

## Chapter 1: Overview

Gardere Lane (*La. Spur 427*) and Nicholson Drive (*La. 30*) are two main arterials into the heart of downtown Baton Rouge. They accommodate commuters from all directions and provide a means for public transportation. LSU Campus is minutes away to the north and just blocks to the south, the City's third riverboat casino is already in the works. The newly-built Indigo Park Apartment Housing, a 330-unit residential building, offers close residence for students and professors alike. Grassroots-Baton Rouge is working with concerned citizens to focus on improving the standard of living and the overall condition of the neighborhood. Beginning at this intersection, let us move through the Target Area.

### *Gardere Murder Rate 'Astronomical'*

Going east, Gardere Lane traverses what is known as one of the worst neighborhoods in the City. It is commonly referred to as "*The Gardere Area*".\* This community has been stigmatized by crime and neglect for almost two decades and it is time something is done. The murder rate in Gardere puts Baton Rouge high on the list for annual homicides for the Nation. In February, 2009, a study revealed a shocking fact about Gardere: *There have been at least two murders a year since the year 2000!*

\* We suggest "Gardère Gardens" as a viable name change. Including the accent mark will change the pronunciation from "Gar-DEER" to "Gar-DARE".

Gardere has become a hub for violence, likely as a result of several factors, and not just one. When it involves community property, personal safety and an overall sense of stability, people tend to look to the local government for answers. The EBR Sheriff's Department has increased its patrol, in hopes to curb some of its violence. Many are skeptical if even that will help to deter the current crime rate. Published in February 2009, the local newspaper printed a story based on the results of an LSU Crime and Policy Evaluation Reserve group study:

*"Murder could be the leading cause of death for non-white males between the ages of 15 and 39 living near Gardere Lane". That's according to a study titled 'Murder and Public Health: The Gardere Community in 2008 as a Case in Point.' Conducted by LSU's Crime and Policy Evaluation Research group, the study looked at 'murder victimization rates' last year in the Gardere area. In general, the study found non-white males between 15 and 39 have an extraordinarily high risk of being murdered, while that risk for the rest of the community is almost non-existent. More specifically, the study found non-white males between 15 and 39 have a murder victimization rate of between 318.04 victims per 100,000 people and 360.27 victims per 100,000 people. The rate for the Gardere area 'is nothing short of astronomical,' writes the study's authors, Matthew R. Lee and Troy C. Blanchard."*

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### The article went on to say:

'We suggest that murder victimization for this demographic group is a major public health problem,' they say. 'We suspect that murder is probably the leading cause of death for this segment of the Gardere community.' On average, two people have been killed there each year since 2000, according to statistics from the EBRSO. The authors of the LSU study concluded by saying: *The burden of addressing the public health threat that murder does present in this community is carried by all of us.*'<sup>1</sup>

### Sheriff's Office Steps up Efforts to Curb Violence in Gardere<sup>\*</sup>

The following article, by Keitha Nelson, aired on WAFB Channel (9) News in January 2009:

**BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB)** - The East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office tackled more than a dozen murder cases in 2008, and almost one-third of those killings were in the Gardere Lane area.

Now, through a new initiative, deputies say they're attempting to turn things around in the crime-plagued neighborhood. They call it the "New Gardere Initiative." Basically, deputies are flooding the area in the hopes that their presence will help to curb the violence there. Many residents wonder if the crime will continue even with deputies watching.

Alison Spruell refers to her daughter, Diamond, as her miracle baby. Born weighing only 12 ounces, Diamond's survival is mind boggling. *On her scooter, the now three-year-old enjoys rolling along the sidewalks in Gardere. However, she and the many kids who call the area home are forced to constantly look over their shoulders.*

In 2008, the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office investigated 16 murders and two manslaughters. Out of that number, five people died in what

deputies call Sector 7C55: Gardere. On average, narcotics agents make about 30 arrests per month in the neighborhood. "We have a very culturally racially, economically diverse society," said Casey Rayborn Hicks with EBRSO. "So, any time you get that sort of mix in a community, it'll usually contribute to higher crime rates."

So now, the sheriff's unit posted in the area has almost become a neighborhood landmark. Deputies patrol Gardere's streets on bikes. Also, the Burbank substation is in place full-time. Moms like Spruell say all of the efforts are comforting. "They're always patrolling the area," she said. "From all times of the night, 'til in the morning."

There is a special community anti-crime team set up in Gardere, as well as a junior deputy program. Because of an increase in the Hispanic population there, deputies are now taking classes to learn basic Spanish. The sheriff's office is also reaching out to the community with outreach programs for kids. Deputies are hopeful they'll be welcomed with opened arms.



Photo 2: Kids on bikes in Gardere. (Photo courtesy of WAFB (9) News Channel.)

1. The Advocate, "Study: Gardere Murder Rate 'Astronomical'", February 13, 2009  
\* January 29, 2009 (Reprinted with permission)

### Living Under the Poverty Level

Coupled with a high crime rate, poverty only adds fuel to the fire. Close to one-third of Gardere's population lives below the poverty level. According to the last Federal Census, there were 8,992 people, 3,216 households, and 2,010 families residing in Gardere. The population density was 2,689.1 people per square mile. The median income for a household was \$26,223, and the median income for a family was \$27,550. Males had a median income of \$27,219 versus \$20,735 for females. The per capita income was \$11,448. About 22.7% of families and 27.8% of the population were below the poverty line, including 34.3% of those under age 18 and 15.1% of those age 65 or over.<sup>1</sup>

When cascading events left a gap in leasing, property owners grasped to fill vacancies and looked for other options. Many chose to accept those on welfare, commonly referred to as a “Section 8”. Under Section 8 several assistance programs exist, which help more than 1.4 million families. A governmental agency inspects the housing units to make sure they follow housing authority standards. The voucher program gives households more choices, especially in high-demand markets where landlords may be reluctant to accept a Section 8. Unfortunately there are those who continue to abuse the system, creating a burden on hard-working, tax-paying citizens. As recent as 200,7 statistics say that nearly one-third of residents live under the poverty level.<sup>2</sup> See Table 1.

1. 2000 US Census Bureau

2. City-Data <<http://www.city-data.com/city/Gardere-Louisiana.html>>

High crime and poverty only lead to depressed property values. For example, 1735 Mast and 1628 Starboard are located in the Target Area. Graphs 1-3 reveal a decline in recent years on Mast and compare Starboard with the rest of Gardere. Graph 3 compares Starboard with the Nation, State, Parish, and Zip Code 70820.<sup>3</sup> See Graphs 1-3.

*“The Section 8 Rental Voucher Program increases affordable housing choices for very low-income households by allowing families to choose privately owned rental housing. The public housing authority (PHA) generally pays the landlord the difference between 30 percent of household income and the PHA-determined payment standard-about 80% to 100% of the fair market rent (FMR). The rent must be reasonable. The household may choose a unit with a higher rent than the FMR and pay the landlord the difference or choose a lower cost unit and keep the difference.”<sup>4</sup>*

Real Estate Statistics 2007	Gardere	Louisiana
Estimated median household income	\$29,650.00	\$40,926.00
Residents with income below the poverty level	27.90%	18.60%
Residents with income below 50% of the poverty level	13.10%	7.8 %
Median resident age	23.7 yrs	34.0 yrs
Table 1		

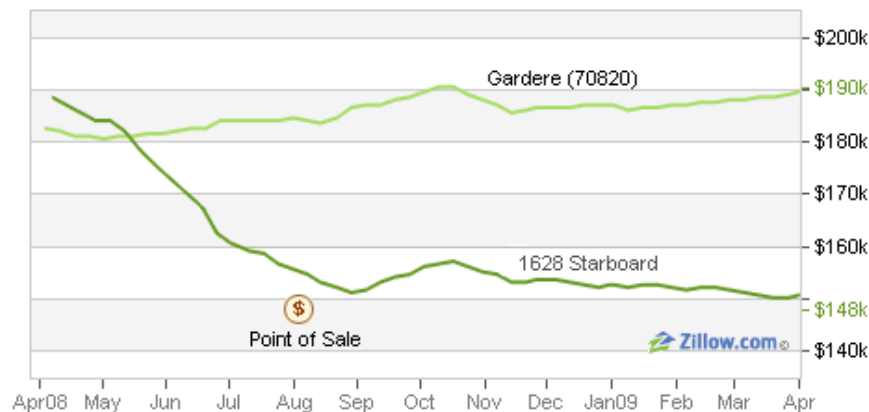
3. Zillow.com <<http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/zip/70820#neighborhoods>>

4. HUD website U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development <<http://www.hud.gov/>>

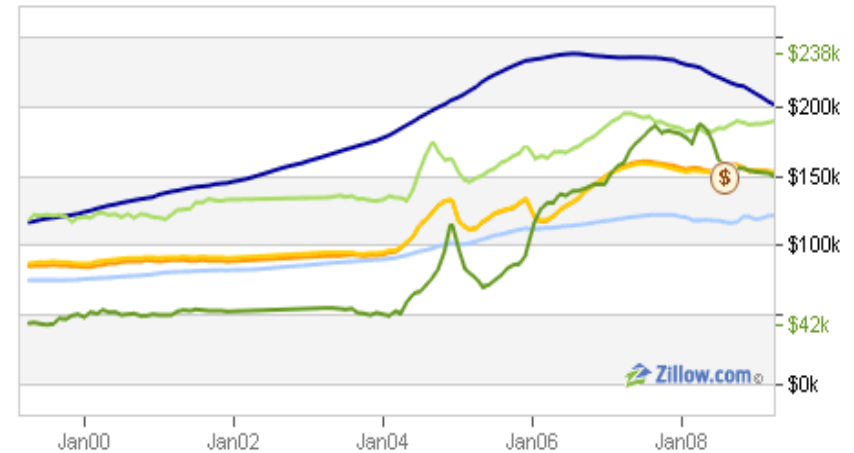
## Overview



Graph 1: In the 2nd quarter of 2008, Mast's value was \$176,000.00. We see a steady decline until September, an incline into October, yet by November, property values began to decline again. Well into the 1st quarter of 2009, property was valued below \$129,000. Hurricane Gustav can be attributed to the peak in October and though we do see a recent increase, overall, the value has depreciated by 27%, in just one year.



Graph 2: 1628 Starboard is one street over from Mast and its property has dropped in value from \$187,000 to \$149,000, since the 2nd quarter of 2008, a substantial 25%. By the time we get to April 2009, the gap has widened between Starboard and 70820 in property value. The market shows an overall decline for Section One of Target Area.



### Decline In Property Values

This area is presently in an economically-stressed state. Made up of residential complexes built in the 1970's (as housing for students and plant workers) there has been time enough for protocols and standards to change, in such things as electrical safety codes and right-of-ways for parking. These complexes are surely outdated and the majority need some type of repair, whether it is a new roof, landscaping or whatever. Although, over the past five years, property values have remained relatively steady for most of District 3, we can still see how they have declined in Section One.

### Surrounding Growth and Development

Despite the real estate dilemma in Gardere, Baton Rouge as a whole, is growing. Many agencies have special financing for hurricane victims. Nearly \$6.5 billion in current construction is ongoing. Compare this with close to \$750 million in a standard year, including a new refinery, chemical plant, and road expansion projects. As in many Louisiana's cities, it is not dependent on the feeble durable goods sector.<sup>1</sup>

Economics professors, at LSU, project the city will see an increase of 2,400 jobs this coming year or close to .06 percent of the workforce. How paradoxical that Baton Rouge remain healthy and thriving in these depressed times and Gardere remains economically depressed for two decades now. With rough economic times in the nation, it is encouraging to see that Baton Rouge ranks up there with America's fastest growing cities.

*"The title of America's fastest-growing city goes to sleepy Baton Rouge, 75 miles upriver from New Orleans (which, sadly, is America's fastest-shrinking city). In our real estate-obsessed culture, it took about a nanosecond from people's thoughts to shift from Katrina's victims to the real estate angle. The Los Angeles Times is carrying a story about the craziness of the sleepy city's real estate market. The first anecdote is about a professor who balked at paying \$1,000 a month for a teeny 700-square-foot home with broken windows. Now, after no luck finding something better, he says he'd sign in a minute if he could still find the person who made the offer."*<sup>2</sup>

1. Business Week <[http://images.businessweek.com/ss/08/10/1014\\_recession\\_cities/9.htm](http://images.businessweek.com/ss/08/10/1014_recession_cities/9.htm)>  
2. Coy, Peter - "America's Fastest Growing City", Business Week Magazine: September 2007.

Just a few blocks south of Gardere and Nicholson, at Bluebonnet Boulevard, Pinnacle Entertainment, Inc. has purchased 550 acres of prime, riverfront property. Based in Las Vegas, Nevada, Pinnacle has plans for the City's third river-boat casino. See *Exhibit B*.

### The Baton Rouge Project<sup>3</sup>



Pinnacle Entertainment continues to grow its family of resorts and casinos, and has one of the strongest development pipe-lines in the industry. By developing new projects and reinvesting in its existing properties, Pinnacle is building a national network of gaming properties designed to leverage its operating and marketing strength.

