

VIII Economic Development

Introduction

A key part of securing St. John the Baptist Parish's future is a sustainable and growing economy including robust and sustainable residential, commercial, and industrial development. Recent trends indicate that while some aspects of St. John's economy is strong and growing, this has not translated into sustained population and household growth.

The One Parish One Future comprehensive plan sets out a 20-year vision for St. John's overall physical development. The Economic Development Element set forth policies, which if successfully implemented, will provide a framework for the Parish to maintain a healthy jobs-housing balance and provide for a diversity of quality businesses and jobs. Attracting and retaining quality jobs and development, preserving and enhancing the local economy, including agriculture, and maintaining the viability of the petrochemical industry are key aspects to furthering the quality of life for Parish residents.

Among other things, the Economic Development element establishes an economic vision for the community and expresses support for the core goal of growing the local economy to create a high quality of life in St. John Parish. Implementation of the Economic Development element is essential to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life in St. John Parish. Economic development provides the community with the means to support physical development by ensuring a stable tax base to fund future public services and infrastructure investments.

St. John Parish government, representative business organizations, and other stakeholders contributed significantly towards development of the Economic Development element. Cyclical economic conditions underscore the need to continuously evaluate local economic development opportunities.

The following statement reflects the general course set by the 2007 Plan and Economic Development element and summarizes the perspectives of the Parish and citizens on economic development:

St. John Parish's community and its economic future will take advantage of opportunities created by dynamic markets and competitive forces. The Parish will benefit from leveraging existing

strengths into new economic opportunities by providing the environment for strong workforce development. The focus of St. John Parish's Economic Development strategy is to grow a strong, diverse, high-wage, economy that creates jobs at a rate in excess of population growth while maintaining and enhancing community identity; preserving cultural and historic resources; and contributing to the Parish's quality of life.

Industrial recruitment and other economic development activities should support existing and emerging industrial activity that have a significant knowledge-based component. Clusters targeted to drive the future economy are petrochemical, telecommunications, knowledge-based service industries, life sciences, healthcare, and expansion of locally owned businesses. There will also be an emphasis on the retention and expansion of existing businesses as the baseline for additional job creation.

To grow targeted industries and support the desired pattern of growth, St. John Parish must maintain an inventory of prime commercial and industrial lands. The inventory should include an increase in the number of larger parcels that individually and collectively accommodate knowledge-based campus development and the clustering of targeted industries.

Economic development should be increasingly supported by master-planned and mixed-use developments in select areas that incorporate both traditionally defined manufacturing uses as well as office or commercial uses, and in some cases residential. The focus on a knowledge-based economy will increase the demand for campus-style development.

The development and marketing of a designated area that supports high-technology and knowledge-based industries can support the continued growth of existing high-technology firms and encourage more knowledge-based industries to locate in St. John Parish.

To be competitive for economic growth and investment, the development process must support shorter timelines, more predictability, and cost effectiveness.

Local and state governments must focus infrastructure investments in areas designated as nodes of growth to support economic development. These investments can be supported by new public sector finance mechanisms sufficient to allow for infrastructure investment in advance of development and to direct growth to identified nodes.

The future economy of St. John Parish will be characterized by an increasing percentage of individuals who both live and work in the Parish. Expanded opportunities and partnerships between education and business will provide an opportunity to engage citizenry and an educated workforce for existing and start-up companies. Our community will continue to recognize the expanding importance of our region and the significant economic benefit to be gained through regional cooperation and diversity.

Relationship To Other Elements Of The Comprehensive Plan

Economic development planning cannot be conducted in isolation. The economy plays a vitally influential role in determining whether or not the broad array of objectives and the strategic vision for the overall Parish comprehensive plan will be realized.

Economic development programs may not be successful without supporting land use, transportation, and capital facility initiatives. Therefore, the intent is to formulate a broad network of interdependent policies within the St. John Parish Comprehensive Plan that are mutually supportive. The Economic Development Element has been designed as an integral part of the Parish's 20-Year comprehensive plan.

Recognizing the reciprocal benefits derived from strategies based on well coordinated policies, St. John Parish has ensured that its economic development initiatives are part of a complementary network of comprehensive plan policies and elements (e.g., Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Parks, Recreation and Open space, Resilience, Natural Environment, Hazard Mitigation, and Implementation, along with any future elements). They also support other goals expressed in the plan and the long-range vision for the Parish.

