



## JEFFERSON PARISH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

*Jefferson Parish commits to planning and developing as a diverse community with a rich quality-of-life by enhancing the integrity, value and character of its neighborhoods and businesses.*

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

- Expedite critical transportation improvements, such as the Huey P. Long Bridge widening and the completion of I-49;
- Protect and enhance development and redevelopment of established areas on the East Bank, including Elmwood and the Metairie CBD.
- Facilitate redevelopment of the Airline Drive Corridor to accommodate the East-West Corridor Project as a means of improving the connection between the airport and New Orleans;
- Protect and enhance development and redevelopment of established areas on the West Bank such as the Harvey Canal area while providing for new development such as the development of a business park in the undeveloped areas of the West Bank;
- Improve and protect existing residential neighborhoods through an increased focus on compatible design and improved access to goods and services;
- Capitalize on the TPC Golf Course by promoting development of high quality planned developments on the West Bank that will attract residents from throughout the region and stimulate business growth;
- Strengthen and diversify commercial areas to offer goods and services for residents throughout the region in attractive commercial and mixed use centers;
- Protect and expand economic development opportunities by improving services to existing industrial areas, protecting those areas from incompatible encroachment and planning for industrial area expansions;
- Create new economic development opportunities in a new technology park that will jointly developed by the public and private sectors;
- Develop the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline to improve recreational amenity for residents and visitors to the Parish;
- Use regional transit and transportation system improvements to stimulate development and redevelopment that will improve the Parish's fiscal health.
- Improve connections between different modes of transportation.

## Overview

Legally established by the Louisiana Legislature on February 11, 1825, Jefferson Parish stretches 60 miles from the shore of Lake Pontchartrain to the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. As the Parish proceeds into the twenty-first century, its citizens have the opportunity to shape the process of growth and development to sustain economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life. This Comprehensive Plan addresses challenges facing the Parish, and presents opportunities for the continuing success of the Parish.

Opportunities currently exist to integrate planned and future development activities on the West Bank into distinct planned developments. The Huey P. Long Bridge widening, the proposed construction of I-49, expansion of the Avondale Shipyard, development of Technology Business Park, completion of the Tournament Players Club golf course, and the improvements to Bayou Segnette State Park can serve as the catalyst for development in the Bayou Segnette, Avondale and Bridge City areas. The development of new planned developments in this area provides the opportunity to integrate educational, public, residential, and employment uses.

The planning process has been structured to emphasize public involvement and incorporate comments, ideas, and direction of the public into the plan. The government of Jefferson Parish explicitly acknowledges there is an appropriate responsibility between the government and private property owners to address this vision. The Comprehensive Plan is designed to respect private property rights while enhancing, increasing, and enriching the individual freedoms and opportunities of all citizens. The Comprehensive Plan provides commercial and industrial land to ensure economic development and expansion in Jefferson Parish. Major commercial and industrial areas such as Elmwood, Metairie CBD and Harvey Canal are protected and

enhanced through the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan encompasses the future vision of the Parish. It is *comprehensive* because it considers the interrelationships of planning activities over the entire Unincorporated Parish. The Plan represents the interests of the wide range of citizens who are active participants in the planning process and the interests of future citizens. Ultimately, because it is comprehensive, the Plan guides decision making by the Planning Advisory Board and the Parish Council to conserve natural resources, ensure efficient expenditure of public funds, and promote the health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of the public.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a schematic guide for decisions concerning growth and development. While it is ultimately a tool to be used by policy makers to guide their decisions, it also serves as a reference for the private sector in making informed investment decisions.



Jefferson Parish is committed to enhancing the quality of life for all citizens.

## Physical Characteristics

Jefferson Parish has a total area of 415,360 acres stretching 60 miles from the shore of Lake Pontchartrain to the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. Lake Pontchartrain forms the parish's northern border and the Gulf of Mexico its southern one, while St. Charles and Lafourche Parishes create the parish's western boundary and Orleans and Plaquemines Parishes its eastern border. The Mississippi River divides the parish, with the part north of the river commonly called the East Bank. The larger part south of the river is known as the West Bank.

