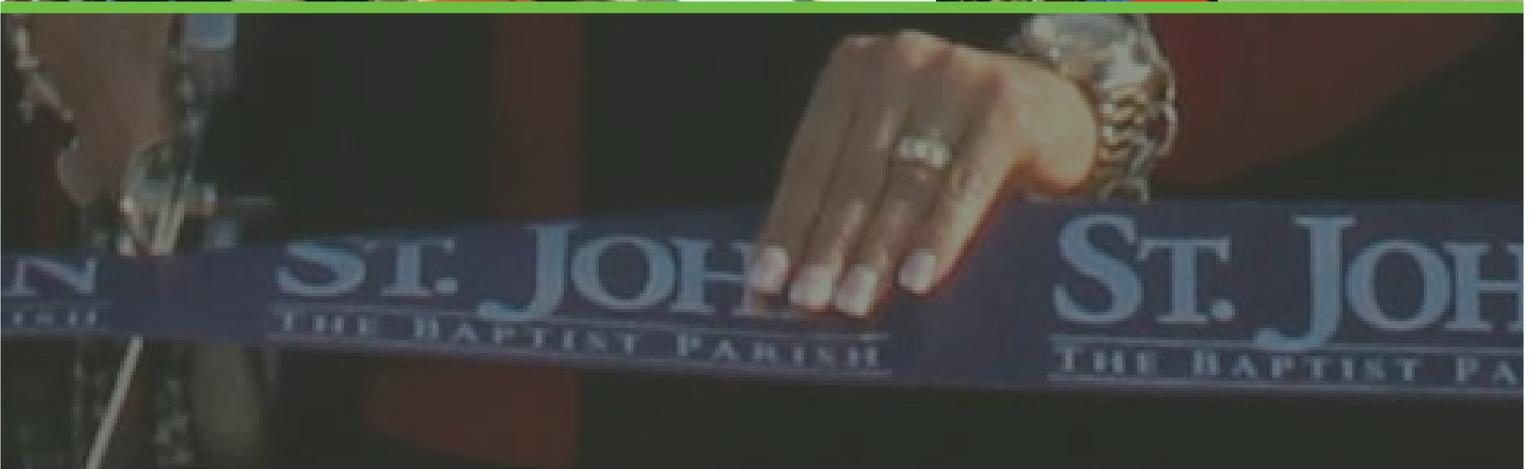




# St. John the Baptist Parish PROGRESS REPORT

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# St. John the Baptist Parish Progress Report

Dear St. John the Baptist Parish resident,

As parish government strives to improve the level and quality of services provided within the parish, this Progress Report highlights many activities undertaken over the past year. In addition to parish infrastructure, quality of life initiatives are also highlighted in this report. All go a long way toward making our community an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

Ensuring public safety remains a top priority and one of the biggest accomplishments of the past year is the passage of a millage to create a funding source to build a \$700 million East Bank Hurricane Protection Levee. Parish voters overwhelmingly approved this measure and while there is still work to do in securing federal funding, this project is finally going forward after 40 years of inactivity. Also moving forward is a project to reintroduce Mississippi River water into the Maurepas Swamp to help restore a vital buffer that protects us from tidal surge.

Because of our geographical location, the potential for flooding remains a major concern as every resident and business owner faces various levels of risk. Flood insurance is available to help reduce the financial impact of a flood as claims are paid even when federal disaster assistance is not available. Insurance costs vary depending on how much is purchased and what is covered. I encourage you to speak with a licensed insurance agent to get more information.

Other public safety initiatives include completing construction of the Hemlock Fire Station in LaPlace while moving forward with a Public Safety Complex on the West Bank through a partnership with the sheriff's office.

Nearly \$50 million in parish work was completed or continued in 2017 with much more to come in 2018. Funded primarily by bond issues approved by voters, residents will soon access a new 44,000-square-foot complex that will bring a new level of convenience to governmental interaction. Drainage improvements continue parishwide while overlay projects and street and bridge repairs go on at a record pace.

Improvements to our parks and recreational programs are enhancing our quality of life. The Timbermill and Mississippi River Multi-Use Trails are providing outstanding opportunities for outdoor activity and a new Senior Citizen's Center serves West Bank residents.

