residents consider quality urban design standards to be essential for the protection of neighborhoods, the function of roadways and the long-term economic health of the Parish. Citizens want better-designed and more visually appealing commercial and

residential areas that incorporate landscaping and attractive green space.

Envision 2020 Responses: Improve Parish design standards addressing commercial land uses, signage, landscaping, streetscapes, parking areas, and site design.

Issue 3: Reuse/Redevelopment of Existing Commercial and Industrial Properties

Jefferson Parish citizens want the Parish to promote the reuse or redevelopment of existing buildings. Citizens support the use of “carrots and sticks” to reclaim blighted and vacant buildings and to ensure that today’s development will not become tomorrow’s vacant and blighted structures.

Envision 2020 Responses: Form partnerships with business and economic development interests to provide the infrastructure and other support needed to promote redevelopment. Ensure that new development will be of sufficient quality to sustain continuous economic activity.

Issue 4: Economic Development

Increased economic opportunities are essential for residents to enjoy quality lives. Economic diversity is essential to support the diverse labor force and to improve economic stability through local, regional, national, and international economic shifts. The *Jefferson EDGE* (the Strategic Economic Plan for Jefferson Parish) recognized the importance of a good comprehensive plan to economic success. *Envision Jefferson 2020* recognizes that economic growth is essential to support high quality services and sustainable neighborhoods.

Envision 2020 Responses: This Comprehensive Plan integrates the objectives of the *Jefferson EDGE* related to land use in Jefferson Parish. Areas such as Elmwood, Metairie CBD, Harvey Canal, and Avondale

are preserved and protected throughout the Comprehensive Plan. A high priority is placed on creation of a new business park, on the expansion of transportation (e.g., the Huey P. Long Bridge expansion) and on utility capacity (water, sewer and storm water) to serve existing and new economic development. Master 404 wetland permitting will be sought by the Parish to facilitate high quality growth and development on the West Bank

Issue 5: Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Citizens of Jefferson Parish identify infrastructure improvements with progress and development that affect the quality of life in the Parish. Citizen concerns include the adequacy of drainage facilities, the need to maintain infrastructure, and the importance of coordinating infrastructure improvements with the Parish’s development priorities.

Envision 2020 Responses: Continue to seek regional, state and federal assistance in resolving drainage and transportation challenges. Fund ongoing maintenance and operations of existing facilities to maximize the return on public and private investment in infrastructure and to minimize the long-term costs for residents.

Issue 6: Administration

Citizens desire greater emphasis on the enforcement of existing codes and laws to enhance the quality of life and the quality of their surroundings. Citizens desire a closer adherence to current zoning regulations and involvement in proposed changes to the zoning ordinance.

Envision 2020 Responses: In addition to revising the Parish’s development regulations to improve compatibility and development aesthetics, the Plan calls for an ongoing commitment to code enforcement.

Issue 7: Environment

Citizens have called for greater awareness and participation in the resolution of the Parish’s environmental issues, including: the protection and nourishment of coastal wetlands outside of the hurricane protection levee, enhanced agency coordination and cooperation to efficiently administer environmental regulations, and the importance of minimizing potential risks from natural and man-made hazards. There is recognition that coastal land loss is increasing the risk of flooding from hurricane storm surges, particularly on the West Bank.

Envision 2020 Responses: Seek state and federal assistance in ongoing efforts to refresh and replenish wetlands and coastal lands that protect the Parish from hurricane storm surges. Coordinate with environmental regulatory agencies to facilitate desired development and minimize unproductive costs and delays associated with environmental reviews. Better capitalize on existing natural resources as recreational amenities.

Issue 8: Wetlands Permitting Within the Hurricane Protection Levee

Jefferson Parish is currently seeking a master 404 wetland permit from the Army Corps of Engineers in the Barataria Corridor of Jefferson Parish. The purpose of the Jefferson Parish Barataria Corridor master 404 wetland permit is to facilitate future development of the area within the hurricane protection levee with administrative review by the Army Corps of Engineers of individual developments following issuance of the master 404 wetland permit. Through a unified approach to both development and mitigation, the Parish can more efficiently achieve its environmental and economic development objectives.

Envision 2020 Responses: Incorporates land use patterns and other factors for the Barataria Corridor to ensure consistency with the master

404 wetland permit process. Calls for initiation of a similar master 404 wetland permit application for the remainder of the West Bank within the Hurricane Protection Levee.