Jefferson Parish is located in the Mississippi River Deltaic Plain. Over a 6,000-year period, the Mississippi River has migrated back and forth across Louisiana at least seven times, depositing nutrient-rich sands, silts and clays to form its delta. Over time this sediment built up, shaping the bayous, bays, lakes, islands, and ridges that comprise the parish's geology

With its location on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and deltaic plain of the Mississippi River, Jefferson Parish, in its entirety, is a floodplain. These factors also create other conditions related to weather and subtropical climate, wetlands and geologic processes, and soils. Problems associated with these factors include vulnerability to hurricanes and need for evacuation, heavy rainstorms, flooding, loss of wildlife habitat and storm buffering, and subsidence. Flooding has been addressed since Europeans first settled the area; individual property owners initially took flood control measures. Now, all levels of government are involved in projects and programs that aim to reduce the risks from flooding, whether from the river, rainstorms, or storm tidal surge. In addition, programs also aim to protect and enhance the wetland that buffers against storms and provides valuable wildlife habitat.

Outside of the levee system on the West Bank are found the concentration of wetlands that

comprises one of the parish's most valuable natural resources. These wetlands are part of the Barataria Basin, composed of barrier islands and saline, brackish, intermediate, and fresh marshes. A variety of species, including fish and wildlife, get food and shelter from the Barataria Basin. The basin supports a commercial fish industry that is the second most valuable in the nation. Each year, about 400 species, or millions, of birds migrate through South Louisiana, including the basin, on their way to and from their breeding grounds in South and Central America.

Soil conditions in Jefferson Parish result from its location on the Mississippi River Deltaic Plain. Most of the parish's soils are firm, loamy clayey soils that settle when loaded, shrink and oxidize when dewatered, and have low shear strengths. Subsidence, or compacting and sinking, is a common problem in the area, and settlement-sensitive structures have to be supported by piles. Being prone to subsidence affects the construction and maintenance of buildings, as well as public works facilities. Pile support is essential in most areas, and regular replenishment of fill is needed as well in some parts of the parish. Replacement and repair of some public works infrastructure, such as sewerage lines, is related to subsidence. Subsidence remedies add to construction and maintenance costs for both private property owners and Parish government.



Bayous, bays, and lakes comprise the Jefferson Parish geology.

Jefferson Parish historically has had a variety of natural resources, many of which still remain. Within Jefferson Parish there are numerous natural waterways, bays, bayous, lakes, and the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River and the bayous and waterways in Jefferson Parish have contributed to port and maritime activities and economies. Additionally a large area of Jefferson Parish that has not been developed in urban uses include marshes and bottomland hardwood swamps and forest, which are typically jurisdictional wetlands. The waterways and wetlands support the wildlife and fisheries found in Jefferson Parish. Most of the West Bank of Jefferson Parish is in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary system. The Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary system is one of the most productive fisheries in the United States. Petroleum and Natural Gas are prominent mineral resources found within Jefferson Parish.

## History

From the early 16<sup>th</sup> century European explorers recognized the strategic and economic potential of the lower reaches of the Mississippi River. Fertile soil and access to the Mississippi River were the area's most attractive features. French and Spanish land grants made during the colonial period set the pattern for development in what was to become the greater New Orleans area. The French and Spanish heritage is the basis for the present division of the State of Louisiana into parish governmental units rather than the county which is used in other parts of the United States. Jefferson Parish was established in 1825 and was named in honor of Thomas Jefferson, commemorating his role in purchasing the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. The Parish originally extended from present day Felicite Street in New Orleans to the St. Charles Parish line. The present boundary was set in 1874 and the seat of Parish government was transferred to the West Bank in Gretna, where it has remained.

Once a largely rural area of farms, dairies and vast tracts of undeveloped land, Jefferson Parish today is New Orleans' first suburb. Jefferson Parish received the first great migration of middle-class families from the 1950's to the 1970's. The Parish's largest community is Metairie, an unincorporated area that comprises almost all of East Jefferson. Jefferson Parish is divided by the Mississippi River into the East Bank and West Bank areas. East Jefferson cities include Kenner and Harahan while cities such as Gretna and Westwego are in West Jefferson.

Population growth in Jefferson Parish has been steady since the 1950 Census when just over 103,000 persons lived in the Parish. Since that time, the Parish has been transformed from a collection of small communities, cities, farms and swamp. In their place has come a vibrant suburban center with neighborhoods, schools, parks, industrial sites and commercial areas.