Other critical projects slated for 2018 include vast improvements to our wastewater oxidation pond in Reserve, completion of Phases II and III of the Reserve Drainage Project and construction of a new addition to the animal shelter.

In 2017, close to \$45 million in residential and commercial investments were made in St. John and the unemployment rate dropped to 5%, the lowest level since 2008. I am confident that with the continued support and encouragement of residents, business owners and regional and state officials, we will continue this growth.

I thank my administrative staff and parish employees for their tireless efforts to keep St. John moving in the right direction. Please visit the parish web site at [sjbparish.com](http://sjbparish.com) for timely information and sign up to receive the latest news. Facebook, Twitter and Constant Contact are also sources of updated information.

As always, I welcome your suggestions on how parish government can better serve you.

Very truly yours,

**NATALIE ROBOTOM**  
*President, St. John the Baptist Parish*  
[robottom@sjbparish-la.gov](mailto:robottom@sjbparish-la.gov)

*The mission of St. John the Baptist Parish government is to effectively and efficiently serve citizens in a manner that ensures transparency, ethical business practices, economic development and a healthy community.*

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### New Government Complex

A new, 44,000-square-foot building will soon serve as the center of parish government. The \$10 million facility, funded through bond issues approved by citizens, will be a “one-stop shop” for residents with more space for the parish president and staff, assessor, clerk of court, registrar of voters, planning and zoning, finance, grants, council offices and a courtroom.

“This building will make it much more convenient for residents to interact with parish government,” President Robottom said. “There is ample parking and citizens will finally be able to access government services in one location.”

The new complex is connected to the Percy Hebert building, a portion of which will be turned over to the sheriff’s office for its use.



### E.L. Fagot Memorial Fire Station

The new, 10,000-square-foot, \$2.9 million Hemlock Street E. L. Fagot Memorial Station includes four apparatus bays, bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, dayroom, gear storage rooms and an exercise area. It also provides training rooms and a safe place for housing firefighters during emergencies.



### New West Bank Senior Center

A new, 3,000-square-foot Council on Aging Senior Citizen’s Center is serving residents in Edgard. The \$600,000 building is nearly twice the size of the former center, providing a gathering place for residents 60 and older. An expansive activity room for socializing, arts and crafts and meals is the heart of the building which features a kitchen and spacious porch. The new center is next to the West Bank Recreation Complex, allowing easy access for exercise. The building was funded through a 2014 Bond Issue.





## New Power Plant

An \$869 million Entergy facility being built adjacent to the Little Gypsy Power Plant near the St. John Parish line will provide more than 700 construction and nearly 30 permanent jobs. The plant will generate increased electrical power to attract new employers and \$26 million in new business sales.

## Planning and Zoning

The Planning and Zoning Department works to implement the parish's comprehensive plan and improve residents' quality of life, specifically issuing building permits, reviewing land development applications, and investigating nuisance violations.

### 2017 Highlights

- Building Permits Issued: 846
- Residential Value: \$20,726,479
- Commercial Value: \$23,854,507
- Development Investment: \$44,580,986
- Clarified standards for junked vehicles to reduce blight
- Established four local historic districts and a Historic District Commission
- \$20,000 grant from National Park Service to support Historic Districts
- Certified four cultural districts with LA Office of Cultural Development
- Collaborated with sheriff's office to streamline occupational license procedure, clarify adult uses regulations and establish standards for live entertainment uses
- Adopted Coastal Zone Management Plan
- Updated signage standards

## Code Enforcement

- From 1/1/17 to 12/31/17, 1,526 violation cases were closed out
- From 1/1/17 to 12/31/17, 1,310 violation cases were opened
- As of 12/21/17, 74 violation cases were in progress

## Purchasing and Procurement

Responsible for the acquisition of all materials and services required by the parish, the Purchasing and Procurement Department also handles all public records requests, responding to 93 last year.

The department is currently implementing new financial/purchasing computer software that will enable it to process inventory, finance, check writing, work orders and procurement with one system to enhance fiscal responsibility.