Baton Rouge welcomed our latest project with a decisive local referendum vote in February 2008. The Baton Rouge project will bring a true gaming entertainment destination to the Pelican State's fastest growing city. The first phase of the Baton Rouge project, which represents an estimated investment of \$250 million, includes a modern single-deck riverboat casino with approximately 1,500 slot machines and 50 table games. An entertainment venue will host top-name talent, live music and other attractions, while a 100-guest-room hotel will offer an upscale respite from the casino excitement. An array of restaurants and lounges will offer diners and a sweeping view of the Mississippi River. The project will be located on more than 550 acres that Pinnacle owns in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Exhibit B

3. Pinnacle Entertainment, Inc. <<http://www.pnkin.com/home.aspx>>

## Overview

### INDIGO PARK APARTMENT HOMES<sup>1</sup>

#### Meet easy street

At Indigo Park you'll find life here above and beyond what you could have imagined. Historically inspired homes in a beautiful park-like setting, designed to simplify your modern life. Enjoy essential conveniences from the address that defines luxury by location and style through exceptional design. Harboring fantasies about living close to all the places you love? Dream no more. Indigo Park, where real life meets easy street.

#### Features

All the right stuff takes on new meaning at Indigo Park, where every home offers an innovative mix of unique architectural details and fashionable 'must haves' like sleek granite counter tops and sophisticated track lighting. Carefully crafted floor plans, together with an outstanding collection of amenities, create a refreshing balance of style and soul. This is the perfect place to enjoy family and friends, this is where it's just easier to relax—home.

#### Neighborhood - Day or Night

At long last, getting to your favorite place is a short trip. When time is of the essence, start here and the rest is in the neighborhood or on your way. LSU, Downtown, even the airport—get there in minutes from Indigo Park. While you're out, enjoy a collection of remarkable restaurants, intimate cafés and an assortment of eclectic shops—all close to home. Get ready for more, this is only the beginning.

#### Amenities - Inside and Out

Resort-style Swimming Pool with Italian Fountain and Waterfall  
Outdoor Cabana  
Indoor/Outdoor Fireplace  
The Indigo Club  
Lounge and Entertainment Center  
Outdoor Grilling Area  
WiFi in Amenity Areas  
Amenity Area Music System  
Pet Friendly

#### Exhibit C

According to statistics, twenty-four percent of Indigo residents will not own a vehicle. This upscale apartment housing complex is new and attractive, having the potential to fill to capacity. See *Exhibit C*.

1. Indigo Apartment Homes <<http://www.liveatindigo.com>>

\* Reference to "The Preserve at Longwood" Apartment Housing, slated for the future.

With the proposed road extensions, there should be sidewalks and bicycle lanes incorporated for pedestrians. Gardere is still a college community, despite what people choose to believe. We must make appropriation for those growing up in this economically-challenged community. "While you're out, enjoy a collection of remarkable restaurants, intimate cafés and an assortment of eclectic shops -- all close to home. " Oh? Where are they? We must build them.

"Largely contributing to this fact is the recent relocations of many hurricane victims. Since the hurricane, evacuees have radically changed Baton Rouge's real estate market. The Greater Baton Rouge Association of Realtors said that before the storm, the area had 3,626 homes listed. Today it has about 2,500 officially for sale, but estimated that 75percent of those homes have been sold already. Some of the newest construction in town has already been snapped up. The sales director for Southgate Towers, a new development of high-end condominiums and apartments near the city's most revered patch of earth, Louisiana State University's Tiger Stadium, says an additional 130 condominiums will soon go up."<sup>2</sup>

In Gardere's current condition, Pinnacle may delay their plans to build. Unless we can 'modernize' the traffic flow, continue with the Staring Extension and redo the Nicholson Intersection, we may not see development soon enough. Franchises can be invited to build, which will employ contractors, developers and laborers, all of whom live in the neighboring community. Growth brings jobs and Gardere needs jobs. With combined efforts, a whole new wave of businesses can come in.

2. Mulligan, Thomas S. and Richard Fausset. "Baton Rouge a Boom Haven for the Displaced". Los Angeles Times: September 7, 2005.



### *The Green Light Plan Comes to Gardere*

The Green Light Plan is currently extending many city streets. One of the main thoroughfares that is slated for expansion is Staring Lane. The contractors are currently clearing the land to extend it to Burbank Drive.

*"In 2005, the citizens of East Baton Rouge City-Parish voted overwhelmingly in favor of a large-scale street and road improvement plan aimed at reducing traffic congestion in our parish. This program is known as the Green Light Plan and consists of 36 new improvement, expansion, and extension projects designed to alleviate traffic."*

This is only one phase of the extension. Although the extension is not fully funded, eventually it will intersect with Gardere Lane. See Map D. This will literally spill out commuters from the all parts of the city, increasing traffic flow substantially. This is a rather appropriate project, as you will see that Joseph Staring played a predominate part in local history. We propose the full extension of Staring Lane be added to this plan and that sidewalks be incorporated in the project. Pedestrian traffic must be accommodated.\*

### *Waste-Water Treatment Plant to Become Largest in South*

The EBR Waste-Water Treatment Plant is beginning the first of, what will be, three phases to expand the plant and improve the air quality. Land has been acquired for the facility that will extend north to E. Wadsworth Drive, taking out the residential buildings that now exist. If extended, this is where Staring Lane will merge into Gardere Lane.

1. Mayor "Kip" Holden. <<http://greenlight.csrsonline.com/program/mayor.asp>>

\*Unfortunately sidewalks are not being added in some extensions, i.e. Sherwood Forest and Coursey, which is retro-productive. Cutting costs loses funds in the long-run. Sidewalks should have been included.



Map D: Fully extending Staring Lane is what Gardere needs. This project will bring new businesses, which will create new jobs. Bringing Gardere into the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on its completion. This is an ideal site for the proposed EBR Parish Museum of History. It will be strategically located from the Rural Life Museum, both Plantations and downtown (USS Kidd). These are favorable conditions.

The Plant intends to provide walkways along its property-line and a new administration building. **Once completed, we will have the South's biggest and most advanced treatment plant right here, on Gardere Lane, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana! (Now, how cool is that?)** Totally state-of-the-art, it is being built in conjunction with the Green Light Plan. See Table 2.

## Overview

### Project Description<sup>1</sup>

This project involves installing a new forcemain from Pump Station 58 to Pump Station 61 at the South WWTP that starts at the intersection of Essen Lane and Essen Park and runs in a southerly direction along Essen Lane continuing on Staring Lane. The forcemain will continue beyond the end of Staring Lane to PS61. PS58 is located at the intersection of Essen Lane and Essen Park. The scheduled improvements will be divided into three phases. Phase I: Burbank Drive to Highland Road; Phase II: Highland Road to Perkins Road; Phase III: Perkins Road to Pump Station 58. Total Estimated Construction Cost is \$4,200,000. Scheduled Design Appropriation Year is 2008 (already appropriated). Scheduled Construction Appropriation Year is 2009.

PHASE START	END	STATUS
January 2008	September 2008	100 % complete
September 2008	October 2008	100 % complete
September 2008	August 2010	10 % complete

The (Highland to Burbank) project includes the construction of a portion of the new forcemain from overflow pump station (PS58) to the South Plant. The purpose of this project is to relieve SSOs at PS58 as well as in the respective upstream basins. The construction of the direct forcemain between PS 58A and the South WWTP alleviates the existing downstream gravity pipe, and allows the capacity needed for future flows in the Staring Lane area. This portion of the new forcemain is being coordinated with the Green Light Plan for the Staring Lane Extension.

Table 2

### Nicholson and Gardere: 3rd-World Intersection

Located on Airline Highway, just 18 miles south of Baton Rouge, is where State Highway 30 begins. Originally intended as a truck by-pass, Hwy. 30 serves has an alternative route to plants, businesses and schools.

1. Friday, April 03, 2009. Baton Rouge City-Parish Department of Public Works - [http://brprojects.com/sewer/documents/projectinfo/Staring\\_ProjectA.pdf](http://brprojects.com/sewer/documents/projectinfo/Staring_ProjectA.pdf)

With the recent growth in South Baton Rouge, it has become a principal route for commuters. Heading west from Airline, it passes through the town of Gonzales, bending right, it crosses under Interstate 10, and then winds its way north to downtown Baton Rouge, reaching I-10 at the base of the Mississippi River Bridge. There are varied attractions and interests along its curvy, thirty-mile stretch, such as: Casinos, chemical plants, exposition centers, fields of sugar cane, outlet malls, plantations, upscale apartment buildings, and universities. By the time it reaches South Baton Rouge, La. 30 is known as Nicholson Drive. It also passes through the center of campus at Louisiana State University, making it a well-traveled and important strip of pavement. See Map E.

Intersecting with Gardere Lane, Nicholson Drive forms a precarious intersection. Under-developed and unkempt, this intersection lacks the essentials for a proper flow of local traffic. Muddy, at times, and unbecoming, this corner surpasses "rural" and looks more like "third-world", when it comes to its description. Proper curbing, shoulders, walkways and turning lanes are all needed to make this a safe intersection. Although this section lies within the East Baton Rouge Parish line, this can only be sanctioned by the Louisiana State Department of Transportation. According to the DOTD, work has begun on an eighteen-month planning process, which will ultimately result in a Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2009). This effort is being coordinated by the La DOTD Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. See Exhibit D. This is exactly what the Nicholson/Gardere corner needs.



We propose this part of La. 30 be included in the State's bicyclists' plan. With a student enrollment of 20,000, this road should include designated lanes for bikes, as it is less than three miles to campus. This is an ideal time to set precedents in urban renewal. It will transform Gardere back into an inhabitable state, having a ripple effect on the city.



Map E: Heading west from Hwy. 61 (Airline) La. 30 passes through the town of Gonzales, crosses under Interstate 10, bends right and then winds its way north to downtown Baton Rouge, culminating at the Mississippi River Bridge. By the time it reaches South Baton Rouge, La. 30 is known as Nicholson Drive. Passing through the center of campus at LSU makes it an important and well-traveled strip of pavement.

#### Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan 2009



#### Why is this Plan necessary?

Safety and accessibility concerns for all users of the transportation system have prompted the La DOTD to update their 1998 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The La DOTD has jurisdiction over 16,700 miles of roads in the state of Louisiana.

Additionally, many parishes, cities and towns through-out the state look to La DOTD for guidance and standards for roadway design. Although bicyclists and pedestrians are allowed on almost all roadways across the state (with the exception of interstates and other control of access facilities), the lack of appropriate accommodations for these groups results in conflicts between motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. The goal of this plan is to develop official policies to guide La DOTD's investments in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Did you know that . . .

- 24 % of renter-occupied households in Louisiana don't have a car.
- 12 % of vehicular fatalities in Louisiana are pedestrians or bicyclists.
- Over 90,000 people in Louisiana walk, bike or take transit to work.
- 40 % of U.S. adults say they would commute by bike if safe facilities are available.
- 50 % of Americans will be over 55 in 2030.
- More than ½ of all elderly Americans walk regularly.<sup>1</sup>

#### Exhibit D

1. LA Dept. of Transportation  
<[http://www.dotd.la.gov/planning/highway\\_safety/bike\\_ped/masterplan.asp](http://www.dotd.la.gov/planning/highway_safety/bike_ped/masterplan.asp)>

## Overview

### *Louisiana National Guard Builds Joint Facility*

Ground has been broken for the *Armed Forces Reserve Center and Field Maintenance Shop* located in the 8000 block of GSRI Avenue. This is a first for the Louisiana National Guard, as the complex will house several offices, including the Army Reserves and Marine Corp Reserves. Plans for completion are scheduled for November 2010, with inaugural ceremonies to be announced. How ironic that a military facility would have a presence at the heart of the Target Area. The potential for integrated activity within the community can be added to our list of resources. When asked about public access, they replied:

*“Access to the facility for public gatherings will be managed on an individual basis but is certainly not prohibited. Many Louisiana National Guard Facilities are used by public and patriotic organizations.”*

This can set new angles for recruiting into the Armed Forces, targeted at local residents and neighborhood youth. The National Guard offers several programs directed at young adults that are socially challenged and may need extra guidance. The Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program is a multi-faceted program which offers at-risk adolescents an opportunity to change their future in many ways, including the opportunity to earn a high school equivalent diploma. The program is aimed to help them become productive and responsible members of society.<sup>1</sup>

1. Louisiana National Guard <<http://www.ngycp.org/site/state/la/>>

### *Baseball Complex Too Expensive for Community*

One of the most recent additions to Gardere is the Cypress Mound Complex, featuring eight uniquely designed baseball/slow-pitch softball fields with natural turf, one Miracle League Field that is handicap accessible, a full-size Ripken practice infield, children's playground and arcade, covered viewing areas, RV tournament parking entry pavilion for check-in, merchandise shop and concessions building with dining area. Truly a state-of-the-art facility. Cypress Mounds will offer clinics to improve the baseball skills of players ages five - High School. Their main objective through these clinics is to teach proper fundamentals, sportsmanship, and character. Through these clinics, Cypress Mounds will offer a venue where young baseball players, parents and coaches will interact with present and former major league and college baseball players.<sup>2</sup> Situated in the center of Gardere, this sports facility charges up to \$605.00 for an 11 year old to join a league.



Exhibit E: Cypress Mound Baseball Complex is a state-of-the-art facility that, ironically, sits in the center of an economically-depressed community.