Overall, the population of the Parish has increased by over 350,000 persons since the 1950 Census. This translates into a 2% annual growth rate in population for the Parish over the last 50 years. The period between 1950 and 1960 saw the most rapid growth when the Parish's population grew by over 100%. The combination of improved access, inexpensive land and growing population lead some to leave the urban center for suburbia.

The growth trend has slowed since 1980 when the Parish experienced several changes as a result of national trends including an aging population, reduced birth rates, smaller family sizes and shifts in population resulting from various turns in the economy. Total population growth in the State was impacted as well by a general downturn in the energy sectors of the economy in the mid 1980s.

Although some isolated pockets of the State continued to show population gains between the 1980 and 1990 census, Jefferson Parish recorded its first loss in population during this

period. Release of the 2000 Census reveals that the Parish, as a whole, has reversed this loss, recovering enough resident population to record figures slightly higher than those at the time of the 1980 Census.

## Methodology

The Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan has been developed as result of a comprehensive public participation process and a comprehensive land use survey.

## Public Participation

Envision Jefferson 2020, the process to develop the Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan, has had an important goal: to increase public participation in planning and decision-making that shapes how Jefferson Parish will change and grow over the next 20 years.

To achieve this goal, planners devised a citizen participation process. In the first phase, planners made educational presentations to groups throughout the parish. To as many civic, business, and other groups as possible, planners presented a message about the benefits of comprehensive planning and the importance of citizen participation in the Parish's upcoming planning process. This initial outreach was necessary because of the historic lack of comprehensive planning in Jefferson Parish and, consequently, the low awareness about planning among citizens.

The first phase of citizen participation occurred as planners also engaged in the more technical planning task known as a land use survey, or the collection of data about how each parcel of land is used. Once planners had collected the land use data for all parcels in unincorporated Jefferson Parish, they made this and other data available to citizens at a series of 36 workshops that were held from April, 2000 to October, 2001. Citizens used this information and their own knowledge of their neighborhoods to identify land use and transportation issues. This issue identification,

which was the focus of the eight workshops held in planning districts throughout the parish, comprised the second phase of citizen participation that took place in February and March of 2002.

At the end of each district workshop, planners used a lottery to choose citizens who would graduate to the next phase of citizen participation. Joining these citizens were representatives of civic and business groups chosen by their respective groups. This Element Committee attended additional workshops where, among other tasks, they developed the goals and objectives that addressed the issues identified earlier and formed the basis of the comprehensive plan. The element committee met five times between May 18, 2002 and November 16, 2002.

The Element Committee was the group of citizens charged with assisting the planning team in developing the parishwide comprehensive plan. Specific tasks included: creating the vision statement; identifying goals and objectives; choosing the preferred scenario for future development; and reviewing the preliminary plan. The committee contained 119 citizens, called liaisons.

The Parish President and Parish Council also appointed a Steering Committee of citizens early in the planning process to oversee development of the plan. The steering committee provided direction to the plan development and provided input and direction on plan policies and implementation.

The Parish President and Council appointed the 21-member citizens' Steering Committee to provide oversight and direction to Envision Jefferson 2020. Parish President Tim Coulon appointed seven citizens to the committee and each of the seven council members chose two representatives. The Steering Committee held its first meeting on June 28, 2001 and has met continually to guide and refine the Plan.



Public participation has been an important part of plan development.

A series of open houses were then held from March 10, 2003 through March 13, 2003 at East Bank and West Bank locations. The preliminary plan was made available at these open houses with the purpose of public information and obtaining comment on the Comprehensive Plan.

### Land Use Survey

In addition to public participation, a comprehensive land-use survey was completed by the University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs. To facilitate citizen participation and land use and demographic data collection, planners divided the unincorporated area of Jefferson Parish into 14 separate planning districts. Two Graduate Assistants from the University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs visited each of the more than 150,000 individual parcels throughout unincorporated Jefferson Parish. Using the American Planning Association's Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS) as the land use code, the UNO surveyors recorded land use data for each parcel. The data was then entered into a series of ArcView Geographic Information System (GIS) based files provided by the Jefferson Parish GIS Department, and compatible with the Parish's GIS platform. Entering the data into the GIS allows the creation of detailed land use tables by acreage for individual land uses, as well as the capacity to produce detailed land use maps. This land use data provides a detailed assessment of existing land use in unincorporated Jefferson Parish.