### 2017 Highlights

- 68 Contracts
- 48 New vendors
- 16 Sealed bids
- 9 Requests for Proposals
- 4 Requests for Qualifications

## Finance

For the third consecutive year, the Finance Department was honored with the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its work in 2016-2017. As the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting, the award reflects the commitment of the department to meeting the uppermost principles of public financial stewardship.

Besides creating and maintaining the parish's annual budget and monitoring fund balances, the department is in the process of implementing a new software system to further streamline the purchasing process. The department is also working to reduce phone costs by partnering with a local vendor.

## Human Resources

The Human Resources Department works to enhance parish employee morale and productivity while retaining a well-trained workforce. "All-Staff Meetings" and quarterly "Lunch & Learn" events allow employees to engage among colleagues and expand their knowledge on topics including healthy living and workplace safety.



Human Resources hosts training sessions on governmental ethics and sexual harassment prevention for management and staff.



## Public Safety/Emergency Operations

In 2017, multiple severe weather threats had the Public Safety/Emergency Preparedness staff working around-the-clock coordinating the response. Departmental and interagency personnel ensure the parish is prepared to withstand such events.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recognized St. John Parish as a NOAA Weather Ready Nation Ambassador for its work in improving the nation's readiness against extreme weather and water events.

The department assisted with household hazardous materials collection day and passed a FEMA-evaluated radiological drill.

## Office of Fire Services

The department is working with the sheriff's office to construct a new, \$1.8 million public safety complex in Wallace in 2019. The building will house vital public safety services including fire, police and EMS.

In addition to its regular duties, fire services supports critical departments such as public works and utilities during weather events and emergencies.

- 1,736 Calls for assistance
- 45 Structural fires, estimated saved \$2,562,200
- 667 Emergency medical calls
- 26 Fire prevention programs reaching 470 adults and 1,500 children
- 22 New sets of firefighting bunker gear purchased for \$57,939
- 200 Free smoke detectors installed



**St. John the Baptist Parish**



**@SJBPGov**



Champions! St. John firefighters William Parker, Michael Moscona, Travis Etie and Cameron Buccola

## Firefighters Win Again

For the fourth year in a row, a team from the St. John Office of Fire Services placed first in the Louisiana Fireman's Competitive Drills Contest of timed events such as handling hoses, hooking up equipment and putting on fire gear.



## Grants Office

The Grants Office secures funding for local projects that support continued development, growth, restoration and resiliency.

The office is in the final phase of administering a \$32 million Community Development Block Grant, helping residents recover from Hurricane Isaac. So far, more than 300 residents have benefited with 13 families receiving new or rebuilt homes, 11 houses being elevated with 16 elevated plus rehabilitation and hundreds of other structures receiving significant repairs. The grant also provided funds to the school board, housing authority and small business loan program.

The Grants Office hosted a series of successful "Contractors' Fairs" to help pair smaller businesses with larger ones while providing accounting and tax consultations.



## Hurricane Protection Levee

The most significant step in more than 40 years towards constructing an East Bank hurricane protection levee was made in 2017 as parish voters approved a millage establishing a funding source for the \$700 million endeavor.

"This much-needed project has been talked about for decades," President Robottom said. "This plan is finally moving forward because of the support of citizens, our congressional delegation and lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C."

The levee project must still clear federal funding hurdles but without St. John citizens pledging to pay for approximately \$50 million of its cost, it would still be stalled.

## Public Works

Responsible for maintaining roadways, roadsides, drainage and the collection of debris, the Public Works Department oversees more than 441 miles of roads and bridges and 136 miles of major canals.

Since 2010, more than 124 parish roads have been resurfaced and, in 2017, more than \$800,000 was budgeted for street repairs. Millions more have been invested in improvements to state roads in St. John.

### 2017 Projects

- 9,451 work orders completed
- \$541,000, Fairway Drive bridge
- \$3 million, Reserve Drainage Project, Phase III
- \$378,695, Peavine Boat Launch improvements
- \$600,000, New Edgard Council on Aging Center
- \$150,000, Renovations to council chamber
- \$134,000, Animal Shelter expansion

### Ongoing Projects

- \$800,000, Haydel Canal project
- \$150,000, Foxwood Levee Phase II
- \$10 million, New government complex
- \$4.4 million, Vicknair Canal Pump Station
- \$457,200, Airport Pump Station reconstruction
- \$1.1 million, Marigold Street drainage improvements
- \$1.4 million, McReine Road drainage improvements
- \$1.4 million, Belle Pointe drainage improvements
- \$3.2 million, Reserve Drainage Project, Phase II
- \$260,000, Woodland Drive Bridge repairs



## Utilities

The Utilities Department remains committed to providing our community with a safe and reliable water supply and to protecting the environment by the proper collection and treatment of wastewater.



