

ST. TAMMANY PARISH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION COUNCIL SERIES NO. C-2398

COUNCIL SPONSOR: BINDER/DAVIS PROVIDED BY: CULTURAL & GOVT. AFFAIRS

RESOLUTION PROPOSING A CULTURAL PLAN FOR ST.
TAMMANY PARISH TO BE ADMINISTERED BY ST. TAMMANY
PARISH COMMISSION ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, in accordance with Ordinance Council Series No. 08-1753, the St. Tammany Parish Arts Commission was renamed the St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs is the official local art agency and humanities commission of St. Tammany; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on Cultural Affairs created a cultural plan for St. Tammany Parish and the Commission desires approval from the Parish Council.

THE PARISH OF ST. TAMMANY HEREBY RESOLVES that the cultural plan for St. Tammany Parish to be administered by St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs is accepted and approved by the Parish Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any future changes, plans and/or amendments made to the Cultural Plan must first be approved by the St. Tammany Parish Council.

THIS RESOLUTION HAVING BEEN SUBMITTED TO A VOTE, THE VOTE THEREON WAS AS FOLLOWS:

MOVED FOR ADOPTION BY _____, SECONDED BY _____

YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

THIS RESOLUTION WAS DECLARED ADOPTED ON THE _____ DAY OF _____ 2008 AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL, A QUORUM OF THE MEMBERS BEING PRESENT AND VOTING.

JERRY BINDER, COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

THERESA L. FORD, COUNCIL CLERK

St. Tammany Parish Cultural Plan

Prepared for the St. Tammany Parish
Commission on Cultural Affairs

March
2008

Goals & Objectives Summary

Goal 1:

To develop and/or renovate cultural and entertainment facilities and spaces

Objective 1:

To develop new, centrally located facilities to support parish cultural life

Objective 2:

Evaluate existing facilities for renovation and more efficient use

Objective 3:

Identify and evaluate alternative facility spaces

Objective 4:

Identify and adapt outdoor venues for appropriate cultural programming

Goal 2:

To strengthen marketing coordination amongst parish cultural programmers and to market St. Tammany parish as a cultural destination

Objective 1:

Expand cooperative marketing collaborations and knowledge of existing and new marketing opportunities among artists and arts organizations

Objective 2:

Develop a single cultural identity for the entire parish

Goal 3:

To stimulate development of the downtown and waterfront areas as Culture-Arts-Entertainment Districts

Objective 1:

Establish a set of key strategic goals parish-wide

Objective 2:

Incorporate "smart growth" principles in design

Objective 3:

Establish tax incentive/enterprise/cultural product zones

Goal 4:

To advance cultural entertainment industry and nonprofit arts sector as economic development

Objective 1:

On-going business-development training for artists, arts organizations, arts businesses

Objective 2:

Access to funding for cultural-industry projects

Objective 3:

Support system for career development in the arts

Objective 4:

Workforce training programs in the cultural-industry sector

Goal 5:

To increase public participation in arts and cultural activities

Objective 1:

Establish parish marketing and recruitment of volunteers to work for cultural nonprofits

Objective 2:

Develop new programs for youth and families

Objective 3:

Develop public recognition of local talent

Objective 4:

Increase committed public participation

Goal 6:

To create education and life-long learning opportunities

Objective 1:

Develop high school arts academy

Objective 2:

Shared location for regional universities

Objective 3:

Expand in-school arts

Objective 4:

Offer opportunities for life-long learning, public education



Parish-Wide Goals & Objectives

After ten days of parish-wide citizen participation, six primary culture-related goals were identified as reflective of the concerns and desires voiced by the public throughout the information-gathering process.



Goal 1

To develop and/or renovate cultural and entertainment facilities and spaces in St. Tammany Parish

Rationale:

Through the last several decades and certainly within the past several years, the development of parish cultural facilities has not kept pace with population growth and overall development. The current inventory and condition of cultural spaces does not reflect the range and quality of existing artistic activity and, in fact, limits the potential for future growth. Citizen concern regarding facility issues is evidenced by the sheer number of projects suggested – or already in development.

Objective 1:

To develop new, centrally-located facilities to support parish cultural life

The most frequently mentioned need is for a performing and visual arts center. There are no existing facilities to meet the parish need for a performance venue with orchestra pit, permanent stage, and appropriate sound and lighting “package.” Seating for such a venue should be in the range of 1,800 to 2,000, but a theater suited for a capacity ranging from 600 to 1,000 is also a viable option. The facility should be a multi-use venue that can work equally well for music, dance and theater. Gallery spaces need to meet national museum standards and should be equivalent, quality-wise, to the performance component. It is important that there be space within the facility to accommodate hospitality-entertainment needs (a reception area). The facility could also be developed as a cultural complex with separate buildings for visual and performing arts and could include a black box theater in addition to the large auditorium. A performing arts center would allow St. Tammany to be involved in the Broadway South concept, which, if realized, can assist the development of professional performing arts programming through tax credits.

Youth-centered facilities are also a priority for St. Tammany citizens. A children’s museum and a high school arts academy are both considered as very important to the future education and economic development of the parish. The recently-announced University Square project to be centrally located on Hwy. 434 will provide a high school arts technology academy with connections to the regional university faculties and resources.

The parish is ideally located for the creation of a movie-production center (soundstage and other facilities). The proximity to New Orleans and the I-10 and I-12 corridors, and the picturesque natural and built environments and the development of technology-sector industry all support development of film production and related business.



Objective 2:

To evaluate existing facilities for renovation and more efficient use

There is a need to develop facilities that will support an economic climate conducive to the creation of a supportive business environment for professional artists and arts organizations. Many nonprofit cultural agencies would benefit from communal administrative and meeting space or a business incubator. Buildings in or near town centers could receive tax credits if renovated for the purpose of constructing affordable housing for artists, artist live-work space and teaching/studio space for artists. Urban development patterns strongly support a history of community economic renewal where arts-related business and artist living spaces are integral to overall revitalization.