## Land Use Issues

### Visionary Concepts

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

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

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

## Land Availability

Jefferson Parish is restricted to a limited number of developable acreage. A natural growth boundary consisting of levees and water features has been created, thus limiting the development of the Parish. The East Bank of Jefferson parish is essentially built-out, with approximately 673 acres available for infill development. On the West Bank, large tracts of undeveloped land remain. Approximately 20,142 acres remain for development on the West Bank.

The *Jefferson EDGE*, which is the parish's adopted economic development strategic plan, has identified land availability as a major issue. The *Jefferson EDGE* states that "Jefferson Parish is quickly running out of land for development of major commercial, residential, or industrial projects. Redevelopment will be required for the parish to attract new investment. Furthermore, contiguous tracts of land for development are difficult to find due to multiple ownership."

The Comprehensive Plan allocates all land within the Parish into broad future land use categories that allocate sufficient and abundant residential, commercial, industrial, public, and recreational uses to accommodate the projected growth of the Parish over the next 20 years.

## Lack of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The *Jefferson EDGE* has also identified the lack of a master land use plan as well as the lack of an updated zoning ordinance as major land use issues affecting economic development in Jefferson Parish. Land Use is currently governed by a zoning ordinance introduced in 1958 and re-adopted in 1966. Jefferson Parish has not adopted major land use plan, major street plan or drainage plan. In lieu of a master plan for development, Jefferson Parish has relied on a series of studies of key development areas. In addition,

the municipal areas within the Parish are responsible for their own planning and development.

Jefferson Parish has made the decision to adopt a comprehensive plan to ensure orderly and efficient development and redevelopment of the Parish. The Comprehensive Plan will also assist in economic development by establishing an overall "guide" to land use and development in the Parish.

## Land Use Compatibility and Buffering

Jefferson Parish citizens have indicated that compatibility among land uses and buffering are important issues facing development in Jefferson Parish and are important aspects of preserving residential neighborhoods in Jefferson Parish. Compatibility, as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, refers to the ability of adjacent land uses to co-exist without significant interference with the normal activities of either use. The intent of this definition is to ensure that where different uses are established adjacent to one another, any negative impacts of those uses are mitigated. Citizens indicated in planning workshops that buffers are needed between large-scale commercial development and residential areas. Citizens would like to see separation of all types of land uses from residential. However, the workshop results indicated that citizens are not opposed to local businesses in the area that bring small town character and feel to the neighborhood.



Existing residential neighborhoods throughout Jefferson Parish are protected and maintained as part of the Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan.

## Design

Jefferson Parish residents see urban design and appearance as necessary for all aspects of the community. Citizens have indicated at Parish planning workshops during the Envision Jefferson 2020 Comprehensive Planning process that citizens want better-designed and more visually appealing commercial and residential areas. Citizens did not support poorly designed areas that had little or no green space or adequate landscaping. Citizen comments have consistently addressed design issues related to development design, signage, community beautification and landscaping. The Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies that address the design issues of Jefferson Parish.

## Reuse/Redevelopment of Existing Commercial and Industrial Properties

Jefferson Parish citizens have indicated that the reuse or redevelopment of existing buildings is an important issue in Jefferson Parish. Community planning workshops indicated a strong concern with vacant buildings. Citizens indicated the need for incentives for redevelopment as well as assurances at the development stage that buildings will not be left in blighted state. Examples included Belle Promenade Shopping Center, strip mall abandonment and abandoned industrial buildings. The Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan addresses the issue of reuse and redevelopment in the goals, objectives, and policies. Due to the limited supply of land in Jefferson Parish, reuse and redevelopment will play an important role in the economic development of Jefferson Parish.

