

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the Envision Jefferson 2020 Steering Committee
November 1st, 2001 - 3:30 P.M.
Select Properties Building
2121 Airline Drive, Suite 600

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members

Connie Casey	Joanne Mire	Kerri Becker
Lee Giorgio, Co-chair	Bruce O'Neil	N. Buckner Barkley
Donnie Wolfe	Vinicio Madrigal, M.D.	Ava Guidry
Lucien Gunter	Wayne Sandoz	

Jefferson Parish Officials

Ed Durabb, Jefferson Parish Planning Director
Dr. Terri Wilkinson, Senior Planner
Shannon Burke, Planner

University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs

Timothy E. Joder, Director of Sponsored Research and Business Affairs
Wendel P. Dufour Jr., Principal Planner
Roxanne Brock, Research Assistant

Timothy Joder of the University of New Orleans called the meeting of the Jefferson Parish Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to order. Mr. Joder addressed the Committee on the appointments of new steering committee members. The new members are Mr. Bruce O'Neil who has been appointed by Councilman Nick Giambelluca to replace Al Montgomery and Mrs. Sharon Cross has been appointed by Councilman Donald Jones to replace Lillian Rankins. Mr. Joder also noted that Parish President Tim Coulon is considering a replacement for Pauline Morgan and Councilman John Lavarine is in the process of finding a replacement for Dr. Joseph Stagny.

Website Changes

Mr. Joder and the Steering Committee determined that a quorum was present and that official business could be conducted. The Jefferson Parish Envision 2020 website was viewed. Mr. Joder noted that various changes had been made to the website. However, there were still some pages that have no available information at this time. Technical difficulties were encountered when accessing maps. Mr. Joder noted that UNO is working with the Website consultant, CTL, to correct this. The Community Image Survey was viewed and Mr. Joder explained how the survey is used and how the ratings allowed citizens to see their ratings and those of others who participated in the survey. Mr. Joder reviewed the rest of the Website with the Steering Committee, noting that the Planning Project Data link was still under construction, but would be populated with data once the market study and land use data collection was complete.

Mr. Joder then introduced Mr. Bill Smolkin who conducted the market analysis survey to answer questions and concerns about the study. Mr. Joder directed the Steering

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Committee to their binders that contained the draft market analysis and opened the floor for questions and comments about the study. Steering Committee member Lucien Gunter pointed out that the Barataria district lay on the West Bank and questioned why this was part of the study. Mr. Smolkin stated that he had chosen a large planning district in the West Bank and two planning districts on the East Bank. Barataria was difficult to predict growth and was a challenge.

Steering Committee member Lee Giorgio asked Mr. Smolkin what the affect would be on the master plan if the numbers in the analysis were significantly off. Mr. Smolkin replied that the link between physical growth and numbers do not always match. He stated that he hoped the analysis would act as a guideline for fiscal and land use in the area. Ed Durabb, Jefferson Parish Planning Director also added that this analysis would aid the Parish in both its long term and short term planning activities. Mr. Durabb also stated that the plan should be updated on a regular basis to insure that the projections are accurate, and if not then the plan can be adjusted.

Steering Committee member Joanne Mire stated that the figures showed there was only a 2,700-population increase expected for the East and West Bank over twenty years. Mrs. Mire pointed out that this was not a significant growth. Mr. Smolkin agreed and commented that it was not what the committee would like to hear. Mr. Joder commented that this was an actual improvement over the last twenty years.

Steering Committee Member Bruce O'Neil questioned the issue of the tax base in the Parish. He asked Mr. Smolkin that if the Parish cannot preserve population how do you hold onto to a tax base. What business or industry could be used to solicit funds? Mr. Joder pointed out that it was not only a land use problem but a variety of other factors such as population decline, a stagnant economy and being inside the hurricane protection levee that also contribute to declining population. Committee member Leo Giorgio stated that the numbers did not shock him. There has been a noted decline in areas such as construction and real estate.

Committee Member Lucien Gunter asked Mr. Smolkin that after his initial review of the data was there anything that he found surprising? Mr. Smolkin replied that the job outlook looked better then what he had expected. His main concern was the issue of population shrinkage on the East Bank.

Committee member Lucien Gunter asked Ed Durabb about the possibility of moving to more density in the East Bank. Ed Durabb replied that housing in the East Bank is expensive. West Bank has affordable housing but has an image problem and loses population to the North Shore area. Mr. Durabb added that concerns such as who is living in the area now, what kind of work force and tax base are in the Parish are important. Mr. Durabb stated that in order to make the Parish an appealing place to live in, one has to stimulate jobs and maintain the current level of residents. He said runoff to other cities is great, but major Southern cities are now suffering from overcrowding. Mr.

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Durabb stated that the Parish is in a unique position of knowing where they stand and what they can offer. Mr. Durabb also gave examples of other parishes that are currently having difficulties coping with the influx of people and are beginning to suffer from some of the problems that Jefferson Parish currently experiences.