The Northshore Harbor Center and Castine Center both need technical upgrades to better accommodate cultural programming. Ideally, NHC needs a theatrical technical system for lighting and sound, elevated stage and raked seating to function as a performance center. The Castine Center has staging and adaptive lighting, but acoustics are a big challenge for performing arts programming.

Benet Hall at St. Joseph's Abbey is already in the process of creating a five-year renovation plan. A theater consultant has been hired to assist with development of the design and function of the facility. The institution would like to use the theater and other areas of the Abbey grounds to present performances, master classes, artist-in-residence programs and other forms of cultural outreach to the St. Tammany community.



There are several other cultural facilities that merit consideration for revitalization and adaptive use. The Dew Drop Inn has tremendous historic value and is iconic in the Mandeville historic district. The NorthStar Theater has been a vital cultural facility for many years and every effort should be made to sustain it as an arts center. It could also be valuable to inventory school auditoriums for viability and availability.

Objective 3:

To evaluate potential "alternative" facility spaces

The idea of alternative space can include school auditoriums, vacant retail space in shopping centers, and commercial venues such as roadhouses and coffee houses.

Objective 4:

To identify and adapt outdoor venues for appropriate cultural programming

Every community in the parish has excellent resources for outdoor venue potential. From the Tammany Trace Trailheads to Pelican Park to the Mandeville lakefront to Madisonville's waterfront to Slidell's Heritage Park, Camp Salmen and beyond, there are amazing natural settings for inventive artistic efforts.



Goal 2

To strengthen marketing coordination amongst parish cultural programmers and to market St. Tammany Parish as a cultural destination

Rationale:

An unexpected outcome of Hurricane Katrina has been the opportunity to bring St. Tammany Parish out of the New Orleans cultural shadow and create a unique regional identity that complements marketing efforts occurring to the east and west of the parish. With forty-two (42) casino projects in development in Mississippi and urban-centered redevelopment in New Orleans, St. Tammany is ideally positioned as a family-friendly, slower-paced destination, but with a wealth of shopping, culinary and cultural options.

Objective 1:

To expand cooperative marketing collaborations and knowledge of existing & new marketing opportunities among artists and arts organizations

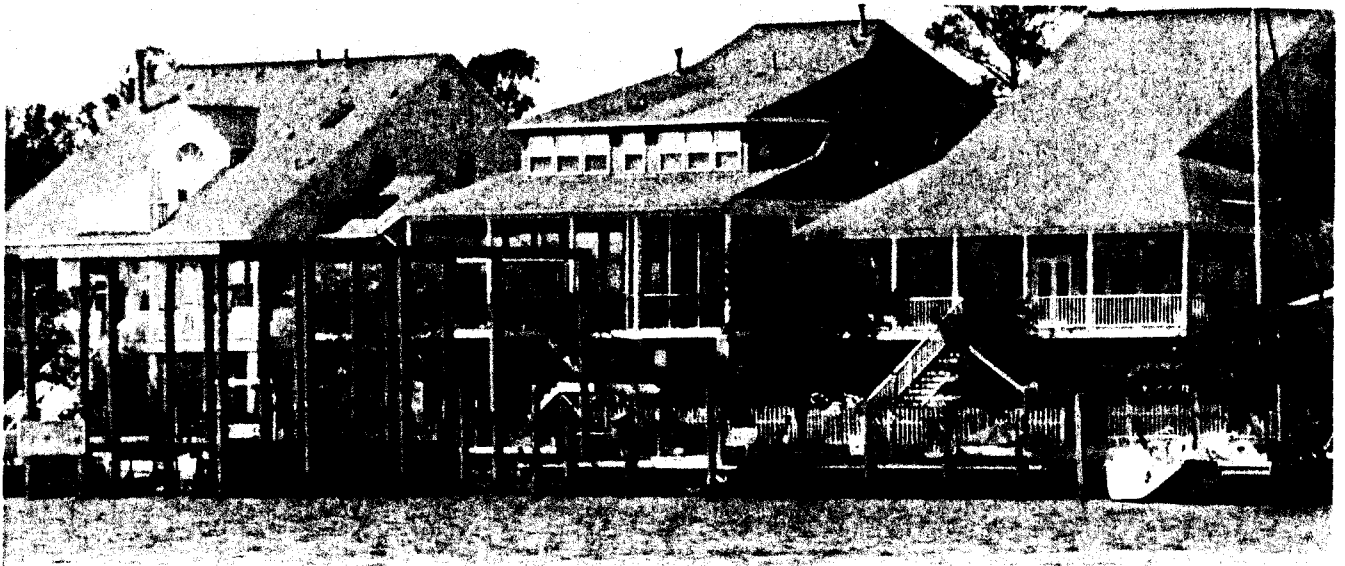
The St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs and St. Tammany Parish Tourist Commission could establish a monthly (or bi-monthly) networking forum with a focus on cooperative efforts; cultural "passport" program, comprehensive community calendar, clear-a-date support, shared database, government access TV marketing options, community cultural guide, web-based marketing, low-investment shared advertising opportunities, create more formal links between local media representatives.

Objective 2:

To develop a single cultural identity for the entire parish

As part of the monthly networking meeting or in other forums, arts industry representatives can assist the St. Tammany Parish Tourist Commission in creating the cultural "brand" of the region. This brand should consider the overall regional position of the parish between the bookends of New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and should blur the lines between nonprofit and commercial enterprises to advance the identity of the parish as a cultural destination. Many respondents see electronic marketing as the most cost-effective way to target a variety of niche tourist markets, but centralized expertise is needed to be optimally successful with this strategy.





Goal 3

To stimulate development of the downtown and waterfront areas as Culture-Arts-Entertainment Districts

Rationale:

Without question, concerned citizens view the network of downtowns, historic districts and waterfronts as the greatest cultural asset of the parish. It is essential that the distinct characters of these existing districts be retained and enhanced as the parish rebuilds and absorbs new commercial and housing developments. The appropriate balance of commercial, residential and government/judicial offices is critical to sustaining the ecology of community centers.

