

KENNER 2030

Strategic Plan for a Prosperous Future *Executive Summary*



INTRODUCTION

Metropolitan areas in the United States are no longer experiencing simple urban decline. They are now experiencing *sub-urban* decline. The challenges that Kenner is facing are similar to what many older suburban communities across the United States are confronting. Kenner is at an “inflection point.” It can either choose to reinvent itself, or it can risk continued decline.

The Strategic Plan is organized in such a way as to answer three questions:

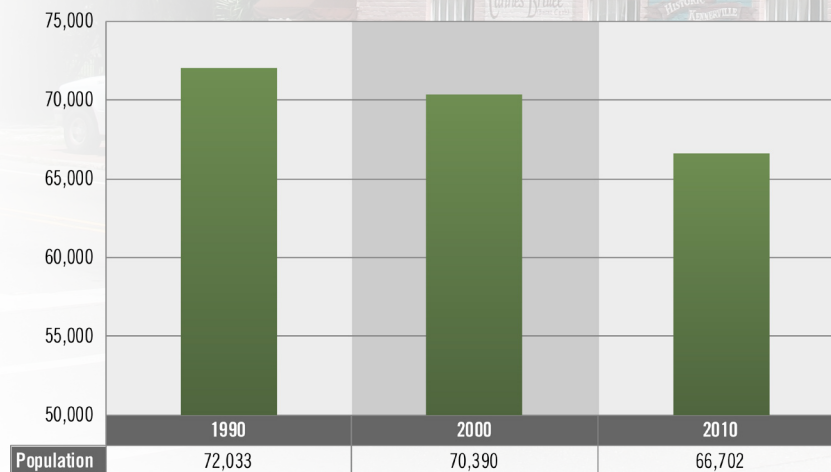
- Where are we?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we want to get there?

Where Are We – Kenner by the Numbers

Based on a number of objectives and quantitative metrics, GCR reached the following conclusions about where Kenner currently stands and where it has been:

- The population of the city is no longer growing and, in fact, has declined somewhat since 1990.
- Kenner’s population continues to grow more diverse, both racially and ethnically.
- Kenner remains slightly wealthier than surrounding communities, though the “wealth premium” associated with Kenner has decreased since 1990.
- Real estate activity, as measured by building permits, has declined substantially in spite of the availability of developable properties.

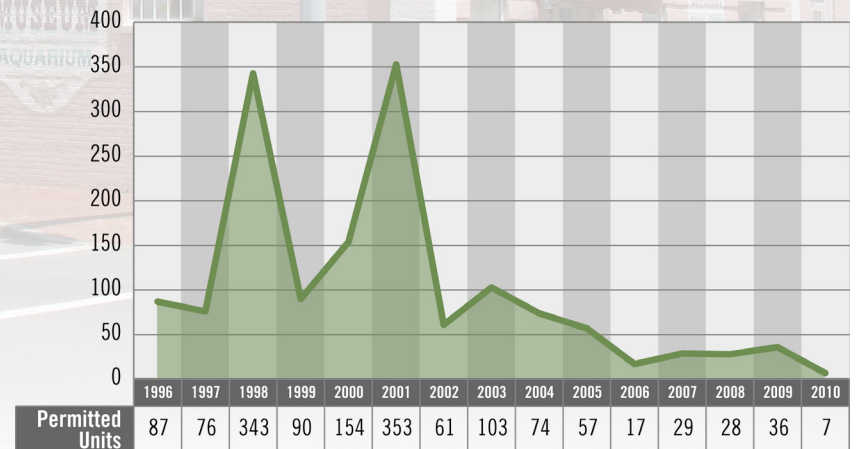
Kenner Population, 1990 - 2010



Kenner’s population has declined by 7.4% since 1990.

Source: Census Bureau, decennial census

City of Kenner, Permits for New Residential Units 1996 - 2010



Residential building activity has declined to a near standstill in recent years.

Source: Census Bureau, Censtats Database

- The education profile of Kenner residents remains unchanged since 1990; in neighboring communities, it has grown substantially.
- Average asking rents in Kenner, once at the same level as the New Orleans region overall, are now somewhat lower
- The median value of owner-occupied housing in Kenner has declined somewhat in relation to Jefferson Parish and the metropolitan area.
- The poverty rate in Kenner remains slightly below surrounding communities, though Kenner now has a greater share of the region's poor population than it once did.
- The unemployment rate in Kenner remains below that of other communities within the region while Kenner has lost fewer jobs than other communities since 2004.
- Tax revenues have remained stagnant for many years, while the costs of governance have increased.

Kenner is still fundamentally strong in many respects. As a point of comparison, Kenner is wealthier than other communities in the region, and it enjoys a relatively strong jobs base and a low unemployment rate. At the same time, it is important to recognize that few of the trends in demographics are positive, and most are unambiguously negative.

Where We Are – Survey Results

The Kenner 2030 plan also collected data in order to gauge residents' views of Kenner. The mechanism for collecting opinions was a series of web-based surveys. The survey found:

- There is moderate degree of pessimism about the overall future direction of Kenner. The most pessimistic survey population was the Economic Development Committee, which was familiar with the city's demographic and socio-economic indicators.
- Quality of life was generally seen as a bigger threat to Kenner's well-being than jobs, although elected officials felt that jobs were a bigger concern.

- The survey takers generally felt that a compelling vision and implementation plan for Kenner's revitalization were not in place.
- Kenner suffers from a lackluster reputation among residents of the metropolitan area. Young survey takers (age 18 – 34) had an especially negative view of the community.

In summary of the survey, consider that the data cumulatively show that an ambitious, fresh new direction is in order.

Survey takers agreed that Kenner lacks a coherent vision for its future as well as a detailed implementation plan.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Members of the Economic Development Committee, elected officials, and member of the general public were asked to provide their input as to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Kenner. Overall, there was a high degree of consensus among all three survey groups. A summary presentation of the SWOT analysis from each survey population are presented as follows:

- Major strengths that were identified include:
 - o The Airport
 - o Recreational amenities and opportunities
 - o Public safety
 - o The overall convenience of the city

- o The affordability of Kenner's neighborhoods
- o Nearby entertainment options

- Major weaknesses that were identified include:
 - o The aesthetics of Kenner's major streets
 - o The quality of Kenner's public schools
 - o The scarcity of jobs
 - o The condition of commercial properties throughout the community
 - o The aesthetics of the city's residential neighborhoods
- Major opportunities that were identified include:
 - o Capitalizing on Kenner's River and Lake frontage
 - o Redeveloping Louis Armstrong Airport
 - o Improving the Esplanade Mall
 - o Transforming Kenner into a "boutique city"
 - o Redeveloping blighted areas
 - o Redeveloping the city's major commercial corridors
 - o Developing the airport buy out properties
 - o Improving public education
- Major threats that were identified include:
 - o An increasingly negative reputation/perception of Kenner in the region
 - o Kenner's inability to attract a new generation of residents
 - o Disinvestment in certain areas of the city
 - o Emerging blight
 - o Vacant commercial properties
 - o The loss of major employers

Several themes emerge from the SWOT analysis that must be highlighted. There is an overall statement about the importance of physical place and the lackluster condition of Kenner from a physical and aesthetic standpoint. Beautiful is a resounding theme. Additionally, there are a substantial number of opportunities that exist to improve physical places, such as Rivertown and Laketown, so addressing aesthetic improvement is easily definable. The impact of such community feedback is that the physical realm must be part of any conversation about Kenner's economy and future prosperity.

Where Do We Want To Go – Kenner Fifteen Years from Now

The vision for the city that has emerged from the planning process focuses on general, desirable qualities for the community. There was not ample discussion on this topic, but there seemed to be a general, implicit consensus about what those qualities are. These desirable qualities include:

- A strong, diverse job market that provides ample employment opportunities for Kenner residents
- A vibrant business climate that attracts new investment to underutilized commercial and industrial areas
- Town centers that serve as focal points of commercial activity and that provide a high quality, pedestrian-oriented environment
- Exemplary shopping, dining, and entertainment options at the Esplanade Mall and other commercial nodes throughout the city
- A state-of-the-art airport that provides an excellent first impression to Kenner and the entire New Orleans region and that functions as a major economic engine
- Safe, attractive neighborhoods that experience continuing reinvestment and that maintain their middle class appeal
- A thriving Hispanic community that adds to the cultural richness of Kenner and that benefits economically from entrepreneurial activity
- Excellent schools, recreational amenities, and quality public services
- Attractive commercial and residential boulevards that are Kenner's signature thoroughfares
- A "boutique city" that has a distinct identity because of its aesthetic appeal, sense of place, and unparalleled quality of life

The following vision statement synthesizes these concepts:

Vision:

As 2030 approaches, Kenner will be known as a thriving, suburban, “boutique” community that is uniquely attractive, appealing, and a wonderful place to live. Residents of Kenner and the entire region will enjoy the city’s two community focal points: bustling Rivertown and Laketown. With a gleaming Louis Armstrong Airport as its primary engine, Kenner’s economy will offer residents a wide range of employment opportunities and a thriving entrepreneurial environment. Accessible by beautiful, tree-lined boulevards, Kenner’s neighborhoods will provide a safe, attractive environment for a diversity of families. These neighborhoods will be in close proximity to exemplary public schools, neighborhood parks, and a network of bike paths. Kenner will be known throughout the region as one of the most sought after communities for both residents and businesses.

No Time like the Present – A Unique Window for Kenner to Change

Kenner is choosing an opportune time to reinvent itself. There are a number of recent developments that Kenner could use as leverage for major change and improvements:

- \$1 billion redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport, which could directly fund off-site improvements to streets and commercial corridors.
- The overhaul of Kenner’s zoning ordinance, a once-in-a-generation opportunity that could substantially improve the physical realm of the city.
- The presence of publicly owned land could be used as an incentive for public-private development partnerships and could therefore be a development catalyst.
- Changing demographics and changing residential preferences that could position Kenner to attract young professionals to Rivertown and Laketown, as well as senior housing for aging Baby Boomers.



The planned overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport could be a springboard for broader community revitalization in Kenner

- New leadership in Jefferson Parish Public Schools that is pushing for aggressive school reforms. This could improve the competitiveness of public schools in Kenner.
- A close working partnership with JEDCO, a capable, experienced economic development organization.

The convergence of these opportunities is the strongest argument for Kenner to think ambitiously and aggressively as it finds a new, rejuvenated civic identity.

A Broader Perspective on Economic Development

At the outset, the Kenner 2030 planning effort was couched in the language of economic development. However, the vision that this Plan espouses is clearly broader and more all-encompassing than an economic development initiative would suggest. There are several reasons for this:

- Kenner has limited influence in setting the regional economic agenda and influencing regional competitiveness. It comprises only 5.7% of the population and 5.0% of the jobs.
- Much of the region's economic development infrastructure is not located in Kenner.
- Even those institutions that do have more regional sway sometimes exert little influence of profound macroeconomic changes that affect the local economy, e.g. the severe downturn in the regional economy in the 1980's was caused by changes in the global oil market.

A key question is how a city with 5.7% of the regional population and 5.0% of the regional jobs can positively impact its economic climate and its ability to attract jobs and residents. The answers lie in focusing on job generating activities within the Kenner but also on creating an appealing *environment* that will itself attract residents and job creators. These environmental factors include attractive neighborhoods, recreational amenities, public safety, and vibrant commercial districts.

There are also indications that the next generation of residents that Kenner is seeking to capture very much scrutinizes these elements of quality of life. The residential preference survey that GCR conducted showed that young people value neighborhoods that are “pedestrian friendly,” that have “low crime” and “quality shopping and dining nearby” and that are noted for their “attractiveness/aesthetics.” These responses suggest that quality of life—not just an abundance of jobs—is critical to attracting a new middle class.



Among both younger and older individuals who participated in GCR's Facebook and Twitter survey, quality of place was a critical consideration in assessing the desirability of a community. Desired traits included:

- **Pedestrian friendly neighborhoods**
- **Public safety**
- **Quality shopping and dining nearby**
- **Attractiveness/aesthetic quality**

With a strong middle class, of course, comes a virtuous cycle of prosperity: an educated workforce, a robust tax base, and quality city services and public amenities, which in turn help to attract additional middle class residents. Best of all, many aspects of quality of life are actually directly controlled by local government. Because of these myriad factors, this Plan calls for a truly holistic approach to building prosperity in Kenner and implementing the vision.

How Do We Want to Get There – Implementing the Vision

If the vision outlined in a strategic plan has any chance of being implemented, the plan must have a sufficiently detailed and nuanced roadmap for implementation. Informing this roadmap is an overall “paradigm” or framework for implementation, consisting of a number of elements. The first is to focus on what the city of Kenner can actually accomplish, not to create wish lists that can only be implemented by other agencies and jurisdictions. The tools in Kenner’s toolbox include:

- The disposition of publicly owned property
- Zoning and other land development regulations
- A working partnership with Louis Armstrong Airport
- Code enforcement
- The provision of much of the city’s infrastructure

The second element of the framework is that studies are an important precursor to action. They may not be a popular primary action item, but they help to set a concrete, definitive path. Also, they capture public opinion and establish where public support lies, and they ensure an efficient, targeted use of scarce resources.

The third element of the implementation framework is that there must be a frank conversation about resources. The plan does not recommend particularly grandiose public projects, but it does emphasize that local, city-generated resources must be part of the conversation about implementation. GCR has research and has been unable to document the instance of any community in the United States that has successfully turned itself around without some supplemental commitment of local resources that go beyond the everyday costs of governance. Community revitalization cannot be done on the cheap. There is a reason why the revitalization of Louis Armstrong Airport carries a \$1 billion price tag and why it took \$336 million to once again transform the Superdome into a world-

class facility. Fortunately, the public seems to recognize this reality. Survey takers and Economic Development Committee members understand this reality. Unfortunately, the political and economic climate is hostile to revenue measures. This is arguably the greatest obstacle to implementation that the Kenner 2030 plan faces.

The fourth element of the implementation framework is that the recommended action items capitalize on tangible opportunities, such as the redevelopment of the Airport and the overhaul of the zoning ordinance. Many of the action items are directly related to existing and emerging opportunities such as these.

The fifth and final element of the implementation framework is the importance of leadership and stewardship of the Plan. A major reason why plans fail is an absence of sufficient leadership. Leadership must come from elected officials, departmental heads, but also from ordinary residents and civic leaders.

Action Items

The action items that the Kenner 2030 plan recommends are those specific measures that will implement the vision for a more prosperous City of Kenner. The action items have been grouped by the overarching, topic-specific goal to which each pertains. There are eleven goals in all, and they are listed in the graphic on the right side of this page.

All of the action items were vetted by the Economic Development Committee and a majority of Committee Members—in most cases, an overwhelming majority—supported each one of the action items. The action items are fully discussed in pages 39 through 96 of the plan. The Mayor’s Office is ultimately responsible for implementation and will assign key personal to each individual action item. A matrix describes the supporting agencies/departments that may assist with implementation, an estimated cost associated with the action, and an estimated timetable, and it is on pages 97 – 111.

The goals of the action items are:

1. Support the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport into a world class facility that will spur economic development and revitalize adjacent neighborhoods.
2. Continue to push for the expedited redevelopment of Airport buyout properties into economically productive uses.
3. Transform Rivertown into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district that will function as Kenner’s town center.
4. Transform Laketown into a thriving, signature, mixed use district that will capitalize on its unique Lakefront location.
5. Work closely with the management of the Esplanade Mall to facilitate on-going redevelopment efforts.
6. Aggressively market Kenner in a targeted, cost efficient manner to existing and prospective businesses and residents.
7. Support efforts to provide high quality public education for Kenner residents.
8. Transform Kenner’s older commercial corridors into economically prosperous, aesthetically appealing boulevards.
9. Improve code enforcement practices to prevent decline in Kenner’s middle income neighborhoods and to attract new investment to struggling neighborhoods.
10. Improve the political climate in Kenner to foster greater public trust in the transparency and effectiveness of City government.
11. Pursue improvements to the transportation infrastructure that will enhance the convenience of living in Kenner as well as the appeal of Kenner’s neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Postscript: Transforming Kenner Into a Boutique City

A concept advocated a number of times was the notion of transforming Kenner into a “boutique city.” A boutique city implies a community that is truly a community of choice—the kind of sought-after place that residents from throughout the New Orleans region would want to live in. It also implies a city with a unique identity that looks and feels different than the communities adjacent to it and that is distinctly attractive from an aesthetic standpoint. Finally, it is a community that is characterized by an exceptionally high quality of life. Collectively, the action items that the Plan recommends will create exactly this kind of community. In a way, the concept of transforming Kenner into a boutique city underlies all of the action items that this Plan proposes. The boutique city concept tackles the fundamental genesis for the Plan head on—the concern about Kenner’s ability to attract a next generation of residents and businesses. It is therefore the fundamental goal of the plan and the primary goal that all of the action items in this plan are oriented towards.

Implementation: Understanding the Price Tag

Every aspect of the *Kenner 2030* plan has been crafted with implementation in mind. The action items are realistic insofar as they are within the purview of Kenner city government, and they are realistic in relation to the total price tag of the plan. The cost of the initiative is quite modest in the context of Kenner’s overall budget and in the context of other recent investments in the region.

Kenner 2030 is a multi-year, 15 to 20 year project. Given the extreme budgetary constraints that Kenner faces, the plan identifies a number of grant programs and external funding sources that could cover some of the cost of implementation. It cannot be overemphasized though that funding—from whatever

source—is an absolute precondition to implementation. For as modest as the cost of the plan is, it will not and cannot be implemented unless funding is secured. Another noteworthy aspect of the price tag is that the overwhelming majority of the total cost is for infrastructure improvements to the city’s major commercial corridors. By definition, these kinds of infrastructure projects should be undertaken over a full 15 – 20 year horizon. Thus, in any given year, the cost of this initiative in the form of debt service payments would be far lower. Also, the city of Kenner would not necessarily have to foot the entire bill for this initiative as the potential \$1 billion overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport could help to secure funding for corridor improvements.

There are also a number of caveats to these cost estimates. Certain costs are too unknown at this point to assign even an approximate dollar figure. A final important caveat to these numbers is that they do not include the critical recurring cost of staffing the initiative itself. Given the breadth and ambition of the action items tasks, it is imperative that Kenner find additional capacity to monitor and administer this strategic plan. Along with revenue, administrative capacity is absolutely essential to ensuring that the plan is implemented.

Implementation: Creating and Sustaining Momentum

The *Kenner 2030* plan strives to avoid the “sitting on a shelf” phenomenon. Responsibility for implementation fundamentally lies with the city of Kenner. A plan cannot implement itself. A plan is only a document, but people—the Mayor, the Council, and City employees—are fundamentally responsible for implementing it. There are nonetheless a number of procedures that can be implemented to substantially improve the odds that the *Kenner 2030* plan will be implemented. These procedures are as follows:

1. **Hire staff and/or secure consultants to monitor implementation.** GCR estimates that Kenner should retain

1 – 2 FTE employees (or an equivalent level of effort to a consultant) whose sole responsibility would be to monitor this plan and advance implementation.

2. Prepare semiannual reports on progress toward implementation.

3. Formulate citizen-based working groups that will have a review and oversight role of each element of the plan. Kenner should formulate volunteer working groups comprised of community stakeholders. These groups will be responsible for continued oversight of elements of the plan, and they will be responsible for monitoring implementation from a citizen's perspective.

4. Get the broader public involved and increase their ownership of the plan. Due to budget and time constraints, the general public was not a principal contributor to the Kenner 2030 plan. If the public is to have ownership of this plan, they must be involved at some point. If the public believes in the merits of the plan, they will insist that elected officials honor its aims and follow through on implementation.

5. Revisit the plan on an occasional basis and make necessary edits. One reason why plans occasionally become stale is the simple fact that they are not revised periodically. Once every 2 – 3 years, the Planning Department should involve the Economic Development Committee, the topic-specific working groups, and the general public in an effort to formally revise the plan as necessary.

6. Provide an orientation to the plan to newly elected officials and to new department heads in city government. A primary reason why even the best crafted plans sometimes wither and die is that they are associated with a certain elected official or senior level administrator. When there is inevitably changeover, plans may become dormant. Kenner should have a formal mechanism for orient-

ing new officials to the document. Whenever there is an election and whenever there is a change in a department head, the Planning Department should have the responsibility of formally introducing newly elected officials and new department heads to the plan.



Citizen working groups help to ensure that elected officials remain focused on the Kenner 2030 plan. They also provide an effective mechanism for translating concepts into implementation.

Implementation: Getting Started

There is much truth to the bumper sticker wisdom that “the longest journey begins with the first step.” For this reason, GCR has identified the critical first tasks that will get the implementation process underway. It is imperative that Kenner get started immediately on all of the goals that the plan outlines, for the sake of actual accomplishments and for the sake of preserving momentum. The first 12 – 24 months following the adoption of the plan will be a critical period.

Action items are fully discussed on pages 39 - 96 of the plan, but following tasks are those that will jump start implementation in the first 12 – 24 months:

General Administrative Responsibilities

- Hire two FTE staff in the Planning Department that will monitor implementation and provide technical assistance to support implementation.
- Prepare up to three semiannual “report cards” that indicate progress in implementing the plan
- Formulate citizen work groups covering each of the goals that the plan outlines
- Strive for greater public involvement in the strategic planning process

Louis Armstrong Airport

- Secure a major role for Kenner on the steering committees for the Airport studies that will soon be underway.
- Initiate conversations with consultant teams and Airport officials about expanding the “footprint” of redevelopment efforts to encompass adjacent roads and commercial areas.

Airport Buy-out Properties

- Work with UNO to complete the study recommending disposition strategies for buy-out properties.
- Adopt internal deadlines for the disposition of the properties and ensure that executive leadership (Mayor, Aviation Director, JEDCO Executive Director) is aware of deadlines.

Rivertown

- Establish a Rivertown Main Street Organization
- Secure funding for a Rivertown Small Area Plan
- Craft new zoning regulations that are appropriate for Rivertown as part of the new citywide zoning ordinance.