Issue 9: Water-Oriented Development

Jefferson Parish has great potential to enhance water-oriented development along Lake Pontchartrain, the Mississippi River and other water bodies in the Parish. Along Lake Pontchartrain, adoption and implementation of the *Jefferson Lakefront Linear Park Master Plan* and development of beaches would enhance recreational opportunities. Along the Mississippi River on the East Bank, water-oriented recreational and development opportunities could increase the value of the Mississippi River. On the West Bank, industrial uses are dominant along the Mississippi River and the Harvey Canal and should be protected. This area also provides the opportunity for Jefferson Parish to capitalize on regional port activities, as outlined in the *Jefferson EDGE*. Other water bodies on the West Bank have the opportunities for a mix of recreational and commercial development, where appropriate.

Envision 2020 Responses: Adopt and implement a plan for the development of the lakefront. Coordinate with the Levee Districts to provide recreational opportunities along levees, visual access to the Mississippi River and better access to recreational lands outside the Hurricane Protection Levee.

Envisioning Jefferson 2020

The comprehensive planning process has involved extensive data collection and public input. The University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs (UNO) performed a detailed land use survey based on the American Planning Association’s Land Based Classification Standards (LBCS). The survey results were recorded in a detailed GIS

database. Public workshops were held throughout the Parish to identify land use and transportation issues. As the goals, objectives and future land use maps were developed, Element Committee meetings were held to review and provide input on the plan contents. In addition, the entire comprehensive planning process has been guided through the input and direction of the Steering Committee.

To address the concerns of citizens and to build the long-term support needed to address those concerns, the Plan incorporates a number of “Visionary Concepts.” The desired outcome of the concepts is to attract high quality residential and economic growth to Jefferson Parish. These “Visionary Concepts” include the following physical changes that will strengthen the Parish’s economic prospects, increase the Parish’s residential appeal and improve the Parish’s ability to fund high quality services for its residents:

- Expedite critical transportation improvements such as the widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge, completion of the I-49 corridor and improving access to the Earhart Expressway;
- Recognize that additional demands may surface as a result of future development which cannot be foreseen in the scope of this study. For Jefferson Parish to continue to prosper, it will be in the interest of the Parish to consider and review the feasibility of other large-scale transportation improvements such as an additional crossing of the Mississippi River.
- New planned developments centered on the TPC golf course;
- Mixed-use development that will provide better access to goods and services for residents, particularly our aging seniors;
- Light-rail service and transit-oriented development that will provide an alternative to traffic congestion and an economic engine for Airline Drive Corridor revitalization;
- A new business and technology park;

- Expanded opportunities for industrial growth.

Each of these concepts is embraced in Envision Jefferson 2020 to foster a bright future for all Jefferson Parish residents.

Land Use Survey by UNO

The land use survey conducted by the University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs identified 20,815.40 acres of land within the Hurricane Protection Levee system as not being developed, 672.99 acres on the East Bank and 20,142.41 acres on the West Bank. This is the amount of land available for new development. The survey shows that the West Bank is where main growth and development opportunities exist for Jefferson Parish. The existing land use of Jefferson Parish is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Existing Land Use.

Population and Housingⁱ

A population projection was done as part of the planning process. Through 2020 in unincorporated Jefferson Parish, the population is projected to grow by approximately 30,000 with most of this growth occurring on the West Bank. The 2000 Census shows a continued aging of the Parish population and growth in minority populations.

To accommodate the increase in population a projection of 15,058 new single-family houses, 868 two-to-four Family residences and 2,429 multi-family units are required. While historically the East Bank has been the desired location of residential development, most of this new housing will be developed on the West Bank where the land necessary is available. Chapter 3 Population, Housing and Employment discusses these issues in detail.

Real Estate Trendsⁱⁱ

The University of New Orleans (UNO) Real Estate Market Data Center produces an annual report on real estate condition of the New Orleans Metropolitan area. The assessment of conditions from Volume XXXIV, January 2002 for Jefferson Parish show household growth rate higher than the population growth rate. This is attributed to smaller household size and aging population:

Jefferson Parish 1990 to 2000
Annual Growth

Population	0.17%
Households	0.55%
Income/Household	2.80%

(estimate – did not use 2000 census data)

Single Family Housing

New Orleans Area shows an upward rise of average housing cost at long term growth rates of between 3% and 6% per year. Low interest rates have increase first time homebuyer activity. In East Jefferson Parish, the trend of first time homebuyers has resulted in older, smaller, less expensive houses being sold (6% increase in volume), but a decrease in price (7%) as a result of fewer newer, expensive houses being sold.