St. John Parish and the other regional jurisdictions should work to promote economic development as a way to stabilize the tax base. The emphasis is to

create wealth for individuals and the community through aggressive job creation and diversified tax base opportunities.

Background And Existing Conditions

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to set forth the framework and guidelines by which the Parish pursues a balanced and stable economic base. In formulating future plans, the Parish recognizes that a dynamic and diversified local economy is important for a community's identity, quality of life, and its tax base. This section summarizes the existing information on historical and existing employment patterns, evaluation of current and projected socioeconomic trends, and characterization of these issues as a basis for the policies contained in the next section.

In 2008, the St. John the Baptist Parish Economic Development department commissioned a detailed economic study and forecast for the Parish titled Economic Growth Outlook 2009 - 2017. This report was compiled by Bob Folsie of Economic and Business Research Services and was completed in February of 2008. The report is a detailed analysis of the existing and projected future economic activity in St. John Parish.

Additionally, data gathered from the University of New Orleans Center for Economic Development, the U.S. Census, and South Central Planning's 2012 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy provides information related to the existing economic development climate in St. John Parish and the region.

As part of the update to the Economic Development element some additional data has been included to supplement the existing forecasts and provide a more recent context to local, regional, and national trends that impact economic development in St. John Parish

Summary of Economic Climate and Potential Growth Outlook In St. John Parish

Predicting future economic activity can be somewhat tricky as local, regional, national, and international forces can act to shape the local economy. Several factors shape St. John's economy and this section summarizes some of the larger forces and trends that are currently in place to drive economic activity in the near future. Below is a broad summary of findings addressing trends related

to the economy and demographics impacting economic development in St. John Parish.

- The local economy is shaped by three main industrial sectors in addition to a broad range of expanding service, manufacturing industries, and retailing, as listed below
 - Petroleum/petrochemicals Processing
 - Maritime related transportation and warehousing
 - Construction Industries
 - Primary and Fabricated Metals
 - Food processing, retail trade
 - Health care and social assistance
 - Accommodation and food service, other service industries

These industrial sectors account for approximately 85% of employment, 92% of all earnings, and represent a broadening and more diversified range of industries impacting St. John's economy.

- Post-Katrina (2005-2007), employment increases from business expansion were most evident in the following sectors:
 - Manufacturing sector – 136 jobs
 - Retailing sector – 235 jobs
 - Accommodation and Food Service sector – 193 jobs
 - Wholesale trade sector – 160 jobs
 - Information sector – 179 jobs
 - Professional and technical service sector – 129 jobs

Recent data from the University of New Orleans Center for Economic Development indicates that despite the increases in jobs post-Katrina, total employment in St. John declined through 2011 from a high of 15,441 in 2008 to 15,056 in the fourth quarter of 2011.

- Nearly \$4 billion from the private sector has been invested in new capital investments in St. John since 2000 including new or expanded manufacturing plant and equipment, terminal/storage facilities, laboratories, and other capital assets. This has led to almost 1,200 permanent jobs and about 8,700 temporary construction jobs.
- St. John Parish has attracted an above average proportion of middle to upper middle-income households since 2000. Slightly more than 56% of

all households in St. John have incomes ranging from \$35,000 to \$125,000 as compared to 51% of households for the New Orleans Metropolitan area and 54% of households nationwide.

- Recent household income data from 2011 provided by the American Community Survey shows that average household income for St. John - \$50,736 - is slightly lower than the national average of \$51,484. But St. John household income is significantly higher than the Louisiana average of \$43,484.
- St. John is experiencing a demographic trend toward the development of an adult labor force with a higher educational achievement consistent with the requirements of an expanding and more diversified industrial base.
- St. John Parish's ability to attract and retain skilled blue and white-collar workers to fill the requirements of its growing and more diversified industrial base is obviously one of the keys to fostering continued economic development.
- Overall employment growth in St. John Parish was projected to average slightly more than 6% annually over the five-year period 2007 – 2012, reaching a total of about 20,000 jobs. However, this growth did not materialize, and in fact total jobs through the data for that period – 4th Quarter 2011 - showed that the total number of jobs in the Parish reached 15,056. This represents a slight decline in total jobs from 2008's total of 15,441.
- Industries expected to produce most of the employment growth in the Parish over the next 5 years (2008 – 2012) are:
 - Retail industries – 690 jobs
 - Manufacturing Industries (primarily petroleum/petrochemical and food processing industries) – 450 jobs
 - Administrative and Waste Services (primarily contract employment for construction, petroleum/petrochemical, and waste remediation industries) – 440 jobs
 - Accommodation and food service – 400
 - Construction industries – 380 jobs
 - Transportation and warehousing industries – 350 jobs