Laketown

- Continue to aggressively recruit Coconut Beach
- Formally adopt the 2028 Laketown Master Plan as the official vision for Laketown
- Craft new zoning regulations that implement the vision of the 2028 Laketown Master Plan
- Begin to formulate an RFP for a master developer in coordination with the State

Esplanade Mall

- Formulate an Esplanade Mall working group
- Increase week-night police patrols at the Mall

Marketing and Business Recruitment

- Devise annual economic development goals and metrics in coordination with JEDCO
- Initiate a social media presence for Kenner

Public Education

- Formulate a closer relationship with Jefferson Parish school officials and school board

- Create a template for annual reports on public school performance in Kenner
- Submit an application for a charter school in Kenner

Commercial Corridors

- Initiate conversations with consultant teams and Airport officials about expanding the “footprint” of redevelopment efforts to encompass adjacent roads and commercial areas (also a “getting started” action for Airport redevelopment).
- Secure funding for a corridor improvement study
- Craft zoning regulations that incorporate stronger aesthetic standards and the amortization of non-conforming signage

Code Enforcement

- Commission a third party review of Kenner’s code enforcement practices

Political Climate

- Initiate a series of semiannual “listening sessions”
- Commission an independent review of ethics rules

Transportation

- Engage in the forthcoming Jefferson Parish bicycle plan
- Begin a dialogue with the CONNECT coalition

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is unequivocal, quantitative evidence that Kenner has experienced moderate decline in recent years. If unaddressed, this pattern of decline will likely continue unabated. The lesson from other suburban communities around the United States is clear—decline and disinvestment are inevitable in the absence of forceful action.

The communities that have bucked this trend are those that are able to attract a next generation of residents and businesses. Through quality of life, lifestyle amenities, and a high quality physical environment, these communities are able to persuade residents to invest in a 30 to 40 year old house that may be smaller than what is available in another community. This is the key to Kenner's economic future—overcoming an aging housing stock, aging commercial corridors, and aging infrastructure to attract a new generation of residents and businesses.

This plan recommends a number of forceful actions to do just that. Through improved commercial corridors, quality public schools, vibrant commercial districts at Laketown and Rivertown, and a host of other improvements, Kenner will once again be a community that is sought after. Continued decline is not inevitable, but forceful action to reverse recent trends is an imperative.

Acknowledgments

The City of Kenner thanks those who assisted with making this plan possible, including Mayor Michael S. Yenni, Michael D. Quigley (Chief Administrative Officer), Duke P. McConnell (Director, Finance Department), Cindy L. Roth (Assistant to the Mayor), the members of the Mayor's Economic Development Committee, Henry Shane for his generosity in funding the initial demographic analysis, and the Jefferson Community Foundation for assisting with funding the plan.

KENNER 2030

Strategic Plan for a Prosperous Future



Acknowledgments

The City of Kenner thanks those who assisted with making this plan possible, including Mayor Michael S. Yenni, Michael D. Quigley (Chief Administrative Officer), Duke P. McConnell (Director, Finance Department), Cindy L. Roth (Assistant to the Mayor), the members of the Mayor's Economic Development Committee, Henry Shane for his generosity in funding the initial demographic analysis, and the Jefferson Community Foundation for assisting with funding the plan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Where We Are

<i>Kenner by the Numbers</i>	5
<i>Survey Results</i>	13

Where Do We Want to Go	23
------------------------	----

How Do We Want to Get There	33
<i>Action Items</i>	39

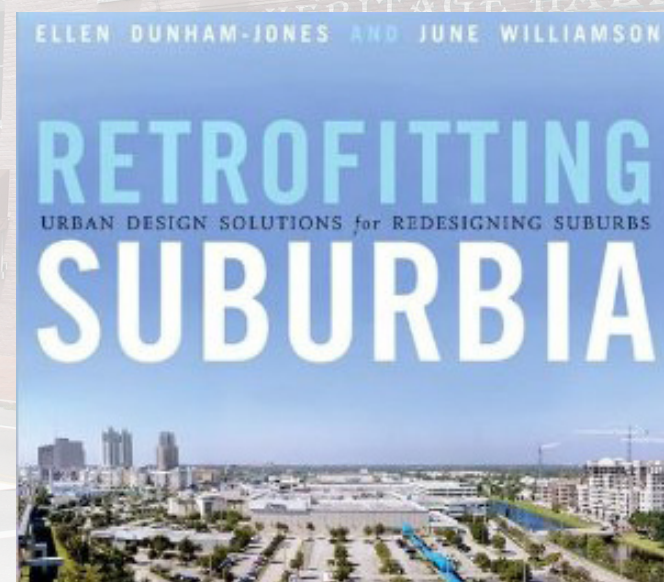
Concluding Thoughts	121
---------------------	-----

Appendix

<i>Facebook Survey</i>	123
<i>Kenner SWOT Meeting</i>	131

INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, the fate of suburban communities has attracted increasing interest from urban planners and policy makers. For much of the post-World War II period, the phenomenon of urban decline was a primary focal point of these disciplines. Little attention was paid to suburban communities aside from cursory observations about their relative prosperity and homogeneity. In recent years, however, the profile of suburbs across the United States has become considerably more complex. While many suburban communities remain overwhelmingly middle class, many others are now grappling with increasing poverty, aging infrastructure, rising crime, and neighborhood blight. Research and academic literature are now turning their attention to the phenomenon of *suburban* decline.



Researchers are increasingly turning their attention to the phenomenon of our evolving suburban communities

Generally speaking, the city of Kenner has paralleled this suburban trend of increasing complexity and emerging challenges. Demographic and socio-economic data reveal that Kenner is growing more diverse in every sense of the term. Of primary interest is the fact that the income profile of the community has declined somewhat over the past several decades. While Kenner remains overwhelmingly middle class and wealthier on the whole than the New Orleans region, it does not enjoy the same “wealth premium” that it once did. Furthermore, the education profile of the community has changed. As of the 1990 Census, Kenner had a higher percentage of residents with a college degree than the metropolitan area did. Recently though, that hierarchy has changed, as the education level of Kenner residents has stagnated while it has increased in other communities within the region.

To grow in prosperity, Kenner needs to attract a new generation of families and businesses.

Perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that Kenner’s population is aging in the context of these emerging challenges. Consequently, Kenner is in the position of needing to attract a new generation of families and businesses in order to preserve its middle class and its tax base. In the coming years, Kenner faces either an opportunity to reinvigorate itself or a pathway to continued decline.

In the absence of aggressive action, Kenner may very well remain a strong, middle class, economically stable city. However, the track record of communities that are similar to Kenner is not promising. Researchers have provided ample documentation of the struggles of so called “inner ring” suburbs. Inner ring suburbs are characterized by:

- older, postwar housing that is in need of reinvestment yet that is more expensive than housing in outlying communities
- commercial corridors that were developed rapidly and with few aesthetic considerations
- little of the unique “sense of place” that older, historic communities possess.

What researchers have documented, based on the experience of inner ring suburbs across the country, is that these communities tend to decline as they age. That is, as the initial first or second generation grows older, successive generations of in-movers tend to be of a lower income profile. Conversely, those communities that have bucked this trend tend to be those that have made aggressive efforts to reinvent and upgrade themselves—investing in new recreational amenities, community infrastructure, and revitalized commercial districts.

This is the “inflection point” at which Kenner now finds itself. Fortunately, Kenner is acknowledging its weaknesses and threats from a position of relative strength. It is still a middle class community with a strong economy and responsive local government. However, there is no question that if recent trends continue unabated, Kenner will continue to decline. Faced with this potential outcome, the city can either maintain its present course and hope that recent trends will abate, or it can take aggressive action to confront its challenges. In light of the trends that other inner ring suburbs have faced, it is fortunate that Kenner is choosing the latter, aggressive course of action. Local leaders increasingly acknowledge that the city needs an ambitious new strategy to grow its economy and attract a new generation of businesses and residents.

The Kenner 2030 plan is that strategy. It is a roadmap that outlines the specific actions that the city should undertake to create a reinvigorated, more prosperous Kenner. With the stewardship of the city’s elected officials and the commitment to secure the necessary resources, Kenner can become a model for how a suburban community can reinvent itself and continue to thrive.

Communities that have reversed the trend of suburban decline tend to be those that have made aggressive efforts to reinvent and upgrade themselves.

Organization of the Plan

Fundamentally, an effective strategic plan must answer three questions:

- Where are we?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we want to get there?

The Kenner 2030 plan is structured accordingly. The first element of the plan focuses on existing conditions in Kenner and the recent troubling trends that are the genesis of this planning effort. This element draws upon two primary sources: publicly available demographic and economic data and secondly, the results of citizen surveys that were conducted during the course of this strategic planning process.

The second element outlines a vision for the kind of city that Kenner hopes to be. The vision statement and accompanying discussion are based on feedback provided by the Mayor's Economic Development Committee and on the results of a number of citizen surveys.

The final, critical element of the document is the implementation element. It consists of a list of action items, grouped by thematic area, that will help Kenner to realize the vision of a more prosperous community with a higher quality of life. The implementation element includes a detailed discussion of each of the action items—the issue that it will address and the basis for the recommended action item. Additionally, this final element of the plan provides a detailed implementation matrix that will outline the party that is responsible for implementation, the resources involved, potential external funding sources, and a recommended timetable for implementation. This final component of the plan will be the basis for evaluating how successful the city is in following through on the implementation of the plan.

Where We Are

WHERE ARE WE

Where Are We: Kenner by the Numbers

This planning process began with a detailed analysis of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Kenner. In order to truly understand where a community is and where it has been, these indicators must be evaluated along two measures. First, they must be assessed over time; secondly, they must be compared to the characteristics of other communities. Socioeconomic and demographic data are rendered meaningless if they are not placed within a broader context.

Accordingly, this is the kind of analysis that GCR Inc., the planning consultant for this initiative, completed at the outset of the planning process. In analyzing a wide range of metrics, GCR reached the following conclusions about where Kenner currently stands and where it has been:

- The population of the city is no longer growing and, in fact, has declined somewhat since 1990
- Kenner's population continues to grow more diverse, both racially and ethnically
- Kenner remains slightly wealthier than surrounding communities, though the "wealth premium" associated with Kenner has decreased since 1990
- The poverty rate in Kenner remains slightly below surrounding communities, though Kenner now has a greater share of the region's poor population than it once did
- The education profile of Kenner residents remains unchanged since 1990; in neighboring communities, it has grown substantially

- Average asking rents in Kenner, once at the same level as the New Orleans region overall, are now somewhat lower
- The median value of owner-occupied housing in Kenner has declined somewhat in relation to Jefferson Parish and the metropolitan area
- Real estate activity, as measured by building permits, has declined substantially in spite of the availability of developable properties
- The unemployment rate in Kenner remains below that of other communities within the region while Kenner has lost fewer jobs than other communities since 2004
- Tax revenues have remained stagnant for many years, while the costs of governance have increased.

The cumulative picture that emerges is that of a community that is still fundamentally strong in many respects. Kenner is wealthier than other communities in the region, and it enjoys a relatively strong jobs base and a low unemployment rate. At the same time, few of the trends are positive, and most are unambiguously negative. As the metropolitan area has become better educated, Kenner has tread water. As the region has become wealthier, Kenner has seen its residents' wealth increase at a slower pace. As building activity has accelerated in certain communities, Kenner has seen residential construction come to a near halt. Collectively, these data indicate that Kenner must redouble its efforts to enhance its appeal to a next generation of residents and businesses.

Each of these indicators is discussed in greater depth.

Population

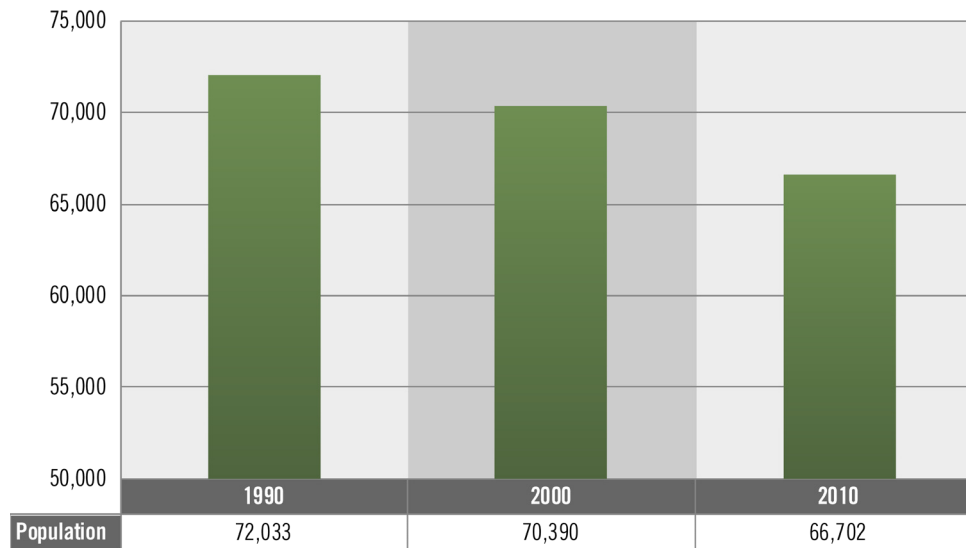
Since 1990, Kenner has seen its population decline by 7.4%, from 72,033 to 66,702¹. This decline is due to a number of factors, including the buy-out of residential properties near Louis Armstrong Airport, the decreasing size of Kenner households,² and an increase in the number of vacant units.

Population is frequently held up as the single greatest indicator of a community's well-being. If population increases (according to conventional wisdom), the community is thriving. If population declines, the community is struggling. In reality, the picture is more complex and hinges, in large measure, on the availability of developable land. In the case of Kenner, its stagnant population growth has much to do with factors that are completely unrelated to quality of life and the overall well-being of the community. These include a relatively finite amount of developable land and the loss of residents due to Airport-related property buy-outs. Many of the communities that are seen as some of the most desirable, thriving communities in the United States have actually experienced little growth or even some population loss.

At the same time, there are some troubling signs that are embedded within the population data. First of all, they imply a somewhat weak residential market and relatively slack demand for housing in Kenner. Indeed, there are a number of relatively new subdivisions within the city that are still checked with vacant lots years after the subdivisions were completed. There are also a number of undeveloped tracts along the Loyola Drive corridor that most likely would have seen development activity in a stronger market. Limited land may explain why Kenner has not experienced break-neck growth as St. Tammany Parish has, but it does not explain the decline in population that Kenner has witnessed.

Another troubling sign is the fact that a rising residential vacancy rate also accounts for Kenner's decline in population. While the total number of residential units in Kenner rose between 2000 and 2010, the number of *occupied* units fell

Kenner Population, 1990 - 2010



Kenner's population has declined by 7.4% since 1990.

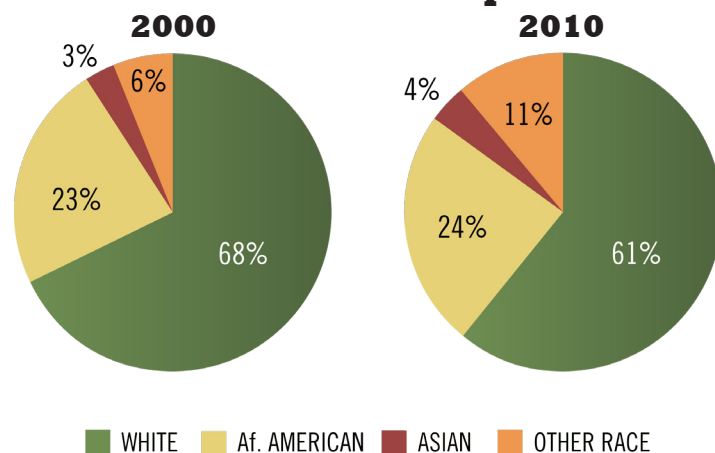
Source: Census Bureau, decennial census

somewhat. This increase in vacancy may be due to the inherent instability of the post-Katrina population. For instance, a couple may still maintain a house in Kenner, though their primary residence may now be in Houston or Baton Rouge. In this instance, the Census would count the Kenner residence as a vacant unit even though it is a well maintained unit. The increase in housing vacancy may also be due to more negative causes, such as low demand or an uptick in blighted properties. By itself, Kenner's population loss is not necessarily an indication of declining prosperity, but embedded within the data are several troubling trends. If Kenner were a stronger, more sought after community, it should have at least a stable population, given the (limited) vacant land that it has. On a very basic level, fewer residents translates into fewer taxpayers to support city services and fewer consumers to support the city's commercial establishments—both of which are critical elements of sustaining a high quality of life.

¹The source of population data is the Census Bureau.

²In 1990, the population per household in Kenner was 2.87. By 2010, that figure had declined to 2.68—a 6.6% decline since 1990.

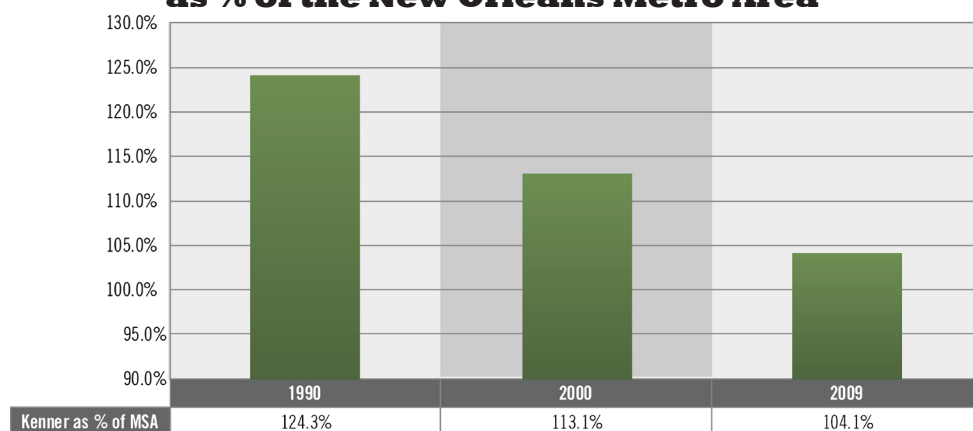
Racial Makeup



Kenner's population is growing increasingly diverse.

Source: Census Bureau, decennial census

Median Household Income in Kenner as % of the New Orleans Metro Area



While the typical Kenner resident is still wealthier than the typical resident of the region, the "wealth premium" associated with Kenner has steadily diminished.

Source: Census Bureau, decennial census and American Community Survey

³The source of data on the racial and ethnic makeup of Kenner is the Census Bureau.

Composition of the Population

At the same time that Kenner has lost population over the past 20 years, its population has grown more diverse, both racially and ethnically. The percentage of the population that is White declined from 68% in 2000 to 61% in 2010³. The African American and Asian percentage increased slightly, while most growth occurred in the "Other" racial category—from 6% to 11% of the population. This category is generally correlated with the Hispanic population (which the Census considers an ethnic rather than a racial category). Kenner's Hispanic population has indeed grown—from 14% in 2000 to 22% in 2010.

In the past, changes in the composition of a community's population have been met with suspicion and occasionally with outright hostility. However, the landscape has changed dramatically in this regard. Now, fewer Americans are placing a high priority on living in a homogeneous community, and more Americans are welcoming the growing diversity of our neighborhoods. Data from the 2010 Census confirm that suburbs throughout the United States are growing more diverse, and anecdotal evidence suggest that most are growing more diverse in a harmonious fashion.

It is true that rapid changes in the racial and ethnic composition of a community can signal disinvestment and decline, but Kenner has experienced moderate rather than rapid change. The changes that Kenner has experienced roughly parallel Jefferson Parish overall, and they are consistent with the growing diversity of communities throughout the New Orleans region.

Income and Poverty

One of the most succinct measures of a community's socio-economic profile is the relative income of its population. Income statistics in isolation have little meaning. When those statistics are evaluated over time and evaluated in comparison to other communities, they become much more meaningful. When Kenner is compared to other communities, the moderate decline in its income profile becomes apparent. In 1990, the typical Kenner household had an income that was 24.3%

higher than the typical household in the New Orleans metropolitan area⁴. By 2000, that “wealth premium” had fallen to 13.1%, and it fell even further, to 4.8%, in 2010. It should be emphasized that the typical Kenner resident remains slightly wealthier than the typical resident of the New Orleans area. In 2010, the median household income for Kenner residents was over \$48,000; for residents of all seven parishes in the region, it was \$46,134. However, if the relative decline that Kenner has witnessed since 1990 continues, Kenner will soon have an income profile that is lower than the metropolitan area—an outcome that could have profound implications for the city’s tax base, its service needs, and its overall desirability to future residents and businesses.

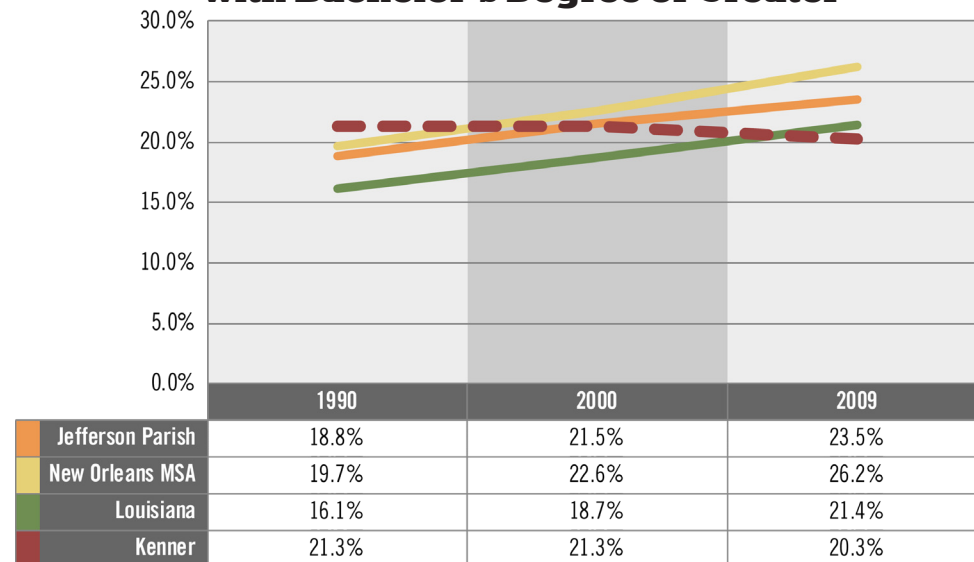
In terms of poverty, Kenner enjoys a family poverty rate that is somewhat below that of Jefferson Parish and the New Orleans region. Since 1990, poverty has declined in Kenner, but it has declined more rapidly in a number of other communities within the region. What this means is that Kenner is now home to a greater share of the region’s poor population. As with the overall income profile of the population, this has implications for how Kenner is viewed by prospective residents and businesses.

Educational Attainment

Without question, many of the jobs of the future lie in so-called “knowledge based” industries. In this macroeconomic context, a well-educated population is arguably a community’s greatest economic asset. Communities that have a well educated population enjoy other benefits as well. Some national retailers will only locate stores in communities that have both a strong income profile and a strong education profile. Additionally, certain cultural activities (such as arts festivals and literary events) are arguably more likely to find a home in communities that have a well educated population. Thus, a well educated population can provide both direct economic benefits as well as indirect economic benefits in the form of quality of life and commercial amenities. A well educated population is also generally correlated with a wealthier population.