Objective 1:

To establish a set of key strategic goals to be agreed upon among the individual St. Tammany communities

Objective 2:

Establish and adhere to best practices in land use, planning & design corresponding to the exist-ing characters of the individual St. Tammany communi-ties

Objective 3:

Research and establish tax incentive/enterprise zones/ cultural product zones for encouragement of arts-based business development



Goal 4

**To advance the cultural entertainment industry/
nonprofit arts sector as economic development**

Rationale:

There is still a tremendous focus at the state level and within the Office of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT) on the growth of Louisiana's cultural economy, as evidenced by the current tax credits and incentives for film and music in film, as well as by pending legislation for the creation of cultural products districts. An expanding technology sector, a position at the intersection of I-10 and I-12, and an existing parish political and business climate open to cultural support all work to position St. Tammany as a state-wide leader in cultural industry development.

Objective 1:

**To provide ongoing business-development training for
artists, arts organizations, and arts-related business**

The St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs in partnership with the St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation, the Chambers of Commerce and other business resources could provide monthly training and networking forums, workshops and seminars. Included in the training of the cultural industry could be programs such as:

- Mentoring between established, successful commercial businesses and cultural nonprofits, arts-related commercial enterprises and/or professional artists

- Technical assistance workshop series focusing on marketing, board development, fundraising, event planning, resource development, marketplace connections, etc.
- Establishment of a cultural business center/media center on the model of a free medical clinic or Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (in that financial, marketing, media and design professionals could donate a certain amount of time to assist artists and arts organizations at no charge) or on the model of low-cost business incubator with shared costs among tenants and users
- Financial assistance in terms of grant-writing training, business plan development, and general accounting
- Market development, particularly for the visual arts. The commercial gallery marketplace is re-developing, post Katrina, and quite a few New Orleans galleries, as well as some in St. Tammany, have closed their doors. Although some artists have experienced a loss of gallery representation and consolidation of potential venues, others have experienced a better market since Katrina with increased sales and more contacts. St. Tammany gallery owners are questioning how to cultivate collectors and build a market for their product.



Objective 2:

To provide access to funding for cultural-industry projects

Every individual artist is, potentially, a cottage industry. Taken as a whole, the population of professional artists working in St. Tammany can contribute significantly to the tax base of the parish. There could be economic benefit in the development of grant funds (public sector) and venture capital funds (private sector) for well-developed business plans from professional artists (career advancement grants that could include professional development and/or equipment purchases) and commercial and/or nonprofit arts-related businesses.

Objective 3:

- **To develop a system of support and career advancement for emerging, mid-career and master artists**
 - Résumé/portfolio development assistance for emerging, mid-career and master levels based on education, career achievements, etc.
 - Development of networking and mentoring opportunities for emerging and mid-career artists
 - Providing distinct and separate exhibition (or performance) and marketing prospects for artists at different career levels

Objective 4:

To develop workforce training programs in the cultural-industry sector

Since Katrina, the parish has lost trained technical event-and-performance-support personnel due to the loss of convention and event business. Production companies are having difficulty providing services because of the shortage of experienced employees. Additionally, there is the opportunity to expand on recording-studio and film-related production but, again, capacity is constrained by a shortage of qualified industry workers.

Both of the parish Chambers of Commerce are involved in cultural-industry initiatives and together have formed a joint Cultural Economy Committee. These two agencies could partner with the Education sector on development of workforce training programs for the cultural industries. Such a partnership would assist in meeting the objectives of both the business and education communities.



Goal 5

To increase public participation in arts and cultural activities

Rationale:

Audiences, members, and volunteers are the best barometers of success for arts organizations and for the measure of importance of the arts to a community. If the marketplace will not support the product, the obvious message is that the product is not needed or valued.

Objective 1:

To establish a parish-wide marketing and recruitment campaign for volunteers and participants (actors, backstage crews, event organizers, fund-raisers, etc.) to work with cultural nonprofits

Many citizens who have never volunteered or are new to the parish might not know where to begin to volunteer their time or talents. The local media should be enlisted in the volunteer-recruitment campaign. However, prior to any such initiative, all interested nonprofits should be required to inventory their volunteer needs and create job descriptions and time-requirements for volunteers.

Objective 2:

To develop new programs specifically for youth and family engagement

Activities in the parish are largely children driven. The more families can be involved in arts activities, the more successful they're likely to be. Recreation programs should have arts-related programming as an alternative to sports. There should be activities geared to the needs of teenagers, possibly including a venue for young bands or a youth-oriented arts festival.





Objective 3:

To develop public recognition of local talent and community arts participation

Strategies could include:

- A unifying event for St. Tammany could be a theatrical-musical production featuring talent from around the parish
- Media coverage of events that spotlight local artists
- St. Tammany Music and Arts Festival featuring local talent
- Recognition for corporate citizens participating in public art program
- Display of local artists in non-traditional venues (create a temporary gallery or exhibition space at active local shopping centers, for example)

Objective 4:

To increase committed public participation

The public needs to understand the importance of culture to quality of life and to make the issue a priority in discussions with elected officials. Governmental support of the arts should be part of political forums during election periods.

Goal 6

To create education and life-long learning opportunities in schools and communities

Rationale:

The St. Tammany Parish Public School System is very committed to arts-in-education as central to overall curriculum development. The social and problem-solving skills that young people develop through arts involvement are essential to developing the creative citizenry required in a rapidly-evolving parish environment.

Objective 1:

To develop a high school arts academy

Objective 2:

To develop a presence for regional universities (Southeastern, UNO, Loyola, Tulane, Dillard, Xavier, Delgado), possibly in a shared, central location



Objective 3:

To expand in-school arts-in-education opportunities

Among the low-cost ideas mentioned were collaborations between high schools and regional universities for creation of master classes and workshops, and mentoring programs (middle school students mentor elementary; high school mentors middle school).