The West Bank of Jefferson Parish experienced a 10% drop in sales volume with a 6.7% rise in prices. This maybe an indication of less expensive houses being sold by owner and not reported.

Townhouses and Condominiums

There is a continuing multi-year modest demand for townhouses. This demand is based on an average price 10% less than single family detached houses, a demand for large expensive units and first time buyers looking for living areas closer to the size of single-family detached units.

Condominium unit prices are up an average of 4.5% in Jefferson Parish with an 8% decline in

sales in 2001. With high costs per foot for construction of single-family detached housing, townhouses and condominiums are an attractive alternative. Townhouse designs may prove useful as housing for low or moderate-income families requiring 3 to 5 bedrooms plus some outdoor play area in locations where land costs are high.

Apartment Market

Jefferson Parish has a strong apartment market with an occupancy rate of about 94.6%, fewer than 1,300 vacant apartments. West Bank had fewer than 350 vacant units out of 5,570 surveyed. Employment growth has led to a very tight housing market with moderate rent levels.

Most construction of multi-family units has been in luxury units. The UNO analysis believes this market is reaching a saturation point, related to national and local economic conditions. The only future large-scale surge in multi-family housing development is likely to be associated with the Section 8 program and replacement of demolished public housing.

Jefferson Parish rents rose by 3% as a whole with larger increases in River Ridge (4%) and West Jefferson (5%). Rents per foot of \$0.63 are the result of new units with rates over \$0.75.

There is a need for less expensive independent and assisted living units for the elderly. Renovation and conversion of older structures offers the fastest and most appropriate means of rebuilding neighborhoods to serve households with Section 8 vouchers.

**Quality of Life - 2002 Orleans
Jefferson Quality of Life Survey –
UNO**

The UNO Survey Research Center conducts a Quality of Life survey for Orleans and Jefferson Parishes on a two-year basis, with the last survey conducted in 2002. The

questions are arranged in a number of categories including general quality of life, safety, quality of government services, economic outlook, and education.

Since UNO began this survey in 1986 Jefferson Parish voters show a high level of satisfaction with their quality of life and in the most recent polls that the quality of life is improving. Crime continues to be mentioned as the biggest problem in Jefferson but is less dominant than in past surveys. Significant numbers mentioned traffic and growth, and streets and education as the major problems.

There is a continuing high level of satisfaction in local government services including improvements in local streets. Respondents were not optimistic about employment opportunities, but feel public education is showing improvement.

Departments and Agencies Issues

Meetings were held with different Departments and Agencies to identify specific issues confronting each department and agency.

Parish Perception

There is a need for a unified view of the Parish. Citizens take a parochial view of their immediate neighborhood needs and are not concerned with needs outside their neighborhood. The parochial view also exists strongly between the East Bank and the West Bank. There is a strong need for public education on the full range of services provided along with the needs, how they are provided and maintained and the funding requirements and limits required to provide the services.

Finance

Jefferson Parish has a large number of needs that are difficult to finance. New revenues are difficult to get. A major constraint is the tax

base structure with business paying the bulk of the load. To get any tax or funding approval requires the support of the business, civic and political sectors; without any one group there is failure. This coalition of all three groups needs to exist for any successful passage of a tax or funding proposal.

Planning and Development

There is a need to improve the coordination of the political leadership in Jefferson Parish. Jefferson Parish Council Members must make decisions based on the entire Parish, not just individual districts. The Parish departments’ operations are rigidly structured, preventing formal communication and coordination among the departments. There is a need to establish formal communication between departments. Communication is currently occurring informally between department heads and has affected some projects. There is a need for improved traffic access to necessary and desired services and opportunities through improved land use compatibility.

Emergency Management

Transportation and storage of hazardous materials is a major concern for the Department of Emergency Management. The types of materials stored changes daily and are not always known. Proximity of residences and critical facilities to heavy industry and hazardous materials along with transportation of hazardous materials through residential areas are the basis for this concern.