The education profile of Kenner residents has not declined over the past 20 years, but neither has it grown. In fact, as measured by the Census, the same percentage of Kenner residents (21.3%) had a college education in 1990 as in 2010⁵. Placed in a broader geographical context, this stasis becomes troubling. In 1990, Kenner had a moderately higher percentage of college educated residents than Jefferson Parish, the New Orleans metropolitan area, and Louisiana overall. Over the past twenty years, these geographical areas have leapfrogged Kenner and

% of Persons 25 and Over with Bachelor’s Degree or Greater



Over the past 20 years, the educational profile of Kenner residents has remained constant while it has grown substantially in other communities in the region and state.

Source: Census Bureau, decennial census and American Community Survey

Since 1990, Kenner has gone from being slightly better educated than the nation overall to substantially less well educated.

⁴The New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area, or MSA, is comprised of seven parishes: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany. Note: the source of these data is the Census Bureau’s decennial census and American Community Survey.

⁵The source of these data is the Census Bureau’s decennial census and American Community Survey.

now have a higher percentage of college educated residents than Kenner does. At the national level, the difference is even more dramatic. The United States overall saw its percentage of college educated residents rise from 20.3% in 1990 to 28.2% in 2010.

Taken together, these figures suggest that Kenner is failing to retain and attract new college graduates at the same rate that other communities are. Furthermore, on a relative basis, the appeal of Kenner’s workforce is declining in relation to the workforce of other communities in the region, the state, and across the country.

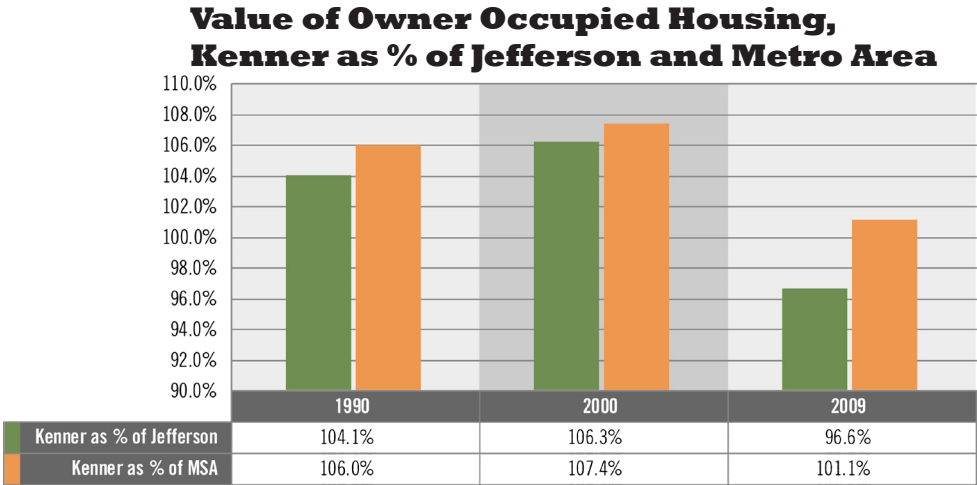
Real Estate Profile

The characteristics of the real estate market in Kenner are generally consistent with measures of Kenner’s socioeconomic profile. The socioeconomic data reveal that the “wealth premium” associated with Kenner residents has declined over the past 20 years. Similarly, real estate values in Kenner—as measured by the median value of rents and the median value

of owner-occupied homes—have also declined on a relative basis over the same period.

In 1990, the typical (i.e. median) owner occupied home in Kenner was worth 6% more than the typical home in the New Orleans metropolitan area. By 2009, that premium had declined to 1.1%—still slightly higher than the metro area home value. In comparison to Jefferson Parish overall, the typical owner occupied home in Kenner was worth 4.1% more than the typical Jefferson home in 1990. By 2009, the typical Kenner home was worth 3.4% less than the typical Jefferson home.

Kenner’s rental market has seen a similar decline in relative value. In 2000, the median rent for an apartment in Kenner was over 15% higher than the median rent for the metropolitan area and nearly 5% higher than the median rent for Jefferson Parish. By 2009, this premium had disappeared, as the median



The home price premium in Kenner has declined since 1990 in relation to Jefferson Parish and the New Orleans region overall.
Source: Census Bureau, decennial census and American Community Survey



Since 1990, real estate in Kenner has not appreciated at the same rate as real estate in other communities within the region.

rent in 2010 for an apartment in Kenner was approximately the same as the median rent in Jefferson Parish and the metropolitan area⁶.

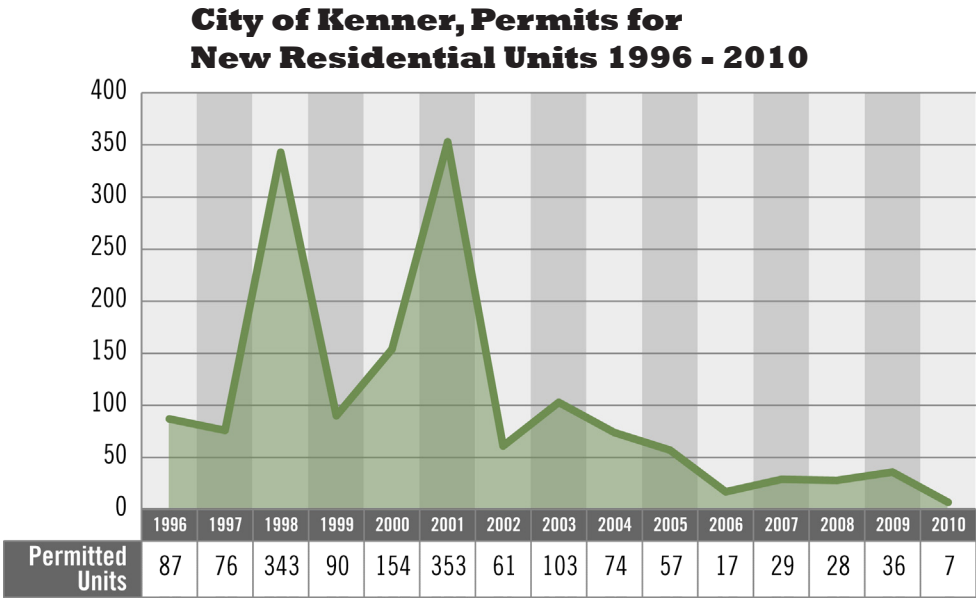
Data collected by UNO’s Institute for Economic Development and Real Estate Research generally corroborate these trends but show a more negative direction. From 2005 to 2009, asking rents at Kenner apartments declined relative to the apartment stock in other communities within the metropolitan area. In 2005, Kenner apartments commanded rents that were on par with the typical rent of apartments throughout the metropolitan area. In 2005, they were higher than the asking rent for the typical Jefferson Parish apartment. By 2009, the typical Kenner asking rent was 10.6% lower than that of the metro area and 10.6% lower than that of Jefferson Parish. The occupancy rate of apartments in Kenner, as measured by UNO, is also considerably lower than that of Jefferson Parish and the metro area. This is also a fairly recent phenomenon. In 2004, the last full year before Hurricane Katrina, Kenner apartments had an occupancy rate that was essentially the same as that of Jefferson and the region—94.0% as compared to 94.7% in the Parish and 94.9% in the region. In 2010, though, apartment occupancy fell to 83.9% in Kenner, while it remained moderately stronger in Jefferson and the region: 90.4% and 89.0%, respectively.

What these data suggest is that the present demand for housing in Kenner is not especially strong. They also indicate that demand has continued to decline in recent years. These data provide one of the most accurate barometers of Kenner’s appeal to middle class families. Those communities that are sought-after tend to have steadily rising real estate values in relation to the region in which they are situated. Conversely, those areas that experience relatively little appreciation in value may struggle to attract a next generation of middle class households.

Another barometer of the real estate market is residential building activity. Along this metric, recent trends in Kenner

⁶The source of the above real estate data is the Census Bureau’s decennial census and American Community Survey.

Cumulatively, real estate data suggest that the present demand for housing in Kenner is not especially strong.



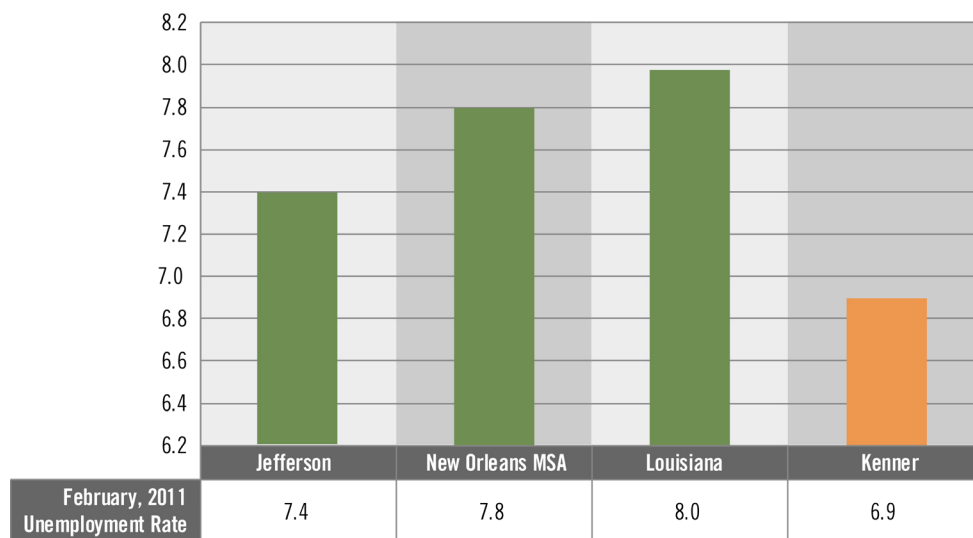
Residential building activity has declined to a near standstill in recent years.
Source: Census Bureau, Censtats Database

are also not favorable. While Kenner does not have ample developable land in relation to other communities, it does have a number of newer subdivisions with vacant lots as well as a number of undeveloped tracts. In spite of this developable land, residential construction activity has ground to a near halt in the post-Katrina period. In the five years prior to Hurricane

Katrina, Kenner averaged 149 newly permitted residential units per year. In the five years from 2006 to 2010 (inclusive), residential building permit activity plummeted to just 23 newly permitted units per year, an 85% decline in residential building activity. In the most recent year for which data are available, 2010, only seven permits were issued⁷.

Collectively, these data suggest that residential market conditions in present-day Kenner are not strong. There is clearly no backlog of households trying to move to Kenner. From a policy and planning standpoint, these data suggest that Kenner must take aggressive steps to make itself a more enticing community to outside residents—the kind of community that will generate new residential activity and that will experience a steady appreciation in real estate values.

December, 2011 Unemployment Rate



The unemployment rate in Kenner remains below that of other communities.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics and Current Employment Statistics; note: data are not seasonally adjusted.

Employment Profile

In contrast to the socioeconomic indicators discussed above, recent job and unemployment data in Kenner are less negative. They suggest that in relation to other communities within the region, Kenner has a relatively robust economy.

As a result of the so called “Great Recession,” virtually every community within the United States has experienced an increase in its unemployment rate. Kenner is no exception to this trend, as its unemployment rate increased from 2.8% in December, 2007 to 6.9% in December, 2011. While higher than it was four years ago, this level is still somewhat below the regional, statewide, and national unemployment rates for the same period, which stood at 7.4%, 7.8%, and 8.0%, respectively⁸.

Partly as a result of the national economic downturn and partly as a result of Hurricane Katrina, Kenner has experienced a substantial loss in the total number of jobs located within the city. From 2004 to 2009, Kenner lost over 4,600 jobs. As of 2009, total employment in Kenner stood at 83.1% of pre-Katrina (2004) levels⁹. While the job loss totals are considerable, they are nonetheless not as severe as the losses experienced by other communities within the New Orleans metropolitan area. As of 2009, within the 7-parish region there were only 79.8% of the jobs that existed in 2004. Within Jefferson Parish overall, the proportion stood at 81.2% of pre-Katrina employment.

There is nothing especially positive about these figures, but they do suggest that Kenner’s economy and the job prospects of its residents have been somewhat resilient in the face of multiple economic shocks—the dislocations caused by Hurricane Katrina and the advent of the Great Recession.

From a policy standpoint, these employment data suggest that Kenner must remain vigilant in attempting to attract new investment and employment opportunities. The employment outlook may not be quite as pressing a concern as the declining demographic profile of the city; but at a minimum, the city should strive in the near term to replace the employment that

⁷Source: Census Bureau, Censtats database of building permits.

⁸Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics and Current Employment Statistics

⁹The source of these data is the Census Bureau’s Local Employment Dynamics database. The most recent employment data that were available for the city of Kenner as of the writing of this report were from 2009.

has been lost since Katrina. An improved economy and job market would not be a panacea for the problems that Kenner faces, but they would make Kenner a more attractive place to live and do business. In addition to luring outside residents and investment, an improved job market would also provide existing residents with greater economic opportunity.

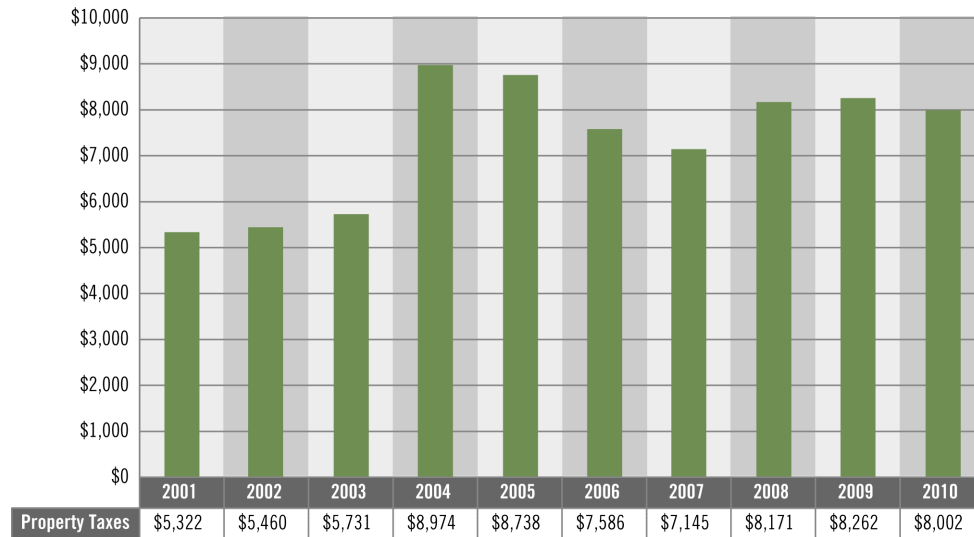
Fiscal Profile

Kenner's recent fiscal profile mirrors the aforementioned demographic, real estate, and employment trends that the city has experienced. From 2001 to year end 2010, sales tax collections increased by barely 1%. Over the same period, the Consumer Price Index, the standard national measure of inflation in the cost of goods and services, increased by 23%. Thus, the City of Kenner's purchasing power from sales taxes declined by over 20% during the past decade.

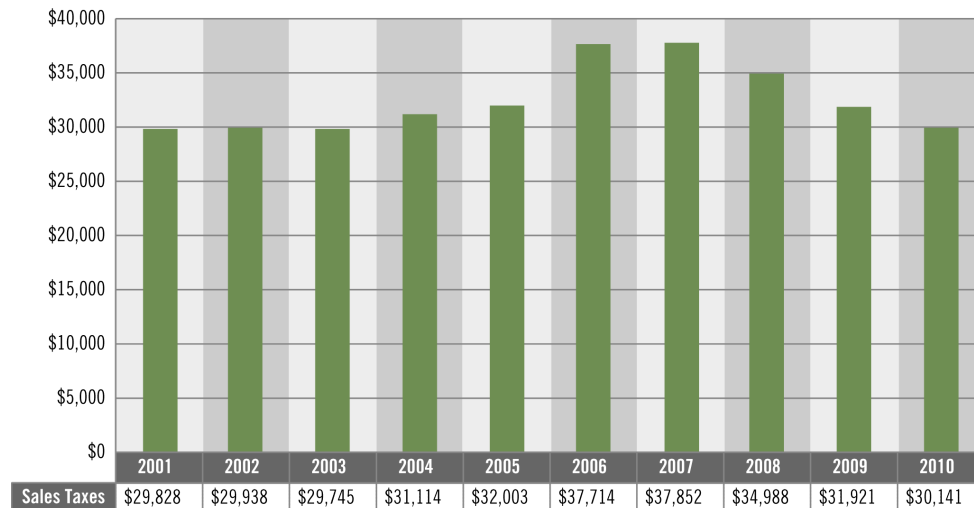
Property tax collections, meanwhile, have increased since 2001, from \$5.3 million per year to over \$8 million per year. However, most of the increase in collections occurred at the beginning of the last decade. Between 2004 and 2010, property tax collections actually declined by almost \$1 million or 11%. Again, this decline occurred in the midst of steadily appreciating prices in the cost of goods and services.

The stagnant growth in tax revenues is both a symptom of larger economic and demographic threats to Kenner, and it is also a threat unto itself. Clearly, a strong revenue base is essential to meeting residents' and businesses' need for municipal services which in turn help to preserve a high quality of life. Restoring the city's revenue base to support quality public services is an imperative in the coming years.

Kenner Property Taxes (in thousands)



Kenner Sales Taxes (in thousands)



Sales and property taxes in Kenner have stagnated in recent years, resulting in declining purchasing power in the face of inflation.

Source: City of Kenner

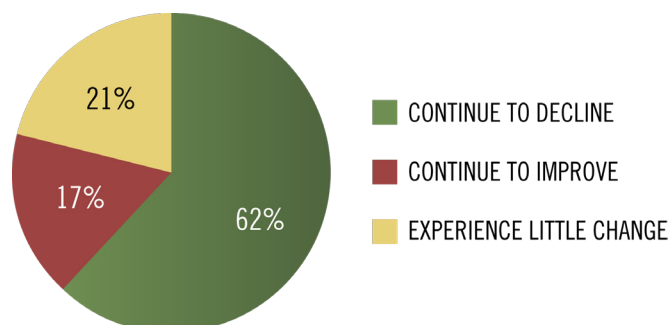
Where Are We: Survey Results

In addition to compiling a number of quantitative metrics, the *Kenner 2030* plan also collected primary data in order to gauge residents' views of Kenner. The mechanism for collecting opinions was a series of web-based surveys that were administered to three populations of survey takers: the Mayor's Economic Development Committee, elected officials, and residents. The complete results of these surveys are provided within the Appendix to the Plan. The most salient results are summarized below.

General Outlook for the City of Kenner

The first survey that GCR deployed was a web-based survey that was adapted to the three survey populations. There were some subtle variations in the text of the surveys depending on the survey takers (e.g. elected officials vs. residents), but all three surveys were essentially identical in content. These surveys were conducted in October of 2011.

Kenner's Future Prospects



Among members of the Mayor's Economic Development Committee, there is clearly concern about the future prospects of Kenner (displayed in the above graph). Residents who were surveyed were also relatively pessimistic about the future prospects of the community.

One of the first questions asked was survey takers' thoughts about the overall outlook for Kenner. Among the residents surveyed, nearly half felt that Kenner would "continue to decline" while only 30% said that the city would continue to improve. The remaining 24% felt that Kenner would essentially stay the same in future years.

Among members of the Economic Development Committee¹⁰, the outlook was more pessimistic. Fully 62% of Economic Development Committee members said that Kenner would "continue to decline."

The elected officials who were surveyed displayed a rather different view of the city's prospects. Only 16% said that Kenner would continue to decline while the vast majority (two thirds) said that conditions would remain essentially the same in the coming years.

These results reveal that there is a somewhat divergent view of the city's prospects between residents and Committee members, on the one hand, and elected officials on the other.

A large majority of Kenner residents and Economic Development Committee members felt that quality of life was a greater threat to Kenner than insufficient job opportunities.

¹⁰At the time of the survey, most of the members of the Economic Development Committee had already become familiar with the socioeconomic and demographic metrics that were detailed in the previous section.

Threat to Kenner's Well-Being

Another question that the survey posed in order to better understand overarching concerns was whether survey takers felt that jobs or quality of life was the bigger threat to Kenner's stability and well-being. Again, there was a pronounced divergence in the responses of residents and Committee members, on the one hand, and elected officials on the other. A large majority of residents and Committee members felt that quality of life issues were a greater concern, while all of the elected officials who took the survey felt that job opportunities were a greater threat to the city.

In posing the question in this fashion, the survey presents these two problems as a sort of false dichotomy—the choice of addressing either quality of life or economic opportunity. In reality, city government can and should address both issues simultaneously, and clearly both issues are intertwined. A high quality of life generally leads to greater economic opportunity, and ample economic opportunities generally lead to a higher quality of life.

Based on the responses of the Economic Development Committee and Kenner residents, it seems that a holistic approach to economic development is welcome—one that does not focus exclusively on attracting more and more jobs but one that also addresses the underlying qualitative factors that will increase Kenner's capacity to attract more jobs.

Vision and Plan for Kenner

Residents, Committee Member, and Elected Officials were generally in agreement that Kenner lacks a coherent vision for its future as well as a detailed plan to implement that vision. A majority of all three survey groups felt that Kenner does not have “a strong, clear vision...for the kind of city that Kenner hopes to be in the future.”

Furthermore, there is a sense among all three groups that a specific plan or roadmap to create a more prosperous, appealing Kenner has not been articulated. For all three groups, a

majority of respondents said that there was no such plan or that they were unaware of such a plan.

Both of these responses fundamentally validate the need for the *Kenner 2030* plan—a document that will outline a compelling vision for the community as well as a pathway to implementation.

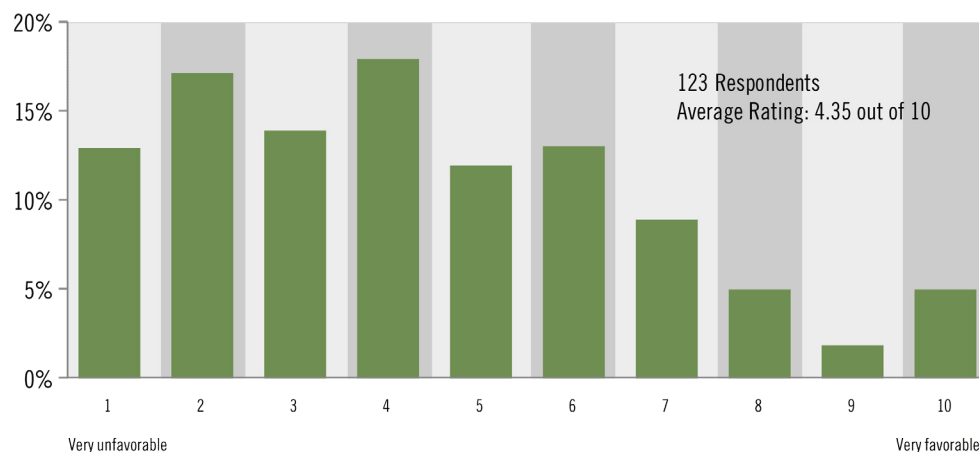
Survey takers agreed that Kenner lacks a coherent vision for its future as well as a detailed implementation plan.