Objective 4:

To provide workforce development training in cultural industries in partnership with public schools, vocational schools, regional universities and other partners

Objective 5:

To expand opportunities for ongoing life-long learning and public education

- The need for education and professional development specific to arts disciplines (dressing appropriately, being on time, etc.)
- Huge demand for educational, cultural opportunities for the general public: lectures, workshops, seminars, continuing education classes
- Use media such as government access TV as education tool



Parish Overview & Key Issues

“Everything has changed.”

Because New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast were so completely devastated by Hurricane Katrina, the severe damage the storm inflicted on St. Tammany Parish has been overlooked by the national media and federal government.

Two years after the storm, residents are still recovery oriented. Parish social service agencies have been taxed as never before. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of children in foster care. Kindergarten truancy is up by 30%, and petty criminal behavior among teens has risen. Many families continue to live in dire straits. Although service industry workers are in demand, the spiraling cost of living has eaten away at whatever salary gains workers might have realized. Many cultural and artistic agencies are currently struggling to survive.

As one visual artist formerly from the Mississippi Gulf Coast but now living in St. Tammany said, “Everything about my life has changed: my focus, my fears, my identity – the proof of my former life, nothing is the same.”



Quality of Life

“What will our grandchildren say about the job we did?”

Although St. Tammany Parish is rich with assets, it does face several critical challenges. First, there is a perception that the historical issue of east-versus-west sides of the parish exists. Certainly, the current change in traffic patterns makes travel from one side of the parish to another a navigational challenge, at least at certain times of day. There is no public transportation to alleviate the problem, and, although innovative solutions have been studied, no funds are currently available for implementation.

Secondly, the parish transition, one that was already occurring but was significantly expedited by Katrina, is one of suburban to urban, and many citizens worry about the loss of a small-town feel. In describing their ideal parish of the future, many people interviewed described a small town world with big city amenities.

Even prior to Katrina, the cost of living in St. Tammany was a critical issue and it has only been exacerbated since the storm. Although now moderating, housing costs rose an astounding forty-five percent (45%) immediately after Katrina. There is still little affordable housing stock (and virtually no public housing), except in the most rural parts of the parish, which makes the area a difficult place for hourly wage earners and other service-sector employees to live. This situation is troubling, as well, for the cultural community. There is concern that pockets of the parish that were once considered enclaves of artistic bohemia will be priced out of existence. There is limited rental space for galleries and arts-related businesses and no artist live-work space.

The citizens of St. Tammany Parish feel very strongly the quality of life that is created in the post-Katrina world is a key to the long-range future of the parish. There is a sense that the parish has a chance to “do things” well, and the challenge that lies ahead is to not waste opportunity in rebuilding and development. Elected officials and concerned citizens believe that smart growth practices need immediate attention and implementation. Zoning, scale and density of new development are critical issues. The rapid pace of new development and interest by outside developers in St. Tammany projects has caused concern about the ability of individual communities to each retain their unique characters.

In conversation with dozens of citizens, there seems to be consensus that certain ingredients for future success are already evident. The excellent public education system is a source of pride and was most frequently cited as critical to continued economic and cultural growth. Residents largely view the parish president and mayors as progressive, enlightened political leaders. The new Northshore Community Foundation is a potential source of funds and community-planning knowledge. Enchanting town centers, lake-and-river fronts, wetlands and ample green space combine to create a built and natural environment that is completely unique and enticing. Governmental investment in recreational facilities makes the parish a very family-friendly locale.

“Now is the time to match the recreational investment with an investment in cultural assets. This is a solid economic-development, education and quality-of-life strategy.”



Economic Development

“We have to think regionally...”

The St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation was busy prior to Katrina, with six serious location inquiries by new business per month. In the first ninety (90) days after the storm, there were seventy-five (75) companies to which the agency had to respond. All office space larger than ten thousand square feet is now off the market. Three new business parks will soon be opened and the available space absorbed within 18 months of opening.

Prior to Katrina, economic expansion in the parish trended south to north, geographically. Now, the parish is moving east to west. Property north of I-12 is more plentiful, less expensive and insurance companies are recommending the area for business location. The St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation has a grant for active marketing of the I-12 corridor. Louisiana Speaks/LRA demographic forecasts estimate that 1.2 million new people will populate the area between St. Tammany and Hammond in the coming years, in essence shrinking the parish. With Hammond and Southeastern University as anchors to the north and the new University of New Orleans technology park to the east of the parish, the regional economic ecology is ripe for expansion in research and high-tech industry.

“In this business environment, the cultural-entertainment industry needs to market the economic impact of the arts and to speak in the vocabulary of potential economic development partners.”



Marketing and Tourism

“We have an incredible opportunity to define who and what we are.”

Nowhere is the rapidly changing post-Katrina environment more challenging than in the tourism industry. The St. Tammany Parish Tourist Commission must respond to all marketing shifts that occur in the Mississippi Gulf Coast area to the east and in New Orleans to the west. Although STPTC does a quarterly analysis of the entire regional market, it's difficult to be strategic when market factors continue to change on an almost-daily basis and, as one Commission employee stated, “Tourism is driving through a fog and we can't see the future.”

There are certain things about which tourism industry officials are certain. St. Tammany Parish has become a more viable destination, post-Katrina, as part of a regional Gulf Coast market. As tourism marketing has become more niche-oriented, St. Tammany is well positioned to promote family-centered sports and recreation activity, upscale arts-antique-culinary experiences, and eco-exploration, among other travel concepts. Ultimately, offering authenticity is “the thing.”

Determining its position in the regional travel industry is critical to the execution of a successful marketing plan and, of course, to delivery of services for the destination traveler. The wealth of recreation facilities, 80,000 acres of wildlife reserve, Tammany Trace, parks and interconnected waterways make the parish an ideal spot for families or eco-tourists. To attract the lucrative DINK (double income, no kids) market, St. Tammany needs a full-service hotel with spa and golf course. Although there are quite a few hotels and motels in development, none fit the bill as an upscale destination.