- Continuing the diversified employment growth pattern of 2007 – 2012, the projection for the following 5 years (2012 – 2017) indicate continuing employment increases among the leading growth industries:
 - Retail industries – 700 jobs
 - Accommodation and food services – 500 jobs
 - Transportation and warehousing – 450 jobs
 - Construction industries – 400 jobs
 - Health care and social assistance – 400 jobs
 - Manufacturing industries – 350 jobs
 - Other service industries – 250 jobs

Population and Household Trends

Population and household trends have a significant impact on economic activity. Growing populations often drive economic development, although the reverse is certainly true as well. Currently, St. John Parish is experiencing a declining population with future population growth projected to be sluggish over the next 20 years.

- U.S. Census estimates put the Parish's post-Katrina population in 2007 at 47,910, up from an estimate of 46,150 in 2005. At the time this growth exceeded all Southeast Louisiana Parishes except one – St. Tammany. Since 2007, however, the Parish population has steadily declined and the most recent U.S. Census estimates in 2014 put the Parish's current population at 43,761 – a decline of 8.6% since the high of 2007.
- Over the next 20 years the population is only projected to increase slightly to about 48,590 residents. This represents slightly more than one half of one percent growth a year (.0055%).

This decline started prior to the impacts from Hurricane Isaac, however it is likely that the decline accelerated as a result of Isaac's impacts on the Parish.

- Prior to 2010 the median age of St. John Parish's population was 32 years, significantly lower than both the median age of the New Orleans Metropolitan area and national population, which average 35 years. However the 2010 U.S. Census indicates that in fact the Parish's population has now become older as the median age jumped to 35.5 – an 11% increase.

From 2000 to 2010 the number of residents under the age of 44 declined by 1,931 while the over 44 population increased by 4,822. Significant within these numbers were the losses within the 0-19 and 30-44 age ranges. The only age cohorts to increase over that period were the 20-27 and 24-29 groups.

Industrial and Commercial Land Analysis

The industrial and commercial land demand and supply has a direct impact on employment. Despite previous estimates that St. John Parish's population and jobs base will continue to increase over the next ten years; recent trends indicate a significant slowing to decline in current and projected population. Improving the present jobs/population ratios will require a proportionate amount of usable industrial and commercial property to maintain a strong tax base.

According to the 2012 land use survey there are currently 3,597.20 acres of land devoted to commercial and industrial/manufacturing activities in St. John Parish. Of that total, the vast majority - about 3,107 acres are used for industrial/manufacturing purposes, or about 86% of total economic land use. This seems normal given the data included in the Parish's economic outlook. Commercial land use is adequate to support the Parish's current population.

The future land use map located in the Land Use Element allocates a total of 9,622.0 acres for future commercial and industrial development, which is an

LBCS Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Total	Change in Acreage, 2003-2012
Residential	3998.35	8.2%	382.48
General Sales or Service	489.78	1.0%	60.94
Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade	3107.42	6.3%	527.49
Transportation, Communication, Information, and Utilities	1385.87	2.8%	178.13
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	664.73	1.4%	143.72
Education, Public Admin., Health Care, and Other Institutional	541.11	1.1%	12.02
Construction-Related Businesses	92.79	0.2%	44.80
Mining and Extraction	0.00	0.0%	0.00
Fishing, Hunting, Forestry, and Agriculture	16463.92	33.6%	-1055.70
Land in Natural State	22223.98	45.4%	-355.31
Total	48967.95	100.0%	-61.43

Note: Total change in acreage is negative because of land removed from the parcel layer for new roadway right-of-way in areas of new development.

increase of nearly 6,024 acres over existing development. Given current population dynamics this is an adequate supply of land for economic development in St. John Parish.

Zoning	Total Acres	% of Total
C-1	793.97	1.62%
C-2	93.18	0.19%
C-3	2,278.05	4.64%
I-1	1,192.85	2.43%
I-2	962.46	1.96%
I-3	8,830.06	17.99%
MHD	2.26	0.00%
MHP	52.50	0.11%
PUD	32.87	0.07%
R-1	23,715.15	48.32%
R-2	58.51	0.12%
R-3	113.19	0.23%
R-4	350.87	0.71%
Rural	10,603.60	21.60%
	49,079.51	100.00%

Source: St. John Parish Planning Dept.