### 2017 Projects

- \$1,675,000, Parish generator project
- \$70,000, New aeration equipment at River Road Treatment Plant

### Ongoing Projects

- \$2,380,000, LaPlace water system, electrical component elevation
- \$900,000, Lions Water Treatment Plant, water intake improvements
- \$300,000, Lions/LaPlace Reverse osmosis piloting project
- \$536,000, Edgard Water Treatment Plant, clarifier rehabilitation
- \$826,000, Pleasure Bend water system, new water facility
- \$300,000, Parishwide isolation valves
- \$216,000, Shell potable water line
- \$8,700,000, Oxidation pond conversion into 3MGD treatment facility
- \$1,270,000, West Bank Wastewater Treatment Plant rehabilitations
- \$200,000, West Bank inflow/infiltration project
- \$1,102,000, LaPlace Main Lift Station rehabilitation

## Communications

The Communications Department relays daily news to citizens and serves as the Public Information Office during emergencies. Besides responding to all media inquiries, the office keeps St. John's web site, calendar, government access channel, Facebook and Twitter presence updated.

Helping to coordinate parish events and meetings is another function of the Communications Department as well as serving as master of ceremonies to many large events including the Independence Day fireworks show. A St. John Parish App will soon be available.



*Communications Director Baileigh Helm interviews Sheriff Mike Tregre during St. John's Independence Day celebration.*

### In the past year, the department:

- Issued 448 news releases
- Made 520,996 phone calls for emergency notifications
- Organized more than 40 ribbon cuttings/groundbreakings
- Participated in state and local training drills including Active Shooter, Waterford 3, GOHSEP, LEPA

To have information added to the parish web site calendar, SJTV, or our social media sites, please contact the Communications Department at [communications@stjohn-la.gov](mailto:communications@stjohn-la.gov).

Visit [sjbparish.com](http://sjbparish.com) and click on 'Stay Connected' to have news updates sent to you via phone, email or text.



## Animal Shelter

A 2,100-square-foot expansion to our shelter provides additional space to care for animals and more room for administrative services.

A partnership with the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will help secure the safety of animals in a disaster. The agreement also provides funding to handle large-scale cruelty cases.

Spay/neuter and medical services are available at the shelter, allowing for faster adoptions. Qualifying residents may get these services at a reduced cost. A program to examine and release healthy cats to citizens who take responsibility for their care is getting started.

St. John Animal Shelter  
985-651-7387  
Monday – Saturday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM  
Adoption Hours: Noon – 4:00 PM  
Low-cost spay/neuter, SPCA: 985-652-SPCA  
After-hour animal emergencies, 9-1-1  
Web site: [petfinder.com/shelters/stjohn.html](http://petfinder.com/shelters/stjohn.html)  
Email: [animalshelter@stjohn-la.gov](mailto:animalshelter@stjohn-la.gov)



## Parks and Recreation

The parish continues its work to enhance its recreational opportunities through the Parks and Recreation Department. Programs for youths and adults promoting physical and mental fitness keep expanding.

“Open Gym” allows residents to exercise or play basketball throughout the day and some evenings. Water aerobics and Ashley Kelly Swim programs are held at the Alex Roland Reese Pool at REGALA Park in Reserve and the Castle Drive Pool in Edgard.

Youth football has returned and the baseball/softball program entered its second year in the Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth Organization. Bidy Basketball is growing, bringing visitors to the parish for tournaments and games. Approximately 80 participants experienced a day with the New Orleans Pelicans.

With the help of local industry, St. John United Way, the parish and volunteers, a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workshop exposed 85 parish youths to modern communications, collaboration and critical thinking through hands-on learning activities. Summer recreation activities include field trips and educational programs.