The location of Jefferson Parish on the floodplain of the Mississippi River along with the subsidence of the ground level to below sea level associated with development and drainage has made flooding major concern for the Emergency Management along with the citizens of Jefferson Parish. In addition to the flooding concern from rainfall, the Parish’s proximity to the Gulf Coast adds the risk of flooding for hurricane storm surges. Flooding associated with a hurricane storm surges

requires the evacuation of the entire Parish population northward to escape the risk.

Wetland Permitting

Most of the large unused portion of land on the West Bank is defined as wetlands, development of which requires permitting by the Corps of Engineers. Jefferson Parish is in the process of applying for a master 404-wetland permit for the majority of the area south of Lapalco, between the Harvey Canal and the City of Westwego, inside the hurricane protection levee system. This permit is based on the Barataria Corridor Land Use Study. Issuance of the master 404 wetland permit will require Jefferson Parish to implement a large-scale master mitigation program to make up for the wetlands lost to development covered by the master 404 wetland permit. Wetlands outside the existing levee system will be difficult to permit and should not be planned for development.

Community Development

There is a critical shortage of affordable housing, both single family and multiple family rentals, in Jefferson Parish. There is an influx of people from New Orleans needing affordable housing and other social services. The population of Jefferson Parish is rapidly aging. Efforts to address the needs of Jefferson Parish have only been able to respond to immediate needs, have not been comprehensive and have not been able to plan for future needs.

Housing and services need to be planned and clustered around job creation, education and commercial locations. Coordination with JEDCO and the Planning Department is needed in the development of the clusters of affordable housing near jobs, stores and schools. This development needs to include access to and by transit.

Housing issues and budgets in Jefferson Parish are currently council district oriented. Affordable housing means housing averaging \$75,000 to a maximum of \$95,000. Impediments to housing affordability include soil subsidence, maintenance of housing and the cost of land. Problems have resulted where the Parish has rehabilitated several houses in a neighborhood only end up being priced out of the neighborhoods. The largest housing need in Jefferson Parish is the need for rehab-for-sale properties to improve declining neighborhoods and make home ownership affordable.

Library

Jefferson Parish Libraries are very successful and serve as the model for other communities. The Libraries are serving as community centers and meeting places providing facilities and information to the citizens of the Parish. Locating libraries along transit routes or routing transit service to existing libraries is important to continue and expand access to the aging population and those without private automobiles. Library Department would like to provide full services to the region through cooperative use agreements with neighboring library systems, becoming a regional resource.

Infrastructure

The Parish has significant problems today maintaining its infrastructure. Public Works is stretching its resources to meet some current capital programs, SELA for drainage and the Road Bond Program, while resources are shifted from or are not made available for operational maintenance and infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion. Jefferson Parish has significant road problems. The Road Bond program needs an additional \$10 million, each year for seven years for a total amount of \$70 million to \$80 million to improve local roads and streets. Water plants are in good condition, however water lines need replacement due to the need for larger capacity and general repair. An estimated 500

million-1 billion dollars is needed to address current infrastructure needs. The Sewerage Department alone requires \$350 million to \$800 million (depending on approach) to address its current needs. Drainage improvements are currently covered by SELA, however funding is questionable, depending on Federal Budget.

Sewerage Department

Need to provide sewage collection and treatment for all of unincorporated Jefferson Parish. On the East Bank there are a couple of areas without sewage, the Office Building on Airline by Abita Springs Water Company and near the Veterans and David Drive intersection. On the West Bank parts of the Waggaman area are developing without community sewerage.

The Sewerage Department is investigating the establishment of regional lift stations to serve areas not yet developed. The Parish will locate and construct lift stations as an alternative to accepting a series of small lift stations that developers place in individual developments. This is a way to reduce operation and maintenance costs.

There are three existing plants on the West Bank. The Harvey Sewage Treatment Plant has the capacity to serve full development of its service area. The Bridge City Sewage Treatment Plant has excess capacity to serve future development.

The Marrero Sewage Treatment Plant is currently overloaded. Expansion of the Marrero Plant is in the design phase with construction schedule to begin by end of 2002. Jefferson Parish is studying the establishment of a consolidated regional West Bank sewage treatment plant in three possible areas: the Destrehan Avenue area, the Kelvin Landfill area and Avondale rail yard area.