If population trends continue along the expected path outlined in the Parish's economic growth report, there will not need to be significant additional commercial land developed to meet the future demand for retail and service activities. Recently, however, new industrial development has been proposed on the Westbank of St. John Parish.

A review of the current zoning in St. John indicates that there is ample zoned land available for future commercial or industrial development. Table 7.2 provides a breakdown of zoned land in St. John Parish.

There are over 3,000 acres zoned commercial, or about 6.45% of total land. This represents nearly ten times the amount of land currently used for commercial purposes in St. John Parish.

The 2002 industrial land inventory revealed that the Parish's total industrial land base is approximately 10,985 acres, or about 22.4% of total available land. This indicates an excess supply of zoned industrial land of about 8,300 acres.

Focused Public Investment Planning

One thing that will be important for future commercial and industrial development is the status of infrastructure for the land currently zoned commercial and industrial. While having land appropriately zoned for new commercial or industrial development is important, perhaps more important is the status of the infrastructure capacity for that land. If the Parish is going to encourage new commercial and industrial development, it is imperative that the Parish immediately begins planning the development of infrastructure for this land.

Since St. John developed their comprehensive plan, Parish leaders have made a commitment to focus on economic development and balancing jobs and housing in the parish. Parish leadership is committed to encouraging economic development and particularly the creation of high-wage jobs.

It is clear that existing revenue streams might not be sufficient to keep up with demands for public services and facilities to support expanding industrial activities. Lack of a coordinated transportation policy has led to the myriad of traffic problems in some corridors. Park acquisition and improvements are beginning to take shape. In the past, St. John dispersed its capital improvements expenditure throughout the parish providing partial solutions to many areas, but not complete solutions to problem areas. Given the limited resources available for infrastructure, the parish needs a more strategic approach to investment of public funds, focused on capital improvements in some select areas rather than spreading capital improvements throughout the parish.

A particular geographical area will produce acceptable levels of service for development in that area. Such areas can be said to contain "fully-served" land because all public facilities meet or exceed future development standards. If these areas are planned for employment development, then the parish will also be achieving one of its economic development goals.

St. John parish should develop a Focused Public Investment Plan (FPIP) that would allow the parish to target infrastructure improvements in areas that require the least cost to provide fully served land that is ready for industrial or commercial development by businesses providing good paying jobs. The FPIP does not dilute public investment by spreading it thinly in every part of the parish at the same time. The FPIP should also avoid public investments in areas that promote undesirable development.

St. John Parish has identified several Public Investment Areas (PIAs) through previous zoning that will be the geographical targets of the FPIP. PIAs are areas that concentrate the location of public facility capacity in order to produce fully served land suitable for economic development. It is critical that as development move forward, the Parish include a Public Infrastructure element to the comprehensive plan that identifies long-range improvements and funding for Parish infrastructure.

Key Economic Development Assets in St. John Parish

St. John Parish is strategically located in Southeast Louisiana along the Mississippi River. With an abundance of undeveloped land on both the East and Westbanks of the Mississippi River; access to major interstate highways; access to several key rail corridors, among other assets St. John Parish offers tremendous opportunities for future economic development.

Available Land

A key part of St. John's attractiveness is the tremendous amount of undeveloped land on both the East and Westbanks of the Parish. Based on the most recent update to the Parish's land use database St. John has nearly 20,000 acres of unused and undeveloped land; with another 16,000 acres used as some form of agriculture. Under current land use patterns and population forecasts through 2030 St. John will need less than 3,000 acres of newly developed land to accommodate growth.

Key to growing development will be ensuring that the Parish can plan for and provide adequate infrastructure – including roads, sewer, water, drainage, etc. – to serve areas of new development. Often development will outpace the provision of public infrastructure resulting in added infrastructure costs.

Multi-modal Transportation Opportunities

A big advantage St. John offers is a true multi-modal transportation network. The Parish has two major Interstate Highways – I-10 and I-55 – that provide access to the Midwest, Western, and Southeastern United States. Additionally, U.S. Highway 61 (Airline Highway) connects St. John to regions east and west.