Community Profiles, Issues, & Resources

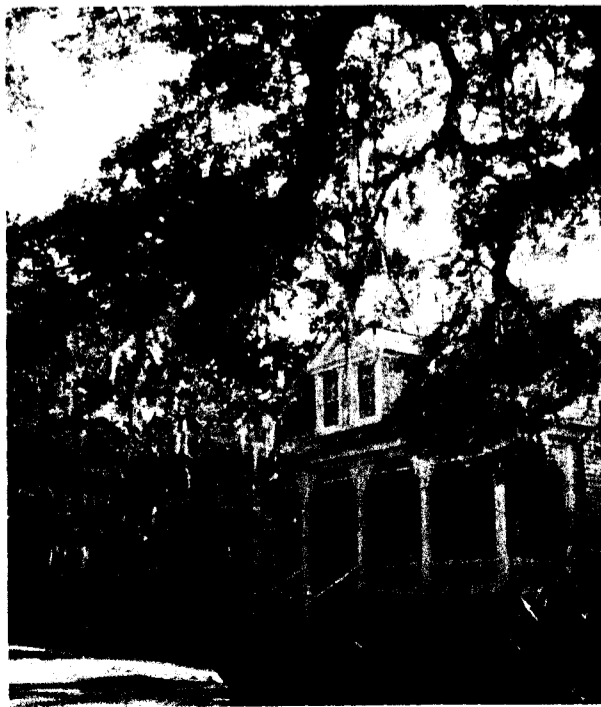
Covington

Covington has a reputation as an “Artists’ Community.” There are quite a few arts-related businesses and a number of well-known local “creatives” such as Leonard Joseph (photography), Raoul Blanco (fashion designer) and Bill Kiermeir (globes). Downtown Covington is considered by many to be the visual arts center of the parish with numerous commercial and nonprofit galleries, arts-related business, restaurants and a newly-developing residential component. The history and architecture of downtown make it an ideal destination for an art-and-antiques center. The community offers a strong annual line-up of free events such as Three Rivers Festival, Final Friday concerts, Farmers’ Market, Shakespeare at the Landing and more.

The Covington Center is a city-owned facility with in-demand space for artist classrooms and studios. The building is in operation seven days a week, day and night. An auditorium (Fuhrmann Theater), renovated after being damaged by Katrina, seats 510 and is used by Playmakers, LPO, NO Youth Orchestra, area dance studios and a variety of other cultural programmers. A Friends of the Fuhrmann group has been formed to raise funds in support of a full cultural presenting season. There has been an overwhelming response to cultural programming since Katrina. The Covington Center has a waiting list for use of the facility and would welcome competitive cultural facilities because the demand is so great. The St. Bernard Parish population that is now living in St. Tammany has been supporting Covington events and offers audience-development options for cultural programmers.

The community has not yet reached critical mass in terms of cultural programming. A number of people who have invested in arts-related business feel that they are participating in an if-we-build-it-they-will-come gamble. There is also a concern that most residents are more than willing to attend the many free community cultural events, but music and performing arts programmers are concerned about attendance and audience-growth strategies for ticketed events. There are several Covington-based cultural organizations suffering from bad past decisions and administrative inefficiency.

Although Covington has traditionally been a nurturing environment for artists, housing and cost-of-living factors are impacting the ability of the cultural community to continue living and working in the community. This issue also affects the ability of young families to move into the community and limits expendable income, which, in turn, impacts the purchase of original art and ticket buying for cultural events. The 2007 median household income for City of Covington residents is \$44,000.



Mandeville

Mandeville has an affluent population: The 2007 median income in the City of Mandeville is \$63,855. The median home cost is \$233,000, up from \$175,000 in 2003. Even before Hurricane Katrina, cost of living was a challenging issue for the community. Now, although there are a significant number of empty lots and severely damaged homes, affordable housing is nonexistent. Local government views itself primarily as a service organization and, having heard a demand from the citizenry for an expanded cultural life, would like to respond, but is challenged by infrastructure-improvement priorities. As Mandeville moves through the slow stages of recovery and advancement, there is a serious concern about smart growth and the appropriate scale of new development opportunities, which appear to be plentiful.

Old Mandeville and its lakefront are what make Mandeville unique – they are the heart and history of the community. The beautiful aesthetic of this immediate area makes it a perfect venue and backdrop for cultural programming. The entire historic region is easily walk-able; pedestrian and bike traffic is encouraged through attractive landscaping and sidewalks. The Old Mandeville Business Association is an energetic group of citizens determined to revitalize the district with a focus on arts and culture. Other existing assets in the district are the Trailhead, Sunset Point, and the Dew Drop Inn. The community is positioning itself as an important green-friendly destination for tourists and residents with natural wetlands scattered throughout Old Mandeville, the Wetlands Assimilation Project and education program, and the new Neighbor Woods project. Additionally, outdoor family-oriented activities are extremely important and well supported. The Pelican Park recreation complex welcomes an average of 2,500 kids a day.

Old Mandeville and the lakefront area are incredibly unique and valuable cultural assets that are completely underutilized as backdrops or venues for cultural programming. An echoed opinion is that the Old Mandeville district has the potential to be developed in a manner similar to Fairhope, Alabama, and Seaside, Florida. The lakefront has the same ambiance as the water's edge in Key West, which becomes a spontaneous cultural event every evening at sunset.

Facility and land development prospects are among the most promising possibilities for cultural growth. There are plans to further expand and develop the footprint of the Trailhead and to restore the historic Dew Drop Inn (if funding can be found). The NorthStar Theater is reopening and will, hopefully, continue in its role as a cultural center. At least one large tract of lakefront property is ideal for development as a cultural-facility property.