Outside Opinions of Kenner

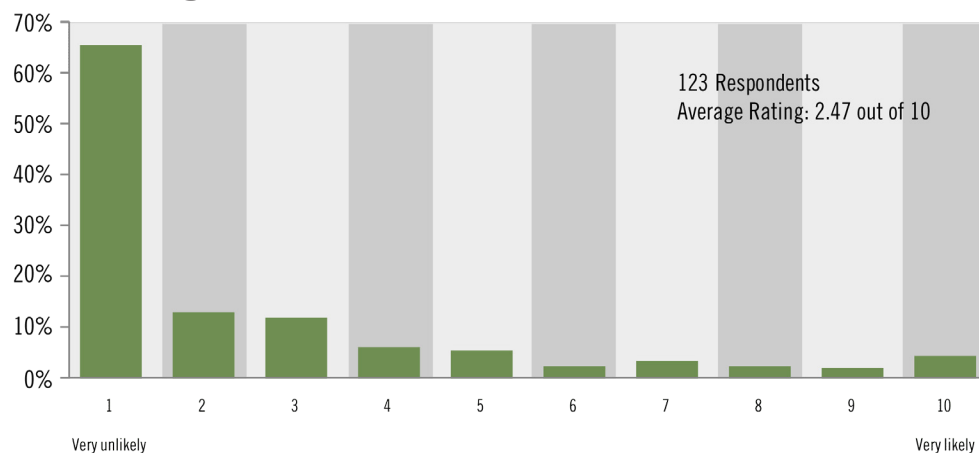
GCR conducted a second on-line survey, distributed largely through the social media sites Facebook and Twitter, to gauge individuals' attitudes about the neighborhood qualities that they find appealing or unappealing. This survey and its implications for Kenner are discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section of the Plan.

Survey results indicate that Kenner does not enjoy a favorable impression among residents throughout the metropolitan area.

Impression of Kenner as a Place to Live All Respondents



Likelihood That Respondents Would Consider Moving to Kenner



Based on the survey of metropolitan area residents that was conducted, Kenner must significantly improve its reputation and overall appeal in order to attract a new generation of residents.

In addition to neighborhood preferences in the abstract, the survey also attempted to gauge individuals' attitudes about Kenner and the likelihood that they would consider moving to Kenner. The individuals who took this survey did not have to be Kenner residents. In fact, the opinions of residents throughout the metropolitan region were welcomed. Because attracting a next generation of residents is a primary concern of the city, it is critical that Kenner be seen positively by individuals who do not currently live in Kenner.

Unfortunately, the results of this second survey suggest that Kenner has considerable work to do in improving its reputation among outsiders. The survey respondents reported a mediocre to negative impression of the city. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing a "very favorable" view of Kenner and a 1 a "very unfavorable" view, the average rating from the 123 survey takers was a 4.35. Among the younger generation of survey participants (the 65 survey respondents in the 18 to 34 age category), the average score was even lower—a 3.77 out of 10.

A second, related question that the survey posed was the likelihood that the respondent would consider moving to Kenner within the next five years. Again, the survey asked that the responses be provided along a number line, with a 10 signifying the greatest likelihood and a 1 signifying the smallest likelihood for a move. Consistent with the responses to the previous question, very few survey takers thought it likely that they would consider moving to Kenner. For the entire survey population, the average response to this question was a 2.47 out of 10. Again, among those in the 18 – 34 age bracket, the average response was even lower—a 1.92 out of 10.

In light of the overriding concern about the graying of Kenner's population and the need to attract a next generation of residents, the results of this survey provide a compelling call to action.

Overview – Demographic Data and Survey Responses

The cumulative picture that emerges from these data is of a city that needs an aggressive, fresh new direction. Where is the City of Kenner in 2012? It is a community that does indeed have the benefit of a reasonably strong economy and a sizable middle class. Unlike the urban centers that experienced a free fall in the decades after World War II, Kenner has not experienced a rapid, precipitous decline in its fortunes. The economic, socioeconomic, and demographic data are unequivocal in this regard. Kenner is still a middle class community.

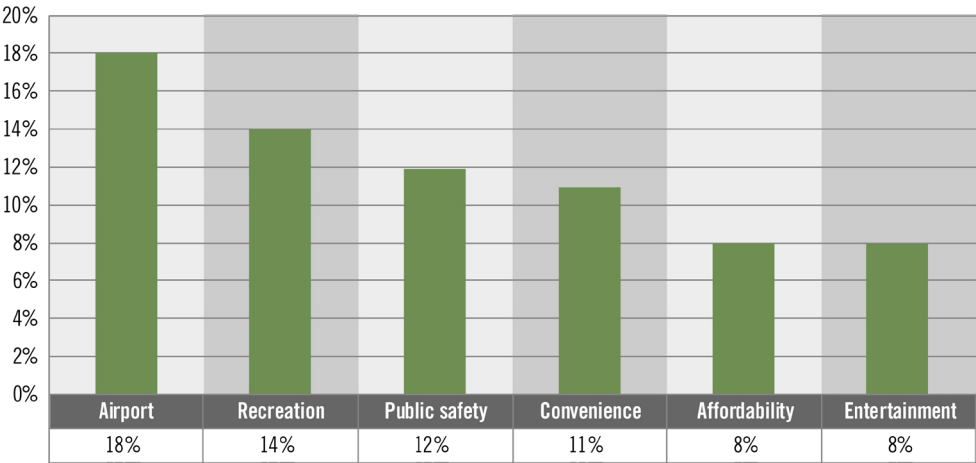
Nonetheless, the data are equally compelling in highlighting the city's shortcomings and its need for an aggressive plan to reinvent itself. They paint a compelling picture of potential threats to Kenner's continued prosperity and stability—from declining relative incomes to a stagnant education profile. The most succinct and disconcerting data, though, are the survey data on residents' impressions of Kenner. At the same time that Kenner needs to attract a new generation of residents, outside residents do not currently see it as an appealing place to live.

The socioeconomic and survey data highlight the need for an aggressive plan to reinvent Kenner.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

The same three survey populations—members of the Economic Development Committee, elected officials, and members of the general public—were asked to provide their input as to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Kenner. Overall, there was a high degree of consensus among all three survey groups. The full results of the SWOT analysis from each survey population are presented within the Appendix. In the interest of being concise, the results of the Economic Development Committee are discussed most comprehensively within this section.

Greatest Strengths of Kenner



The above chart illustrates those strengths that were most frequently mentioned by respondents.

- In addition to those listed in the above chart, other characteristics that received relatively high scores included:
- An attractive housing stock
 - Quality neighborhoods
 - Responsive government
 - Resilience from flooding.

Strengths

From a list of fourteen possible strengths, survey respondents were asked to identify what they felt were the five greatest strengths of Kenner. The full list of potential strengths that respondents could choose from is as follows:

1. Louis Armstrong Airport as a major economic generator
2. The quality and the overall physical attractiveness of Kenner’s residential neighborhoods
3. The availability of recreational opportunities, such as the Mississippi River bike path and parks and playgrounds
4. The quality and the attractiveness of the housing stock
5. The affordability of housing in comparison to other communities in the New Orleans area
6. Public safety
7. Quality of schools
8. Shopping, dining, and entertainment options within Kenner and in close proximity
9. The convenience of living in Kenner—commute times to employment and major attractions in the region
10. The quantity and quality of job opportunities in Kenner
11. An overall “business friendly” environment
12. Tax rates in comparison to other communities in the region
13. The quality of public services and the responsiveness of local government
14. Resilience from flooding, either from rain events or storm surge

Respondents also had the opportunity to identify additional strengths that were not included in the list of fourteen possible selections. From the members of the Economic Development Committee, some of the additional strengths described in this “free response” portion included: accessible public officials, a thriving Latino community, industrial areas in the vicinity of Louis Armstrong Airport, and the Mississippi River as an economic asset.

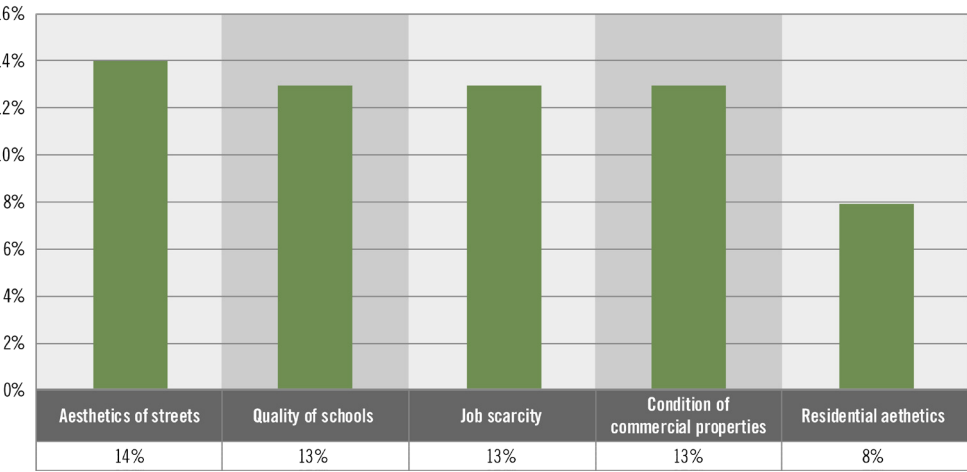
Weaknesses

The list of potential weaknesses generally paralleled the list of potential strengths that was provided in the survey. The sixteen characteristics that respondents could choose from are as follows:

1. The aesthetic characteristics and overall appeal of Kenner’s residential neighborhoods
2. The scarcity of recreational opportunities
3. The aesthetic characteristics of Kenner’s major thoroughfares (Airline, Veterans, Williams, Loyola, etc.)
4. The quality and the overall appeal of the housing stock
5. The condition of Kenner’s commercial properties (vacancies, physical appearance, etc.)
6. The cost of housing in comparison to other communities in the New Orleans area
7. Public safety
8. Quality of schools
9. The scarcity of shopping, dining, and entertainment options within Kenner and in close proximity
10. The inconvenience of living in Kenner—commute times to employment and major attractions
11. The scarcity of quality job opportunities in Kenner
12. An overall environment that is not “business friendly”
13. Tax rates in comparison to other communities in the region
14. The quality of public services and the responsiveness of local government
15. The risk of flooding, either from rain events or storm surge
16. Noise and other negative characteristics associated with the airport and other major infrastructure

Greatest Weaknesses of Kenner

Survey respondents were then asked to identify what they felt were the five greatest weaknesses of Kenner from a list of sixteen potential weaknesses. Again, as with the list of strengths, there was a high degree of agreement among all three survey groups (elected officials, Committee members, residents) as to what Kenner’s most significant weaknesses are.



Survey respondents most consistently identified the above characteristics as Kenner’s greatest weaknesses.

Other characteristics that were frequently mentioned as weaknesses included:

- Quality of the housing stock
- Scarcity of entertainment options
- Commute times to employment
- An “unfriendly” business environment

Within the free response format, survey takers also identified as major weaknesses the quality of Kenner’s roads, its divisive politics, and the fact that the city is not pedestrian friendly.

Opportunities

Respondents were given a list of 21 potential opportunities for civic improvement and revitalization. From this list, they could select up to ten characteristics representing the best opportunities for Kenner to capitalize on.

The full list of possible selections that was included in the survey is as follows:

1. Improving Louis Armstrong Airport and making it more of an economic generator for Kenner and the region
2. Redeveloping the airport “buy-out” properties to create additional job opportunities and economic activity
3. Transforming Kenner into a “boutique city” with a distinct identity as an attractive community offering a high quality of life
4. Improving public education and attracting families through strong public schools
5. Addressing crime and improving public safety
6. Facilitating redevelopment in blighted areas of Kenner
7. Enhancing the marketing of Kenner to businesses and residents in the region
8. Capitalizing on low tax rates to attract new businesses and residents
9. Redeveloping major corridors, such as Williams and Veterans, as attractive “boulevards” with new commercial amenities
10. Redeveloping Rivertown as Kenner’s “downtown” to attract young professionals to Kenner
11. Revitalizing the Esplanade Mall and ensuring that it is once again a premier retail destinations in the New Orleans region
12. Improving the recreational and commercial amenities at Laketown to make it more of a regional destination
13. Capitalizing on Kenner’s river and lake frontage to entice new development
14. Improving the approach to/from the airport to create a better “front door” for Kenner
15. Providing improved parks, bike paths, and other recreational amenities
16. Attracting new commercial development or other forms of development to the vacant commercial properties in Kenner
17. Beautifying Kenner’s residential neighborhoods
18. Offering incentives for new and existing residents to renovate houses
19. Targeting specific companies and industries to locate or expand in Kenner
20. Making government services more effective and more responsive to residents’ needs
21. Improving infrastructure to reduce flood risk and improve traffic flow, for example

Kenner’s Greatest Opportunities



The above chart indicates those characteristics that were most frequently selected as opportunities.

Other characteristics that were mentioned as strong opportunities included:

- Redeveloping vacant commercial properties
- Redeveloping Laketown
- Improving the Airport approach
- Enhancing the marketing of Kenner
- Turning Rivertown into Kenner’s “downtown.”

Within the free response section, survey takers also identified as opportunities the idea of erecting sound walls along I-10, overhauling local codes, providing incentives to improve commercial properties, and improving the industrial areas near the Airport.

Threats

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the top five threats to Kenner’s well-being from a list of fourteen potential selections.

The potential threats that the survey identified are as follows

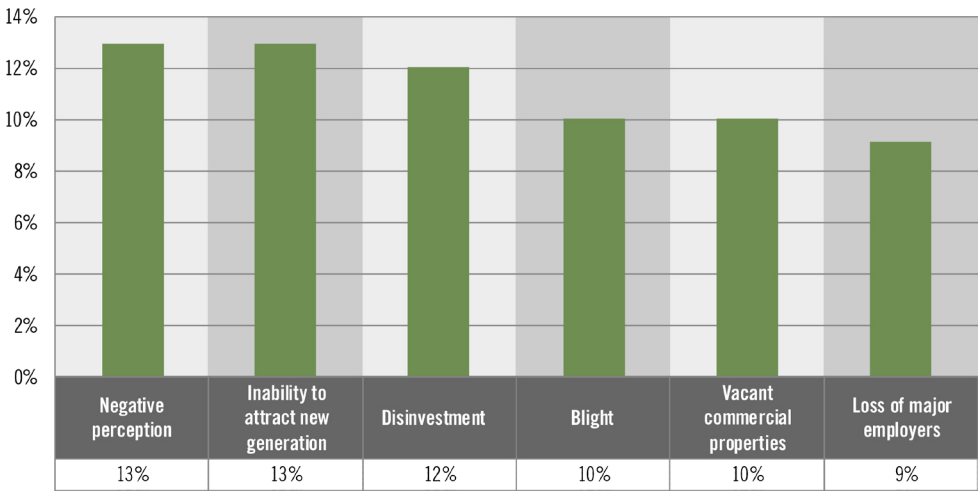
1. Blight in certain Kenner neighborhoods
2. Vacant commercial properties that are both numerous and very visible
3. Disinvestment along Kenner’s commercial corridors, as lower quality tenants replace higher quality tenants
4. The perception that Kenner is changing/declining
5. Diminishing public services and public amenities as a result of reduced tax revenue
6. The lackluster first impression of Kenner (and the entire New Orleans region) from Louis Armstrong Airport
7. Concerns, whether real or perceived, about the risk of flooding in Kenner
8. Kenner’s inability to attract a new generation of middle income households
9. Changing consumer preferences that put Kenner’s neighborhoods (which consist of ranch houses and apartment complexes) at a disadvantage
10. Competing neighborhoods that are closer to the core of the New Orleans region, in areas like Lakeview and the CBD
11. The availability of high quality public education in other communities in the region
12. The effect of aesthetics (such as open canals) upon property values
13. The risk of increased crime
14. The loss of major employers and retail anchors

Other threats that received multiple mentions included:

- The lure of better schools in other jurisdictions
- Diminished City services and tax revenue
- A poor first impression from the Airport
- The loss of residents to other communities in the region.

For the free response question, survey takers enumerated a number of additional perceived threats. These included Kenner’s changing demographic profile, the city’s overall quality of life, a negative political environment, and a declining income profile.

Greatest Threats to Kenner’s Prosperity



Respondents selected the above characteristics as the greatest threats to Kenner.

Overview – SWOT Analysis

There are several reasons for conducting a SWOT analysis as part of a strategic planning process. First, it provides a window into the thinking of the residents, leaders, and stakeholders of a community in a way that data cannot. It provides a rich qualitative description of their contentedness with current conditions, their anxieties about the future, and their thoughts about the critical “pressure points” of the community.

An effective strategic plan should capitalize on a community’s existing Strengths and emerging Opportunities in order to address its Weaknesses and Threats.

Additionally, a SWOT analysis provides concrete direction in answering the second and third critical questions in a strategic planning process: Where do we want to go, and how do we want to get there? Stated succinctly, an effective plan should capitalize on a community’s existing Strengths and emerging Opportunities in order to address its Weaknesses and Threats. Thus, the input from the SWOT analysis contributed substantially to the future vision and action items that the *Kenner 2030* plan puts forth.

There are a number of noteworthy themes that emerged from the SWOT analysis. First, many of the greatest concerns revolve around what urban planners call a community’s “sense of place.” Some of the greatest weaknesses were “aesthetics of

streets,” the “condition of commercial properties,” “residential aesthetics,” the “quality of the housing stock,” and the “scarcity of entertainment options.” Some of the major threats that the survey highlighted are “disinvestment,” “blight,” “vacant commercial properties,” and a “poor first impression from the Airport.” In short, the quality of the physical environment and the quality of life that stems from the physical environment are seen as major shortcomings in present day Kenner.

A second and related theme is the sense of promise associated with underutilized physical assets and place-based characteristics. These include, as stated by the survey respondents, “River and Lake Frontage,” “Louis Armstrong Airport,” “Esplanade Mall,” the City’s “major corridors,” and the concept of redeveloping Kenner as a “boutique city.”

Collectively, these characteristics imply that the physical realm in present-day Kenner is one of the city’s foremost shortcomings. Given the diversity of challenges that it faces, from public education to a stagnant tax base, there is clearly no panacea for Kenner’s problems. Nonetheless, one of the unmistakable implications of the SWOT analysis is that an improved physical realm should indeed be a significant component of Kenner’s future.

Major Themes of the SWOT Analysis:

- The importance of a “sense of place”
- Capitalizing on underutilized physical assets
- Revitalizing the physical realm and place-based characteristics of Kenner

**Where Do We
Want to Go**

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO

Kenner Fifteen Years from Now

During the course of the *Kenner 2030* planning process, there was relatively little discussion about a concrete future vision for what Kenner should look like ten to twenty years from now. This is mostly due to the fact that there seems to be general consensus on those qualities that are seen as desirable. This implicit consensus emerged from the discussions of the Economic Development Committee as well as from the input that GCR received from the multiple surveys that were conducted.

Another reason why there was relatively little discussion about the future vision is the fact that this process and the resulting plan are limited in their scope and specificity. For instance, while physical characteristics are an important element of the city's future prosperity, it was beyond the purview of the *Kenner 2030* plan to delve into specific aesthetic characteristics. As a result, the vision for the city that has emerged from this process focuses more on general, desirable qualities for the community.

These desirable qualities include:

- A strong, diverse job market that provides ample employment opportunities for Kenner residents
- A vibrant business climate that attracts new investment to underutilized commercial and industrial areas
- Town centers that serve as focal points of commercial activity and that provide a high quality, pedestrian-oriented environment
- Exemplary shopping, dining, and entertainment options at the Esplanade Mall and other commercial nodes throughout the city
- A state-of-the-art airport that provides an excellent first impression to Kenner and the entire New Orleans region and that functions as a major economic engine
- Safe, attractive neighborhoods that experience continuing reinvestment and that maintain their middle class appeal
- A thriving Hispanic community that adds to the cultural richness of Kenner and that benefits economically from entrepreneurial activity
- Excellent schools, recreational amenities, and quality public services
- Attractive commercial and residential boulevards that are Kenner's signature thoroughfares
- A "boutique city" that has a distinct identity because of its aesthetic appeal, sense of place, and unparalleled quality of life

Given the breadth of these concepts, it is difficult to synthesize all of them into a single, concise vision statement. Nonetheless, the following statement attempts to capture the spirit of these sentiments.

Vision:

As 2030 approaches, Kenner will be known as a thriving, suburban, "boutique" community that is uniquely attractive, appealing, and a wonderful place to live. Residents of Kenner and the entire region will enjoy the city's two community focal points: bustling Rivertown and Laketown. With a gleaming Louis Armstrong Airport as its primary engine, Kenner's economy will offer residents a wide range of employment opportunities and a thriving entrepreneurial environment. Accessible by beautiful, tree-lined boulevards, Kenner's neighborhoods will provide a safe, attractive environment for a diversity of families. These neighborhoods will be in close proximity to exemplary public schools, neighborhood parks, and a network of bike paths. Kenner will be known throughout the region as one of the most sought after communities for both residents and businesses.

No Time like the Present – A Unique Window for Kenner to Change

The easiest part of any strategic planning process is outlining the future vision for a community. It is easy to wax poetic about the kind of ideal place that we want our community to be. It is far more difficult to make the hard choices that will actually realize that vision. In many communities, there is a fundamental disjuncture between sweeping visions for the future and the resources and collective will that are necessary to implement those visions. This is the reason why many plans—even the most well crafted plans—are disparagingly said to “sit on a shelf.”

However, the opportunity for Kenner to realize the ambitious vision that this Plan outlines could not be stronger. There are a number of recent developments that provide an unprecedented opportunity for Kenner to reinvent itself, attract a new generation of residents and businesses, and generate momentum for its future.

Louis Armstrong Airport

The first, most exciting opportunity is the recently announced proposed overhaul of Louis Armstrong International Airport. Despite the ups and downs of Kenner’s relationship with the Airport through the years, it is undeniably the principal economic generator and the most significant attraction in the city. In its present form, though, Armstrong does a disservice to Kenner and the entire region by providing a profoundly underwhelming first impression to the community. Both the terminal and the approach roads to the Airport do little to convey an image of prosperity.

Recently, the Airport and the City of New Orleans announced an ambitious plan to completely overhaul the facility, including possibly constructing an entirely new terminal. With an estimated price tag of up to \$1 billion dollars, the stated goal is to transform Louis Armstrong into a “world-class” facility. These plans will require an exhaustive series of feasibility studies

The opportunity for Kenner to realize the ambitious vision that this Plan outlines could not be stronger.