2. Cypress Mounds Baseball Complex <<http://www.cypressmounds.com/content/clinic-info/>>

We already know that almost one-third of the residents live in poverty. Now, what is wrong with this picture? It is obvious from the fees, that this complex is for the wealthy and it is this type of irony that stifles growth. A balance must be brought to the community.

## Chapter 2: Basis for Intervention

Our proposal today involves networking a vast array of agencies, businesses, clubs, churches, schools, and both State and City-Parish governments, correlating an answer to the plight that has depleted, not only land values, but the reputation of Gardere residents. With the advent of technology, we literally have the world at our fingertips. We can search virtually millions of Internet websites for current and relevant information. This enables us to engage in the task of uniting several key-organizations, so that they dovetail into an effective solution to this problem. There are already several organizations that are actively pursuing improvements and proper development of the community. Organizing and managing resources takes time. We propose a committee be formed to implement these strategies and work with those, actively involved, to formulate change.

**Landowners, in tandem with the City, can bring back the physical appearance of Section One by clearing lots, re-pairing buildings and removing abandoned vehicles.** In order to gain the respect and cooperation of the residents, this "cosmetic" change must happen first. Efforts are based on the needs of the community. A look at the historic, economic and aesthetic relevancy to Project Gardere: Revitalizing the Community will reveal some surprising truths and startling statistics.

### Historical Basis - Gardere's Rich Heritage

Historians tell us that Baton Rouge was inhabited by Native Americans when European explorers first arrived. Records indicate that there was an Indian Village in the vicinity of, what we know as, Gardere, Louisiana. It was located right above a bend in the Mississippi River to the south and, what was then, lush fertile woods to the north, where villagers would likely hunt. Just to the west was the Mississippi River, which provided a bountiful supply of fish. Once Europeans discovered this land, it was only a matter of time before it would be developed to parrot the lifestyles of those back in Britain, France and Spain.

#### *The American Indian and European Settlers*

Mis-named by Christopher Columbus, the indigenous people living here, when other Europeans arrived, became known as "American Indians". Seeking passage to the East Indies, Columbus mis-took the New World and named the people "Indians". In those days, Native Americans would mark their territory by stakes that were spiked with an animal carcass, such as a nutria or raccoon, the smaller and less wanted of the hunt, no doubt. When Europeans first laid eyes on this area, they referred to the tribal stakes as markings to designate territories between the different tribes.

## Basis for Intervention

British, French and Spanish referred to this area as "le baton rouge" (*the red stick*), as it was first coined by French explorers. They eventually drove away the Indians. At that point Baton Rouge was known as "Istrouma" and from evidence found along the Mississippi, Comite, and Amite, archaeologists have been able to date habitation of the Baton Rouge area to 8000 B.C, in three native mounds remaining in the city.<sup>1</sup>



Exhibit F: Jacques Marquette and Algonquins on Mississippi bank, c. 1670.

By the time the word got out in Europe about the fertility and beauty of the land, Spain had already sent its explorers and conquerors to join in the conquest of the "New World". Louisiana was possibly visited by Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow survivors of a Spanish expedition of 1528, and it was certainly seen by some of De Soto's men (1541–42). In 1682, La Salle reached the mouth of the Mississippi and claimed for France all of the land drained by that river and its tributaries, naming it Louisiana after Louis XIV and his wife, Ana. Europeans did not permanently settle here until 1699. We can say that some of America's earliest history took place right on our doorstep, on the banks of the Mississippi River.

1. Wikipedia <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baton\\_rouge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baton_rouge)>

People landed from virtually all over the known world on either its west bank, Plaquemine, or on its east bank, Sunshine. Among the many ports that dotted the Mississippi River, as far north as Memphis, Plaquemine and Sunshine were two where one could buy cotton, sugar cane, fresh milk and other essentials. Molasses was very popular then, and this area was one of the few that produced it. The Plaquemine-Sunshine Ferry exists today and is located just eight miles from the intersection of Nicholson Drive and Gardere Lane and can be developed for income.

### *Fort Baton Rouge Divided by Land Grants*

Travel between New Orleans and Baton Rouge was very common and travelers needed supplies, food and directions. Gardere had a general store at the height of this area's development.

*"In the Great Expulsion of 1755, around 11,000 Acadians were deported from Acadia under the direction of British colonial officers and New England legislators and militia; many settled in an area near Baton Rouge that would come to be known as Louisiana."<sup>2</sup>*

Not only did Baton Rouge serve as a fort, to protect these travelers from New Orleans, but also as an agricultural basin. With the diversity of backgrounds, Baton Rouge is unique and understanding its history makes it all the more interesting. These three cultural influences: British, French and Spanish molded the structure of government, rural planning and international trade. Many of those influences remain in place today, e.g. Louisiana is the only state to practice Napoleonic Law.

2. Wikipedia <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baton\\_Rouge\\_History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baton_Rouge_History)>



Trade and immigration were at their peak and the Mississippi River was a major asset to those who farmed sugar cane, raised dairy cows and others who had international affairs, which required traveling abroad. It was during the British rule that land grants were first issued and people began to develop the land accordingly. Having a predominant role in State Government, François Gardère was one of those who had a claim to much land, an advantage that merited favor with many. New technology brought on new inventions, such as the steam engine. Soon cotton and sugar cane became the leading commodity for the South during the Civil War era. The crop fields we see along Highway 30 once produced crops that literally sustained this state during the years that immediately followed the Civil War. Once ravaged by war, the land faced an unduly change, not only in allegiance to government, but the physical landscape. Many prominent developers suffered loss and many buildings were not finished. Cotton and sugar cane have suffered the same fate as riverboats and trains—unrefined potential. Today, there is new use for sugar cane: Fuel. A renewable resource, ethanol can be made a wide variety of crops, including sugar cane.

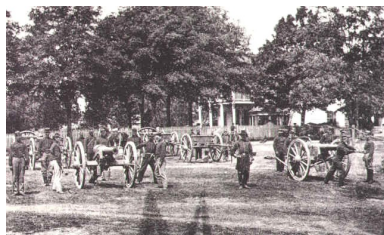


Exhibit G: A view of Longwood during Civil War.

### *Along River Road*

In her book entitled *Along River Road*, Mary Sternberg writes a colorful and detailed history of almost the entirety of River Road, one of our state's most scenic routes. Surely this is one of America's top ten historic roads, making it one of Baton Rouge's undeveloped resources, as it can be better tailored for increased tourism. This is what she writes concerning the part of River Road that intersects with Gardere Lane:

*“La. 327 continues as the River Road. 327 spur, to the right, leading from the river to the Highlands, approximately three miles inland. Spur 327 is Gardere Lane, the approximate road to the Chatsworth quarters. It is named for François Gardère, a wealthy New Orleans banker and treasurer of the state, who lived in this area in the 1820's. This property was the site of an Indian village until the 1780's, and then was parceled out to Acadians in the form of land grants. During the 1830's, small tracts in the area were consolidated and acquired by Fergus Duplantier, adopted son of Armand Duplantier, owner of Magnolia Mound. Colonel Anthony Peniston, a Duplantier son-in-law, bought the property in 1853 and named it Chatsworth Plantation. The fifty-room mansion was begun in 1859, planned to be a very grand copy of an English country home, but after the outbreak of the Civil War, it was not completed. It was said that the Union army intercepted the ships bringing Chatsworth its finest construction elements, so they never arrived. The house was Classical Revival with Corinthian columns. A sweeping spiral staircase, arches, finely detailed mill work, and silver hardware graced the interior. Large marble niches for statuary decorated the public rooms. The plantation was purchased by François Gardère in 1865 and continued to operate as sugar plantation.”*

## Basis for Intervention

### Along River Road (continued)

The next owner, Thomas Womack, suffered through two levee breaks; subsequent owners of the property were Camille Landry and Joseph Staring. Chatsworth was the site of the lively fraternity parties in the 1920's. Even when occupied, the house was always said to be haunted by a forlorn woman who wandered occasionally through the rooms crying for their lost child. Chatsworth was demolished when the levee was set back in 1930, and the site became a borrow pit. A 1929 account of a visit to Chatsworth would not have lamented its sub-sequent demise: 'But for all it's grandeur, it is uninteresting. This is due partly to the fact that it was never completed and partly because it was built as a show place rather than as a dwelling. There is a feeling of artificiality about it as though it were stage set which had been left out in the rain.'<sup>1</sup>

### Fergus Gardère and Chatsworth Plantation

In the early 1800's, François Gardère (1792-1871) bought and developed land that produced a vast array of sugar cane products. His son Fergus Gardère took over when his father died in 1850.

"Fergus Gardère (was) one of the most prominent citizens of East Baton Rouge parish, La., and in the early years of his career was a conspicuous figure in the political history of the state. He was born in the city of New Orleans, October 2, 1817, and there grew to man's estate. He attended the first college that was ever established in his native city, and when he left school he took a position as accountant in the commission house of John A. Merle & Co. He remained there five years and then took a place in the state treasurer's office as accountant.

1. Sternberg, Mary Ann. *Along the River Road*. 2nd Edition. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2001, pages 202-203.

In 1843 he determined to abandon this profession and removed to Jefferson parish, La., and embarked in the sawmill business. While a resident of this parish he represented that senatorial district from 1850 to 1862, and was also a member of the constitutional convention of 1852. He was a member of the convention that voted for secession, although he cast an opposing vote. However, when the struggle came, he an senator and as an individual gave an unqualified support to the confederate cause.

Fergus Gardère was the proprietor of "Chatsworth Plantation," which contained 2,300 acres; the greater portion of this was planted to cane; an immense amount of sugar was refined every year. The refinery was fitted out with the latest improvements in machinery, and in 1891 the output was 650, 000 lbs."<sup>2</sup>

Further research of Gardere brings out an even more active role in Baton Rouge history. From the movement of troops to the production and transporting of sugar cane and cotton, we can say Gardere played a more prominent part in our history than previously believed. From the historical records, we can see that Chatsworth Plantation was one of the casualties of war, as it was never finished. From store records we can see that it was a very active plantation. Constructed in 1859, Chatsworth Plantation was located in the Manchac area, East Baton Rouge Parish, on the east bank of the Mississippi. Comprised of 2300 acres, it mostly produced sugar cane. Initially developed by Fergus Peniston, the adopted son of Fergus Duplantier, it was sold to François Gardère in 1866. A store was opened on the plantation, believed to be the Good Intent Store at Manchac Landing.

2. Miller, Mike. *Biographical and Historical Memoires of Louisiana*, (vol. 1). Chicago, IL: Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1892, page 430.



Between 1895-1920 the plantation was under the ownership of the Womack family. It was acquired by Joseph Staring in 1920, who ran it until his death. It was torn down in 1930, due to the encroachment of the Mississippi River. Fergus Gardère (1817-1894), the son of François, lived at Chatsworth in 1866 and managed the plantation for his father. His previously served career had included being Senator for the Jefferson Parish District of Baton Rouge for twelve years (1850-1862). Joseph Staring live from c. 1860-1920 and worked on the Mississippi River for Fergus Gardère for three years. He later cultivated cotton and operated a cotton gin in conjunction with Gardère in the 1880s. In 1886 he married the granddaughter and moved to Chatsworth in 1920.<sup>1</sup>

### *Longwood Plantation*

Records indicate that the community known as Gardere included places like the Longwood Plantation (visible from Gardère and Nicholson) and goes as far back as the days when there was an Indian Village here, for which one of the sub-divisions is named. During the first half of the nineteenth century the city grew steadily as the result of many factors, one being the ability to transport fresh produce by steamboat. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the population was 5,500. The War halted economic progress, but did not physically impact the city until it was occupied by Union forces in 1862. Longwood is a classic, southern antebellum plantation home originally built in 1795 and is one of the oldest in the South.

1. Chatsworth Plantation Store Records, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

*"Longwood home and plantation buildings located along the Mississippi River levee at jct. of River Rd. (La. SR 327, in part) and Gardère Lane (La. Spur 327) just off Nicholson Drive (La. SR 30), ca. 8 miles south of downtown Baton Rouge, or ca. 5 miles south of LSU. Former plantation*



Photo 3: Longwood Plantation, c1902.

*lands extended much farther east and north, but much has been sold and subdivided in recent years. Plantation home and other more modern homes are currently occupied. The mansion is barely visible from River Road and Gardère Lane behind high, thick hedges. A beautiful oak-shaded drive leads to the house, and a narrow, gravel road (Longwood Lane) leads between River Rd. and Nicholson Dr. This lane affords the visitor views of Longwood mansion as well as remnants of plantation village, including old slave cabins, store, barns and other buildings. Sold in 1794 to Madame Marianne Decoux who began building the original home in 1795, as well as a sugar house, hospital, corn mill, blacksmith shop, cabins and apartments. Like most large plantations, Longwood supported a plantation village or town of perhaps 50 to 100 people. Chief crops were sugar, later cotton, corn, and vegetables for plantation consumption Crops were loaded onto river flatboats and later steam-boats at the plantation dock on the Big River right in front of the plan-tation. It is said that during the ownership of Mme. Decoux, the pro-perty was first referred to the property as the "Decoux Plantation," the later "Long Bois" (French for "Longwood"). In 1827 the property was sold to the Rouzan family and the name "Longwood" was recorded on the deed."<sup>2</sup>*

2. Ghost Towns <<http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/la/longwood.htm>> (Reprinted by permission.)

## Basis for Intervention

Auguste Lefebre bought the property in 1889 and then deeded title, in around 1897, to his son-in-law, who was an Italian immigrant from Corsica. His son-in-law lived in the west bank town of Plaquemine and worked in a livery stable. He eventually bought the livery stable and Longwood Plantation.