The challenge, however, is that Old Mandeville is not a traditional downtown. The mixed-use (with a heavy residential concentration) nature of the district makes redevelopment an extremely sensitive and politically volatile balancing act. Interested citizens don't want the area staged as strictly residential, but it's not currently functioning well commercially. The district's main street, Girod, is home to NorthStar Theater and enough art galleries to support a successful evening of monthly gallery openings. A shift of arts-related and other small businesses to shopping centers outside of the historic area left Old Mandeville without a strong cultural identity and without the critical mass necessary for retail to succeed. The area has become a destination for restaurants, but little else. Complicating revitalization of Old Mandeville is that the physical recovery of the district is still very much in process. The cost of living has become too expensive to support an artists' community. For those people who want to repair homes or make a new business investment, how can they afford to elevate property to meet insurance requirements? Additionally, anti-development forces do exist. There is a critical need for a downtown development employee, because it's difficult to coordinate and sustain an all-volunteer revitalization effort. There is a strong feeling among the citizenry that whatever cultural activity developed to sustain the area must be organic – it should be an outgrowth of what resources already exist.



Slidell

Slidell took a huge hit from Hurricane Katrina. Two years later, the main priority of local government is to get the citizenry out of the remaining FEMA trailers and into homes. Much of the city, including the downtown, suffered flooding and severe wind damage. For that reason, community beautification has been important to a sense of recovery and progress. \$35,000 has been spent for tree replacement. Four-to-five-hundred people participated in a city-wide cleanup. Students from Northshore High School have participated in a beautification partnership. Slidell is now a participant in the Tree City USA/Keep America Beautiful program.

Another local government priority is to rebuild the downtown core. There is a need to get government offices out of FEMA trailers and back in the old town district. The Slidell Cultural Center, which was flooded and then housed FEMA offices, has yet to be renovated. The city is making application to become a Main Street community. Government is being joined in this focus by key business partners. Commercial ventures such as The Continental, Dish on First and Time Out have great personality, are leading the way in the revitalization of the district and have the potential to serve both commercial and nonprofit activity. Slidell Rotary Club and Northshore Rotary Club are working on office restoration for social service agencies in downtown. The East St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce is focusing on recovery of Old Town Slidell. The Chamber, whose job is to create business growth opportunity, recognizes downtown as a marketing and branding draw. Chamber leaders understand that the unique old town district is the best asset for the creation of a cultural identity or logo. The logo, in turn, draws attention to the product.

On a broader level, Slidell doesn't have the identity it should have. There needs to be a broadened awareness of Old Town, the railroad station, Heritage Park and amphitheater and other district assets. The community has most of what it needs to become a Destination Weekend for cultural tourists, with a combination of history, culture, green space and waterways, and proximity to New Orleans and Mississippi casinos. Community leaders see Fairhope, Alabama, as a model for what Slidell can become.

Slidell is the leading commercial center of St. Tammany Parish, as well as the largest city. In addition to the retail, healthcare and education sectors, the community is building a reputation as a technology center with a well-educated population supporting Stennis Space Center and Michoud Space Center. The 2007 median household income is \$49,230.



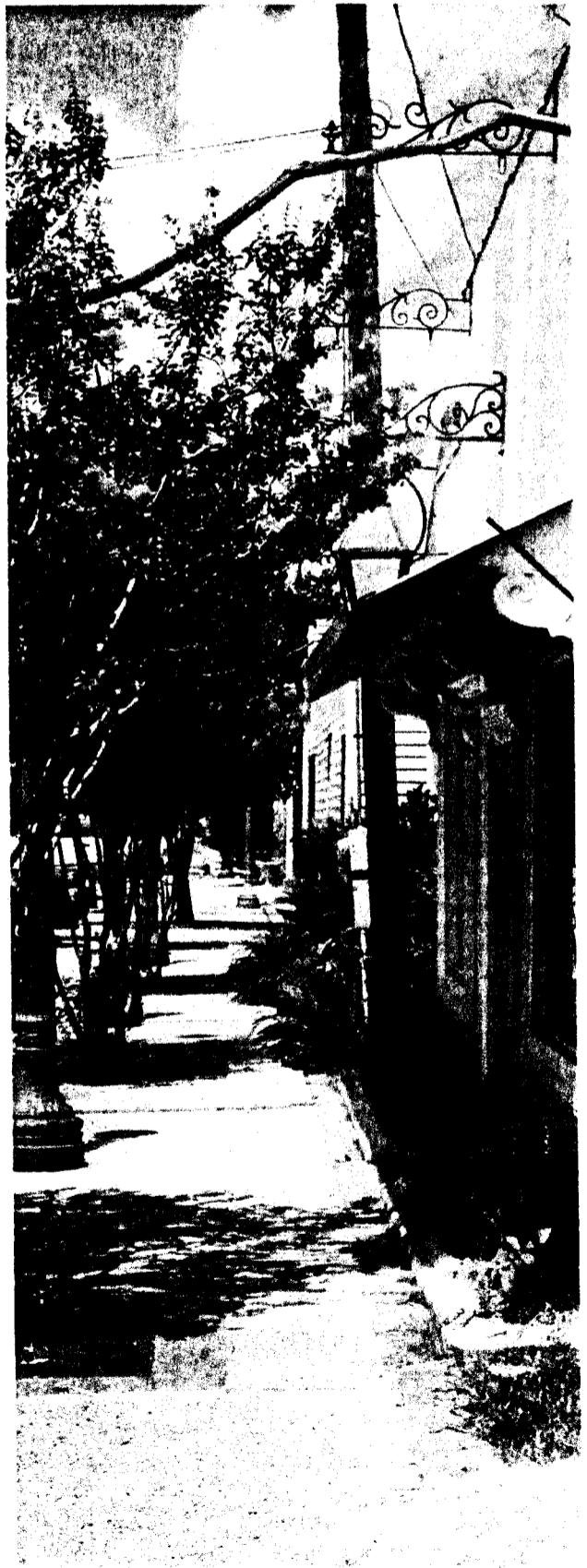
Industry and commerce will soon meet in Slidell with a monumental development project encompassing a University of New Orleans technology park and education center and a one-million square foot lifestyle (retail, entertainment and residential) center.