## Economic Development

The community workshops held during the Envision Jefferson 2020 planning process suggest that citizens are in favor of creating economic development opportunities in Jefferson Parish. In addition to the

community workshops, the Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan and the associated planning process is the result of being the top priority of recommendations of the *Jefferson EDGE*. The *Jefferson EDGE* is the comprehensive economic development strategic plan for Jefferson Parish. As a result of this directive, the Comprehensive Plan integrates the objectives of the *Jefferson EDGE* related to land use in Jefferson Parish. Major economic activity centers such as Elmwood, Metairie CBD, Harvey Canal, and Avondale are preserved and protected throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

## Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Comments made at the Envision Jefferson 2020 workshops identify support for infrastructure improvements. Citizens of Jefferson Parish identify infrastructure improvements with progress and development that affect the quality of life in the Parish. Citizen concerns include drainage, infrastructure maintenance and coordination of infrastructure improvements. The goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan address general infrastructure issues as well as public facilities such as parks and schools.



The Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan addresses issues relate to public facilities and infrastructure.

## Administration

Citizen responses indicate a desire for greater enforcement of all codes and laws to enhance the quality of life and the quality of their surroundings. Citizen comments suggest that citizens desire a closer adherence to current zoning regulations and a greater say in proposed changes to the zoning ordinance. Issues such as code enforcement, public involvement, issuance of variances and revision of regulations are topics that were indicated during the planning process. The Comprehensive Plan addresses administration issues in specific goals, objectives, and policies.

## Environment

Citizen and Parish comments reflect the need for improved environmental awareness Parish-wide. Environmental issues related to Jefferson Parish include coastal wetlands outside of the hurricane protection levee, agency coordination and cooperation and the minimization of potential risks from natural and man-made hazards. The Comprehensive Plan addresses a variety of environmental issues through the goals, objectives, and policies.

## Wetlands Permitting Within The Hurricane Protection Levee

Jefferson Parish is currently seeking a Master 404 Wetlands Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers in the Barataria Corridor of Jefferson Parish. The goal of the Jefferson Parish Barataria Corridor Master 404 Permit is to allow for the future development of the area within the hurricane protection levee with little to no further administrative review by the Army Corps of Engineers. The permit application has provided a comprehensive evaluation and response to the economic and environmental issues which arise out of development within the Barataria Corridor. Through a unified approach to both development and mitigation, a coordinated process will produce a more positive result

than can be achieved by individual permits and developments processed and permitted separately. The Master Permit is taking a comprehensive approach to land use, the environment, and to mitigation.

The land use data being provided to the Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Master Permit application is the West Bank Barataria Corridor Study prepared by the University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs and adopted by the Jefferson Parish Council. The land use recommendations of this plan form the land use basis for the Master Permit application. The Comprehensive Plan incorporates these recommendations for the Barataria Corridor to ensure land use consistency in the Master Permit process.

## Water-Oriented Development

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, recommendations have been made with regard to water-oriented development. Jefferson Parish has great potential to enhance water-oriented development along Lake Pontchartrain, the Mississippi River, and other water bodies. Along Lake Pontchartrain, adoption and implementation of the *Jefferson Lakefront Linear Park Master Plan* would enhance recreational opportunities along Lake Pontchartrain. Along the Mississippi River on the East Bank, water-oriented recreational and development opportunities could improve the focus on the Mississippi River. On the West Bank, industrial uses are dominant along the Mississippi River and the Harvey Canal and should be protected. This area also provides the opportunity for Jefferson Parish to capitalize on regional port activities, as outlined in the *Jefferson EDGE*. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that water bodies are assets to be utilized appropriately. Jefferson Parish contains many bayous, bays, and lakes that can be utilized to enhance development and economic opportunities. Water-oriented development is an important issue addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

## Planned Development

The comprehensive planning process has involved a great deal of data collection and public input. A detailed land use survey was performed by the University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs, who then developed a detailed GIS database of this land use information based on the American Planning Association's Land Based Classification Standards (LBCS). Public workshops were held throughout the Parish to identify land use and transportation issues. As the goals, objectives, and future land use maps were developed, Element Committee meetings were held to review and provide input on the plan contents. In addition, the entire comprehensive planning process has been guided through the input and direction of the Steering Committee. As a result of this public input and plan development, issues related to existing conditions were identified and addressed. The development of "Visionary Concepts" has been introduced as an issue to help Jefferson Parish attract additional residential and economic growth beyond current projections. These "Visionary Concepts" include planned developments, mixed-use development, the light-rail initiative and the development of business and office parks. These concepts, combined with appropriate improvements in education and infrastructure, including the widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge and the designation of the I-49 corridor, may help accelerate residential and economic growth in Jefferson Parish.