- \$1.4 million, Mississippi River Multi-Use Trail Project, Phase II
- \$3.6 million, Mississippi River Multi-Use Trail Project Phase IV
- \$427,000, Garyville Timbermill Recreational Trail Project, Phase II
- \$403,113, Lucy Recreational Trail, Phase I
- \$2.1 million, Lucy Recreational Trail, Phase II

### Parks and Recreation programs:

Adult Water Aerobics  
Ashley Kelly Swim Program  
Bidy Basketball  
Cal Ripken & Babe Ruth Baseball  
Line Dancing  
Pelicans Jr. Training Camp  
Pelicans Night Out  
S.T.E.M. Workshop  
Youth Football  
Youth Softball Development Program



## Spencer Chauvin Memorial Station

The St. Andrews Fire Station underwent \$9,000 in renovations and landscaping before it was dedicated to the late District Fire Chief Spencer Chauvin, who was killed while responding to a call in August of 2016. Much of the work was done by Fire Service personnel to save money and as a tribute to Chief Chauvin.



The official poster for the 44<sup>th</sup> annual Andouille Festival is revealed.

Economic Development Director Jerry Jones kicks off Shop Local/Shop St. John.



## Economic Development

Recruiting businesses to our parish and retaining the ones already here is the job of the Economic Development Department. Through our agreement with the Greater New Orleans-Louisiana Small Business Development Center, we create business outreach initiatives and training programs and enhance our workforce.

A recently-launched web site, OpportunityStJohn.com, promotes our parish to potential employers and residents. Economic Development also offers business counseling and helped 40 residents graduate from the Kauffman Foundation's FastTrac Entrepreneurial Training Program, laying the groundwork for new businesses to succeed.

Garyville, Reserve, and Wallace were winners in the four-parish cleanest city competition. New "welcome signs" are being completed for these communities as well as new landscaping for other signs at parish entranceways.

### The Economic Development Department participated in:

- St. John's Industry Career Day - hosted by the St. John Library and South Central Louisiana Technical College
- Louisiana Calling - raising awareness and connecting Louisiana citizens to career opportunities and financial prosperity
- Port of South Louisiana's Globalplex \$9.6 million warehouse expansion that will create jobs
- A partnership with "Livability Magazine" generating \$50,000 in advertisements for the 2018 St. John publication

### 2017 Highlights

- 48 New businesses
- 358 Small business consultations
- 20 Business plans created
- 27 Business training workshops

### TV/Film Productions

- Queen Sugar
- Preacher
- Deadlier Than the Male
- The Highway Men

### Special Events Attendance

- Andouille Festival – 21,000
- Independence Day Celebration – 5,000
- Veterans Luncheon – 600



The U.S. Military provided health services to parish residents at no cost.

## Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Delta Regional Authority partnered with the U.S. Military to host an Innovative Readiness Training Clinic at East St. John High School where, at no charge, the clinic provided area residents with counseling, medical, optometry and dental health services with an estimated value of \$270,000.

The department continually works to enhance and protect the health and well-being of our parish in many ways.

### DHHS in 2017:

- 808 Families received LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program)
- 1024 Children fed through summer nutrition program
- 21 Students from at-risk families placed in jobs
- 123 Families aided with shelter, lodging, food and utility assistance
- 177 Families assisted with food distribution
- 213 Individual tax returns completed at no cost
- 11 Families received seasonal baskets
- Bottles of water and heat safety tips distributed to residents



## West Bank Library Renovated

The Roland Borne Memorial Library in Edgard has undergone a \$568,000 expansion and renovation to provide residents with an updated, modern, comfortable facility.

# St. John the Baptist Parish

1801 West Airline Highway  
LaPlace, Louisiana 70068



[sjbparish.com](http://sjbparish.com)



St. John the Baptist Parish



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*Parish government is ready to assist you or your organization in any event that helps make St. John an even greater place to live. Let us know how we may help you.*



Fire prevention program



Parish employees fill Christmas baskets



Academic Excellence lunch



Shop Local/Shop St. John program



St. John Clean Sweep



Krewe DuMonde Mardi Gras parade



Andouille Festival pageant



Renovated council chambers



Council on Aging Halloween party



Veteran's Day lunch