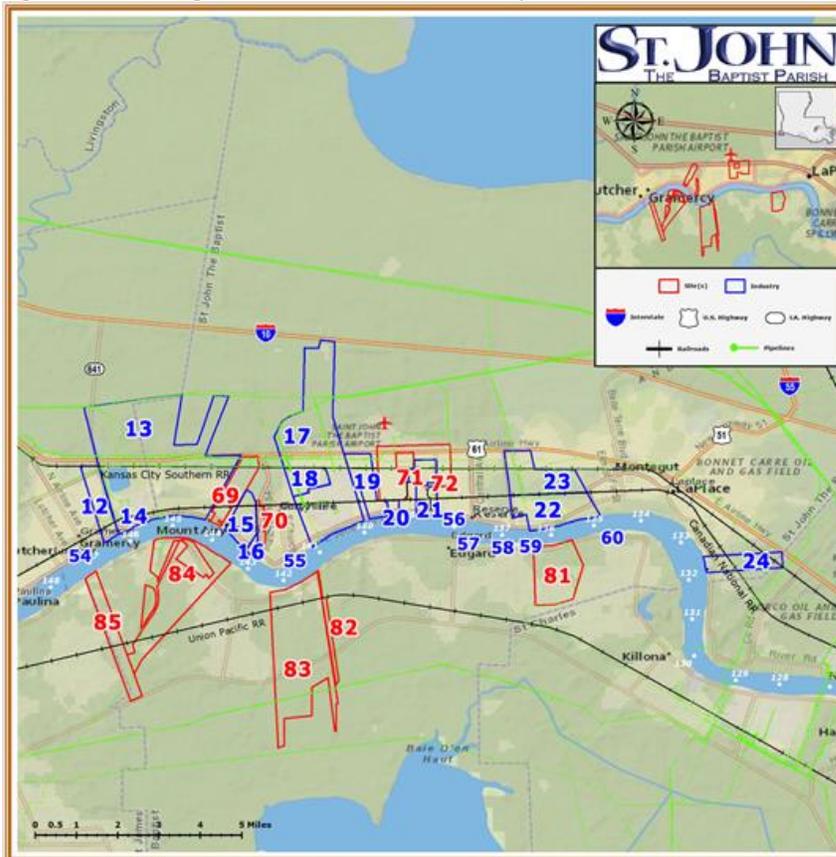
Several major rail lines run through the Parish including the Canadian National and Kansas City Southern lines on the Eastbank, and the Union Pacific line on the Westbank. These offer tremendous value as freight and/or chemical transport options within St. John Parish.

St. John Parish also has a regional airport – St. John Airport. Recently the airport came under the direction of the Port of South Louisiana. Plans call for expanding operations and aircraft capacity to further the Ports ability to move freight and enhance their activity.

Mississippi River and the Port of South Louisiana

Perhaps the biggest economic asset within St. John is the Mississippi River. The Mississippi bisects St. John and provides existing as well as tremendous future economic potential. This has allowed the Port of South Louisiana (POSL) to

Figure 8.1: Existing and Available Sites With Deep Water Draft in St. John



become the largest tonnage port in the Western Hemisphere with over 4,000 oceangoing vessels and 55,000 barges using the POSL year. Additionally the POSL accounts for 15% and 57% of total U.S. and Louisiana exports, respectively. This outpaces the Ports of New Orleans, Gulfport, and Baton Rouge in Louisiana.

The Port relies on deep draft moorings. There are several opportunities for the Port to expand its footprint in St. John Parish, particularly on the Westbank, which boasts several large undeveloped tracts with deep draft Mississippi River frontage as well as access to the Union Pacific rail line. Highway 3127 connects these sites to both of the existing Mississippi River bridge crossings on either end of St. John Parish and onto I-10.

Figure 8.1 identifies those sites currently developed and those that are available with deep draft access to the Mississippi River. The Port has expressed a desire to expand their Globalplex Intermodal Terminal operations in Reserve as well as expanding operations on the Westbank. One limiting factor is the lack of a mid Parish Mississippi River bridge crossing. Given the tremendous growth potential offered by the Westbank it is possible that the Port could assist in funding a mid Parish crossing. This could also greatly enhance future development on the Westbank, which currently relies on the intermittently available Edgard Ferry for quick access to the Eastbank.

Historic and Cultural Resources

An important within the Parish is the rich historic and cultural history written over the last several hundred years in St. John Parish. The Historic Preservation element within the comprehensive plan provides an inventory of some key Parish historic assets, along with goals and policies to promote preservation and development of the history and culture of St. John Parish. There are tremendous opportunities, however, for the Parish to grow the economy utilizing these assets.