Slidell's performing arts programming has actually seen increased audience and corporate support since Katrina. For several cultural nonprofits, audiences have grown, membership size has remained steady or decreased slightly and volunteerism has dropped dramatically. This seemingly incongruous trend supports an assumption that Slidell citizens have needed arts programming for socialization and stress relief, but that volunteer time has been consumed by people's needs in physical and emotional recovery.

The Slidell cultural community has much to commend it: the Department of Cultural Affairs presents an assortment of high-quality programming, most of it free to the community; the Slidell Symphony Society sponsors LPO performances, informances and the Lolly Pop Kids; and the Slidell Little Theater provides entertainment and involvement for children and adults. SLT's YATS summer program, in particular, is bursting at the seams and could more than double its participation from 200 to approximately 500 youth if it had an appropriate facility. Bayou Country is an important commercial asset, selling products from more than 60 artisans and developing an amphitheater for performance opportunities.

Positive energy in Slidell abounds and a number of good ideas have been proposed or are underway. Highway 11 into the community could become a green entryway, similar to Isla Mirada. Leadership Slidell has undertaken a portable movie-screen project and is also exploring a skateboard park project. Even the Mayor has some ideas: "Slidell's Got Talent" would be a showcase event celebrating local talent.

The cultural community is not without challenges. Traditional marketing is not necessarily working under current circumstances – just getting word out can be a challenge. The Slidell Department of Cultural Affairs is struggling to meet the demand for community programming and a bigger staff is needed. There is still a perception that Slidell art patrons go to other markets such as Covington or New Orleans to make purchases. And, like the rest of the St. Tammany communities, Slidell needs affordable live/work situations for artists, and downtown Slidell certainly has an inventory of buildings that could work well for such projects.





Abita Springs

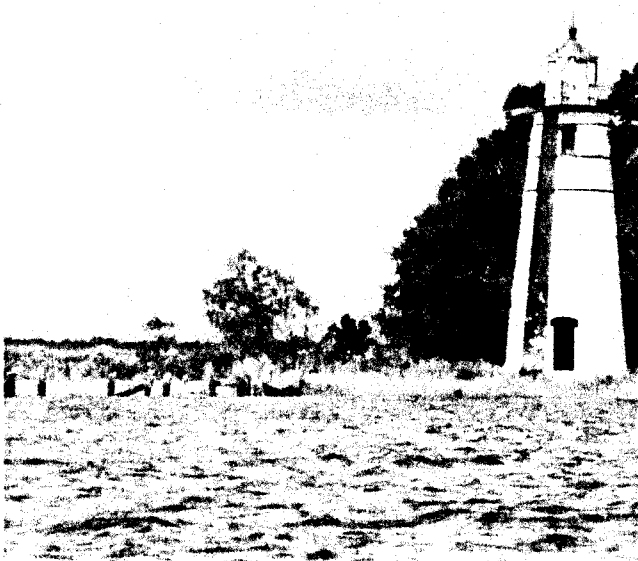
The community has a history as an artists' community. Earlier in its history, the community was a 20th century resort. In the 1950s there were 200 hotel rooms, now there are none. The folklore is that the hippies showed up in the 1960s. Although the parish is generally considered to be politically and socially conservative, Abita Springs is liberal. The community is green-space conscious. Post-Katrina, Abita has experienced infrastructure pains. The restricted tax base makes providing extended infrastructure and the means with which to pay for it a challenge. Existing businesses are doing well and sales tax is good, but there's not a lot of new business post-Katrina. The community needs some basic retail service such as a grocery and drugstore. Labor is a problem – getting workers and offering competitive pay. The 2006 median household income of \$49,575 makes the town ineligible for many U.S. grants and the mayor is only slightly joking when saying he couldn't afford to move to Abita today. There is a concern that as residential development occurs it should have the character and scale of existing homes and neighborhoods.

One of the main attractions of Abita is the Abita Opry, which is shown on public access all over the country. The live show attracts 300-350 people per show – and there are 3 in fall, 3 in spring. The program is considered a model cultural program for the parish and many people question whether the model can be replicated in other St. Tammany communities. The Opry venue is important – it's a community center. Abita Beer and Abita Water have a lot of name recognition throughout the Gulf Coast region and beyond, serving as cultural branding for the community.

The extension of the Tammany Trace into Abita has helped the community – it attracts ecotourism. There is a master plan for a town park and Trailhead, with a portion of the necessary funding already committed by the State. There's an 1884 World Expo Pavilion that will be a centerpiece of the park and a place to hold public events. The Long Branch Hotel, the first and oldest in the area, was damaged during the storm. The building has been donated to the town and will be moved to the Trailhead. Abita has a clear vision for tourism and community development that includes cultural marketing and branding, eco-destination attractions, and a quirky sensibility that is unique to the town.

Town leaders feel strongly there should be more support from the tourist commission and that the small community gets lost in service delivery by agencies that serve the entire parish. For tourism to become truly meaningful as economic support to the community, there is a need for a boutique hotel or a bed and breakfast.





Madisonville

Madisonville was once the hub of the parish because of the Tchefuncte River, and the community still draws its strength and identity from the waterfront. Outdoor activity is important: fishing, boating, and sports support a family atmosphere. The Maritime Museum is a key community asset. They run cooperative programs with the schools and the highly-successful Wooden Boat Festival. The museum has a cooperative agreement with Southeastern Louisiana University and would like to have the university able to teach on site. There are a slab and pilings in place for a 3rd building. This offers future possibilities for an aquarium and more exhibition space. In its role as a research center, the Museum could partner with the local historical society.

Madisonville needs marketing assistance to bring more people into the community, although visitorship has increased since Hurricane Katrina. The community has the highest housing prices in the parish, which makes it virtually impossible for artists to live within the town limits. As with other small St. Tammany communities, there is a sense that Madisonville's needs and resources are overwhelmed by Slidell, Covington and Mandeville. One potential tourist draw, the Cotton Blossom Riverboat is caught in a lawsuit. It would be great for parish tourism to have the boat available for river tours.