The Longwood Mansion, and other buildings on the property, were moved back twice from the Mississippi, once in 1900 to construct the levee and again in 1928 when the US Army Corps of Engineers moved it back to within what was considered to be a disturbingly close distance, of 200 feet, from the doorstep. The structures were raised up and set onto cypress logs, then rolled back from the river by mule teams.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Kleinpeter Family*

Gardere is rich in Louisiana History and hopefully this will bring out several key figures who played a role. Men like Leon Kleinpeter, and his family, who took a flat-boat down the Mississippi from Pennsylvania and landed in St. Gabriel in 1774. This Swiss-German family found new opportunities in the New World.

*"The Kleinpeter Family endured many hardships before coming to Baton Rouge on August, 1774 from Switzerland by way of Pennsylvania. Like many families, religious persecution is what prompted them to find a new home. Traveling by flatboat down the Ohio River, then the Mississippi River, they landed in Baton Rouge with the Sharp and Ory families. Landing in St. Gabriel near the St. Gabriel Catholic Church, they soon after relocated to the area now defined by Highland and Perkins Roads."*

1. Ghost Towns <<http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/la/longwood.htm>>

Being innovative, even by current standards, historical documents show that the Kleinpeters were the first farmers to successfully grow sugar cane in East Baton Rouge parish, and were the first in Louisiana to have a steam-powered cotton gin. They also had a sweet potato dehydration plant, along with a dairy farm--all located at the intersection of Highland Road and the railroad tracks, near Perkins Road.

*"In early 1913 Sebastian Louis Kleinpeter, also known as "Sib" and Leon Kleinpeter, Sr., known as 'Papa', started a small local dairy business by rounding up and milking 'woods' cows. The well-known Guernsey Kleinpeter legacy began when they learned that Guernsey cows have a gentle disposition, and give milk that is superior in taste and quality."*<sup>2</sup>

### Economic Basis - Bringing in New Businesses



Nestled within the center of this historic area are five subdivisions: Indian Village, Riverland, Sable Chase and South Highland Industrial Park. See Map G. There is also a dense, forest-like grove of native trees: Pines, oaks and magnolias. Stoney Creek, Elbow Bayou, and Bayou Fountain wind their

way through the landscape, providing the potential for attractive design and development. This allows for a diversity of interests in developing contemporary urban housing, businesses and recreational parks. A topographical view of land will clearly reveal the acres of natural resources that can be designated for enhancement and production.

2. Kleinpeter Dairies <[www.kleinpetermilk.com/history](http://www.kleinpetermilk.com/history)>



Map G: Situated in the heart of our Target Area are five subdivisions that can built upon to bring in a museum and contemporary urban houses, which will generate new businesses and income for Gardere. There are several key locations, upon which one can build.

### East Baton Rouge Museum of History and Gardere Village

East of Indian Village is undeveloped and there is over 500 acres of unused land. Land that can be incorporated to generate interest in building a replica village of the era, with appropriate crops and a museum. Appropriately, the Rural Life Museum is three miles east on Essen Lane and Interstate 10. The proximity is very conducive to fulfill this strategy.

The proposed extension through this immediate area will make it convenient for visitors. This would put both museums within a three mile radius of each other, having a substantial impact on the economy:

*Despite a tally of two dozen Baton Rouge area museums and historic sites recognized by the Louisiana Association of Museums, (Charles) Coates told the Downtown Development District Commission that **there's a huge historic vacuum in the city: No museum explores Baton Rouge history as its major theme.** A retired civil engineer, Coates came up with the proposal for a comprehensive Baton Rouge history museum. "We need a museum of Baton Rouge history," Coates said. "Everyone who hears this idea gets really enthusiastic," said Carolyn Bennett of the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, "It's a great idea. (We) are with you, Charles."*<sup>1</sup>

With the need for an East Baton Rouge Parish Museum of History, surely this area is ideal for its location. Such a museum could benefit greatly



from the historical facts of Gardere, as we can be sure that at one point, this area was a focal point for trade, travel and politics.

What is now housed in a tiny room in Baton Rouge's downtown branch of the Library can be given a much larger space, allowing

growth of its historical collection to continue. A life-size simulation of an old village, complete with history, artifacts and agricultural plots can be built as an educational tourist attraction. There is adequate acreage for a museum and sufficient land for an agricultural renaissance.

1. The Advocate Business Staff, "Does Baton Rouge Need Another Museum?", December 9, 2008.

## Basis for Intervention

### Agricultural Development

By enlarging the picture, we can see that there are acres of land ideal for such an agricultural renewal. Society is prone to a more healthy diet nowadays and raising fresh products, such as figs, grapefruits, satsumas, and strawberries, would surely be a success. Sugar cane, which only grows in tropical and sub-tropical climates, still has the potential for great products. Hybrid plants were able to be developed to grow in Louisiana because of its abundant sunshine and humid climate. Crops that sustained this area once, can be grown again, ushering in a agricultural renaissance.

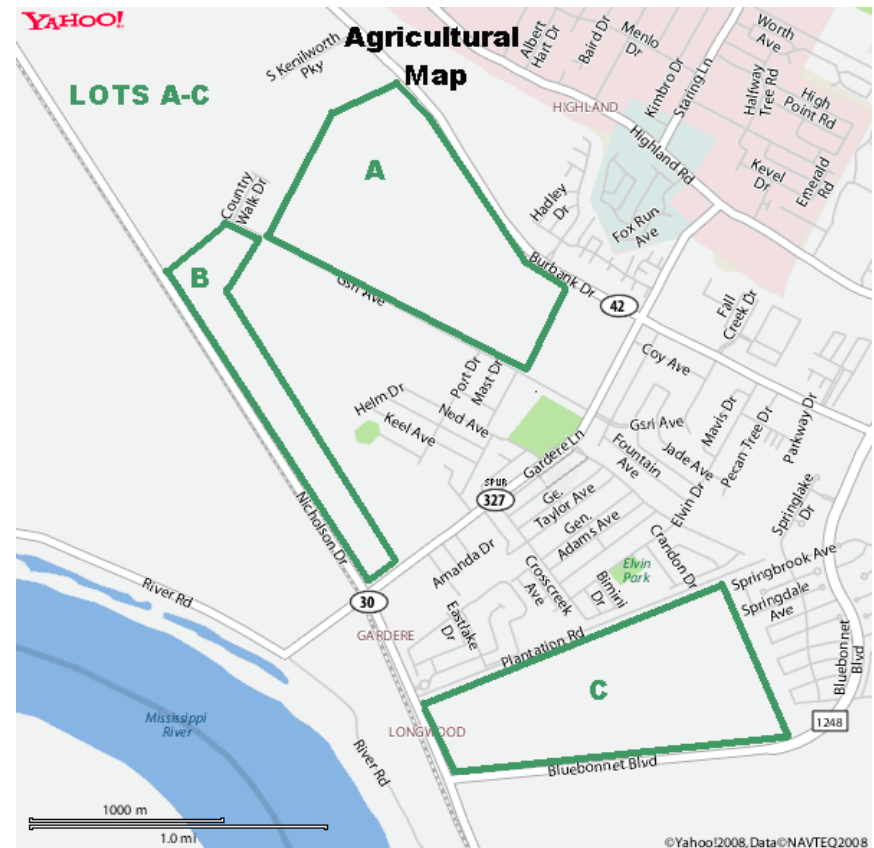


Photo 4: Succulent figs thrive off of Louisiana sunshine. A 100g-serving supplies the body with 232mg of potassium and trace elements, such as zinc and copper.

The following map shows some roughly proposed agricultural lots. See Map H. We have a year-around growing season and proper planning and forming will bring back the word "seasonal" to markets and restaurants, both alike would benefit from fresher produce. This project of revitalizing

Gardere will create untold jobs and new agencies and organizations that will stimulate the local economy. Property owners can be given tax breaks for beautification projects and local residents can be encouraged to participate in a local Farmers Market. The northeast corner of Nicholson and Gardere can be developed, so that farmers can display and sell their produce. Benches, tables and trash receptacles can all be incorporated in a contemporary design.

Once a year, such agencies as the LSU Ag Center can promote an interest in farming along Nicholson Drive. There are miles of sugar cane fields already in production and with proper planning and organizing, agricultural awareness can revitalize this whole area.



Map H: A vague look at the vacant land shows plenty of acreage for farming. A more detailed study and enhanced research would be needed to define proper boundaries, as some land is privately-owned and much state-owned, by means of LSU.



### Farmers Market

Getting back to nature and a more conscientious diet are the trends we see today, when it comes to lifestyles. We see an interest in more natural parks with pathways for walking and beds of beautiful flowers. It just makes sense to use existing assets to offset the imbalance of the economy in Gardere. Creating long-term, agricultural strategies would benefit all the way around: Jobs, income and fresh produce for the city.



Photo 5: Satsumas are a Louisiana tradition. This hearty citrus is rich in Vitamin C and can be easily cultivated to bring good crops every year. These shown will be ready by Thanksgiving.

The possibilities are endless, once planning begins. Consider the local supermarkets and restaurants that can be targeted as potential buyers.

**Creating a Farmers Market, with plenty of parking and easy access, would create an outlet for local farmers and give reason for people to start farming again.**

Tables, benches and trashcans should all be supplied, as well as a water source. There can be a distinct area where patrons can enjoy a fig or something. Much of what is now available in stores, and other produce suppliers, are products imported from Chile or Mexico. Many of the strawberries in the stores come from California and a lot of the citrus we eat comes from Florida. Cultivating all these products in Louisiana would totally boost the economy on a state-wide level. With the advent of new technologies in producing ethanol, sugar cane is a recent addition to the list of agents.

### Contemporary Urban Development

Situated within this four-square mile radius are several subdivisions. As within other parts of Baton Rouge, contractors can be encouraged to build contemporary housing that incorporates its theme: Indian Village, Riverland, Sable Chase, and South Highland Industrial Park. Streets in South Highland Industrial Park were named after parts of a ship, incorporating the theme of its acronym: S-H-I-P. This concept can be continued and follow throughout the community.

The heart of Sable Chase will be the intersection of Gardere Lane and Staring Lane. This will be an ideal intersection for development of businesses, such as eateries and shops. Residential buildings with a flare for the contemporary can be constructed. Specialty shops and services can incorporate the sub-division's identity as a means of uniformity. Xeriscapes and Historic Plaques can be placed in conspicuous places. Prior concerns about air quality can be dismissed, as the Wastewater Treatment Plant will be installing new technology to reduce odors. Once the Staring Lane Extension reaches Sable Chase, and with the Treatment Plant's expansion growth, it is only a matter of time before we see a surge in local traffic. Riverland Subdivision is situated between Sable Chase and Ben Burge Park, making it ideal for residential dwellings. It will be equally affected, by the Staring Extension, as Sable Chase. Public gardens can be used to enhance the area. The eclectic shops, eateries and cafés, that Indigo boasts about, can be built here. Advertising is already in place for future businesses.

## Basis for Intervention

### *Indigo Park, Revisited*

The contractors for Indigo Park, at one point, published plans for *The Preserve at Longwood Plantation* residential housing. It is slated near where Indigo Park now sits. See Exhibit H. Based out of Atlanta, GA, Cortland Partners sees Baton Rouge has a surging population and the plans to continue with *The*



Exhibit H: The Reserve at Longwood has not been built yet, but the contractors have published the plans and will go up on the corner of Gardere and Nicholson.

*Preserve at Longwood* are just a matter of time.<sup>1</sup> Indigo Park in a prime example of the development Gardere needs to survive. The window of opportunity is open.

*Indigo Park is an upscale multifamily community designed to appeal to a broad array of residents, including families, empty nesters, young professionals and Louisiana State University alumni visiting for weekend games. Located in Baton Rouge, a city identified by Cortland Partners as a strategic development opportunity due to the population growth trends and favorable land prices, the site was acquired based on its location in a burgeoning expansion area.* Shortly after acquisition of the site, this opportunity was further enhanced by the influx of people moving inland after 2005's historic hurricanes and the announcement of a 500 acre resort and casino development directly across the street from the site. Indigo Park is well-positioned both as an investment, and as a source of high quality residences for the surging population.<sup>2</sup>

1. Skyscraper Page <<http://forum.skyscraperpage.com/showthread.php?page=2&t=90598>>

2. Cortland Properties <<http://www.cortlandpartners.com/>>

Plans to build a 330-unit apartment complex at Nicholson Drive and Gardere Lane have been published. *The Preserve at Longwood Plantation* will feature a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units being developed by Cortland Development, an Atlanta company.<sup>3</sup> Initially planned for construction in 2006, this type of residential development happens hand-in-hand with the development of the community. Future projects are waiting for the community to catch-up.