The planned overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport could be a springboard for broader community revitalization in Kenner

Major Benefits of a New Louis Armstrong Airport:

- Increased economic opportunity around the Airport
- A dramatically improved first impression for visitors to Kenner and the region
- The opportunity to make major off-site improvements to revitalize Kenner's commercial corridors

before any construction activity commences, but all indications suggest that the Airport and City of New Orleans are firmly committed to this goal.

The potential for this scale of investment is vitally important to Kenner's future. There are three principal benefits that Kenner would realize from this project. First, with an upgraded facility and a better appropriation of the fallow land that the Airport possesses, there could be increased economic activity and increased employment opportunities for Kenner residents. Second, an improved facility would create a far better impression for arriving visitors and business people. Instead of Kenner's "front door" being the current tired, well worn facility, an overhauled airport would convey a sense of prosperity and community pride. Finally, the revitalization of the Airport provides an excellent opportunity to leverage the project's capital funds for off-site improvements in the immediate vicinity. It would be counterproductive for the Airport to invest \$1 billion in a new terminal only to have passengers depart into a landscape of powerlines, billboards, and drainage canals. Both the Airport and Kenner would be well served to allocate a relatively small (though significant) portion of that investment to off-site improvements that would dramatically improve streetscapes



The redevelopment of the Airport could be an important jumping off point for major revitalization efforts along the corridors abutting the Airport.

and the overall approach to a gleaming new facility. Thus, the redevelopment of the Airport could be an important jumping off point for major beautification and improvement efforts in the vicinity of the facility.

The execution of this ambitious project is far from a certainty; but if Airport redevelopment plans were to come to fruition, they would represent a tremendous opportunity to enhance the economy of Kenner, visitors' initial impression of the community, and the aesthetic appeal of the neighborhoods bordering the Airport.

Overhaul of Kenner's Zoning Ordinance

A second major initiative that has generated less press coverage but that is of critical importance to the city's future is the effort to rewrite Kenner's zoning ordinance. The City's Planning Department, in conjunction with UNO, has secured funding for this initiative, and the re-write is already underway.



Zoning regulates a number of characteristics that affect the physical environment, such as signage, parking, and landscaping.

Zoning is an extremely technical aspect of local governance and one that does not attract the same level of attention as other governmental functions, such as public education or law enforcement.

Nonetheless, it is one of the most concrete ways that local government can induce investment activity and affect the quality of new investment. Well crafted zoning regulations can have a profound effect on property values, the overall appeal of a community, and its likelihood to attract new investment—all issues that are especially relevant to the challenges that Kenner faces.

These regulations can indeed have a profound impact on the quality of development, as zoning regulates a myriad of physical features, such as parking, signage, landscaping, and even the design of a building's façade. Kenner's present zoning ordinance does certain things well, but in many ways, it is simultaneously too rigid and not demanding enough. Completely overhauling the ordinance—something that communities do every 30 or so years—provides Kenner with a unique window to simplify the development process and provide new opportunities for attrac-

tive investment. With a well crafted new zoning ordinance in place, Kenner could see attractive new development in Rivertown and Laketown, the reuse of vacant commercial properties throughout the city, and improved aesthetic standards that elevate property values in surrounding areas.

The rewrite of Kenner's zoning ordinance is truly a once in a generation opportunity to “get it right” from a regulatory standpoint. Most exciting of all is the fact that the process of overhauling the ordinance is already underway.

Publicly Owned Land as a Catalyst for Investment

There are a number of ways that local government can spur new investment in areas that have not witnessed it for some time. In addition to direct financial incentives, a major resource that communities can use as a development incentive is publicly owned land. Because government is not strictly constrained by profit in the same way that private land owners are, local government can transfer land to developers at a reduced cost as part of a public/private development partnership.

Alleviated of the full market-rate cost of land acquisition, developers may be more willing to undertake a project in an area that is seen as less proven.

Two areas of Kenner that have considerable development potential are Rivertown and Laketown. A revitalized Rivertown and a revitalized Laketown could go a long way toward establishing the “sense of place” that is currently missing in Kenner. With the right aesthetic vision and a commitment to high quality design, both areas could even become regional destinations. One reason why Rivertown and Laketown have so much potential is the fact that there is ample publicly owned land in both areas. If the City were to aggressively recruit quality developers and offer them publicly owned land at a discounted price, Kenner could facilitate a number of signature development projects that would begin to implement the vision for both areas. These projects, in turn, could catalyze further development in that they would provide tangible evidence of Laketown's and Rivertown's market potential.



Publicly owned land at Laketown can be a catalyst for major new development.

The presence of so much publicly owned land in both areas is therefore a unique tool that Kenner can use to incentivize quality new development.

Changing Demographics and Changing Residential Preferences

The United States as a whole is experiencing major changes in demographics, as well as major changes in what people want from a lifestyle and neighborhood standpoint. These changes are being reflected in the decisions that people are making about where they want to live.

The baby boom generation is aging while at the same time the “echo boom” of individuals in their 20’s and early 30’s is making their presence felt in the residential market. Both of these trends have typically been portrayed as inimical to the interests of suburbs. Many baby boomers who are now empty nesters are looking to downsize from single family homes to townhomes, condominiums, and ultimately senior living facilities. The residential preferences of the so called echo boomers also appear to be dramatically different than those of previous generations. It is well documented that young people are increasingly seeking



The redevelopment of Rivertown can provide exactly the kind of lifestyle and amenities that Baby Boomers and “Echo Boomers” desire—a walkable neighborhood with residential and commercial uses, recreational amenities, and a distinct sense of place.

out more of a pedestrian-oriented, urban environment—the kind of neighborhood where one can walk to a grocery store or get a cup of coffee. Young people are also generally more willing to live in areas that are diverse ethnically and socioeconomically. Because older central cities typically have these characteristics, they have experienced a real, quantifiable resurgence in recent

years. A 2010 study by the EPA documented this phenomenon.¹¹ The study showed that in metropolitan areas across the county, an increasing proportion of regional building permit activity is occurring within central cities. For instance in the Chicago region, 7% of residential building permits were issued by the city of Chicago from 1990 to 1995. From 2003 to 2008, that percentage increased to 27%. In the Denver region, the city's share of regional building permits increased from 5% in the '90 – '95 period to 21% in the '03 – '08 period. The list of metropolitan areas that have experienced a similar trend is extensive, and this phenomenon is occurring throughout the country.

Within the New Orleans region, these characteristics would seem to favor historic neighborhoods in the city of New Orleans, rather than the more suburban neighborhoods of Kenner. While Kenner cannot replicate the historical ambience and the pedestrian scale of New Orleans, it can indeed capitalize on these trends in a number of ways. If done correctly, the redevelopment of both Rivertown and Laketown can provide exactly the kind of amenities and lifestyle that these burgeoning demographic groups cherish—walkable neighborhoods, a mixture of residential and commercial uses, bike paths and other recreational amenities, and a distinct sense of place. Furthermore, other undeveloped land in Kenner—whether a vacant parcel or a dilapidated commercial structure—are prime locations for the kind of senior-oriented residences that the aging Baby Boom generation will increasingly seek out.

By making strategic investments in underutilized assets like Laketown and Rivertown and by improving its zoning regulations, Kenner can indeed capitalize on the demographic trends and evolving lifestyle preferences that are changing the face of communities.

New Leadership in Jefferson Parish Public Schools

It has long been appreciated that public education is one of the most important, and potentially distinguishing, characteristics of a given community. Quality public schools are generally associated with a skilled workforce, a high quality of life, and an absence of social problems. High quality schools are also a critical difference maker in attracting successive generations of families and employers to a given community.



It has also long been appreciated that Jefferson Parish Public Schools (JPPS) have not been particularly competitive for some time. Aggressive action to improve stagnant test scores has been sporadic at best. Recently however, school leaders have displayed an unprecedented willingness to make substantial changes and to expect dramatic improvements in performance. Under the leadership of Superintendent James Meza and the present School Board, JPPS is undertaking a series of landmark reforms. These include welcoming charter schools to Jefferson, consolidating underperforming schools, restructuring school funding formulas, and introducing greater flexibility into personnel decisions. These measures and a host of other policies that are under consideration are changing the landscape of public education in Jefferson.

Kenner has a chance to capitalize on these changes. If Kenner can add quality public schools to a growing list of civic amenities, it will be in a much better position to re-brand itself as a “boutique city” and ultimately to attract a new generation of residents and businesses.

¹¹“Residential Construction Trends in America’s Metropolitan Regions,” by the Development, Community, and Environment Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (January, 2010).

A Closer Partnership with the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO)

Kenner has a tremendous economic development ally in JEDCO, the economic development agency for Jefferson Parish. In existence

since 1987, JEDCO has a strong track record of business attraction, business retention, and economic development. In 2008, JEDCO was accredited by the International Economic Development Council, becoming only the second accredited economic development organization in Louisiana and the first in the New Orleans region. Accreditation recognizes the “professionalism, commitment, and technical expertise” of the organization in question. As underscored by this honor, JEDCO is indeed a capable, professionally managed economic development partner.



Given JEDCO’s track record, capacity, and expertise, it would make little sense for the City of Kenner to duplicate JEDCO’s core responsibilities. After all, JEDCO is responsible for economic development efforts throughout Jefferson Parish, including the Parish’s incorporated cities. Until recently, however, JEDCO had no specific charge and no specific funding source to focus on issues that are particularly relevant to Kenner. To bolster JEDCO’s efforts in Kenner, the city in 2009 allocated \$75,000 in funding to support the efforts of a JEDCO economic developer who would focus exclusively on issues germane to Kenner.

This collaboration represents a wise, efficient use of resources in that it recognizes the institutional strengths of JEDCO. This collaboration builds on, rather than duplicates, JEDCO’s capacity. Since 2009, JEDCO has indeed assisted Kenner in a number of ways—attracting a Target store to the Esplanade Mall and assisting in the disposition of the Airport’s “buy-out” properties.

This recent collaboration between the City of Kenner and JEDCO provides a strong foundation and potential springboard for further economic development efforts.

Overview – No Time Like the Present

In sum, Kenner is seeking to reinvent itself at an opportune time. The *Kenner 2030* planning process is taking place in the context of a \$1 billion capital initiative at Louis Armstrong Airport, a new zoning ordinance, an aggressive reform agenda in public education, a closer partnership with JEDCO, and major changes in demographics and housing preferences that could benefit the city.

This convergence of opportunities is the strongest argument for Kenner to think ambitiously and aggressively as it finds a new, rejuvenated civic identity.

A Broader Perspective on Economic Development

At the outset, the *Kenner 2030* planning effort was couched in the language of economic development. Indeed, the steering committee for the initiative is called the “Mayor’s Economic Development Committee.” However, the vision that this Plan espouses is clearly broader and more all encompassing than an economic development initiative would suggest.

There are several reasons for this approach. One is that the *Kenner 2030* plan recognizes the inherent limits of Kenner to influence the regional economy. Kenner, a city of just over 65,000, comprises only 5.7% of the New Orleans region’s population and only 5.0% of the region’s jobs. Major regional economic infrastructure—the Port of New Orleans, the bulk of the class A office space in the region, all of the institutions of higher education—lie beyond Kenner’s boundaries and therefore beyond its jurisdictional control. Even public education within the city of Kenner is not directly controlled by the city of Kenner.

It should also be noted that even the institutions that affect economic development on the regional level have limited control over economic forces. For instance, the severe downturn in the regional economy in the 1980’s was precipitated by a sudden decline in global oil prices. While local economic development efforts perhaps could have mitigated the effects of the 1980’s “oil bust,” the primary cause of that economic shock was beyond the control of even regional or statewide actors, much less a city of 65,000.

Because of these constraints, this Plan addresses issues beyond the narrow purview of economic development. For Kenner, the appropriate question is how a city with 5.7% of the regional population and 5.0% of the regional jobs can positively impact its ability to attract jobs and residents. The answers lie in focusing on job generating activities within the city of Kenner but also on creating an appealing *environment* that will itself attract residents and job creators. Attractive neighborhoods, recreational amenities, public safety, vibrant commercial districts—

Kenner comprises only 5% – 6% of the region’s jobs and population. An effective economic development plan must therefore focus on the things that Kenner can control.

these are several of the aspects of a community’s quality of life that have a magnetic effect on residents and businesses. Indeed, there are examples of communities around the country that offer such a superior quality of life that they are in the position of *turning away* companies that would like to locate within their boundaries.

There are also indications that the next generation of residents that Kenner is seeking to capture very much scrutinizes these elements of quality of life. In support of this initiative, GCR conducted a residential preference survey of area residents to gauge their sentiments about the kind of qualities that they look for in a neighborhood. The answers were very revealing. Among both younger and older survey takers, the importance of place was an overriding consideration. Among 21 possible choices, those that scored highest for young people on the list of preferences were characteristics like “pedestrian friendly,” “low crime,” “quality shopping and dining nearby,” and “attractiveness/aesthetics.” While the responses of older survey takers (those ages 35 and above) were somewhat different, they were similarly focused on place-based traits, such as “low crime,” “attractiveness/aesthetics,” and “proximity to parks and recreation.” These responses suggest that quality of life—not just an abundance of jobs—is critical to attracting a new middle class.

With a strong middle class, of course, comes a virtuous cycle of prosperity. A healthy middle class ensures a quality, educated workforce for businesses. A healthy middle class contributes to a robust tax base, which funds quality city services and public amenities, which in turn help to attract additional middle class residents. Thus, attracting and retaining a middle class population through quality of life improvements is absolutely integral to Kenner's economic development efforts.

Best of all, many aspects of quality of life are directly controlled by local government. The resources available to a city of 65,000 cannot substantially influence the region's appeal to digital media companies, for example, but they can create more appealing neighborhoods, a more competitive regional mall, better entertainment options, and more beautiful boulevards. These subtle yet important tools of local economic development are well within the purview of Kenner city government.

Because of these myriad factors—the limited size of Kenner, the resources and influence at its disposal, the relationship between quality of life and economic development—this Plan calls for a truly holistic approach to building prosperity in Kenner and implementing the vision outlined above. The *Kenner 2030* plan now turns its attention to the details of this approach—answering the third critical question of a strategic planning process: “How Do We Want to Get There?”



Among both younger and older individuals who participated in GCR's Facebook and Twitter survey, quality of place was a critical consideration in assessing the desirability of a community. Desired traits included:

- **Pedestrian friendly neighborhoods**
- **Public safety**
- **Quality shopping and dining nearby**
- **Attractiveness/aesthetic quality**

**How Do We Want
to Get There**

HOW DO WE WANT TO GET THERE

If the vision outlined in a strategic plan has any chance of being implemented, the plan must have a sufficiently detailed and nuanced roadmap for implementation. It is helpful to first discuss the overall framework or “paradigm” for implementation—i.e. the overarching issues and considerations that run throughout the implementation chapter. These include jurisdictional constraints, available resources, strategic opportunities, and stewardship of the plan.

Focusing on What the City of Kenner Can Do

A principal consideration that has shaped the implementation element of this plan is the fact that the City of Kenner is the client, end user, and ultimate steward of the plan. The *Kenner 2030* plan was not written for Louisiana Economic Development, Greater New Orleans Inc., Louis Armstrong Airport, or even JEDCO. Therefore, the fundamental question in crafting the recommended action items is what tools the City of Kenner has at its disposal to improve its economy, improve quality of life, and make itself more appealing to residents and businesses.



The City of Kenner is the end user and ultimate steward of the Kenner 2030 plan

On the one hand, Kenner does not have nearly the resources or the jurisdictional authority of other agencies. It does not have the \$300 million “mega project” incentive fund that Louisiana Economic Development does. It does not have direct control

over many of the principal economic generators in the New Orleans region, and it does not have the multi-jurisdictional influence that Greater New Orleans Inc. does. It also does not have the economic development capacity that JEDCO does—the years of experience in business recruitment, retention, and the administration of complex financial incentives. Indeed, no one is suggesting that Kenner duplicate the core economic development responsibilities of JEDCO.

While the City of Kenner does not have the resources or the policy making responsibility that other organizations do, there is much that the city government does control: the disposition of publicly owned property, zoning and other land development regulations, a working partnership with Louis Armstrong Airport, code enforcement, and the provision of much of the city’s infrastructure. In this regard, the action items outlined within this chapter are fundamentally grounded in reality. The plan attempts to identify primarily those things that the ultimate user of this Plan, Kenner city government, can actually control.

Key economic development tools that Kenner does control:

- Disposition of publicly owned property
- Zoning and subdivision regulations
- Code enforcement
- Key infrastructure initiatives
- Working partnership with Louis Armstrong Airport

Studies as Important Precursors to Action

This plan recommends a number of studies as initial action items. Recommending a study is unquestionably not the most inspiring course of action. At the national level, political leaders sometimes strenuously argue that certain issues have been “studied to death.” Everyone would prefer a ceremonial ground breaking or ribbon cutting to another written report, but studies are indeed an important pre-cursor to final implementation. They help to set a concrete, definitive path; they capture public opinion and establish where public support lies; and they ensure an efficient, targeted use of scarce resources.

In Kenner, there is ample need for the kind of better information and analytical insight that only a study can provide. This plan also covers many issues for which there is not a clear direction for action. What should a revitalized Rivertown look like? What kind of new development should be encouraged in Rivertown? If Kenner is to re-make its older commercial thoroughfares, how ambitious and costly should that initiative be? What would be an ideal pilot project for a revitalized commercial corridor? If Kenner were to establish an independent school district, what would be the tax burden on Kenner residents and businesses? These are the kinds of critical questions that can only be satisfactorily answered by detailed, analytical reports. For as maligned as studies sometimes can be, they are frequently essential precursors to implementation.

A Frank Discussion of Resources

The most well crafted and ultimately the most successful strategic plans strike a delicate balance between being too ambitious and too cautious. If a plan is overly ambitious, if it grossly exceeds a community’s financial, political, and administrative capacity, it has no hope of being implemented. If, on the other hand, it is overly cautious, it is unlikely to produce the change that is necessary to effect meaningful results.

This plan attempts to balance these competing considerations. It does not recommend particularly grandiose public projects, and it recognizes that major improvements to Kenner’s infra-

While not politically popular, studies are often essential precursors to implementation.

structure must necessarily be phased over a period of time. The plan also identifies potential external funding sources to implement the plan, i.e. funding beyond the city government’s annual budget. Within the action matrix in this chapter, specific grant programs and their granting agencies are associated with the action items that they could potentially fund.

While the *Kenner 2030* plan does not recommend lavish public spending, it is absolutely essential to convey that local, city-generated resources must be part of the conversation about implementation. GCR is unaware of any community in the United States that has successfully turned itself around without some supplemental commitment of local resources that goes beyond the everyday costs of governance. Local resources are an essential part of the equation of community revitalization.

It should be further emphasized that community revitalization cannot be done on the cheap. There is a reason why the revitalization of Louis Armstrong Airport carries a \$1 billion price tag. The scale of improvements that the Airport needs is likely that large. Along the same lines, the Mercedes Benz Superdome would not have once again become a world class facility without the infusion of \$336 million in capital improvements over the past six years. On a smaller scale, a major reason for the post-Katrina transformation of New Orleans’ City Park is the infusion of over \$30 million in capital improvements.

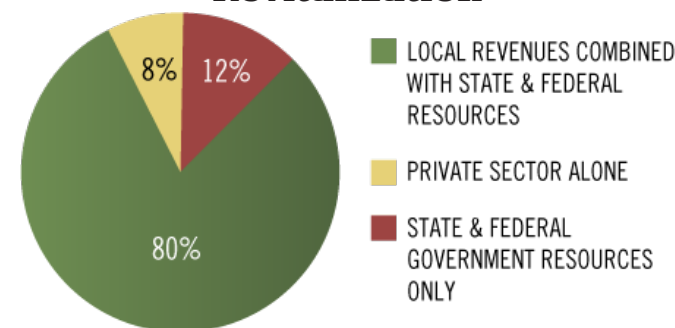
Kenner does not have resource needs on the scale of these other examples, but it is wholly unrealistic to think that Kenner's thoroughfares, neighborhoods, and commercial districts could be revitalized without some commitment of local funding.



The post-Katrina transformation of key regional assets, such as the Superdome and City Park, has required the commitment of significant resources. Community revitalization is impossible without the willingness to commit local funds.

Fortunately, the public seems to recognize this reality. In the surveys that GCR conducted of Kenner residents, Economic Development Committee members, and elected officials, all three groups expressed a frank understanding that local resources are a necessary component of an ambitious revitalization effort. All three groups were asked to choose the most realistic scenario for securing the resources necessary for community revitalization. The three options that the survey provided were "private sector resources only," "state and federal resources only," and "local revenues combined with state and federal resources." A vast majority of all three survey populations selected the third answer as the most realistic funding scenario. Of course, it is one thing to ask residents this question in a

How to Fund Kenner's Revitalization



In a fall 2011 survey, Kenner residents expressed a frank understanding of the importance of locally generated resources to revitalization efforts.

survey, and it is quite another to put forward an actual ballot initiative. Indeed, in April of 2011, the city asked residents to vote on a measure that would have extended certain expiring taxes and approve a package of tax increases to keep pace with increased costs. Residents not only resoundingly rejected the proposed new taxes but they even rejected the extension of pre-existing taxes for fire protection, sewerage, and garbage. Clearly from a political standpoint, this is not the optimal

context for discussing additional revenues. The downturn in the national economy and the ascendance of anti-tax, anti-government rhetoric surely played a role in the recent defeat of the proposed ballot measures. Hopefully, these are ephemeral trends, and hopefully a different political and economic context will allow Kenner to once again broach discussions about revenue.

Regardless of the political implications, local resources are an absolutely indispensable component of implementation. The plan returns to this issue in greater detail at the conclusion of this chapter to discuss the aggregate “start up costs” of this initiative and to convey the aggregate scale of resources that the Plan calls for.

Capitalizing on Opportunity

In addition to considering resources and the policy tools that Kenner has at its disposal, the implementation element of the *Kenner 2030* plan also considers the unique opportunities that Kenner can leverage. The action items are crafted with these opportunities in mind. Hence, many of the action items touch on the opportunities that were discussed extensively in the previous chapter. Many of the action items pertain to the proposed overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport, the city’s new zoning ordinance, the kind of housing and neighborhood amenities that will respond to demographic trends, and the productive use of publicly owned property.

The action items therefore are not crafted in a vacuum; rather, they attempt to capitalize upon the trends, capital investments, and policy changes that are already underway. In this regard, the action items in this strategic plan are very much grounded in reality.

The action items that the Kenner 2030 plan recommends were not crafted in a vacuum. Rather, they capitalize upon the trends, capital investments, and policy changes that are already underway.