Developing Mainstreet programs in some areas, utilizing existing historic buildings for adaptive reuse projects, taking advantage of eco-tourism opportunities, expanding promotion of existing historic assets such as River Road plantation homes, among other things can positively impact the Parish through job creation and property and sales tax collections. Historic Preservation as an economic engine has been used successfully throughout southeast Louisiana and can be done in St. John Parish.

Economic Development Goals And Policies

St. John Parish Economic Development Vision Statement:

“St. John Parish will grow as a high-wage economy that creates jobs at a rate in excess of population growth, and an increasing percentage of the population will both live and work in St. John Parish. There will be an emphasis on emerging industrial clusters that have a significant knowledge-based component, while continuing an emphasis on retention and expansion of existing businesses. Economic growth will be supported by master-planned and mixed-use developments in areas with adequate infrastructure, which will also be the primary focus for infrastructure investments that support economic development.”

The St. John Parish Land Use Plan contained a series of policies for economic development. The intent of this Economic Development Element is to build on the policies already in place, provide more specific direction for implementation of economic development goals, and coordinate with other elements of the comprehensive plan.

Parish-Wide Economic Development Goals and Policies

GOAL 1: Enhance the Overall Economic Development Climate in St. John Parish.

Policy: The Parish will demonstrate its commitment to long-term economic growth by promoting a diverse economic base, providing opportunity for all residents, including unemployed and disadvantaged persons.

Growth that helps to measurably raise the average annual wage rate of community residents and preserves the environmental quality and livability for St. John residents will improve the lifestyle of St. John Parish residents.

Policy: The Parish should continue to support those enterprises that have created the economic base of the Parish, and promote their continued growth in a predictable environment, which encourages investment and job growth.

Policy: The Parish will encourage long-term growth of businesses of all sizes.

Policy: The Parish will promote productivity and quality among its businesses to meet world and market standards for their products and services.

Policy: The Parish will encourage higher educational levels for residents, and improvements in the measurable performance of high school graduates compared with other parishes in the state.

Policy: The Parish may give priority assistance to employers who will increase the standard of living in the community.

Policy: The Parish will plan for long-term economic growth, which enhances the capacity of existing air shed for job-generating activities.

Policy: The Parish will provide for orderly long-term commercial and industrial growth and an adequate supply of land suitable for compatible commercial and industrial development.

Policy: The Parish will encourage the recruitment of new business employers to absorb the increasing labor force, and to supply long-term employment opportunities for Parish's residents who are currently employed outside of the Parish and for new residents.

Policy: The Parish will work with other regional partners to establish specific common benchmarks that will measure the region's overall economic viability. These benchmarks will be included in the Parish's Comprehensive Plan and are encouraged to be included in each jurisdictions comprehensive plan.

Policy: Encourage use of a multi-modal transportation system that facilitates the reduction of travel times and reduces the need for additional road construction within the region.

Policy: Following consultation with interested local governments, the Parish may designate, consistent with state requirements, major industrial developments and /or master planned developments across jurisdictions to foster economic development for St. John Parish and the region. Appropriate or required Intergovernmental Agreements consistent with the provisions of the state law shall accompany such designation.

GOAL 2: Continue to identify targeted industries to guide public policy, infrastructure development, workforce training, and other economic development initiatives.

Policy: Encourage long-term business investments that generate net fiscal benefits to the Parish, protect environmental quality, and are consistent with the objective of higher wage jobs for St. John Parish residents.

Policy: Encourage public and not-for-profit partnerships with private business interests in generating economic development projects that would not otherwise occur without the cooperation of all sectors.

Policy: Promote a diverse economic base, providing economic opportunity for all residents, including unemployed, under-employed, and special needs populations.

Policy: Provide priority assistance to employers who pay a family wage and thereby improve the region's standard of living.

Policy: Work with the Port of South Louisiana to assist them in expanding within St. John Parish along the Mississippi River.

Policy: Encourage expansion of the St. John Airport to increase economic aviation related economic development opportunities.

GOAL 3: Assure an adequate supply of prime industrial sites to meet market demands for industrial development over the planning horizon to create an environment conducive for the startup, growth, expansion and retention of “targeted” industries.

Policy: In cooperation with the Parish’s Economic Development Department, maintain a minimum ten-year supply of prime industrial land based on average absorption rates over the last five years.