### *Plantation Tours*

Less than a mile east of Gardere, ironically, is Highland Road, which boasts of Antebellum homes, mansions and has many places registered as National Historic Landmarks. Gardere Lane ends at the doorstep of one of the South's oldest plantations:

*"Mount Hope Plantation House stands as an example of the architecture typical of Southeastern Louisiana farmhouses constructed during the 19th century. Built in 1817, it is the only farmhouse of its kind remaining in the Baton Rouge area. The spacious lawns, oak trees, and colorful flowers and vegetation of the plantation itself find their origins from a 400-acre Spanish land grant endowed to Joseph Sharp, a German planter, in 1786. German families had settled in the region since 1718. Most Germans became culturally absorbed into the surrounding French Creole culture, but even with their addition, the European population of the colony remained small. When France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1763, the total population of the colony stood at about 5,000 Europeans and 3,000 slaves. Later, during the Civil War, the plantation housed Confederate troops for the war efforts."*<sup>4</sup>

3. Skyscraper Page <<http://forum.skyscraperpage.com/showthread.php?t=90598>>

4. Southeastern Louisiana National Register of Historic Places <<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/louisiana/mou.htm>>





Photo 6: Mt. Hope Plantation

There are two surviving antebellum homes in Baton Rouge and Mount Hope Plantation is one of them. See *Photo 6*. For over two hundred years, Mount Hope has represented true Southern grace and charm. Oak trees, dating back over a century, are draped with

Spanish moss. Some of the attractions include porches that wrap around the home, quaint gazebos, and a beautiful fountain and patio area. It has never been remodeled or has it deviated from its original architecture. Built in the early 1800's, it is one of two surviving plantations in Baton Rouge.

Located nearby on Nicholson Drive, BREC's Magnolia Mound Plantation is a rare survivor of old-world architecture introduced by early settlers from France and the West Indies. See *photo 7*. This antiquated landmark is unique in southern Louisiana, not simply because of its heritage, quality of restoration, or unique collections, but because it is still an active part of the community. Through educational programs, workshops, lectures, festivals, and other special events, Magnolia Mound's mission is to illustrate and interpret the lifestyle of the French Creoles who formed the fascinating culture which still influences and pervades life in southern Louisiana.<sup>1</sup> Built on



Photo 7: BREC's Magnolia Mound Plantation on Nicholson Drive.

an Indian mound and constructed from moss and mud, it also features hand-carved woodwork and heavy planked floors. Indigo, cotton and sugar cane were all grown on this plantation.<sup>2</sup>

### Aesthetic Basis - It is our Duty

It is our civic duty to clean up the neighborhood. A brief tour of the residential area is all it takes to see the depletion and decay. No child should be raised in such an environment. Potential leaders of the future live here and it is the obligation of our generation to make their future good. Physically, many of the complexes are grime-ridden and many are abandoned altogether. Curbs, sidewalks and lots are unkempt and garbage services are breaking ordinances by places their dumpsters too close to the street. Basically, everyone does whatever they want, when it comes to trash and abandoning vehicles. Lack of maintenance on dwellings must be addressed.

Some lots are overgrown past five feet, breeding rodents, snakes and poisonous spiders. See *Photo 8*. Under-developed should not mean dangerous. Think about the peril each child faces when they go outside to play. **Open culverts, broken curbs and vacant buildings await ever child's curiosity.**



Photo 8: Stern and Port is overgrown to the point where the lot is not even visible anymore. There is a side-walk in there, somewhere, along with other things.

1. BREC <<http://www.brec.org/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&nid=659&cpid=387&cfmid=0&catid=0>>

2. Oak Lawn Manor <<http://www.oaklawnmanor.com/antebellum.htm>>

## Basis for Intervention

### *The Effects of a Clean Neighborhood*

According to Yahoo! Answers, the following reply, to the question: "Does a Clean Neighborhood Make You Feel Better?", was voted number one:

*They make me feel better. They also help my pocketbook, help my children succeed and improve the general health of my family and the community. HOW? you ask. Cleaner neighborhoods lead to higher property values. Higher property values make more for me when I sell my home. You rent? No problem, higher property values lead to more local services which means you get more city services even if you are a renter.*

*Cleaner neighborhoods lead to lower crime and more activity in parks and play for the kids. More activity leads to better health, improved performance in school and long term economic gains. Several long-term studies have been done that show this.*

*Cleaner neighborhoods lead to better performance in school for kids which lead to success in college which leads to success in life. There are exceptions of course but I am only saying on average things improve.*

*Cleaner neighborhoods lead to healthier families which contributes to general family happiness. Generally people are happier in a clean neighborhood. They derive economic value from this as well as mental and physical health benefits.*

*You can't go wrong if you clean up your neighborhood!*<sup>1</sup>

Government must step in and enforce the ordinances for property owners, not to mention doing its part to clean up the streets. There are open

1. Yahoo! Answers <<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/indexqid=20080114111756AAWzzze>>

culverts that need to be safe-guarded from children who play there. See Photo 9. Providing a clean environment is the first step in providing a safe environment. Renewing this part of South Baton Rouge should be the next step in City-Parish and State Government Steering Committees. There is potential, for even the worst neighborhoods, with government agencies and committees. Bringing the proper agencies and their programs together, in a joint effort to initiate a revitalization, is the answer. This is the day of networking and specialists can be hired to coordinate educational and domestic programs.

What appears to be an unfinished job by the developers, much of the area is lacking in culvert guards, proper lighting, sidewalks and curbs.

For example, Keel Street has an entire block of fully functional street lights, yet no houses are built on that block. There are streets that have absolutely no lighting and are heavily populated. Dark streets are not safe. From the average citizen's point of view, these improvements are the obligation of the City-Parish or State and not necessarily the developer's responsibility.



Photo 9: A view from apartment 4 at 1658 Port Drive clearly shows there is no guard on the drainage ditch, which is within 20 feet of the front door. This is a hazard for children.

### City-Parish Plan of Government Provisions for Urban Areas

Baton Rouge City-Parish Government has incorporated articles in the General Provisions for their Plan of Government. Please note provisions for urban areas.

*(a) Urban Area. Urban Area. There shall be in East Baton Rouge Parish an urban area in which, because of the congestion of population therein, there shall be supplied by the City of Baton Rouge, unless supplied by districts established in accordance with the constitution and general laws of the state, police protection, fire protection, garbage and refuse collection and disposal, street lighting, and the maintenance and operation of sewers and sewer works.*

*(c) Rural Area. There shall be in East Baton Rouge Parish a rural area consisting of that portion of the parish not included in either the urban or the industrial areas. Fire protection, garbage and refuse collection and disposal, street lighting, and sewers and sewerage works and the maintenance and operation thereof, shall not be provided by the parish in the rural area except through the medium of districts established by the governing body of the parish, as provided by the constitution and the general laws of the state.<sup>1</sup>*

Much of Gardere is unlit. Except for the few residents that have had special lighting installed, there is virtually no illumination once night falls. Also, many residents have hired trash companies for the refuse pick-up, which is fine, but these companies are placing their huge, ugly trash containers wherever it is convenient, including on top of sidewalks and very close to driveways. It is a free-for-all and there is no accountability for these garbage companies. As for abandoned vehicles, the

1. Baton Rouge City-Parish Plan of Government, General Provisions, Section 1.08

same way: They are left wherever they stall or are wrecked. If we have not been able to correct, or even address, the situation with the manpower we have, maybe we need to expand or create a temporary agency--until Gardere is all cleaned-up. This same temporary agency can address other parts of Baton Rouge as well. Gardere is not the only suffering neighborhood. As a grassroots organization, we deal with residents from all over Baton Rouge and there are many needs.

### Street Sweeping

Street sweeping provides three primary benefits to the City:

#1: The obvious benefit is the collection and removal of paper, leaves, and other visible debris that collect in the gutters. This debris can block storm water facilities, causing localized flooding during heavy rains.

#2: Another, but less visible benefit is the removal of metal particles and other hazardous waste products left by passing vehicles. Although they are virtually invisible, these particles can be extremely harmful to fish and other wildlife if they reach our creeks, rivers, beaches and bayous.

#3: Sweeping also serves to control and improve water quality by removing debris from the street before it goes into the storm drains, ending up in the Gulf and impacting Louisiana coastline, which loses 25 feet of coastline a year.<sup>2</sup>

2. WAFB Newscast, Monday, July 27, 2009, 6:00pm

### Chapter 3: Proposed Strategies

In accordance with the City's "Strategic Plan for Economic Development", we propose working together to bring help to Gardere. One of the first steps will be to go into the neighborhood with a volunteer trash-picking crew.

Organize church groups, schools, and volunteer programs to conduct regularly scheduled campaigns to determine needs, crisscrossing all streets and listing any property damage, city-owned property related problems and/or landowner negligence.



Photo 10: Abandoned buildings, like this one, have become so run-down that they are a common eye-sore in "The Gardere Area" from Nicholson Dr. to Highland Rd. Notice the open stairwell: Children see this as a playground.

#### *Strategic Plan for Economic Development*

The Strategic Plan for Economic Development was established in September 1995 to insure economic development planning in East Baton Rouge Parish. The plan helps the Planning Commission in meeting several economic development goals.

*The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to establish a comprehensive program to serve as a guide for Parish-wide economic development efforts. The program includes the formulation of strategies that will address unemployment and under employment, and build capacity in economically distressed neighborhoods throughout the Parish. Utilizing a strong public input process, the Strategic Plan defines goals, objectives and Action Items specifically related to economic development<sup>1</sup>*

Divided into two time-frames, the following examples may be implemented as an effort to create new growth and stability in the community. These proposed actions will take more detailed planning, as they are being presented as abstract concepts, yet are within reach. In order to accommodate new businesses, some zoning laws may have to be updated. Some buildings are in fore-closure, meaning they are temporarily owned by some type of bank, and the negligence, on their part, is paramount. Financial institutions must be reminded to maintain properties.

1. BR City-Parish Government:  
<<http://www.br.gov.com/dept/planning/econdev/strategic.htm>>

### Abstract Plans for Action - Immediate and Forthcoming

The following ideas are some examples of what can happen with proper planning and funding. We have divided the strategies into two groups: Immediate and Forthcoming. Clergy and parishioners can be encouraged to visit the elderly and ill. **High school counselors and teachers can be encouraged to contact students via email or visits to their home.** Every High School student should be emailed or visited at least one time during the school year. Educate parents on the values of teaching their children social skills and how to build a re pore.

#### Immediate Implementations

**Bicycle Lanes** - Suggest a portion of La. Hwy. 30, (from University Acres to downtown), as a candidate for bicycle lanes. This is less than a ten-mile stretch. Establish a bike-depot at the intersection of River Road and Gardere Lane. Install curbs, sidewalks, benches and bike racks. Place Historic Plaque, water source and refuse cans.

**City-Parish Lighting** - Light-up the neighborhood: **Illumination is the key to safety.** Place light poles where needed, in neighborhoods and parking lots. Install energy-saving, modern lights. Ask the City to clean, repair or replace all the street light poles from Highland to Nicholson. **(Drape poles with colorful banners welcoming visitors and presenting the area with a new look.)**

**Clinics and Health Care** - The majority of residents have limited transportation and the population include a high percentage of babies and small children. An out-patient clinic is much needed.

**Community Center/Gymnasium** - Make state-of-the-art and promote physical fitness programs and nutrition classes. Create sports teams, i.e. basketball, soccer, volleyball. Hoops, nets and courts should be a part of every kid's life and there is no better way to exercise, than to play a sport. Sports teach so much: From skill and agility, to pride and humility. A community center is vital in implementing these strategies.

**Newsletter** - With all the changes and proposed buildings and highways, a community newsletter, published seasonally, can properly inform residents of up-coming changes or events.

**Pedestrian-friendly Park** - This could be designed with a Nature Center at Starwood Court or Elvin Park. Lights, landscaping, benches and water fountain along with flowering beds.



**Pet Park** - This can be incorporated within the Ben Burge Park. Provide pet-provision fences, watering holes and benches for owners. Promote "Pet Awareness" every four months. Promote pet adoption and importance of spaying/neutering your pet.

**Public swimming pool** - This has been a request from the residents. **Include it with the gym or the community center. 8618 GSRI Avenue is the latest site of interest for a center. It has two adjacent lots that can be used to put a pool or gymnasium or even voting hall.**



## Proposed Strategies

Quotation Board - Use the existing marque at Gardere and GSRI for inspirational quotes that encourage, bringing everyone to a common thought. The lattice-framed sign is in dire need of paint.

Resource Center - This can be located in a central area, such as the proposed community center or the existing Ben Burge Park. Provide WiFi and stock tax forms, WIC Applications and other information that promote a better standard of living.

Sidewalks - A very basic concept that promotes and encourages pedestrian traffic which, in turn, saves energy. Our climate has rainy periods and the lack of sidewalks proves for a muddy environment for people who have to walk, and this is dangerous. Remember: People in Section One are economically challenged and may not own transportation. Look into a "sidewalk program" for the City that the Federal Government maybe offering. Surely Baton Rouge is not the only city without sidewalks.

Street Pole Banners - Colorful, expressive and relevant banners proclaiming: "Welcome to Gardère Gardens!" Modern banners are inexpensive and last. Create a program where businesses are given the opportunity to sponsor the banner, which will offset cost.

See Exhibit I.



Exhibit I: Street pole banners like this one can be used to beautify Gardere Lane from Highland to River Road.