Folsom

The village does not have a lot of funds coming in, but there have been a lot of inquiries regarding property purchases since Katrina. The rural isolation that presents a challenge for community growth and cultural programming is also what creates the best opportunity to create a unique community cultural profile. The plant nurseries, horse farms, and other similar businesses produce a unique and vanishing rustic atmosphere. Although Folsom has an intergovernmental agreement with St. Tammany Parish for annexation, it is not actively looking at annexation at the moment.

A four-block linear park concept is being discussed. The park would build upon some successful community events such as a car show, community yard sale, Christmas decorating contest, Mardi Gras parade, and arts and crafts show. A church-owned Community Unity park & pavilion has been generously made available for community gatherings. A planned state park with a reservoir between Folsom and Franklinton should prove to be an asset in attracting visitors to the region. Currently, there's no lodging available in the area, but there are a few places to eat. The 2006 municipal household income was \$44,853.



St. Tammany Parish fondly remembers the music presented by Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Slidell Resident and Grammy Award winning Blues Musician who passed away shortly after evacuating for Hurricane Katrina.

St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs

This is a critical period in the history of St. Tammany Parish. Decisions made in dealing with storm recovery, revitalization and new development will affect parish growth patterns for many years to come. As is the case for many governmental and nonprofit agencies, the St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs must evaluate whether its role in community and cultural development needs to evolve.

Commissioners are concerned about attention paid and services offered to smaller communities and how they might better be served. The agency is currently considering the establishment of at least one satellite office to better respond to needs throughout the parish and, ideally, others could be launched with additional outreach staff. Funding, of course, is a primary concern.

Community development issues seem to require the Commission to move beyond the traditional idea of arts and cultural advancement to explore roles in urban design, education and workforce training, downtown and cultural district development, and industry growth. If the agency accepts the challenge, will it need to be restructured in a more productive way?

To support a small staff already challenged by exploding parish needs, there is a possibility that Commissioners could become more involved with each one chairing a focused subcommittee, mentoring a nonprofit agency or tracking a specific project, fundraising at the corporate level, and actively representing the agency to the public. The fact that the agency is a division of government restrains staff, to an extent, in its programming and fundraising activity. This could certainly make the active role of commissioners more a necessity than a luxury.

The need for the agency to plan a new future seems imminent and, in fact, demanded by the findings of the cultural plan. Strategic evolution for the agency will likely involve redefinition, service and staff expansion, a critical role as convener and facilitator of strategic cultural planning, and establishment of new, long-term partnerships.

APPENDIX

THIS CULTURAL PLAN HAS BEEN CREATED THROUGH THE COMMITMENT OF COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO HAVE INVESTED THEIR FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES TO GUIDE IMMEDIATE AND FUTURE ARTISTIC GROWTH IN ST. TAMMANY PARISH. THANKS ARE DUE TO THEM FOR THEIR BELIEF IN CREATIVITY, THE ARTS AND THE ST. TAMMANY COMMUNITY.

Kevin Davis, Parish President

Mayor Marshall Brumfield, Folsom
Mayor Louis Fitzmorris, Abita Springs
Mayor Peter Gitz, Madisonville
Mayor Ben Morris, Slidell
Mayor Eddie Price, Mandeville
Mayor Candace Watkins, Covington

St. Tammany Parish Commission on Cultural Affairs

Lisa Barnett, Chair
Stephen Cefalu, Vice-Chair
Dr. Joan Archer
George Dunbar
Kelly B. Elliott
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Kathy VonBieberstein, Secretary

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Dána La Fonta, former Assistant Director
Annie Strack, Project Facilitator

St. Tammany Parish Cultural Organizations & Assets

Abita Springs Opry
All in the Frame
Art on Columbia
Arts & Frames Gallery
Ballet Apetrei, Inc.
Ballet Esprit/Southern Youth Ballet
Bayou Lacombe Rural Museum
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeast LA
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater NOLA-Slidell Unit
Brunner Gallery
Castine Center
Chef Soiree
City of Mandeville, Winter on the Water
City of Slidell/Cultural & Public Affairs
Covington Three Rivers Art Festival
Fort Isabel Gallery
Suitemix Studio
Guardian of Slidell History (GOSH) Museum
Gourmet Gala
Greater Covington Center
Greater Mandeville Seafood Festival Association
Historic Slidell Antique & Collectable Association
Hot Art in a Cool Space
Javier's Dance Company/CSIPA
Krewe of Eve
Lacombe Crab Festival
Lacombe Heritage Center
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum
Legacy Music, LLC
Madisonville Wood Boat Festival
Mandeville City Hall Monthly Artist Program
Mandeville High School Band Boosters
Mandeville Trailhead Cultural Center
Minacapelli's Dinner Playhouse
Mo's Art Supply & Framing
Music Together on the Northshore
Mysteries By Request
Gallery Nu
North Star Theatre

Northlake Nature Center
Northlake Performing Arts Society
Northshore Cajun Dancers
Northshore Friends of GNOYO
Northshore Harbor Center
Old Mandeville Business Association
OPUS
Otis House Museum
Ozone Camellia Club
Ozone Film Fest
Playmakers Inc.
Pontchartrain Vineyards-Jazz'n the Vines
PoPs Performing Arts
Pride of St. Tammany
Sally Dunn-Ven Norman Photo Studio & Gallery
See Hear Productions
Slidell Art League
Slidell Heritage Festival
Slidell Little Theatre
Slidell Museum
Slidell Photography Club
Slidell Symphony Society
Speak Easy Center
Spectrum Gallery
St. Joseph Seminary College
St. Tammany Art Association
St. Tammany Historical Society
St. Tammany Parish Library
St. Tammany Parish Schools
St. Tammany Porcelain Art Club
STARC
Tammany Trace Foundation
Tammany Twirlers Square & Round Dance
The Harriet Blum Collection
UCM Museum/Northshore Art Academy
US Amateur Ballroom Dancers Assn
WWNO - Radio