Planned developments allow for more flexible development practices than traditional "grid" zoning. Through the adoption of planned development zoning, a developer is permitted to meet overall community density and land use goals without being bound by rigid requirements such as minimum lot standards and use categories. For example, a community may require the same overall density within a residential planned development as that of the surrounding area. However, the community may allow development within the planned

development to be massed or clustered so that the individual lots are smaller but more open space is preserved than would occur under traditional zoning. The planned development concept can also be applied to encourage creative mixes of land uses, by permitting certain nonresidential uses (or a mix of different kinds of residences -- single and multi-family) in the development. The planned development concept can be used primarily for new subdivisions of vacant developable land. By allowing developers to depart from "cookie cutter" lot forms and setback requirements, more creative use of open space and urban design is possible. The planned development concept offers the opportunity for a new development pattern in Jefferson Parish, which may help in attracting residents back to Jefferson Parish and new residents to the metro area. Planned developments may offer residential options that will help Jefferson Parish compete with higher growth areas such as St. Tammany Parish.

Opportunities currently exist to integrate planned and future development activities on the West Bank into distinct communities. Improvements to Bayou Segnette park, the Huey P. Long Bridge widening, the proposed construction of I-49, expansion of the Avondale Shipyard, development of Technology Business Park and the completion of the Tournament Players Club golf course can serve as the catalyst for development in the Bayou Segnette, Avondale and Bridge City areas. The development of new planned communities in this area provides the opportunity to integrate educational, public, residential, and employment uses into master planned developments.

## Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-Use developments are areas of retail, commercial, and housing that provide a variety of compatible shopping and employment opportunities in close proximity. The changing demographics of our population means that more people are likely to find

mixed-use areas desirable places to live. Mixed-use areas would generally have higher densities than currently exist. Whenever possible, mixed-use areas would be connected by sidewalks to nearby residential neighborhoods, enabling residents to walk to shopping, recreation, transportation, and, for some, work. Mixed-use areas are premised on the belief that closer coordination between land use and transportation can reduce the use of automobiles, while leading to greater conveniences for residents.

The light rail initiative is located in St. Charles, Jefferson, and Orleans parishes. The East-West Corridor is a region between Interstate 310 in the west and the New Orleans Central Business District to the east. Roadways in this region serve over one million residents in the Jefferson, Orleans, and River Parish Region. Airline Drive (US 61) and the Earhart Expressway (LA 3139), the principal roads in this Corridor, are burdened with heavy congestion. A 1997 study sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) evaluated alternatives to address this congestion, which concluded that both roadway and rail transit improvements are needed to address congestion in the corridor. In Jefferson Parish, the Airline Drive provides the corridor for the East-West Corridor light rail alignment. The proposed light rail initiative can provide commuters working in New Orleans convenient access to downtown New Orleans, thus improving the quality of



The Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan provides development opportunities for planned developments and mixed-use developments, thus expanding residential housing options and opportunities.

life in Jefferson Parish. The light rail initiative may also spur needed redevelopment in the Airline Drive Corridor through the designation of mixed-use activity centers around proposed station locations.

### **Business and Office Park Development**

Business and office park development is an initiative of the *Jefferson EDGE* and an important part of economic growth in Jefferson Parish. JEDCO is currently involved in a site selection process to determine the most appropriate site for a research and technology park in Jefferson Parish. JEDCO has also identified the development of the Parish's technology sector as an essential component of future economic growth. The development of high-end business parks is important in attracting and retaining technology companies. JEDCO is currently looking at appropriate sites, all located on the West Bank west of Westwego, to develop a high-quality business/office park that will provide an attractive opportunity for expanding local and regional companies currently operating within and beyond Jefferson Parish. In addition to research and technology, opportunities for office, warehousing and distribution parks exist on the West Bank of Jefferson Parish. The Elmwood area, once the major warehousing and distribution center for Jefferson Parish, is undergoing a transition to office uses. This transition offers the opportunity for the development of an "Elmwood West" distribution center on the West Bank. The development of office and light industrial parks can accommodate warehousing and distribution demands. These opportunities on the West Bank can be accommodated through the widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge. These economic development opportunities can offer numerous employment opportunities in Jefferson Parish to attract new residents and workers to Jefferson Parish.