Trash Receptacles - Place refuse cans throughout the area. Design trashcans to be accessible from vehicle, like mailboxes Square and fully enclosed with a flap-door on each side. Paint a target with a bulls-eye. As a means of offsetting expenses, create a program "Hit the Mark" and encourage businesses to hit the mark by providing that receptacle. City can collect revenues from the program to offset the cost of emptying trash containers.



USPS (United States Postal Service) - Send everyone an Itinerary of Changes and the various programs and agencies available. Consider a quarterly newsletter and/or flier. Replace the dilapidated mailboxes and remove those where no one lives.

Volunteer Groups - Encourage and promote groups to clean up litter, weed community gardens and promote a healthy environment by becoming involved. Stress these groups as options in "Community Service" for lawbreakers.

WiFi Areas - Provide "hot spots" to encourage internet usage and as a convenience to students. Create a network of residents and form a routine of reporting plight online. This will protect privacy.

Youth Programs - So many already in existence, having a community center would provide a way to network and promote different groups and organizations.



## Abstract Plans for Action (*continued*)

### Forthcoming Implementations

Antique Market. Develop a lot conducive to vendors, including benches, tables and booths. Provide a water source and trash cans. Weekends only. Integrate with Farmers Market.

Art Galleries. Have an "Art Fair" once a year, with a different theme. Incorporate cultural influences, i.e. African American and Indian. Use sculptures in landscaping ideas. Contact LPB for list of local artists, whose biographies aired, and invite them to participate.

Cafés and Eateries. Reach out to businesses to bring in commerce. Promote lighting and surveillance of parking lots. Offer tax deductions for first year of business. The promotions for Indigo Park boasts of nearby eateries and eclectic shops. (*Talk about a "plug"*).

Car Washes. The only car wash is on the condemned list and should be rebuilt or removed. Pitches should be made to investors to open a state-of-the-art facility.

Credit Union/Banks. There is a reason one does not find a bank in Gardere and that reason is for fear of robbery. We must overcome that stigma, which has marked this area for over a decade now.

Department of Motor Vehicle Branch. Express Lane DMV - This will keep residents in the general area for other shopping needs. Explore the idea of a free Drivers School for low-income families.

Farmers' Market. The northeast corner of the Gardere/Nicholson intersection can be developed it to fit vendors: Booths, water access and trashcans. Place Fact Plaque here: *The Story of Sugar Cane*. This makes an ideal corner to buy seasonal produce, e.g. asparagus in the spring and sweet potatoes in the fall. **Our growing season allows for year-around farming.** Bell peppers, onions and celery are main ingredients in some of our staple dishes.



Photo 11: Sugar cane flourishes under the Louisiana sun and is now being used to make ethanol.

Festivals - Parallel existing festivals in the area, e.g. sugar cane, strawberry or create the 1st Annual Molasses Festival, or Satsuma Festival. How about a "Corn Festival"? Plant a "maize" and allow Parish to collect revenue to offset agricultural expenses. Create an Annual Wild Blackberry Festival.

Film Studio - Already a concept, this idea has been hot and cold for years. There is ideal acreage in District 3 to facilitate a film studio- either an out-of-state company, or incorporate our own. There is currently a movie slated to be filmed in Baton Rouge:

**"The movie is the first major production to come to the state since the Legislature recently increased its tax benefits for filmmakers. In addition, Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden -- who attended Wednesday's (July 22, 2009) press conference -- said he will ask the East Baton Rouge Metro Council to chip in an extra \$175,000 worth of incentives for the film."**

1. Scott, Mike. *The Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA: July 22, 2009

## Proposed Strategies

Indoor Tennis Courts. Another great sport, tennis is invigorating and keeps the body in shape. Promote tennis, and other sports, in school, beginning early in the developmental stages of a child's life.

Jr. Leagues. Form a community team for baseball, basketball, soccer or tennis. Fund uniforms by selling ad spots on playing field. Encourage business sponsorship of community team: "Gardère Guardians". Create a Volunteer Coaching Program.

LSU Ag Center Involvement. LSU Ag Center can promote an interest in more Agriculture along Nicholson Drive . There are miles of sugar cane fields already in production and with proper planning and organizing, agricultural awareness can revitalize this whole area. Sugar cane is now being used to make fuel for cars.

Laundromats. Although many of the duplexes and housing units are equipped with washers and dryers, some landlords are no longer equipping apartments with them, due to maintenance cost.

### Multi-Media Cultural Center.

Couple with History Museum.  
Build RR Museum and show area's role in past historic events and how it developed over the years.  
This can be tied into a state-of-art facility where we propose the Baton Rouge Museum of History.



Exhibit J: A new multipurpose cultural center demonstrates institutional and statewide commitments to diversity and promotes individual achievements. A Multicultural Center, like this one at the Western Illinois University, had their Grand Opening this past Spring (2009).

Nature Centers. These are very popular nowadays. It is simply taking what Mother Nature has to offer and making it people-friendly. Starwood Court Park is an ideal locale for such a center. Include paths and benches, flower beds and fruit trees.

One-way Streets. Curtail drug traffickers from making continuous rounds on a block. A brief study of the area will find that east and west streets can easily be made into one-way streets that give law enforcement better control. Speed bumps are an option.

Plantation Tours. Magnolia Mound, Mount Hope and the historic Longwood plantations are all within touring distance. Work with CATS to create tours, including historic sites, like the USS Kidd.

Plaquemine-Sunshine Ferry - Only eight miles from Target Area. Place signs and promote and develop ferry for increased tourism and potential commute for people who work in Plaquemine or Brusly. Virtually a thing of the past, ferries can be revitalized to generate tourism.



Photo 12: Plaquemine-Sunshine Ferry

Public Driving Range - This can be adjacent to Burbank Soccer Complex and somewhat southeast of Autumn Run. University Lakes Golf Course is southeast of there. Southern University needs a green for their Lady's Golf Team-this could be the time and place.

Spiritual Centers - Invite all faiths to establish an outreach. The Constitution of the United States defends our right to choose which religion we serve. Contact leaders and invite them to join our efforts to revitalize the neighborhood.

Sugar Cane Awareness - A complex and intriguing member of the grass-family, products, like molasses, were very popular once. Ask the BR Historical Society to create "*Gardere Village*" (model after the Williamsburg, Virginia) complete with fields of sugar cane.

Tax Offices - Offer seminars and educate the public on tax laws. Instructional videos and motivational speakers are ideal to stress the importance of doing your taxes.

Uniform Landscaping - Line Gardere Lane with some type of landscaping that denotes uniformity and cleanliness. Flower boxes, herb beds, tree and bushes, etc. all make for pleasant scenery.

Zoo - Contact a wildlife preserve and discuss the possibilities of a "petting zoo". The Global Wildlife Center is a non-profit, wildlife preserve, whose animals are free-roaming, with over 3000 animals and over 30 different species. They have tour guides, who educate you. You will learn all sorts of interesting and exciting facts about the animals. *"Get up close and personal with the animals – wiggle the humps of a camel, feel the woolly fur of bison, and get eye to eye with a family of giraffes as you feed them—it is learning through touch!"*<sup>1</sup>

1. Global Wildlife Center <<http://www.globalwildlife.com/>>

### *Xeriscapes*

Xeriscape is attractive, sustainable landscape that conserves water and is based on sound horticultural practices. Simply stated, xeriscape is a landscape that is water wise – using water conservatively in the landscape without wasting. Creating sustainable landscapes is one way the city can lessen the impact on the local environment. In the 1980's, the word 'xeriscape' was coined from the Greek word 'xeros', meaning dry. It is defined as "*quality landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment.*"<sup>2</sup> It is not a style of gardening, but a method.



Photo 13: Many varieties of wildflowers come all colors, including purple and yellow. Go Tigers!

Xeriscapes depend on seven basic principles. By using these principles, you can reduce maintenance and use less chemicals and synthetic fertilizer.<sup>3</sup> Developing a plan is the first and most important step in a successful Xeriscape. Consider the regional and micro-climatic

conditions of the site; existing vegetation and topographical conditions; how you intend to use your landscape; and the zoning or grouping of plants by their water needs. Louisiana is home to numerous wildflowers, shrubs and trees. Discrete choices must be made to insure successful lots. Here are some practical guidelines:

2.. Garden Builders <<http://www.greenbuilder.com/general/articles/AAS.xeri.html>>

3. Colorado Springs Utilities <<http://www.csu.org/environment/xeriscape/about/index.html>>

## Proposed Strategies

### *Xeriscapes (continued)*

Soil Analysis. Soils will vary from site to site--even within a given site. Be aware of the acid/alkaline state of your soil.

Appropriate Plant Selection. Your design will determine the overall effect of the landscape. The actual selection of plants should come from those species that are native or adaptive to your site..

Practical Turf Areas. Lawn grass usually covers more of the landscape than is needed. Increase the area of rocks, porous paving, paths, and mulched planting beds to reduce turf. Select drought-tolerant grass varieties such as Buffalo and Bermuda.

Efficient Irrigation. Water infrequently, but when you do, water deeply. Plants and grasses develop deeper, drought-tolerant roots when forced to find deeper moisture. Frequent, light watering results in shallow roots, leading to water stress during dry periods.

Use of Mulches. A 3"-4" layer of organic material should cover all exposed soil areas. Replenish it twice a year. Mulch retains moisture, controls soil temperature, discourages weeds, and prevents erosion.

Appropriate Maintenance. You cannot totally eliminate maintenance, but by following the first six principles, you can reduce time spent on maintenance. Once established, Xeriscapes require less fertilizer, chemicals, and less water. **Logical choices will insure our children a cleaner, greener planet.**



Photo 13: This vigorous Trumpet Vine can be tailored to grow with virtually little maintenance, creating natural boundaries in parks and gardens.



Photo 15: This variety of wild Wandering Jew can be used as a ground cover.

### *Ten-Step Job Training Program*

We are looking at one-third of the residents of our Target Area as living "below the poverty line". The following Ten-Step Program can be created to educate citizens about employment. Employment education is vital to success, especially for our youth. Listed in chronological order, the following ideas will instill good work ethics and values which will insure long-term employment. Teaching communication skills is of the utmost importance when it comes to the workplace. This program can be a guideline for future projects:

**1. Promoting Self-esteem/Self-worth:** Bringing in motivational speakers to address the simple issues of pursuing a productive life-style. Have a college professor come and speak on ethics. Contact area Ministers to correlate the implementation of spiritual awareness in the family and community. Determine if the individual can read. Teach "Johnny" to read.

**2. Determining Goals and Ideals:** Design a "Self-Awareness" program which implements projects to determine interests, such as: Tours of factories and plants, exposure to work environments that involve agriculture and landscaping, and/or group projects that force the individual to work with others. Law enforcement and Fire Departments can promote 'job awareness'. Restaurant and hotel can be asked to recruit for the industry.

**3. Equipping with Proper Tools to Attain Goals and Ideals:** Teaching skills that make a difference between qualified and non. Target which type of job is best, and then provide training and financial assistance to acquire proper clothes and/or uniform needed for the individual to get and keep that job. Help individual to get a computer and teach them how to work on one. The Government can provide free computers.

**4. Preparing to Enter the Workforce:** Have secondary tours and/or guest speakers from the City, State and Federal government to speak on "Government Employment", The Office of Tourism can be called upon to promote awareness of jobs in that field. This is a good time to make the individual aware of the different forms that will be needed. If they do not have a SS card, get them one. Does the individual have a drivers license?

**5. Applications and Resumes:** Teach the individual how to fill out an application. Basic writing skills may be needed and this is a good time to determine the individual's educational background. Did the individual graduate from High School? Sub-interest: Insert General Education Diploma program here.

**6. Preparing for an Interview:** Teach etiquette. Stress the importance of a firm hand-shake and the importance of good eye-contact. Write a thank you letter and assemble references.

**7. First Day on the Job:** Prepare the individual for what to expect the first day on the job. Present forms that will be required for identification and taxes. Emphasize the importance of being an ideal employee to get promoted.

**8. First Paycheck:** What to do with your first paycheck and what not to do with it. Establish a consistent process. How to read the deductions. What are year-to-date totals? Percentages and remedial math can be taught here.

**9. Setting Up a Bank Account:** Have representative from a local financial institution give seminars to promote "How to balance your checkbook". Many banks already offer such seminars at no charge.

**10. How to Budget Your Income:** Teach family how to budget. Pie charts or bar-graphs may be used to give the individual a visual as where their money is going.



## Proposed Strategies

### *Horizon CNA Training School*

Horizon CNA Training School, LLC offers a four (4) week Certified Nursing Assistant job training program to the people in Gardere, as well as other communities. Horizon welcomes the opportunity to help improve the quality of individual's lives through proper job training. The School is currently a provider through WIA grant funding program. *"What (we) want to see is more tuition funding options for those in need of job training here in the city of Baton Rouge,"* they request. *"We have taken steps to make the registration process as easy as possible for applicants by eliminating the upfront costs prior to acceptance into the program."* By taking such measures, the School has opted to postpone those costs "upfront", to enable students to have a smooth transition in the registration process and to generate growth. Horizon agrees with our mission to clean up Gardere and can provide hope in the area of job training programs. The School is located at 8000 GSRI Avenue.