The Importance of Leadership and Stewardship of the Plan

Along with insufficient resources, another major reason why strategic plans sometimes fail to be implemented is insufficient leadership and stewardship. Because a strategic plan is inherently a multi-stage, multi-year effort, a continued commitment to the plan is absolutely essential. This commitment must come from multiple sources. It must come, first and foremost, from elected officials who are directly responsible for providing the executive leadership necessary for implementation. It must come from the heads of public agencies and departments who will be responsible for the technical, day-to-day aspects of implementation. Just as fundamentally, this commitment must also come from the public and from community stakeholders. The public will be responsible for ensuring that the plan remains a central component of the community dialogue; they will be responsible for electing public officials who continue to make the plan a priority; and they will also be responsible for grassroots advocacy efforts.

This plan acknowledges that grassroots ownership of and advocacy for the plan is one of the most overlooked aspects of implementation. Grassroots community support helps to confirm to the broader community that the plan is in their interest. It maintains the plan's visibility and ensures that it will remain a living document. It also ensures that the plan will not be forgotten when there is a change in executive leadership. When the mayor or council is inevitably replaced with another mayor or council, grassroots community support ensures that the plan will remain a priority.

Needless to say, a plan in and of itself cannot create this kind of leadership by fiat. That responsibility lies with the public officials, community leaders, and residents of Kenner. What the plan can do, though, is shine a light on the central importance of leadership to implementation; it can highlight the specific agencies that will have technical responsibility for “owning” and implementing certain action items; and it can describe certain techniques for ensuring continued community support. This critical infrastructure of implementation is discussed in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.

Strategic plans cannot implement themselves. Implementation hinges on the steadfast commitment of elected officials, public agencies, and the broader community.

Action Items

The action items that the *Kenner 2030* plan recommends are those specific measures that will implement the vision for a more prosperous City of Kenner. They span a variety of topics including the revitalization of Rivertown and Laketown, capitalizing on reinvestment at the Airport, and improving Kenner's commercial corridors. The action items have been grouped by the overarching, topic-specific goal that each pertains to.

Sources of the *Kenner 2030* action items:

- Input of the Economic Development Committee
- SWOT analysis of residents, elected officials, and the Committee
- Best practices in other communities
- Analysis of economic development consultant (GCR)

These implementation measures were developed from a number of sources, including the input of the Economic Development Committee, the SWOT Analysis that was conducted, best practices in other communities around the country, and the expertise of the planning consultant (GCR) that authored this plan. All of these action items were vetted by the Economic Development Committee, and a majority of Committee Members—in most cases, an overwhelming majority—supported each one of the action items.

This section of the plan is divided into two parts: a detailed narrative explanation of the action items and secondly, an “implementation matrix.” The implementation matrix provides a more concise overview of the recommended action items. It includes the agency that will be responsible for its implementation, potential costs associated with the action item, potential revenue sources, and an ambitious yet realistic timetable for completing the action. This matrix provides a

framework for gauging progress toward implementation on an on-going basis. With this matrix in hand, residents, political leaders, and community stakeholders will have an easy-to-use roadmap illustrating what needs to be done and whether the City is following through on implementation.

The action items that the *Kenner 2030* plan recommends are indeed far reaching, but they are very much attainable. They have been crafted with the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in mind. Collectively, they attempt to capitalize on the city's existing strengths and opportunities in order to address weaknesses and emerging threats. While no one can predict the future, a Kenner that succeeds in implementing these measures should be a far more appealing place and a more vibrant, prosperous community in the coming years.

A Kenner that succeeds in implementing these measures should be a far more appealing place and a more vibrant, prosperous community in the coming years.

Goal: Support the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport into a world class facility that will spur economic development and revitalize adjacent neighborhoods.

No other initiative has the same catalytic potential as the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong International Airport. While ultimate responsibility for this initiative rests with the Airport and the City of New Orleans, Kenner has a critical role to play. It can either be on the sidelines as major decisions are made, or it can be a close partner and stakeholder throughout the process. As an active participant, the City will be in a much better position to extend the benefits of redevelopment beyond the boundaries of the Airport itself. Possible off-site improvements include streetscape enhancements along adjacent corridors, improvements to traffic flow, improved transit connectivity to the Airport, aesthetic improvements along I-10, and new off-site commercial investment.

Most of the action items are related to extending the benefits of this potential investment to the neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and underutilized property in the immediate vicinity of the Airport. The studies that will be commissioned to support the redevelopment effort also represent a prime opportunity to analyze a wide range of economic development issues that are relevant to Kenner. These include the market potential of industrial properties surrounding the Airport, the possibility of a multi-modal cargo facility, and the feasibility of expanded hotels and commercial amenities.

A1. Ensure that Kenner's interests are well represented in the selection of consultant teams and in the execution of subsequent studies regarding the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport

With such a monumental investment scheduled to occur within the city limits, it is essential that Kenner have a formal role in working with the consultant teams that will shape what a "new" Louis Armstrong Airport will look like. Optimally, this would include some role in reviewing the qualifications of the consultant teams that will respond to the Airport's Requests for Qualifications. This process had already begun as of the writing of this plan. At a minimum, though, City officials and the City's Planning Department should have a formal role on



the project steering committee or equivalent body. Typically, planning studies of this breadth and detail are guided by a steering committee of stakeholders and subject matter experts. These steering committees highlight critical issues, assist in the formulation of the plan, and establish priorities. It is essential that Kenner work with the Airport administration to secure such a role on the Airport revitalization studies that will soon be underway.

A2. Work with consulting teams and the Aviation Board to expand the "footprint" of Airport redevelopment efforts to include the neighborhoods, streets, and commercial districts adjacent to the airport itself

From its role on the project steering committee, City officials must be strong advocates for including the adjacent streets, neighborhoods, and commercial districts within the Airport's redevelopment "footprint." The current vehicular approach to Louis Armstrong Airport is lackluster at best. When visi-

tors leave the Airport, they are greeted by a procession of billboards, powerlines, oversized signage, and open drainage canals. Clearly, it would make little sense for the Airport to spend \$1 billion on a gleaming new facility only to have visitors exit into the present, underwhelming landscape. For reasons of aesthetics, potential commercial investment, and transportation access, the reach of Airport redevelopment efforts must necessarily extend beyond the physical boundaries of the Airport. Kenner must ensure that this topic is a prominent component of the final redevelopment plans, and Kenner must ensure that its interests in this regard are well represented.

A3. Ensure that Airport redevelopment efforts prioritize the Aberdeen Street corridor project--the beautification and revitalization of the northern entrance to the Airport

Even more underwhelming than the Airport ingress/egress for commercial passengers is the Airport approach for general aviation customers. Those who exit from the north side of the Airport along the Aberdeen Street corridor must navigate their way through an area that has poor signage, poor lighting, poor infrastructure, and a substantial amount of blight. For those arriving by charter flights or corporate jets, this presents the worst possible face not only for Kenner but for the entire New Orleans region. The “Aberdeen Street Project” has been discussed for some time, but Kenner should insist that it be one of the first capital projects to be undertaken as part of a larger redevelopment effort. Furthermore, the improvement of the northern entrance to the Airport should be a high priority whether or not the terminal is relocated to the North side of the facility, as has been discussed. Even if the northern entrance to the Airport remains solely for general aviation passengers, the aesthetic and infrastructure needs are so dire that the Aberdeen Street Project must be of the highest priority.



The Mineta San Jose International/Silicon Valley Airport opened its new \$1.3 billion terminal in 2010, expecting to increase the economic impact of the airport on the surrounding community. The airport authority is now working on their Non-Terminal Area Improvement Program to expand airport infrastructure and economic impacts to the surrounding areas. By disbursing airport services, the plan will add 4,000 new jobs and bring in \$240 million in new wages and a \$24 million increase in local sales tax revenue.

Other recent examples of airport investments that have spurred off-site commercial activity include Panama City, Florida and Kansas City, Missouri.

Photo by Alan Cordova.



The Aberdeen Street entrance to the Airport creates an unfavorable introduction to Kenner for those arriving by corporate or charter flight. The corridor is unsightly and includes a number of blighted properties.

A4. Leverage funding for the redevelopment of the Airport to improve traffic flow and the quality of the streetscape of major roads in the vicinity of the Airport (Airline, Veterans, Loyola, etc.) and the Airport approach to/from I-10.

Arguably the most glaring aesthetic deficiency of the Airport is the condition of the major thoroughfares adjacent to the Airport. They include portions of Airline Drive, Williams Boulevard, Veterans Boulevard, and Loyola Drive. All of these streets funnel traffic to the Airport, and traffic flow would undoubtedly be impacted by Airport redevelopment plans.

For this reason alone, the redevelopment of the Airport should serve as a catalyst to improve these roadways. The overhaul to the Airport would provide a unique window to make dramatic aesthetic and functional upgrades to these thoroughfares—to transform them into true boulevards that are far more attractive and pedestrian-oriented than their current form. Major streetscape improvements could include burying powerlines, planting trees and improving landscaping, and providing sidewalks and bike lanes where appropriate. The transformation of these thoroughfares into boulevards would simultaneously ensure smooth traffic flow from the new terminal and present a far more attractive “front door” to those arriving at the Airport. Street segments that could realistically be folded into the Airport overhaul include:

- **Aberdeen Street between the Airport and Veterans Boulevard (see action item A3 above)**
- **Veterans Boulevard between Loyola Drive and Roosevelt Boulevard**
- **Loyola Drive between I-10 and Veterans Boulevard**
- **Williams Boulevard between I-10 and West Metairie Avenue**
- **Airline Drive between the existing terminal and Roosevelt Boulevard**



The street segments highlighted in the above map could reasonably be included in redevelopment efforts due to the vehicular traffic that they carry to and from the Airport.

Collectively, these street segments total approximately five and a half miles of roadway. An extremely generous unit cost estimate for comprehensive streetscape improvements is \$9 million per mile of roadway¹². Thus, all of the above segments could be completely transformed for an approximate cost of \$49.5 million. While funding for these road improvements would not likely come from the same source as the \$1 billion for on-site improvements at the Airport, it is useful to get a sense of the relatively small cost of these streetscape improvements. For just under 5% of the cost of a new terminal, those arriving at Louis Armstrong Airport would exit onto a network of attractive, tree-lined boulevards that would convey the prosperity and community pride of the entire New Orleans region.

¹²This would likely include extensive landscaping, burying utility lines, and some additional infrastructure, such as the replacement of traffic lights. Some estimates are as low as \$3 million per mile.

A5. As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, identify opportunities for major new economic infrastructure, such as intermodal facilities and distribution and cargo centers on underutilized Airport property

The most ambitious Airport redevelopment concept that has been proposed is the notion of completely relocating the terminal from the south side of the Airport to underutilized land on the north side. One rationale for moving the terminal is the possibility of establishing an “intermodal” cargo facility on the south side that would allow for a relatively seamless transfer of goods among various transportation modes: air, water (i.e. the Mississippi River), rail, and road. While much of the infrastructure on the south side of the airport exists to support intermodal facilities, the concept is relatively untested. This component of the forthcoming Airport redevelopment studies, therefore, would attempt to answer a number of fundamental questions, including:

- whether there is demand and market potential for intermodal facilities
- where such facilities would be located
- whether additional properties would have to be acquired
- the level of additional investment that would be required
- what the financial and administrative model would be for on-going operations.

Kenner should push for this level of detail on the intermodal concept. If there is indeed demand for such a groundbreaking facility, it could produce significant new economic activity and job growth.

A6. As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, develop a vision, land use, and marketing strategy to optimize the use of the commercial and industrial properties adjacent to the Airport, such as those along Crestview and Bainbridge Street



The commercial corridors in the immediate vicinity of the Airport, such as Veterans Boulevard, should be folded into Airport redevelopment plans. These corridors would benefit from improved traffic flow and streetscape enhancements.



The Bainbridge corridor on the north side of the Airport is home to a number of commercial and light industrial employers. A land use and market study would help the Airport and Kenner to determine whether there is demand for further commercial activity in this area.

At present, there is a considerable amount of industrial property surrounding the Airport that is somewhat underutilized. There is a general sense in Kenner that properties along streets like Crestview and Bainbridge, are not at their highest and best use in spite of their proximity to the Airport and to major roadway and rail infrastructure. Any study examining an overhaul of the Airport should examine the issue of why there is not greater demand for these properties and why there is not more commercial/light industrial activity surrounding the Airport. The forthcoming studies should examine a number of potential reasons for the underperformance of these areas including:

- overall demand for this kind of real estate within the regional market
- present zoning regulations
- the condition of infrastructure
- the overall look and feel of the area
- the cost of commercial/light industrial real estate in the vicinity of the airport
- the overall size and appropriateness of the properties for certain kinds of commercial activity.

The consultants selected for this study should examine how other airport-adjacent areas around the country have transitioned into thriving distribution and commercial centers.

A7. As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, determine the market potential for a new complex of high quality hotels, retail, and conference facilities that could better capitalize on business travel to the New Orleans region

Kenner should ask that the Airport redevelopment consultants also examine the potential for further commercial activity near the airport. Possible visitor-oriented commercial uses include additional hotels, conference centers, and shopping/entertainment venues. Other airports around the country are anchors for massive agglomerations of hotels and visitor amenities. The most fundamental question that this analysis would have to answer is whether a revitalized Armstrong Airport would generate sufficient



Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia is a textbook example of a thriving commercial district that has taken shape near a major airport (Reagan National). Airport redevelopment plans should examine the feasibility of this form of development—though likely on a more modest scale—in the vicinity of Louis Armstrong Airport.

Photo by thisisbossi.

demand for new visitor-oriented investment in Kenner. Would visitor traffic increase? Would visitors and conventioners continue to gravitate to Downtown New Orleans for lodging and meetings, or would there be a distinct market for additional hotels and conference centers near the Airport? If this demand does exist, would the best location be immediately adjacent to the Airport, or would a near-Airport location (such as Laketown) be more attractive?

Clearly, increased visitor activity near the Airport would generate numerous economic and fiscal benefits to Kenner. Kenner should strongly advocate for a study that determines whether a market for this activity exists and how best to capitalize on that market potential.

Goal: Continue to push for the expedited redevelopment of Airport buy out properties into economically productive uses.

Starting in the 1990's, Louis Armstrong Airport acquired nearly 100 acres of nearby property as part of an effort to mitigate Airport-related noise impacts for nearby residents. Fifteen years later, these properties still lie fallow. More recently, efforts to find productive uses for the so called "buy out properties" have gained momentum. Kenner, JEDCO, and the Airport have all committed substantial time and energy to determining the best way to dispose of the properties in an economically productive manner. UNO has also recently been retained

by the City as a subject matter expert and consultant to move the process forward. While the characteristics of the buy-out properties (location, zoning, dimensions) suggest that Kenner will not reap a windfall from their re-use, they do provide a tangible opportunity for incremental growth, reinvestment, and tax revenue. Furthermore, the proposed redevelopment of the Airport and the forthcoming overhaul of Kenner's zoning ordinance provide an opportunity to enhance the marketability of these properties.

B1. Work closely with on-going UNO study to identify optimal land uses and disposition strategies for buy-out properties

While the disposition of the buy-out properties has been discussed for many years, more tangible efforts to advance their re-use are underway. UNO was recently retained by the City to recommend the best land use and disposition strategies for the properties. One question that UNO is examining, for instance, is whether properties should be bundled as a package or whether they should be sold off individually on a parcel by parcel basis. Additionally, UNO is examining whether other properties should be acquired and whether public rights of way should be deeded in order to improve the marketability of these properties. UNO is also in the process of studying the best potential uses of the properties, based on their dimensions, their location, and overall market demand. JEDCO and Kenner must continue to work closely with the UNO team to ensure that the process of disposing of the properties is expedited.

B2. Coordinate with UNO, the Airport, and the City of New Orleans to ensure that the buy-out properties generate new economic activity instead of duplicating commercial activity that already exists in Kenner

In working with UNO to study the disposition of the buy-out properties, Kenner and JEDCO should insist that the redevelop-



Map of buy-out properties near Louis Armstrong Airport.

oped properties contribute to net new economic activity rather than merely duplicating existing commercial uses. Of particular concern is the present inventory of vacant retail space in Kenner. It would make little sense to build, for example, a new strip mall on these properties, given the apparent oversupply of commercial space that is presently in the market. This kind of standard retail use could be profitable to the developer, but from the perspective of the entire city, it may just result in additional vacancy elsewhere in Kenner. Thus, there should be ample consideration of the specific uses that are most desirable, least redundant, and most economically productive. This guidance should be provided to potential developers, and it should ultimately be a major factor in evaluating the quality of competing redevelopment proposals.

Simply put, the process of redeveloping these properties must be expedited.



New development at the Airport buy-out properties should not compound the problem of vacant commercial buildings in Kenner.

B3. Ensure that Kenner zoning regulations and public infrastructure are not obstacles to the redevelopment of the buy-out properties

Two occasional obstacles to redevelopment are the zoning regulations governing a property and the infrastructure serving the property. During the course of UNO's on-going study of the disposition of the buy-out properties, Kenner should work closely with UNO to identify potential regulatory and infrastructure-related obstacles to their redevelopment. If regulatory obstacles are identified, these considerations should be folded into the overhaul of the city's zoning ordinance which is already underway. The revision to the zoning ordinance presents a unique opportunity to create the optimal regulatory environment for the re-use of the buy-out properties. With regard to infrastructure, if problems are identified, they should be detailed on a property by property basis and should be resolved accordingly.

B4. Continue to engage the Airport and City of New Orleans to push for an expedited disposition of buy-out properties

This final item essentially amounts to a call for action. The buy-out properties were first purchased in the 1990's, and they have lain fallow for fifteen or so years. During this time, they have not contributed to Kenner's tax base; they have not produced any economic activity for the city; and they have not provided any amenities for residents. Simply put, the process needs to be expedited. Kenner, JEDCO and the Airport should work with UNO to develop an internal timeline for the disposition of the properties with clear intermediate milestones. The executive leadership involved in this effort—the Mayor, the executive director of JEDCO, and the Aviation Director—should ensure that these deadlines are adhered to. The disposition of the buy-out properties is hardly an economic panacea for Kenner, but the issue has occupied a substantial amount of time and energy and should be resolved expeditiously.

Goal: Transform Rivertown into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district that will function as Kenner's town center.

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the *Kenner 2030* planning process was an overriding concern that Kenner lacks character. This void may contribute to Kenner's on-going struggle to attract young professionals. While New Orleans offers bustling commercial areas like Magazine Street, the Faubourg Marigny, or even Harrison Avenue in Lakeview, Kenner only offers a staid suburban landscape of shopping malls and residential subdivisions.

In the survey of residential preferences that GCR conducted, young people (ages 18 – 34) gave Kenner particularly low marks while they regarded New Orleans' historic neighborhoods particularly favorably. These are neighborhoods that are characterized by their distinctive architecture, their pedestrian scale, and their mix of residential and commercial uses. Young survey takers also indicated that some of the most appealing neighborhoods are those that are "pedestrian friendly," that have "shopping and dining...within walking/biking distance," and that have strong "aesthetic appeal." These are characteristics that are not typically associated with the standard suburban neighborhoods that comprise most of Kenner. The absence of these characteristics in Kenner suggests that the community is indeed poorly equipped to capture the increasing number of professionals who value these traits.

There is no feasible way for Kenner to somehow "retrofit" itself so that it could all of a sudden offer the same amenities, pedestrian scale, and historic charm as New Orleans' older neighborhoods. Kenner's character is primarily suburban, and there is little that can be done to transform its landscape in a wholesale fashion. Nonetheless, what Kenner could potentially offer is a number of nodes or activity centers that could provide some of the aforementioned qualities that young professionals seem to value. Residents of these activity centers would be able to have a more urban, pedestrian-oriented lifestyle; they would be able to live in a condominium or loft apartment; they would be able to walk to a



Pedestrian-oriented streets, such as Oak Street and Magazine Street in New Orleans, stand in marked contrast to the predominantly suburban streetscapes of Kenner. Residents 18 – 34 who participated in the Facebook survey that GCR conducted gave these historic neighborhoods high marks and had negative views of more suburban communities.

Photos of New Orleans by infrogmation.

corner coffee shop or restaurant; and they would even be able to walk or bike to work.

Just as critically, the vast majority of Kenner residents who would not reside in these activity centers would still be able to enjoy their charms. They could patronize the restaurants, boutique shops, and entertainment options in these areas; and they could participate in occasional festivals and cultural events held there. In short, most neighborhoods in Kenner cannot all of a sudden transform themselves into urban, walkable utopias; but Kenner can indeed create several community focal points that exemplify these characteristics. With these activity centers, Kenner would be able to offer a compelling residential option for young professionals. At the same time, Kenner would also be able to offer walkable, vibrant neighborhoods in close proximity to the city's typical, suburban-style neighborhoods. Creating vibrant activity centers would have the effect of improving Kenner's overall quality of life and improving Kenner's ability to attract a younger generation of middle class residents.

Rivertown is one of these potential activity centers. While it is hardly thriving at present, it does have many characteristics that would appeal to young professionals, and it also has much of the raw material for an exciting, town center environment. Its streets are narrow and pedestrian-scaled; it has attractive, historic ar-

chitecture; it is situated close to the River; it could accommodate new residential development with River views; and it is served by the Mississippi River bike path—an amenity that appeals to those interested in an active lifestyle.



Rivertown already has many of the ingredients of an attractive, exciting, pedestrian oriented neighborhood.

Major existing and potential amenities in Rivertown:

- Pedestrian-scaled streets
- Attractive historic architecture
- Proximity to and potential views of the Mississippi River
- Access to the Mississippi River bike path
- Safe, low-crime environment
- Mixture of residential and commercial uses

While Kenner cannot completely retrofit itself, it can offer a number of distinct activity centers that have the qualities that young professionals are looking for.

Rivertown also has the added advantage of safety. Crime remains a persistent concern in the historic neighborhoods of New Orleans, and Rivertown could conceivably offer many of the same amenities of a historic New Orleans neighborhood in an extremely safe environment.

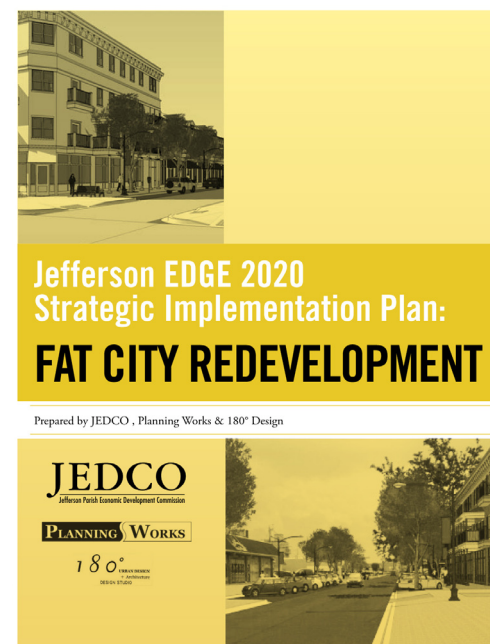
With the right zoning in place and with targeted public investment, it is not difficult to imagine Rivertown as Kenner’s version of Magazine Street—a thriving, attractive core of shops, restaurants, residences, and small businesses.