Water Department

The major issue for the Water Department is the rehabilitation of the distribution lines along with improvements to the distribution system in select areas of the Parish including Waggaman-Avondale area, Terrytown, Crown Point, and Lafitte. There is currently capacity at the East Bank and West Bank Plants to meet the anticipated need through 2038, with room for increasing capacity on the West Bank by replacing the older plant.

JEDCO - Economic Development

There is a positive business image in Jefferson Parish, but a lack of sites and buildings hinders the ability to attract new businesses. In order for Jefferson Parish to grow, the Parish must retain current businesses and attract new businesses. Businesses pay the vast majority of the taxes of Jefferson Parish. Residential areas are encroaching into commercial and industrial areas.

Jefferson Parish needs business and industrial park development in order to remain competitive. There is a need for a business and research park with a campus atmosphere. Land needs to be provided for business development.

Transportation is an issue in business site selection for access to the types of transportation, especially access to airports, is an important requirement for many businesses today. Transportation is also an impediment to business development due to traffic congestion, limits on the capacity and access to roads and highways, especially the Huey P. Long Bridge. Business development has a communications constraint, including the lack of fiber optics in some areas.

The Jefferson Economic Development Commission developed a five-year strategic plan, The *Jefferson EDGE*, for economic development in Jefferson Parish that was adopted by the Jefferson Parish Council. As part of the planning process the strengths and

weakness related to the economic development of Jefferson Parish were identified.

Strengths:

Strengths identified in the *Jefferson EDGE* include location advantage of being near New Orleans with its international reputation and excellent transportation network of highways, railroads, airport, and port. This advantage has let businesses develop in Jefferson Parish that are able to serve populations in adjacent parishes including retail services that serve the entire New Orleans region.

Other strengths identified are the business climate, including taxation, permitting and research capacity, governmental leadership, and the quality of life in Jefferson Parish. The quality of life attribute identified in the *Jefferson EDGE* includes crime rates, the number of hospital beds or doctors per capita, total square footage of retail shopping, and cultural events (concerts, art exhibits, theaters).

Weaknesses:

The major weakness identified is the limited development opportunities associated with the lack of developable land. The West Bank offers the main opportunities of developable land. It is critical for the infrastructure to be developed, especially the widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge, to support the economic opportunities that are present today and in the future.

Business climate is also identified as a weakness associated with taxation and permitting. Lack of available capital to invest in business startups, particularly for technology businesses is a crucial weakness. Other weaknesses identified include the labor force and education as impediments to higher wage employment, with a lack of high quality public education and few skilled workers resulting in the out migration of talented workers.

State and Regional Transportation Activities

There needs to be both a public and political will to make projects a reality. There is a large mix of parish and state roadways in Jefferson Parish, resulting in multiple changes in ownership of single roadways. This mix of ownership causes planning problems. The state maintains 220 traffic signals in Jefferson Parish compared to 115 signals maintained by the Parish. The Crescent City Connection handles the most traffic for West Bank to East Bank commuting. Plans are underway as early as 2004 to widen the Huey P. Long Bridge. Improved Parish and state cooperation requires Parish initiation.

The state is deploying an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) to improve traffic flow. The state will be constructing a traffic management center in Orleans Parish to manage traffic on Federal and State highways throughout the New Orleans region including Jefferson Parish. Jefferson Parish needs to participate in the regional management center through the integration of its traffic management efforts into the regional network. Jefferson Parish is good at getting improvements from developers. One proposal is to make Clearview a state route from the Huey P. Long Bridge to I-10.

Heavy reliance on funding from Federal and State sources removes control of projects from the Parish. Long term focus and planning will provide predictability to projects and development. Regional planning for transportation improvements is most successful.

Planning for the Causeway and its access corridors requires the cooperation of Jefferson Parish and St. Tammany Parish, since the two parishes control the access routes. Any work requires cooperation by parishes at both ends of bridge.

ⁱ Population and Housing projections prepared by Herbert/Smolkin Associates, Inc. of Louisiana in the *Market Study For Land Use In Jefferson Parish*, 2002.

ⁱⁱ Real Estate Market Data Center, *New Orleans & South Central Gulf Real Estate Market Analysis*, Volume XXXIV, University of New Orleans, January 2002.