### *The François Gardère Community Center*



It is time we embrace the community, not turn from it. One of the primary concerns of the citizens is to place a community center in the heart of the town. Naming it after the founder just makes sense. *A Town Center*

*would allow many avenues of assistance and provide a means of an outreach for a variety of organizations who are willing to help fulfill the needs of the community--needs that will not be met otherwise.*

A community center may be defined as a building which serves a community, organized in an association (which is responsible for the management of the building) that provides facilities for the development of the recreational, cultural and personal welfare of its residents and it constitutes as a meeting place for voluntary organizations, which need accommodation. It is created for several agencies to work together.



Centrally located within the community, 8618 GSRI Avenue is vacant and on the market. It housed a branch of the Department of Environmental Quality for Louisiana, who have since relocated. A potential problem with funding, means must be taken to establish a central focal point. Providing referral services, employment training and offering counselors to residents will help to lower the crime rate.



### Recreation and Park Commission (BREC)

Ben Burge and Starwood Court Park are outdated and are not meeting the needs of the community. **We propose the Ben Burge Park be called "Fergus Gardère Park", in keeping with the town's history.** When it comes to community events, the following will definitely enhance any program and create a greater potential:

**Accessibility** - Open access paths from the neighborhood for pedestrians and make park more accessible. List rules at each access point, along with lighting and security camera. Consider Staring Lane extension to bring a new entrance in the future.

**Baseball Diamond** - Cypress Mounds is a private enterprise and fees can be hard on an economically-challenged family. Having a free, public baseball diamond will give kids of all economical levels, an opportunity to enjoy the sport

**Benches** - This will make the park Senior-friendly and comfortable. Once again, incorporate an Ad Strategy that allows local businesses to "sponsor" a bench.

**Boundaries** - Delineation of property lines, parking and drive-ways will define the park. In its current condition, visitors park where it is most convenient--sometime that is on grassy area.

**Grills** - Grilling areas will attract more "picnickers". Consider family-size grills and special pits designed for crawfish pots, for reunions and other events.

**Landscaping** - Plant flower-beds, shrubs and trees to increase the park's beauty. Use xeriscapes, rockbeds, sculptures or a pond and fountain.

**Lighting** - Make full and bright, using energy-saving technology. Dress poles with "Welcome to Fergus Gardère Park!" banners

**Pavilion** - Totally enhance any community event, increasing its potential a hundred-fold. A covering will draw families as an ideal spot for a reunions.

**Pet Park** - An area for pets, like those in other parks, would serve pet-owners and encourage exercise.

**Playground equipment** - This includes carousels, sandboxes, and swings. Gardere has a large population of families with children.

**Security Cameras** - Install cameras and post signs: "UNDER SURVEILLANCE" to deter would-be trouble-makers.

**Soccer Field** - Remodel existing field. Neighborhood teams have already scheduled games for the season.

**Tables/Trashcans** - Meeting visitor's needs includes supplying tables, benches and trashcans--"Hit the Mark" here.

**Trails/Greenways** - Per their web-site:

*"BREC, the Park and Recreation Commission for the Parish of E. Baton Rouge, learned that TRAILS were the #1 public request during our public meetings that precede the development of our strategic plan. The Capital Area Pathways Project is an initiative to identify routes and build a network of trails and green-ways throughout E. Baton Rouge and surrounding Parishes."*<sup>1</sup>

**Coupled with the François Gardère Community Center the Fergus**

**Gardère Park can have a greater impact on the way things are now.**

**These two things may possibly be the crux to the whole renewal**



**process.** Consider acquiring the land in between, where a carwash once stood, asking CATS to put a Hub Station with all the amenities.

1. Park and Recreational Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge <<http://www.brec.org/>>

### Chapter 4: Resources and Development

This report is designed to educate and inform you of the current conditions surrounding Gardere. It is a culmination of many years of study and research, and we have found that the potential for help is virtually endless. Our greatest assets are the City-Parish and the State of Louisiana. Surely we can seek solace in our government to conduct urban improvements, as well as provide a safe community for its constituents. There are many agencies and organizations that exist to enhance the lives of the people. What we present is only the “tip of the iceberg”, when it comes to available resources. Our key strategy is place our goal for revitalization fore-most and create simultaneous programs and events to bring things together. We have assessed the situation and it is bleak. Our starting point is to draw from the well that is already in place. Teamwork is always the key to success.

Drawing from the already existing well, measures can be taken to restore and preserve what is left of the community. Residents are tired of the over-grown lots, open buildings and abandoned cars. **Open culverts pose a health threat to their kids and violence has sky-rocketed.** Not believing their involvement will change things, most eventually move out and the cycle repeats itself and nothing gets done. In fact, the opposite is true: It is getting worse.

#### *EBR Housing Authority*

The East Baton Rouge Housing Authority is an independent, autonomous agency, whose leadership and policy making are vested in a Board of Commissioners, who are appointed by the Baton Rouge City-Parish and serve without pay for the good of the community. It was established in 1941 to provide a decent home and suitable living environment for low-income families.

*East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority, is requesting \$24,991,351 in Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2 funds to acquire and redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant and foreclosed properties. The intent of the program is for each of the organizations to construct new affordable housing units to replace the blighted and obsolete housing units. Funding will also be used to finance related soft costs in the development of the new housing. Applicants will be reevaluated according to the following factors: need/extent of the problem, grantee capacity to execute projects, soundness of approach, leveraging potential, energy efficiency, and neighborhood transformation and economic opportunity. Each application must be for at least \$5 million and have an impact of returning 100 abandoned or foreclosed properties to productive use or eliminating their blighting influence. Additionally, the application must indicate the target area; the area can be a single neighborhood, citywide, regional or national.<sup>1</sup>*

1. EBR Parish Housing Authority <<http://www.ebrpha.org/>>

This program enables public housing authorities to receive federal assistance to finance, develop, and manage low-income housing. This sounds like a remedy for much of the housing blight in Gardere. Application for funding can be made by the city, on its behalf.

#### *Existing Agencies, Institutions, Organizations and Programs*

"Mining" our resources is the answer to the problem. The resolution is in all of us to make a difference. Referred to as one of America's "*fastest growing*" cities, Baton Rouge must leave no stone unturned. We are turning over the stone that has stifled growth in Gardere for too long, and we are reaching out for support to revitalize this community.

**Boys Club/Girls Club of America.** An increasing number of children are at home with no adult care or supervision. The local affiliate, Boys & Girls Club, offers young people (ages 6-18) a wide variety of educational, cultural and social enrichment programs after school and during the summer. The Club measures success of its program with three priority outcomes: Increasing Academic Success; Improving Citizenship and Character; and Increasing Healthy Lifestyles. Boys & Girls Club is a non-profit organization.<sup>1</sup>

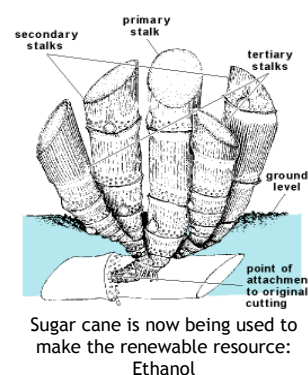
**Big Brothers/Sisters Program.** Offer mentoring programs to young boys in the area. The Big Brothers Big Sisters Mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth.

1. Boys & Girls Club <<http://www.brclubs.org>>

**BRCC (Baton Rouge Community College).** Suggest a recruiting center and offer financial aid offices, job placement programs and promotional academic programs. With such success, perhaps BRCC can open an extension: BRCC-Gardere.

**Capital Area Transit System.** Revamp lines for all three campuses, exclusively and expressly for students in South Baton Rouge. Create bus lanes that will facilitate arrival on campus regularly. Use covered bus stops for Ad Strategy that off-sets cost.

**Connections Ministries.** The Mission is to help churches and Christian organizations get the resources they need for outreach and discipleship ministries by informing the body of Christ of the opportunities for participation and to introduce church leaders to organizations that want to partner with them for ministries of compassion, evangelism, and discipleship.



**Exxon/Mobile.** Arrange tours of the plant and establish recruiting times and awareness days. Elaborate on its global impact and the advantages of having such a plant in Louisiana. Suggest the production of ethanol from locally grown corn and sugar cane. **Renewable resources are the wave of the**

**future for the country's energy supply.**

### Office of Neighborhoods Mission<sup>1</sup>

To improve the quality of life in East Baton Rouge Parish by connecting citizens with the service they need and by providing support to East Baton Rouge Parish neighborhood and civic associations. The Constituent and Neighborhood Services (CNS) achieves this by accomplishing the following goals:

- Providing helpful information to constituents and neighborhood and civic associations, particularly on issues, policies, and procedures that most affect neighborhoods, especially in reference to City-Parish government services.
- Providing training and education to constituents and neighborhood and civic associations, teaching citizens how to affect positive change in their communities.
- Facilitating partnerships between constituents, neighborhoods and other groups, including local government departments, faith-based institutions, businesses, universities, schools, and not-for-profit organizations, enabling constituents and neighborhoods to utilize resources around them to their full potential.
- Advocating policies and procedures that will facilitate, not hinder the work of constituents and neighborhood and civic associations as they work to improve their lives and neighborhoods.

### Exhibit K

1. BR City/Parish Government <<http://brgov.com/dept/neighbors/>>

**Family Road<sup>2</sup>** of Greater Baton Rouge is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of services for families. Family Road has over 108 non-profit, public, private, and government agencies that have committed to provide services on location, including:

- Prenatal Classes and Clinic
- Car Seat and General Safety Classes
- Fatherhood Classes
- Counseling Programs
- Teen Parenting Classes
- Education and Training Classes
- Parenting Classes
- Banking and Technology (Computer) Classes
- Children and Teens Classes
- Wellness, Nutrition and Fitness Classes

**Gardere Initiative.** There is a network dedicated to rebuilding the foundation of the area on biblical principles. The Gardere Initiative has been active three years and has a solid track record in the community for being dedicated to spiritual, educational and economic progress for Gardere. They tell us:

*"Each of our events reach between 500-1500 persons at a time, without incident. We provide school supplies each year for 500 children, have provided LEAP tutoring, conducted voter registration drives, purchase Christmas gifts for 300 children annually and are working the neighborhood door to door to know the Gardere families individually. On March 7th (2009) we had a "Meet in the Streets" day in which six churches were out meeting the residents. We also partner and support with a sister organization, which provides long-term mentor services for girls."*

2. Family Road <<http://www.familyroadgbr.org>>

**GSRI Property Owners Association.** They have a very aggressive program, in cooperation with the Sheriff's department, that has already made a difference and has the potential to rid our area of crime completely in the foreseeable future.

**Habitat for Humanity.** Habitat for Humanity International is a non-profit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry. Habitat invites people of all backgrounds, races and religions to build houses together in partnership with families in need. Habitat is a world-wide, grassroots movement.

**Illinois Central Railroad.** Now operated under the Canadian National Railways system, consider the development of a Passenger Train Service as an alternative means of transportation for commuters and tourists. This will not only reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released in the atmosphere, but will also reestablish their role once played in our society. It begins in the heart of New Orleans and ends in Gloster, Mississippi and intersects with Gardere Lane. The length of this track is approximately 135 miles and passes key points, such as airports, casinos, downtown Baton Rouge, outlet malls, and both LSU and Southern University. Place on the southwest corner of the intersection.



Exhibit G: Illinois Central, circa 1930.

**Kleinpeter Dairies.** Invite the milk industry to educate, promote and recruit the consumption of milk, its benefits etc. Tours of the facility can be established twice annually.

**Law Enforcement Agencies.** Educate citizens on Law Enforcement. Ask police officers to offer lectures on topics such as: The Importance of Seat Belts. Other topics can include: First Aid/CPR, Traffic Safety and Rules of the Highway. Provide security for key-areas, ie. churches, schools and public events.

**LSU Agricultural Center.** Develop the acreage extending south of campus and reaches Gardere Lane and create a family-friendly welcome center. Provide a petting zoo that will give kids a positive exposure to the animal kingdom.

**One Hundred Black Men.** Chapters are educating and empowering youth and their families while positively impacting communities. The mission of One Hundred Black Men of Metropolitan Baton Rouge, Ltd. is to give substance to a shared vision which fosters and develops model programs that enhance the lives of our youth.

**Southern University.** Recruiting Station and Sports Programs. Reestablish Lady's Golf and Mens Tennis by converting the acreage between Brightside to Gardere Lane, to a 9-hole Golf Course and Tennis Complex. Bound by Burbank Drive on the east and Nicholson Drive on the west.



## Resources and Development

### *Computers for Learning Federal Program*

In 2006 the White House created a program that used all of its old computers, refurbishing them and donating them to schools and non-profits involved in education:

*In order to ensure that American children have the skills they need to succeed in the information-intensive 21st century, the Federal Government is committed to working with the private sector to promote four major developments in American education: making modern computer technology an integral part of every classroom; providing teachers with the professional development they need to use new technologies effectively; connecting classrooms to the National Information Infrastructure; and encouraging the creation of excellent educational software. To the extent permitted by law, all agencies shall give highest preference to schools and nonprofit organizations, including community-based educational organizations, ("schools and nonprofit organizations") in the transfer, through gift or donation, of educationally useful Federal equipment. The availability of educationally useful Federal equipment shall be made known to eligible recipients under this order by all practicable means, including newspaper, community announcements, and the Internet. "Community-based educational organizations" means non-profit entities that are engaged in collaborative projects with schools or that have education as their primary focus. An educational nonprofit is eligible if it is classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c) of the United States tax code.<sup>1</sup>*

More of society is coming online each day. Think about how much your computer serves you. Think about how we can make a difference in someone's future by giving them access to a computer and the Internet.