Committee member Buck Buckley asked about the use of “ smart growth” in the analysis. Mr. Smolkin replied that the report had taken the approach as business as usual and just reported numbers. Ed Durabb replied that due to the area being so compact that the use of "Smart Growth" was not an issue at the time. Mr. Durabb also noted that Jefferson Parish is an alternative suburb to the North Shore and people do not have to spend a lot of time in their car commuting to work.

Steering Committee member Joanne Mire stated that to encourage middle class families to come back to the Parish, the schools have to be improved because they are an important factor in attracting newcomers to the area. Steering Committee member Donnie Wolfe said there are good schools in Jefferson parish, but pockets of terrible schools as well. Mr. Wolfe also agreed with another committee member's statement that most of the poor performing schools are located on the Westbank. Ed Durabb stated that with the influx of middle class taxpayers, a demand for better schools would be made. Mr. Durabb stated that other parishes with a large middle class tax base have better schools.

Steering Committee member Lee Giorgio asked if the same market analysis would be completed for every district in the area. Mr. Giorgio also asked if there could there be an assumption sheet developed so that how the information was gathered and interpreted could be used easily in the future. Mr. Joder stated that the analysis was obviously quite complex and not citizen friendly for presentations. It will need to be excerpted and condensed as many assumptions can be made from the data. The issue of adding more statistical indices was also noted. Mr. Giorgio also commented that the analysis was a critical part of the plan and essential for facilitators to help educate the public. Mr. Giorgio added that the market analysis would add depth to the educational presentations.

Mr. Joder then turned the discussion to the approval of initial district workshop dates and agendas. Mr. Joder initiated the discussion with a review of what has been learned in the past month. Mr. Joder noted that citizen participation for the general educational meetings in October had been dismal despite running a half-page add in the Picayune section of the Times-Picayune on Thursday, October 11th. In different cases, over 90 civic groups had been called and a flashing sign at the Alario Center had been placed a week before the meeting there.

Mr. Joder then commented that he had met with a consultant, McCrossen and Taylor, to discuss more effective methods of advertising. Mr. Joder listed the ideas the consultants had which included working with Jefferson Parish Public Relations Director Jackie Bauer to organize a news conference, finding prices for advertising on prominent bill boards in

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the parish that would display the Jefferson Parish Website, and radio spots that have a sensational impact. However, radio is not geographic specific and is being looked into. Other possibilities discussed were canvassing by graduate assistants and handing out flyers.

Mr. Joder stated that the consultants are extremely skeptical as to the amount of people that will turn out for the district workshops that are scheduled for three consecutive weeks that start on November 26th. Mr. Joder suggested changing the meetings from three consecutive weeks to one three hour session held on a Saturday. Participants would not be required to stay the full three hours.

Mr. Joder then discussed the proposed district workshop agenda and list of proposed charts, graphs and maps that can be used for citizen meetings. Mr. Joder explained the use of the facilitator for the district workshop meetings and the importance of talking points for the meetings. Main talking points are going to be taken from Jefferson Parish department reports that have been reviewed and are now being used for opportunities and constraints analysis. Mr. Joder then added that there was still more work to accomplish before the district workshop meetings.

Steering Committee member Vinicio Madrigal, M.D., asked Mr. Joder how representative are meetings if none shows up. Mr. Joder replied that they are not representative. Mr. Madrigal stated that maybe a change in the schedule would be more appropriate as this would allow citizens to be notified about the plan and for more public information to become available. Mr. Joder noted that even the hottest issues in the parish do not garner large turnouts.

Steering Committee member Kerri Becker stated that going to direct grass root levels such as churches would help raise participation levels. Steering Committee member Ava Guidry also commented that maybe public access TV, which is free, would be able to get more participation. Steering Committee member Joann Mire asked about relinquishing the list of civic groups. She added that typically, these groups have citizens that are more proactive and could be a possible target for increasing public participation. Planning Team member Wendel Dufour noted that there are certain groups whose membership lists are quite large, but that most civic groups do not have up to date lists because some groups are better organized than others or have fluctuating membership.

Mr. Gunter stated that he was relieved that there was low citizen participation. He stated that his initial thought was that the Steering Committee would develop the parameters of the plan and produce a better document than would then be presented to citizens rather than vice versa. Mr. O'Neil stated that by going to chronic voters and to active participants in civic groups the effort would not be wasted when the plan is presented.

Steering Committee member Donnie Wolfe inquired about using discretionary funds from individual councilman to help in the mailing process. Steering Committee member

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Lee Giorgio stated that there was no real kick off for the plan. He added that there has to be more encouragement for the plan to make it go further. Councilmen have to make sure that they are also advertising the plan in their own meetings. Mr. Giorgio also supported shortening the district meeting sessions to one three hour session. He stated that this allows people the opportunity to be involved in the process. Mr. Joder stated that there needs to be a document agreed to in advance so that there was something to actually present to citizens.

Steering Committee member Connie Casey asked where the meeting on the 26th was to be held. Mr. Joder informed the committee it was at the Lakeshore playground at 7.00pm. He stated that it was currently not advertised as meeting times and places had to be decided on by the committee.

The meeting was then adjourned.