- Designate the necessary acreage of vacant prime industrial land for the 20-year planning period.
- Discourage removal of land from the inventory that results in a less than 10-year supply of prime industrial sites.
- Update inventories of industrial lands at least every ten years to reestablish the 20- year supply of industrial lands.
- Require new industrial sites that are part of a major industrial land bank to have a minimum of 75 acres.

Policy: Designate sites for industrial use at locations that will be accessible from major multimodal transportation sources (rail and marine facilities) and roadways of arterial classification or higher, potentially

served with utilities, and free of major environmental constraints such as unsuitable soils, floodplains, archaeological sites, and wetlands. Coordinate public investment capital facilities planning expenditures to assure development of these lands.

Policy: Maintain an adequate inventory of properties designated for industrial use and that are suitable for a mix of business and industrial park, light and heavy industrial uses; include properties developed by both private and public entities; and provide access to multimodal transportation services including motor freight, rail, and marine facilities.

Policy: Restrict rezoning of primary, secondary, and tertiary industrial parcels for non-industrial use by preserving industrial land exclusively for those permitted uses in the industrial zone classification.

GOAL 4: Provide commercial sites adequate to meet a diversity of needs for retail, service, and institutional development in St. John Parish.

Policy: In cooperation with local officials, maintain an adequate supply of commercial lands on the East and Westbanks of St. John Parish, based on average absorption rates of the last five years plus an appropriate market factor.

- Designate sufficient commercial land for the 20-year planning period within St. John Parish.
- Discourage removal of commercial land from the inventory that results in a less than 10-year supply of commercial sites.
- Update inventories of commercial lands at least every ten years.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment of underutilized commercial sites.

Policy: Locate convenience-oriented retail and service developments adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Policy: Encourage commercial and mixed-use developments to locate on current or planned transit corridors; encourage transit-oriented site planning and design.

Policy: Develop and maintain design guidelines to ensure that commercial projects are developed with minimal impact on surrounding

land uses, are consistent with related community appearance/design guidelines, and assure pedestrian as well as vehicular access.

Policy: Permit home occupations that are consistent with the character of adjoining residential properties and neighborhoods.

Policy: Encourage responsible waterfront development where environmentally and economically feasible.

GOAL 5: Provide a continuum of educational opportunities responsive to the changing needs of the work place locally and regionally.

Policy: Encourage continuing education, skills upgrading, mentoring, and lifelong learning programs suitable for large and small employers.

Policy: Consider incentives to link proposed industrial development projects with job training, education, and housing programs.

Policy: Encourage improvement of the region's educational network, including K-12 and higher education.

Policy: Support development of a Community College in St. John Parish that will focus on education and training for employment opportunities in St. John Parish.

GOAL 6: Encourage infrastructure development and services necessary to serve new industrial development.

Policy: Coordinate the recommended Capital Facilities Element so that infrastructure funding and construction is consistent with parish-wide policies for industrial development.

Policy: Prioritize infrastructure development in advance of need for areas that are suitable for industrial development:

- When siting a regional/corporate office development, land use compatibility, effectiveness, and family-wage jobs created shall be considered; and,
- Emphasis on infrastructure for development should be placed to serve major industrial areas with proximity to the I-10 corridor.

Policy: Encourage port infrastructure improvements along the Mississippi River in order to expand support for deep-water vessels and industries dependent upon regional import-export trade.

Goal 7: Utilize existing historic physical and cultural resources to enhance economic development.

Policy: Identify areas that could be designated as Mainstreet corridors and apply to the State Mainstreet Program for Mainstreet Status.

Policy: Utilize existing historic buildings for adaptive reuse opportunities that preserves their historic significance while maximizes economic value.

Policy: Identify areas within St. John Parish that either are currently or could be designated as historic corridors, wildlife corridors, or other designations so that these can be promoted to tourists visiting the region.

GOAL 8: Maintain and enhance opportunities for resource-based industries located on rural lands in St. John Parish.

Policy: Encourage resource-based industries, including agricultural, forestry, and aggregate materials, which are consistent with maintaining rural lands in the Parish consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement.

Policy: Implement programs to encourage agricultural and forestry management of rural tracts consistent with sound environmental practices.

GOAL 9: Provide incentives for “targeted” industries to guide public policy, infrastructure development, work force training, and other economic development initiatives. Incentives for targeted industries should focus on identified clusters for which the region has a strategic advantage and those supported by existing infrastructure and workforce base.

Policy: Undertake parish sponsored planning efforts in targeted areas to address industrial development and related commercial, open space, recreation, and critical land issues.