1. Computers for Learning <<http://computersforlearning.gov/>>

Avenues that extend up to the Federal Government exist that can be networked into our development scheme. This program ties in with the proposal we have for Wireless Internet spots (Wifi).

### *LSU - Initiatives in Service*

*As an urban land-, sea- and space-grant institution, LSU uses its extensive resources to solve economic, environmental, and social challenges. To more accurately measure LSU's level and variety of community engagement, a University-wide audit was recently disseminated to students, faculty, and staff through the Office of the Provost. Appropriate variations of the survey were also sent to the Office of the Chancellor, Division of Student, deans, and department heads. The Community University Partnership exhibits the University's commitment to community in a variety of these areas, with a concentrated focus upon Old South Baton Rouge and the neighborhoods immediately north of campus. LSU's Center for Community Engagement, Learning and Leadership allows students to put their classroom knowledge to use in service to the community, benefiting both students and the community outside the gates of LSU. Students enrolled in service-learning courses help meet community needs while fostering greater self-knowledge, improved leadership skills, and a sense of civic responsibility. Volunteer LSU is the university's center for community service and involvement. Its mission is to promote and coordinate volunteer opportunities, build partnerships within the community, and instill a lifelong commitment to service.<sup>2</sup>*

Coordinating effects can be made to bring volunteers into the Gardere Community. Bringing in the necessary assistance to those in need will generate trust and cooperation on behalf of the people.

2. Louisiana State University <<http://www.lsu.edu/chancellor/service.htm>>

### Development

In all practicality, one must really take a good look at the situation to see how dire the need is. Just as the physician has to diagnose the patient for proper treatment, we must really examine the community of Gardere. We must do our best to nurse this wonderful neighborhood back to health. Proper planning is vital and that will take an even more detailed look at the situation. Developing this plan has several options.

We know that a high crime rate is something to consider. The Office of Corrections can incorporate mandatory participation in these programs as public service and/or anger management treatment. An evaluation can be done on repeat offenders to see if any program can rehabilitate them back into society. First-time offenders must be made to acquire a GED, learn to read and have employment, or show that they are looking. Why not take lawbreakers and put them to work cleaning up the area. Those who work in law enforcement would be better to determine the best way to implement and develop this concept.

With such a low level of income, we can expect to see many on welfare and food-stamps. A community center is essential, if we want to really make a difference in these people's lives. Establishing a presence in the community will provide a base for operations. Job training and continuing education can be coupled with employment that provides "hands-on" training. **Participation in these 'enhancement' programs will prepare the individual for long-term employment.** LSU, Southern or BRCC can give some credit hours for certain programs accomplished,

should individual want to pursue further education. Individuals can list their participation on their resumé and letters of recommendation can be provided and certificates awarded. **These concepts tie in with need to develop and boost self-esteem and confidence, which will allow the individual to become a responsible, law-abiding citizen.**

Where the "*rubber hits the road*" is at the grassroots level, which means there must be a "personal" involvement with each household. Conducting surveys, as to each family's need, is mandatory and can only really be done on a one-to-one basis. This generates the need for a Committee or Plan of Action that requires going door-to-door. Consider the need to create a training program for want-to-be counselors and case workers. This will create more jobs. Only trained, qualified persons should be allowed to determine what is lacking and what is needed for families. Area churches can be asked to help.

There is an advantage here: Many resources already exist and what may be lacking, we can create. Developing these resources is where it all begins. **It must begin soon or we may all be sucked in by this**

**vacuum of violence.** Revitalizing Gardere is a special needs project



and a very sensitive situation. We are dealing with people's lives here, and their future depends on us. The power of the people is in people. This is the day for all good people to come to the aid of their community. May God be with us.

## Conclusion

People are not meant to live in poverty, especially in the United States of America. Nearly thirty percent of Gardere residents live under the poverty line. No child should have to grow up in such a run-down neighborhood, where every other step is a booby trap. No community should exist in such a state. In such a great and diverse country, our state ranks up there among the most cultural and influential in the nation. Let us take some of that 'influence' and clean up Gardere Lane. Let us make it beautiful again. There are numerous reasons why Gardere has become a ghetto. One reason is neglect on behalf of the landowners to maintain their properties and secondly, the neglect on behalf of the proper agencies, not enforcing ordinances. That is why the average citizen fails to become an active member in society. We would like to change that. The City needs to provide a means for pedestrian traffic; repair street curbing; enforce ordinances involving the neglect of property; and maintain empty lots with proper landscaping. When it comes to Gardere's overall condition, the City will have to be the first and foremost agent to transform its condition into a more inhabitable one: Cleaner and safer for all.



Highway 30 houses many plants and refineries that provide employment for thousands of workers, many of whom live in Baton Rouge. LSU has a student population of over 20,000 students. Indigo Park Apartment Homes will increase the local population by up to twenty per-cent. Now is the time to fully extent Staring Lane, transform the Nicholson/Gardere intersection to accommodate a higher volume of traffic and build contemporary housing in order to woo in new businesses. Surely there is substantial traffic flow to warrant a study to determine an intersection make-over: Bicycle lane, sidewalks and turning lanes, thus bringing Gardere into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

People like Moyen, Galvez, Gardère and Kleinpeter live today. The difference is that they may not be conquering lands, capturing cities, or milking cows, but they are engaged in some new field of medicine, technology or philanthropic effort, all of whom experience defeat and victories of their own kind. The motivation that drove explorers, military leaders and inventors still exists today and the residents of Gardere have as much a right, as anyone else, to pursue the American dream.

Advancements have made so much progress in farming, that the vast acreages used for sugar cane can be managed to easily produce an abundance of commodities.

Products like figs, grapefruits, lemons, pears, pecans, satsumas, and sugar cane are just a few main ingredients of our lives--crops that we can produce in our own backyard. Health trends demand fresh produce and technology is turning sugar cane into fuel. Working with an entity, such as the Agricultural Center of LSU, every foot of acreage can be successfully mapped and slated for cash crops..

Many cities in America are struggling. Baton Rouge is not like any other city and as the State's Capital, we get visitors from all over Louisiana.

Technology in medicine is advancing at several of our medical research centers, bringing in doctors and staff from all over the world. Whether we realize it, or not, we are a popular city, ranked up there with one of America's fastest growing. Creating tourist attractions and revitalizing this district will have an effect on the entirety of the city.

The city's third riverboat casino, The Reserve at Longwood and the plans to have the South's largest water treatment plant will all have a great impact on the immediate area by increasing the population. Extending Staring Lane to Gardere Lane will pave the way for new businesses. After having examined the charts, exhibits and maps, we hope that we have sparked an interest, and even more so, placed a burden on your heart to revitalize and change Gardere, Louisiana. It will take the cooperation of many offices, and the individuals who run those offices, to properly coordinate development and improvement.

As one of our oldest communities, Gardere has been over-looked too long and with such powerful resources available, surely we can make a

difference, beginning today. There are numerous advantages to this plan, including increased property values and increased tourism.

Businesses will have more opportunities to flourish in a safer, cleaner environment. Revitalizing Gardere is a win-win situation for the State of Louisiana and the City of Baton Rouge.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these ideas for urban renewal and we ask you make it a priority and make pictures, like this, a thing of the past in Gardere, and all of Baton Rouge.

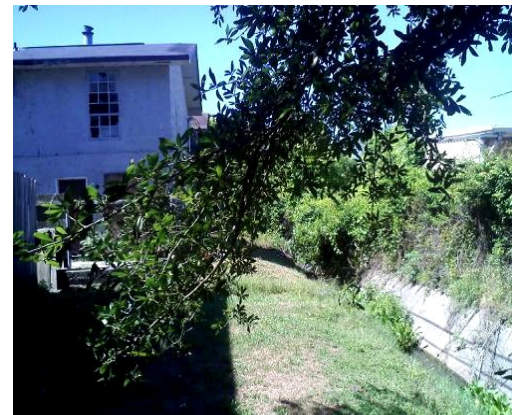


Photo 16: Taken from 1658 Port Drive, apartment 4, it is clearly visible that culvert is unprotected. No doubt the residents that once lived in the now abandoned complex had safety issues for their children and moved.

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## Definition of Terms

*Access* - the ability, right, or permission to approach, enter, speak with, or use; admittance.

*Aesthetic* - having a sense of the beautiful; characterized by a love of beauty.

*Antebellum* - before or existing before the war, especially the American Civil War.

*Bike Lane* - a part of a road marked off or separated for the use of bicyclists.

*Census* - complete counting of a population, as opposed to a partial counting or sampling.

*Commute* - to travel regularly over some distance, as from a suburb into a city and back.

*Commuter* - a person who commutes, esp. between home and work.

*Curb* - a rim, especially of joined stones or concrete, along a street or roadway, forming an edge for a sidewalk.

*Eclectic* - noting or pertaining to works of architecture, decoration, landscaping, etc., produced by a certain person or during a certain period, that derive from a wide range of historic styles, the style in each instance often being chosen for its fancied appropriateness to local tradition, local geography, the purpose to be served, or the cultural background of the client.

*Forcemain* - used to pump wastewater to a treatment plant.

*GED* - General Education Diploma.

*Greenway* - Utilized by BREC, a green pathway in a park.

*Landowner* - See Property Owner.

*Local Traffic* - the vehicles, persons, etc., moving in an area, along a street, etc., pertaining characteristic of the target area.

*Napoleonic Law* - Civilian law is based on scholarly research and the drafting of legal code which is passed into law by the legislative branch. It is then the judge's job to interpret that intent more than to follow judicial precedent.

*Pavilion* - a light, usually open building used for shelter, concerts, exhibits, etc., as in a park or fair.

*Property Owner* - a holder or proprietor of land.

*Proposal* - a plan or scheme proposed.

*Propose* - to offer or suggest a matter, subject, case, etc., for consideration, acceptance, or action.

*Reside* - To dwell permanently or for a considerable time; to have a settled abode for a time; to abide continuously; to have one's domicile of home; to remain for a long time.

*Resident* - a person who resides in a place.

*Sidewalk* - A paved walkway along the side of a street; walk consisting of a paved area for pedestrians; usually beside a street or roadway.

*Spur* - A short road or highway that shoots off of the main highway or thoroughfare.

*Traffic Flow* - the movement of vehicles, persons, etc., in an area, along a street, in a repeating manner within the Target Area.

*Uniform Landscape* - to improve the appearance of an area of land, a highway, etc., as by planting trees, shrubs, or grass, or altering the contours of the ground in an identical or consistent manner.

*Xeriscape* - any type of landscaping that incorporates indigenous plants, to the area being landscape, that are maintained by nature.

## Appendix A: Grassroots-BR



John B. Austin, ORDM  
Founder and Executive  
Director, *Grassroots  
Society for Residential  
Involvement*

Created out of need for motivation and involvement in neighbor-hood affairs, Grassroots-BR has been actively playing a role in this City's development for over ten years. We formed a small group in the Fall of 1998 and incorporated in January 2005. There are no boundaries with Grassroots-BR. We take every citizen seriously and endeavor to resolve an issue or make sure their concerns are channeled to the correct resource.

As in other volunteer-orientated organizations, participation is sporadic and involvement lapses, although there are always on-going Projects all around Baton Rouge. Born in the heart of one of the City's toughest neighborhoods, Grassroots-BR provides assistance in the pursuit of resolving urban plight such as public eye-sores, squatting and littering.

As a faith-based organization, Grassroots-BR believes that everyone is created equal and that all should have equal nourishment, protection and security. Many hold to the belief that all authority is given by God, so therefore one could say that those who are elected to any office, have been 'called'. Some will not see it that way, and that is what makes our country great: The protected Freedom of Religion or for some, Freedom *from* it. Urban renewal is desperately needed. What, or how, one believes is irrelevant and should not be a deterrent, ever.

Humanitarianism preserves the race and we believe that by helping others, we are helping ourselves. As a non-profit organization, Grassroots-BR functions as a civic organization that reaches out to the city on a "grassroots" level.

We believe in results and the best way to achieve results is to pursue them. There are no limits to Grassroots-BR, except those that exclude us by law, natural force or divine intervention. In this present day, we have resources available to resolve most neighborhood challenges. We are our brother's keeper. It is a common thing for us to do door-to-door visitation for personal involvement. Networking is vital to communicate effectively with so many involved.

We provide personal assistance with local, state and federal government forms; benefit programs; educate on acquiring and maintaining employment by offering reference letters; interview training and financial budgeting of household income. We offer translation services in Spanish and French

Our focus has always been on the environment and its effect on people. The outward, physical condition of a neighborhood is a prime factor in promoting a safe and clean environment. Resolving chronic littering, slumlords, eye-sores and lot negligence have been our main avenues for keeping the environment clean. Bringing a harmonious relationship between the people and City government can only insure positive, long-lasting results for all those involved. God bless Baton Rouge.