R1. Commission a “small area plan” for Rivertown that will engage the public, that will develop a coherent land use and urban design vision, and that will establish a specific implementation plan and funding mechanisms for the revitalization of Rivertown

As a community contemplates a revitalization initiative for a particular area, it is tempting to jump right into implementation. After all, people like to see action—ground breakings, ribbon cuttings, major new development projects, and so forth. However, it is usually wiser to have an underlying specific plan in place before advancing to the “shoveling dirt” phase. There are many reasons for a well crafted plan. These include securing community support, outlining a coherent vision so that projects will truly complement each other, and allocating scarce public funds in a strategic fashion. Rivertown needs exactly this kind of plan to guide public and private efforts to reinvent itself.

There are so many unanswered questions that would best be addressed in the context of a strategic “small area plan” for Rivertown. Just a sampling of critical questions includes the following:

- What kind of architecture would be most appropriate for new development? Should new development aim for a “historicist” style that blends with older buildings, or would more modern, loft-style buildings be appropriate?
- What would be the appropriate height and scale of new buildings?



The Fat City plan, completed in 2009 and 2010, is an example of a small area plan that has guided the revitalization of a commercial district.

Rendering by Planning Works and 180° design.

- What kinds of commercial uses should be permitted? Should quality bars, for instance, be permitted in the way that they have been encouraged along Freret Street in New Orleans?
- Should Kenner dispose of all of the publicly owned land in Rivertown, or should it preserve some property for public uses, such as City offices or a community center?

These are precisely the kind of details that can be the difference between a thriving, mixed-use district and a languishing one. Therefore, they should be addressed in a comprehensive, community-driven process. This is exactly the kind of planning process that recently provided momentum to long-stalled efforts to redevelop Fat City in Jefferson Parish. A small area plan could play a similar catalytic role in Rivertown.

R2. Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations foster an attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian oriented district.

Zoning regulations are one of the most basic, real world ways that communities can affect the quality of the built environment. Among other characteristics, they regulate parking, building setbacks, signage, height, permitted uses, and (in some cases) even the design of a building facade. According to Kenner's Planning Department, Kenner's present zoning ordinance is not equipped to permit the kind of attractive, mixed use, pedestrian oriented development that young professionals seem to prefer. Instead, the ordinance is too inflexible in some ways while it does not provide sufficient guidance in other ways. The overhaul to the zoning ordinance that is presently underway presents a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that the ordinance permits and even facilitates quality development in Rivertown. Just as Jefferson Parish recently adopted unique zoning regulations for Fat City, so should Kenner incorporate Rivertown's unique qualities into the new Kenner zoning ordinance. The resulting Rivertown-specific regulations should take their cues from the proposed Rivertown small area plan (action item R1), and they should insist on the highest quality in the built environment.



Present zoning regulations have permitted development in Rivertown that is incompatible with a pedestrian-oriented, mixed use environment.

R3. Examine the feasibility of permitting quality, mid-rise residential and mixed use development along the Mississippi River levee in the vicinity of Rivertown

The Rivertown area is unique in that it presents perhaps the best opportunity in all of Jefferson Parish for attractive mid-rise residential development along the Mississippi River. This is because the parcels along the river are bracketed by a major road (Jefferson Highway) and the River. Elsewhere in Jefferson Parish, Riverfront parcels lie mostly at the end of small residential streets—locations that are ill suited for even a four- or five-story building. In Rivertown, though, the location of these parcels along a major thoroughfare presents a prime opportunity for quality, mid-rise, loft-style residential development. At present, there are many vacant or underutilized parcels along the levee that would be ideal locations for this kind of development. Through the proposed Rivertown small area plan and subsequently through the new Kenner zoning ordinance, the feasibility of this kind of residential development should be examined. If it is determined that multi-story, multifamily development along the River is feasible, the new zoning ordinance must insist upon the highest quality in materials, design, and pedestrian orientation to ensure an attractive built environment.



Mid-rise residential development with views of the Mississippi River could be an attractive feature of a revitalized Rivertown.

Photo by John Murden

R4. Commission a design standards manual to ensure that new development in Rivertown exemplifies “best practices” in architecture and urban design

Conventional zoning governs many aspects of a building’s design including signage, the location and amount of parking, and building height. However, basic zoning regulations allow for considerable leeway in building design, particularly with respect to the



A design standards manual, such as this one from the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, ensures that new construction will be held to a high aesthetic standard. It also provides developers with a more predictable permitting and review process.

design and materials of building facades. For this reason, many communities supplement zoning regulations in certain neighborhoods with a discretionary design review process. The most well known of these within the New Orleans area is the Vieux Carre Commission, which regulates demolitions, renovations, and new construction within the historic French Quarter. Rivertown actually has an analogous process in place, a board known as the Rivertown Advisory Committee. Due to the dearth of investment in Rivertown in recent years, it has been rather dormant.

Also, it has operated with few objective design criteria. A standard practice in communities that have discretionary design review processes is to adopt a so called design standards manual. This document outlines the particular aesthetic characteristics that are desirable in the community. It therefore provides developers with a greater level of predictability during the approvals process. A design standards manual also provides the development community with greater certainty and confidence that future, adjacent development will also be held to a high aesthetic standard. A design standards manual for Rivertown could be completed concurrently with a Rivertown Small Area Plan (R1). It can and should also be seamlessly integrated into new base zoning regulations for Rivertown (R2).

R5. Explore the possibility of selling or leasing publicly owned land in Rivertown to facilitate mixed use projects that exemplify the new vision for Rivertown

One of the greatest assets that the City of Kenner has at its disposal is the fact that there is so much publicly owned land in Rivertown. Fat City, in contrast, is another area that is the target of revitalization efforts, but those efforts hinge entirely on the activity of a multitude of private land owners. In Rivertown, the city has direct control over the disposition and re-use of a considerable amount of property. Not only does this allow the city to more directly control exactly the redevelopment that it is trying to encourage, but it also means that the city already has a substantial incentive that it can deploy. That incentive is the potential sale or long term lease of certain properties at

a discounted price. Developers may be more willing to take a chance in an area that has not seen substantial investment if they are able to obtain a development site for below-market rates.

These public-private partnerships are frequently complex, but they can have a tremendous catalytic effect. One such example in the New Orleans area is the adaptive re-use of an old transit facility along Magazine Street in New Orleans into a Whole Foods market. Completed in 2004, this project has spurred substantial new investment in its vicinity.

Another benefit of using publicly owned land to facilitate development is that the government has the ability to set the broad parameters of what the development should look like. In the case of Rivertown, the city of Kenner could insist upon a project that exemplifies the vision for Rivertown as a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented community. This, in turn, could arouse the interest of other developers by giving them a tangible example of what Rivertown could soon become.



The Whole Foods Market on Magazine Street in New Orleans is a prime example of how the re-use of publicly owned land can be a catalyst for community revitalization.

Photo by Walter Parenteau



Major events, such as the annual White Linen Night in New Orleans' Warehouse District, can generate buzz and cultivate familiarity with a commercial district.

Photo by Mattmc89

R6. Develop a Rivertown capital improvement plan that will identify potential improvements to the Rivertown streetscape, publicly owned buildings, and parks and playgrounds

As part of the Rivertown Small Area Plan (R1), Kenner should develop a capital improvement plan for Rivertown. This capital plan would identify improvements in the public realm that would spur additional investment. Improvements to public buildings, streetscapes, and parks are a typical component of revitalization efforts. There are many examples of the beneficial effects of these investments throughout the New Orleans region, from the Tammany Trace in St. Tammany Parish to the recently completed streetscape improvements along Oak Street in New Orleans. A more appealing public realm can often set the stage for further private investment.

Fortunately, the basic infrastructure in Rivertown does not need a lavish overhaul as it is already in reasonably good condition. Some further improvements should be considered though, including:

- Streetscape improvements along Jefferson Highway
- Improved bicycle facilities that connect the street level to the Mississippi River bike path
- Improvements to Buddy Lawson playground and a stronger pedestrian connection from Buddy Lawson playground to the heart of Rivertown
- Landscape improvements to the Riverfront Park
- Restoration of the street grid along 4th Street.

R7. Ensure that adequate, recurring funding exists for the Rivertown Main Street program's efforts to market and promote Rivertown

One of the most important yet least flashy elements of revitalization efforts is stewardship. It is tremendously helpful for a commercial district to have a full-time staff person who can function as a point of contact for potential developers and who serves as an advocate for the area. The best template for these

functions is the National Main Street Program. Kenner is currently in the process of applying to Louisiana's State Historic Preservation Office to secure National Main Street designation for Rivertown. This designation would allow the newly formed Rivertown Main Street Organization to take advantage of the technical assistance that the Main Street program provides.

Main Street organizations are typically supported by private donations from foundations, businesses, and individual donors. Given

the budget constraints that Kenner faces, the City is not in a position to provide on-going funding for the operations of a Rivertown Main Street organization. However, the City can serve as an advocate for the organization in order to attract the interest of donors. Steady operating funding is essential to implementing the administrative and advocacy functions that Main Street organizations provide.



R8. Attract an annual event or events, such as Oktoberfest, that will elevate the profile of Rivertown to the entire New Orleans region

One of the reasons why Rivertown's profile has grown within the past year is the fact that the annual Oktoberfest, organized by the Deutches Haus cultural organization, was held in Rivertown in the fall of 2011. Major events such as Oktoberfest elevate the profile of an area, familiarize the broader community with the amenities that it has to offer, and can even attract the interest of the development community. Throughout the New Orleans area, there are countless other examples of outdoor cultural events that attract visitors and generate buzz. These include the Wednesdays at the Square concert series in Downtown New Orleans, White Linen Night in New Orleans' Warehouse District, and the Gretna Heritage Festival in Old Gretna. The city of Kenner, and ultimately the Rivertown Main Street organization, should strive to schedule multiple cultural events throughout the year, such as outdoor concerts and events that celebrate Kenner's ethnic and cultural heritage.

Goal: Transform Laketown into a thriving, signature, mixed use district that will capitalize on its unique Lakefront location

Along with Rivertown, Laketown is the other area of Kenner that could deliver the kind of active, mixed use, pedestrian-oriented environment that could help to attract a next generation of residents. The development dynamics of Laketown are substantially different than in Rivertown in that Laketown is a much newer area that would rely on an entirely different development toolkit. Whereas Rivertown is an older area of gridded streets and small lots owned by a variety of individuals, Laketown is a newer creation. It consists of relatively few parcels; it does not have the infrastructure (sidewalks and a street grid) that established communities do; and it does not have an historic building stock. Given these differences, a more top-down approach to development is appropriate for Laketown—one in which a master developer is selected to implement a ground-up development vision. While less organic than the revitalization of an historic community, master planned communities can generate a similar level of pedestrian activity and mixed-use vitality. Successful examples of this type include River Ranch in Lafayette and Seaside and Rosemary Beach along the Florida Panhandle.

Like Rivertown, Laketown also benefits from an abundance of publicly owned property. Flexibility in the sale or lease price of parcels in Laketown could attract the interest of a wide range of developers. In the context of a stronger national economy, a well crafted Request for Proposals should yield a substantial response from the development community.

To residents of the New Orleans area, the potential of Laketown should be clear. Lake Pontchartrain is a tremendous aesthetic and recreational asset, yet there are precious few opportunities to interface with the Lake, due to low density, residential development patterns. Along with the West End area, Laketown provides one of the only opportunities to create a mixture of commercial, marine, and high density residential uses on the lakefront. And



Rosemary Beach, Florida and the Stapleton development in Denver, Colorado are examples of successful master planned communities. Other examples include RiverPlace in Portland, Oregon, Playa Vista in Los Angeles, and SouthSide Works in Pittsburgh.

Photos by UGArdner and Matthew R. Lloyd

unlike West End, Laketown provides a much cleaner slate for development with relatively few parcels and relatively few property owners. With a capable, visionary master developer at the helm, Laketown should become a second major focal point of exciting, mixed use activity in Kenner in the coming years.

L1. Continue to aggressively recruit the Coconut Beach volleyball complex to Laketown

The most tangible, current initiative to attract new investment to Laketown is a modest yet important effort: recruiting the Coconut Beach volleyball complex to Laketown. Coconut Beach is a sand volleyball facility and accompanying bar that has been located in the West End area. It has long been a popular evening destination for volleyball leagues and for socializing among young professionals. Its location in Orleans Parish has been threatened, though, by forthcoming improvements to flood protection and pump station facilities along the 17th Street Canal. The complex is currently looking for a new home, and Kenner has jumped at the opportunity to bring Coconut Beach to Laketown.

Securing Coconut Beach would merely be the first step in a broader development effort, but it would be an important first step. It would bring an exciting new use to Laketown; it would put Laketown on the map for young professionals; and it would elevate Laketown's overall profile in the same way that the 2011 Oktoberfest raised the profile of Rivertown. The City of Kenner should therefore continue its aggressive recruitment efforts of Coconut Beach.

L2. Formally adopt the 2028 Laketown Master Plan, subject to public comment and review

In 2008, the Kenner Planning Department completed an ambitious plan for the development of Laketown, entitled "2028 Laketown Master Plan." Informed by considerable public input, this plan outlines a cohesive, ambitious physical plan for the site. The plan emphasizes recreational uses on the lakeside of the hurricane protection levee and a mixture of commercial and residential uses



Present day view of Laketown.



The Coconut Beach volleyball complex will help to put Laketown on the map for the region's young professionals.

on the land-side of the levee. The plan was never formally adopted by the Council, but it does represent a comprehensive, publicly crafted plan for the area. As four years have elapsed since the plan was completed, it should be reviewed by the Planning Department in the context of recent developments, such as the overhaul of the zoning ordinance and the proposed redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport. Additionally, there is growing interest in siting commercial development on the lakeside of the hurricane protection levee. This concept should also be revisited by an updated Laketown Master Plan process. The Planning Department should request additional public comment prior to the city's formal adoption of the plan. Given the breadth of the 2028 Laketown Master Plan, there is no need for an entirely new study regarding the future of Laketown. The 2028 Plan is well crafted; an updated version of the Plan should be formally adopted by resolution; and it should serve as the guide for near- and long-term development efforts at Laketown.

L3. Coordinate with the State to issue a request for proposals (RFP) that will solicit public-private development proposals from local and national developers

As the State of Louisiana owns much of the property at Laketown, Kenner should coordinate with the State to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Laketown master developer. With the updated, approved 2028 Laketown Master Plan as their guide, developers should submit conceptual proposals for the design, the mixture of uses, the density, and the implementation schedule that they envision for Laketown. From the list of submittals, a committee would select the highest scoring proposal based on criteria that would evaluate the quality of the proposal and the developer's track record and overall capacity. Kenner would then begin negotiations with the developer on the transfer of property, legal covenants, performance bonds, and other contractual issues.

As the national economy and the finance landscape are still in a fragile condition, interest from developers may be tepid in the near term; but the master developer approach remains the most realistic pathway to creating a thriving, mixed use Laketown.



The Laketown Master Plan, completed in 2008, must be revisited and revised, but it provides an excellent framework for future development at Laketown.

L4. Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations allow for sufficient flexibility in the redevelopment of Laketown, including residential, commercial, and hotel/conference uses

As with Rivertown, Kenner's existing zoning regulations do not permit the kind of development that would create a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district at Laketown. With a new zoning ordinance in the works though, Kenner has a unique opportunity to adopt zoning regulations that will encourage the qualities that the Laketown Master Plan envisions. The new zoning regulations should permit a broad range of uses, including retail, entertainment, multifamily residential, and hotels/conference centers. They should permit sufficient flexibility in height and density so that developers can realize a strong return on investment, and they should insist on community-serving amenities, such as public access to the waterfront.

L5. Establish a Laketown design standards manual and design review commission to ensure that new development in Laketown exemplifies “best practices” in architecture and urban design.

Because Laketown is such a unique area with so much potential, future development warrants particular aesthetic scrutiny. As was discussed in relation to Rivertown, base zoning regulations can go a long way toward ensuring a quality physical environment, but they generally do not have any regulatory control over critical design qualities such as materials and façade design. Through a design review commission and an accompanying design standards manual, Kenner can ensure that new development in Laketown is of the highest quality. Given how open ended the architectural possibilities are in Laketown, a design standards manual can also provide developers with much needed guidance in formulating their development plans.

This kind of discretionary design review is particularly critical for the kind of master planned community that is envisioned at Laketown. In the wrong hands, these communities can feel sterile, manufactured, and can quickly feel dated. In the right hands and with the right design qualities, master planned communities can become cherished neighborhoods that only grow more appealing as they age.

L6. Ensure that a redeveloped Laketown includes provisions for public access, such as publicly accessible commercial areas, a waterfront promenade, or parks and plazas

A fundamental principle of the Laketown 2028 Master Plan is that a substantial portion of Laketown should be preserved for public waterfront access. As public access to the waterfront will improve the quality of life for all Kenner residents—not just those residing within Laketown—public access is a must.



Exacting design standards and an emphasis on aesthetic quality are hallmarks of successful master planned communities. Pictured above is a structure from Rosemary Beach, Florida.

Photo by UGArdner



Well-designed, well-programmed public space, as shown here in the 2008 Laketown Master Plan, is an essential component of future development at Laketown.

L7. Ensure that a redeveloped Laketown is designed to be resilient to flooding

In addition to guaranteed public access, another critical design component of a fully developed Laketown is resilience from wind damage and storm surge. Given its location—particularly those facilities on the lakeside of the hurricane protection levee—Laketown has a higher level of vulnerability than other areas of Kenner. Through zoning and negotiations with potential developers, Kenner must ensure that resilience remain a paramount consideration for the sake of public safety and for the enduring appeal and financial viability of Laketown.

L8. Retain an independent fiscal analyst and fiscal impact consultant who would determine the fiscal costs and benefits of proposed development plans

Public-private development partnerships can be exceedingly complex. Because public resources and public land will necessarily be involved in the development of Laketown, the city should retain an independent fiscal analyst who could assess the fiscal costs and benefits of competing development plans. The technical expertise that this individual would bring to the development process would help to safeguard the public resources and would help to ensure the highest return on investment to Kenner. A sophisticated fiscal analysis would be a major component in the ranking of development proposals from competing master developers. This fiscal consultant could also assist in structuring the terms of a development agreement between Kenner and the selected master developer.

Goal: Work closely with the management of the Esplanade Mall to facilitate on-going redevelopment efforts

The Esplanade Mall is an important retail anchor and tax generator for Kenner. Opened in 1985, The Esplanade had quietly maintained its position as a major player in the region's retail landscape over its first 20 years. In 2005, on the eve of Hurricane Katrina, the Mall recorded its strongest performance ever. It boasted strong sales figures, robust rents, and a minimal vacancy rate. After Katrina, however, its fortunes changed somewhat. The delayed opening of anchor stores caused other tenants to cancel their leases; some customers grew accustomed to shopping at other locations; and there generally was a degree of instability that The Esplanade had not previously witnessed. Vacancies became more visible, and there began to be whispers in the community that the Mall's best days were behind it. Given the dramatic and sudden instability brought on by Katrina, these were not imagined concerns.

Fortunately, the Mall seems to have weathered this period and appears to be on the rebound. One of the most objective measures of success, The Esplanade's ability to attract new tenants, has indeed been trending positive. In July 2011, the Mall secured a major anchor tenant in the form of a new Target store. Another recent addition is a flagship store for the boutique Love Culture, the brand's first entry into the New Orleans market. In 2012, the Esplanade also welcomed the arrival of World of Decor, a Florida-based home furnishings store.

Much of the credit for this recent momentum can be attributed to The Esplanade's ownership/ management team, Simon Properties. Simon is one of the largest mall owners in the entire world with nearly 400 properties. As a major, publicly traded company, its properties are held to an extremely high performance and revenue standard. Declining properties are not tolerated, and aggressive steps are taken to ensure that its malls remain vibrant and profitable. All of Simon's properties benefit from excellent contacts with national retailers, and they also benefit from the leverage that comes from Simon's management of multiple malls. This



presents a wide range of leasing opportunities to a property like The Esplanade.

Management is one of the greatest variables in the success of a mall. Negligent management can result in a downward spiral of vacancy, a declining reputation, further vacancy, and ultimately a failed property. By all indications, The Esplanade seems to have the right ownership and management team in place to sustain the recent positive momentum.

From the standpoint of the City of Kenner, the best course of action is to let Mall management continue their aggressive efforts to attract new tenants and restore the Mall to its pre-storm level of activity. However, there are a number of ancillary functions that the city can play that will provide support to the Mall's management team. These items are detailed below.

E1. Formulate an Esplanade Mall working group whose purpose will be to work with Mall management to monitor redevelopment efforts and represent the interests of the City of Kenner

The City of Kenner should formulate an Esplanade Mall working group consisting of City officials, the Kenner Police Department, business leaders, and real estate professionals. This working group would have no formal authority, but it would play the important role of providing a forum for discussing possible improvements to the Mall and emerging threats to its prosperity. This standing committee would provide a way for city leaders to hear the concerns of Mall management and to identify areas in which municipal services could assist the Mall. The working group could also provide suggestions to Mall management and to report back on the evolving “word on the street” concerning The Esplanade. This working group would initially meet every one to two months on a continuing basis.

E2. Ensure that there is an adequate and visible security presence at the Mall in the form of Kenner police and/or private mall security

Based on the comments of the Economic Development Committee and the feedback provided through surveys, there are concerns about public safety at The Esplanade. According to Mall management, in a given year the Esplanade actually sees fewer instances of crime than Lakeside Mall in Metairie. Nonetheless, the perception that a mall is unsafe can be just as damaging as actual criminal activity. The Kenner Police Department currently provides regular patrols at the Mall on Friday and Saturday nights, providing a highly visible, reassuring security presence. Supplementing the existing week-end patrols with week-night patrols would be optimal and would further improve public confidence. The desire for a stronger police presence must be balanced with the needs of the rest of the city, but every effort should be made to further expand the Kenner Police Department’s presence for the foreseeable future.

E3. Examine the feasibility of the “town center” development concept in the immediate vicinity of the Mall

The Esplanade is ringed by a number of properties that are ripe for redevelopment. These include outparcels of the Mall, as well as properties that have deteriorated. In a number of communities around the country, older Malls have been repositioned as anchors of “town center” developments that combine pedestrian oriented commercial activity with quality residential development. This tends to breathe new life into older Malls while creating an attractive amenity (i.e. proximity to retail) for new development. Kenner should examine how its new zoning ordinance could be used to facilitate this kind of development in the vicinity of The Esplanade.