Policy: Conduct pertinent wetland delineation studies and master plans to identify areas for industrial, commercial, open space, recreation, and environmental uses, to include wetland banking.

Economic Development Strategies For St. John Parish

The following is a recommended set of strategies needed to implement the identified economic development goals and policies. The strategies are not in any particular order, but are designed to give Parish officials' options from a wide array of strategies. As always, funding and priorities change, so the strategies should be viewed as flexible since it is likely that changing conditions will result in the need to shift strategies in the future.

- Expand the St. John Parish Economic Development Department to include at least one person focused on business and industrial retention and recruitment; and add additional staff as necessary.
- Focus on existing clusters where the region has a strategic advantage, are supported by existing infrastructure, and for which the parish can provide a ready labor force.
- Identify existing and emerging industrial clusters that offer the potential for growth within the local and regional economy. Refine the locational and supportive requirements for each cluster and recommend programs and public sector actions necessary to support growth in that sector.
- Fund regional targeted industry recruitment programs to attract new commercial business investments in St. John Parish.
- The Parish's Economic Development Office should partner with local University Business Development Centers on the creation of Parish wide strategies and programs to support targeted industries.
- The Department of Economic Development should partner with the State Historic Preservation Office to identify opportunities to utilize St. John's existing historic resources to create economic development opportunities.
- Support the expansion of technical and professional training capabilities in St. John Parish by developing partnerships with regional educational institutions to support workforce development for targeted industries.

- In cooperation with Delgado Community College, support establishment of a regional training center that offers career progression for those seeking advanced training in high-technology fields. Continue to support vocational skills training through the St. John Parish public education system.
- Support creation of a Parish-wide Workforce Development Council to spearhead creation of a workforce development plan for the next 20 years.
- Increase the industrial land base to allow for large-acreage sites (greater than 75 acres) and support aggregation of land for large master-planned, mixed-use development on industrial lands.
- Support retail commercial development and residential development in order to create employment centers.
- Allow for the development of a broader scope of non-retail office commercial uses on designated industrial lands to allow for the location of targeted industries. Routinely update the zoning ordinance to reflect the emerging market and economic demand for industrial development.
- Designate additional industrial land inventory in areas designated as nodes of growth sufficient to accommodate industrial clusters, particularly on the east and west ends on the Westbank of St. John Parish.
- Make targeted infrastructure investment in advance of growth to guide development and to facilitate the development process.
- Create larger sites (greater than 75 acres) for industrial and office park development by using public sector mechanisms (e.g., ports and public development authorities) to aggregate smaller parcels.
- Create and designate an area to further the growth of high technology and knowledge-based industries. Create a sub-area and infrastructure development plan in cooperation with the private sector to promote desired development and business within the area.
- Support the development of new broad-based funding mechanisms to finance infrastructure investments in support of focused industrial development and recoup investments as development occurs.

- Support the improvement of the efficiency of the permit review process and a 60- to 90-day permit review for all priority projects.
- Regularly benchmark local development review processes against competitor Parishes with similar targeted industries with the intent to match or beat benchmarks for Parishes competing for like investments.
- Update Parish development regulations to allow designation of those commercial and industrial development proposals that result in significant economic benefits (including job creation, high-wage jobs, investment, and public revenue generation) as 'Projects of Parish-wide Significance. For such projects:
 - Develop expedited permitting processes and coordination mechanisms to facilitate economic development
 - Create project advocates or permit teams within municipal permit authorities that provide individualized support and coordination
 - Establish a 60- to 90-day development review process benchmark
 - Conduct training sessions for public officials and staff on economic development to educate individuals regarding private sector perspectives of land development.
- Encourage and support public efforts that empower efficient development:
 - Create and fund a publicly owned and operated wetland mitigation bank to provide a convenient and efficient mechanism to convert low-value wetlands that impinge upon the development of industrial and commercial properties
 - Create sub-area plans for each node of growth to the level that developmental and environmental permits are available in a timely and efficient manner.
 - Create processes that allow pre-qualification of individual sites so development and environmental permits are available in a timely manner.
- Support transportation improvements and expansion of the interstate corridors to increase freight mobility and movement of the regional labor pool including any initiatives to develop regional high-speed rail service to St. John Parish.

- Support continued cooperation between regional port authorities to increase investment that improves the transportation of goods and services to export markets.
- Encourage the recruitment and location of compatible targeted industries, especially knowledge-based, high-wage businesses to St. John Parish.