Underutilized land around the Esplanade could conceivably be redeveloped as a “town center” development in the same way that the Perkins Rowe development in Baton Rouge (pictured) is adjacent to the Mall of Louisiana.

Photo by bmooneyatwork

Goal: Aggressively market Kenner in a targeted, cost efficient manner to existing and prospective businesses and residents.

Of all of the goals within this plan, this one comes closest to the conventional purview of economic development efforts. For all of the significance that the *Kenner 2030* plan accords to quality of life, the importance of traditional business recruitment and retention efforts cannot be underestimated. A strong economic development infrastructure can be the difference between one community's business recruitment success and another community's missed opportunity.

The action items in this arena focus on the technical aspects of business outreach and marketing. Implicit within these action items is a frank recognition of what Kenner can and cannot do. As it comprises only 5.7% of the region's population, Kenner cannot set the economic development agenda for the region, but it can direct targeted economic development and marketing efforts.

Starting with its formal collaboration with JEDCO, there is much that Kenner has done that is positive in recent years. The action items listed below build on these efforts in order to further enhance Kenner's appeal to existing and prospective businesses.

ED1. Continue to retain JEDCO staff to represent Kenner in all economic development endeavors.

JEDCO is far and away the logical choice to continue to manage the day-to-day aspects of Kenner's economic development efforts, such as promotions, business recruitment, and business retention. One of two accredited economic development organizations in Louisiana, JEDCO is a professional organization that has substantial capacity and technical expertise in the economic development arena. Since 2009, Kenner has capitalized on this existing economic development infrastructure by signing a cooperative endeavor agreement with JEDCO. This is a far more cost effective arrangement than trying to somehow duplicate JEDCO's responsibilities within Kenner city government. It is also much more

effective than having no economic development entity representing Kenner's interests. In the short history of the cooperative endeavor agreement, JEDCO has notched a number of signature accomplishments. These include securing Target as an anchor at the Esplanade Mall.

The only change that should be considered in the City's arrangement with JEDCO is the commitment of several years of funding, in lieu of a recurring annual agreement. This would insert greater predictability into the collaboration, and it would free Kenner and JEDCO to pursue more ambitious economic development initiatives that would potentially span multiple years.



ED2. On an annual basis, devise and refine economic development goals and performance metrics for JEDCO staff (e.g. number of site visits conducted, number of leads contacted, etc.).

One way to further refine Kenner's on-going relationship with JEDCO is to devise more objective goals and performance criteria on an annual basis. After all, one of the most difficult questions to answer in economic development (as in many other areas of governance) is how one measures success. By clearly establishing economic development expectations, Kenner will have a basis for confirming JEDCO's value to the community. At the outset of each year, the City could also work closely with JEDCO to modify the goals for the forthcoming year depending on changing conditions and emerging opportunities. This kind of regular strategic assessment would help to ensure that JEDCO's services are being maximized. Kenner should also work with JEDCO to develop objective, quantitative annual goals such as the number of leads contacted and site visits conducted. These metrics will help to track progress, and they will simultaneously convey JEDCO's value to Kenner residents and business leaders.

ED3. Commission an independent commercial/retail market study to develop an accurate, nuanced analysis of commercial/retail supply and demand in Kenner

One of the lingering problems that Kenner faces is an inventory of vacant commercial property. This is an issue that was repeatedly mentioned as a problem by members of the Economic Development Committee. There are many potential reasons for retail vacancy. It could be the result of a typical, healthy “churn” in the market. It could be the result of negligent property owners. It could be the result of changes in national trends in retailing, such as the increasing shift to on-line commerce. Retail vacancy could also be a consequence of the changing market fundamentals of an area, such as a decline in population and/or household purchasing power.

A comprehensive retail market study for Kenner would help to answer many of these questions and would provide some policy direction for the City. If, for instance, the level of vacancy is determined to be part of the healthy, periodic turnover of property, then little intervention would be called for. If, on the other hand, there is an oversupply of retail space in Kenner, the City should perhaps consider a number of re-use possibilities for vacant commercial properties, such as senior housing. Whatever the cause and whatever the solution, this kind of market study would provide Kenner with valuable information that would help to resolve the problem.

ED4. Pending the outcome of the commercial/retail market study, examine the feasibility of retaining a retail attraction consultant to work with JEDCO to attract new commercial tenants to Kenner

One potential solution to surplus vacant commercial property is to retain a retail attraction specialist. This kind of consultant could assist Kenner in securing retailers that are likely to succeed in the market. Whether this is the right policy response for Kenner would hinge on the results of the aforementioned retail market study (ED3). Indeed, if the decline in retail activity is the result of

**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR NEW
RETAIL, RESIDENTIAL AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH**

City of Central, Louisiana

3/9/2009
GCR & Associates, Inc.



A retail market study, such as this one completed for the City of Central, Louisiana, can help Kenner to determine whether there is unmet demand for retail and other commercial uses. If there is an oversupply of commercial space in Kenner, alternate land use and redevelopment strategies for these properties should be evaluated.

fundamental changes in Kenner’s market potential, then a retail attraction specialist will likely make little difference. If, on the other hand, Kenner has been somewhat overlooked by national and local retailers, this consultant could use her contacts to convey the market potential of Kenner and link retailers to potential store



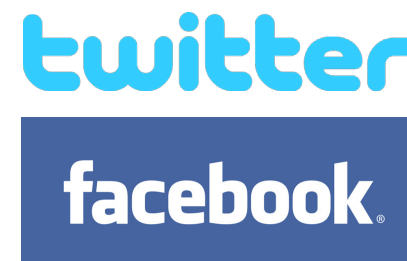
The New Orleans Downtown Development District has retained a retail attraction specialist and has prepared informational materials in order to attract additional retailers to the Canal Street corridor.

locations. Retaining a retail attraction specialist is an approach that has been used by other communities around the country. At the local level, it is a solution that the New Orleans Downtown Development District is pursuing in order to attract stronger retailers to Canal Street.

ED5. Initiate a Facebook and Twitter presence for the City of Kenner to promote positive news, major developments, and the overall quality of life of Kenner

Social media represents one of the best, most cost effective ways for Kenner to disseminate positive information and improve the overall public perception of Kenner. People increasingly stay informed through non-traditional news sources including social media. In the old news regime, communities were at the mercy of local media to shape public opinion. In the new era of social media,

communities have a much greater capacity to positively influence public perception by setting the message. Through Facebook and Twitter, Kenner could announce special events, convey progress on major initiatives, herald major economic development successes, and generally convey to the public a positive community image. The audience for social media tends to be a younger demographic, so an intelligent, witty, informal social media presence could help to improve Kenner's cache among this demographic. This is something that is sorely needed in light of the survey results that highlight Kenner's negative reputation among those in the 18 – 34 age bracket.



ED6. Develop promotional materials for Realtors and social organizations (e.g. 504ward, Young Leadership Council) to emphasize the benefits of owning or renting in Kenner.

Based again on the survey results that were obtained at the outset of this planning process, Kenner has substantial ground to make up in improving its image, particularly among young people. In addition to a strong social media presence, Kenner should create promotional materials, such as flyers and brochures, that would play up the benefits of living in Kenner. In order to reach a younger audience, their tone could be playful and irreverent, but they could nonetheless highlight Kenner's substantial advantages relative to other communities: the cost of a mortgage in Kenner vs. other communities, the quality of the housing stock, the responsiveness of local government, the safety of its neighborhoods relative to other areas of the region.

These materials could be distributed periodically to Realtors, a group that is directly involved in shaping the housing/neighborhood preferences of individuals. They could also be distributed

Through formal outreach and printed materials for Realtors, Kenner should emphasize the advantages of living in Kenner, including:

- Safety
- A higher quality house for the money
- Lower cost of homeowner's insurance
- Lower cost of automobile insurance
- Proximity to Lake Pontchartrain
- Recreational amenities

These points of comparison should be conveyed in a compelling manner with quantitative data and a highly visual presentation.

to social organizations that target young professionals in the New Orleans region, such as 504ward and the Young Leadership Council. To test the effectiveness of these outreach efforts in shaping public opinions, the city could conduct an annual survey measuring public attitudes about Kenner. Through the survey, changes in public sentiment could be measured, and the messaging campaign could be modified accordingly.



ED7. Work with JEDCO to ensure that data on vacant, developable properties in Kenner are continually updated.

One of the basic roles that local economic development organizations play is to provide prospective companies and site selectors with an inventory of properties that may meet their needs. This property-specific information typically includes data on the dimensions of the property, its assessed value, utilities serving the site, zoning regulations, and other characteristics. Economic development organizations cannot compel prospective companies to relocate, but they can provide them with the best information possible.

Kenner should work closely with JEDCO to ensure that its database of available properties provides the most accurate, up-to-date information on prime, developable properties in Kenner. This will ensure that Kenner is strongly considered when companies consider relocating to Jefferson Parish.

ED8. Develop marketing and promotional materials on available commercial properties in Kenner for site selectors, prospective businesses, and key economic development partners (GNO Inc., Louisiana Economic Development).

In order to reach a broader audience with more ample resources, Kenner should not stop at merely updating data on available, developable properties. The city should also periodically prepare brochures or other such promotional materials that highlight those properties in Kenner that would be most appealing to companies and site selectors. In a concise, straightforward fashion, these materials would provide basic site-specific information (zoning, property value, dimensions, etc.) as well as a simple qualitative description of the site's characteristics. These materials could be distributed periodically to points of contact at Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and Greater New Orleans Inc. to ensure that more state and regionally driven economic development efforts take Kenner into consideration. Again, while Kenner cannot compel companies to locate within its boundaries, it can ensure that prospective companies have access to the best information possible.

ED9. Conduct a “cluster analysis” of existing businesses to examine Kenner’s potential to build strengths in a particular industry or industries.

One way to provide a more strategic direction to economic development efforts is to capitalize on economic “clusters” within a community. Clusters are groups of similar industries that benefit from symbiotic relationships. Supply chain interactions, a skilled labor market, close relationships between industry and universities—these are some of the competitive advantages that accrue to economic clusters. Perhaps the most famous and gargantuan of economic clusters is the Silicon Valley region of the San Francisco Bay Area in which an entire self-sustaining ecosystem of entrepreneurship, innovation, research, and venture capital has arisen over the past 40 years.

Building on existing strengths is generally recognized as a more effective economic strategy than trying to build an industry from the ground up. Kenner should therefore commission a cluster analysis to determine the established and emerging clusters within its borders. This assessment would provide JEDCO with a stronger sense of the kinds of companies that would be most drawn to Kenner and the companies that would create the strongest economic spinoff effects.

ED10. Examine best practices (in micro-lending, marketing, technical assistance) from communities around the country to facilitate entrepreneurship and wealth creation for Kenner’s growing Hispanic population.

One of Kenner’s strongest economic assets is its burgeoning Hispanic population. Throughout the history of the United States, immigrant populations have brought vitality, a strong work ethic, and an entrepreneurial zeal to the communities in which they reside. Helping these qualities to flower represents one of the best avenues for grassroots economic development in Kenner. Indeed, economic development is not only about attracting new investment into a community; it is also about furthering opportu-

nity for those residents and businesses that are already present. Kenner has created resources for its large Hispanic population, such as the Hispanic Resource Center. However, it does not appear that Kenner has ever taken a particularly systematic approach to evaluating what other communities are doing to further economic opportunity for their immigrant populations.

Consequently, Kenner should evaluate best practices from around the country relative to the kinds of business development services that are provided to immigrant populations. Services may include assistance with citizenship and legal residency, securing financing, identifying market opportunities, and other technical aspects of running a business. From the experience of other communities, Kenner would also be able to determine how to measure the effectiveness of these efforts so that progress may be systematically evaluated and periodic adjustments made.

La Fuerza Unida Community Development Corporation, founded in 2001, is a microlending institution focusing on the needs of minority small business owners in the Long Island area. They are focused on improving prospects for minority, low-income, and women owned businesses; and they provide technical assistance and lending to qualified owners. The organization also provides technical assistance to its customers in the form of financial literacy workshops, business plan development, seminars and classes.



Goal: Support efforts to provide high quality public education for Kenner residents

Little explanation is required for including public education as a focal point of the *Kenner 2030* plan. A strong public education system improves the quality of the workforce; it reduces the incidence of social problems; and it serves to attract residences and businesses to a community. In an economy where businesses and individuals are less tied to a particular place, Jefferson Parish is ill equipped to compete with other communities on the basis of its public education system. Recent statewide rankings showed limited gains in the performance of Jefferson Parish schools, though the system remains well below the statewide mean along a number of indicators. Jefferson's lackluster performance comes into even sharper contrast when one considers Louisiana's longstanding underperformance in relation to the other 49 states. Jefferson is therefore a below average school system in a below average state.

Kenner, as part of the Jefferson Parish school system, has significant work to do if it hopes to attract a next generation of families on the basis of public education. At present, its schools are not competitive with the schools in St. Tammany Parish, St. Charles Parish, and increasingly even Orleans Parish. Fortunately, Jefferson appears to be moving in the right direction. Superintendent James Meza and the recently elected Jefferson Parish School Board have outlined an ambitious reform agenda. This includes introducing additional charter schools to Jefferson Parish, closing schools that are low performing or that are substantially under capacity, changing teacher and principal assignments, and re-allocating funding to the schools that have the greatest needs.

As the City of Kenner is not responsible for running the schools, the *Kenner 2030* plan focuses on advocacy and more systematic monitoring. Even though City of Kenner does not directly control public education, it still has a vital role to play in pressing for improved quality.



PE1. Actively support the on-going school reform efforts of the Jefferson Parish School Board and Superintendent Meza

Within the last year, there has been a renewed sense of purpose and heightened expectations around Jefferson Parish Public Schools (JPPS). Much of the credit must go to Superintendent Meza and the Jefferson Parish School Board. As discussed in the introduction, they have outlined an ambitious agenda to dramatically reform public education.

As with any reform effort, no one can guarantee its success. What is clear, though, is that the previous system was not working. Many of the proposed reforms also make intuitive sense. They highlight much of the illogic and inefficiency of prior practices, such as maintaining the same number of school campuses despite a significant decline in enrollment. The reforms that Jefferson is proposing also mimic the changes that were made in Orleans Parish that have been associated with profound gains in student achievement. Charter schools, greater autonomy at the level of individual schools, and greater discretion in personnel decisions

are all hallmarks of the reforms adopted by New Orleans Public Schools. Since these reforms were enacted, the percentage of Orleans public school students who are attending academically failing schools has fallen precipitously.

Again, one cannot be certain that Jefferson will achieve the same dramatic results, but the reforms that Dr. Meza and the School Board are pursuing appear to be sufficiently ambitious and sufficiently well thought out.

Kenner can provide indirect support for these reform efforts in a variety of ways—in the comments of public officials, in discussions with constituents, in official letters and resolutions in support of reform efforts, and in simply maintaining a regular dialogue with school officials.

PE2. Advocate for the establishment of a new charter school in Kenner.

There are several reasons why Kenner should advocate for a new public charter school within its boundaries. The first is the overwhelming success that the charter schools in New Orleans have experienced. Not all of New Orleans' charters have attained the same educational outcomes, but a substantial number have indeed achieved remarkable results. Their success is a prime contributor to the overall increase in student performance throughout the New Orleans public school system. There is no guarantee that a charter school will succeed in Kenner; but given the lackluster record of the existing public schools and given the success that New Orleans has had, it is certainly an avenue that should be explored.

A second reason why Kenner should advocate for a charter school is the positive reputation that charters enjoy. Charters profit from an identity that is distinct from a larger, more monolithic public school system. They frequently have a unique, themed curriculum such as a language immersion program, and as a result, they may have a higher public profile than a "typical" public school. This elevated identity, coupled with the flexibility and autonomy that many people associate with charters, could convince residents

that quality public education does indeed exist in Kenner. This, in turn, could help to diminish the competitive disadvantage that Kenner currently suffers from in relation to public school systems elsewhere in the metro area.

The kind of advocacy that Kenner could pursue in support of a charter school is similar to what is described in action item PE1: writing letters, writing editorials in the newspaper, meeting with school officials, encouraging constituents to speak up, and generally arousing public support for a charter school. Kenner's initial application for a charter school—a life sciences themed school—failed to obtain the approval of Jefferson Parish Public Schools in the fall of 2011. This should not deter community leaders from continuing to pursue this worthwhile objective.

PE3. Work with the School Board to prioritize capital improvements to schools located within Kenner.

The physical plant in which a school is located is one of many components of a successful school. Schools that have high quality facilities are more likely to be appealing to those families who can afford to send their children to private or parochial schools. Kenner



New, high quality school facilities are one reason why New Orleans is attracting a broader base of families and students to the public school system.

therefore has a better chance of attracting new middle class families to the city if it can boast of quality school facilities. Secondly, high quality facilities have even been associated with stronger student performance. Students learn more readily in a quality physical plant than they do in a deteriorating building. It is for these reasons that Kenner should dialogue with the JPPS Administration and School Board to advocate for capital improvements to the public schools that are located in Kenner. Given the age of the entire system and current resource constraints, only a fraction of schools will be able to undergo major capital upgrades in the near term. Nonetheless, the only way for Kenner to jump to the head of the queue is to begin this conversation with school officials.

PE4. Commission a feasibility study to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of creating a separate City of Kenner school district.

One reform that has been discussed in recent years is the notion of establishing a new City of Kenner School District that is distinct from Jefferson Parish Public Schools. This is a tactic that has been pursued in other communities throughout the state in recent years. The rationale is that a smaller school system would be more nimble, more responsive, and less saddled with a cumbersome bureaucracy than the existing Parish-wide system. The idea for a separate Kenner school district was floated several years before Superintendent Meza and the present School Board launched their ambitious effort at system-wide reform. Thus, it may make sense to postpone this feasibility study until the results of present reform efforts become apparent. Should the transformations currently underway fail to produce meaningful results, a discrete Kenner school district may be the most promising path to better public schools in Kenner. If such a study is commissioned, it would likely cover, among other topics, startup costs, annual operating costs, the potential tax burden to Kenner residents, and case studies of other independent school districts in Louisiana.



Central Community School System and Zachary Community Schools are two independent, high performing school districts within East Baton Rouge Parish. If the reforms currently underway fail to produce meaningful improvement in Jefferson Parish Public Schools, Kenner may consider establishing an independent school district.

PE5. Closely monitor school reform efforts and changes in the performance of public schools located within Kenner

A simple way that Kenner can take a more proactive role in public education is to systematically monitor the indicators of achievement at Kenner public schools. JPPS and the Louisiana Department of Education collect a wealth of data on attendance, student achievement, the demographic composition of the student body, and a host of other indicators. On an annual basis, the City should prepare a concise report summarizing recent reforms/policy changes and the performance of the public schools located within Kenner. Their performance should be couched in relation to previous years' data, as well as the performance of JPPS overall.

PE6. Actively engage the School Board and School Administration if test scores at Kenner’s public schools fail to improve.

With better information and regular progress reports in hand, Kenner’s leaders will be in a far better position to engage JPPS officials if schools fail to show improvement. Scrutiny from the City of Kenner would introduce further accountability to the school system. If schools in Kenner fail to improve, Kenner’s political and civic leadership could then directly and intelligently engage JPPS to demand corrective action. If corrective action is not forthcoming, Kenner could more aggressively pursue the concept of establishing an independent school district.

Goal: Transform Kenner's older commercial corridors into economically prosperous, aesthetically appealing boulevards

Kenner, like much of the rest of Jefferson Parish, is not known as a particularly aesthetically appealing community. The reason for this is not Kenner's tidy residential streets but rather its commercial thoroughfares. The older thoroughfares in particular—much of Williams Boulevard, Veterans Boulevard, and Airline Drive, for example—are indeed underwhelming. Characterized by oversized signage, scant landscaping, and a tangle of powerlines, these streets hardly convey an image of prosperity. They feel tired, dated, and are simply unattractive.

It may be tempting to relegate this issue to the backburner of problems that the city faces, but the condition of these corridors presents several problems. First, these roads provide a horrible first impression to visitors and prospective businesses. Much of the development is simply unattractive and in need of reinvestment, and the overall aesthetic conveys none of the energy and community pride that Kenner residents have. These thoroughfares stand in marked contrast to the lush, uncluttered appearance of more planned suburban communities such as The Woodlands, Texas which provide a feeling of wealth and prosperity. On the basis of aesthetics, Kenner is at a tremendous competitive disadvantage in appealing to outside residents and businesses.

Due to the city's compact size, overhauling even a one-mile stretch of roadway could have a profound impact on individuals' impression of Kenner.



The appearance of Kenner's commercial corridors (top) stands in marked contrast to the well-kept appearance of most of its residential streets (bottom).

The second major problem associated with Kenner's thoroughfares is that they affect property values and therefore the city's fiscal strength. It is no coincidence that the Jefferson Parish neighborhood that has experienced the greatest appreciation in property values over the past 20-30 years is Old Metairie, the Parish's most aesthetically appealing neighborhood. One explanation as to why Kenner has not seen similar growth in property values is the fact that its thoroughfares serve as the "front door" to its neighborhoods.

Stagnant property values are also a symptom of a larger issue—Kenner's inability to attract a new generation of residents. Kenner's thoroughfares do little to address the neighborhood preferences of a younger generation. As discussed earlier, younger individuals have indicated that they value neighborhoods that are aesthetically appealing, that are pedestrian oriented, and that provide quality commercial uses within walking distance. Kenner's thoroughfares are none of these things, and their dated, 1970's feel is likely a major reason why young residents of the New Orleans area do not have a particularly favorable impression of Kenner. Transforming the look and feel of Kenner's major thoroughfares is one of the most immediate, tangible things that the city can do to demonstrate Kenner's resurgence and to make the city more appealing to outsiders. There is indeed reason for hope. First of all, not all of Kenner's major streets are unattractive. Considerable stretches of Loyola Drive, West Esplanade, and Vintage Boulevard are all attractive, well landscaped, uncluttered suburban boulevards. What Kenner needs is more of a facelift in certain areas rather than citywide reconstructive surgery. Second, because Kenner is compact geographically, relatively small scale improvements could yield tremendous benefits in the city's appearance and, in turn, its reputation within the region. Due to the sheer size of Jefferson or Orleans parishes, for example, dramatically improving a one mile stretch of roadway would probably do little to change people's perceptions. In Kenner, though, that scale of improvement would make a more significant impression. A final reason for optimism is the potential overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport. Kenner can make a very compelling case that spending a billion dollars on a state of the art terminal makes little sense

if the approach to the Airport is not given a similar overhaul. A gleaming terminal deserves a gleaming approach. Funding for capital improvements at the Airport could potentially be leveraged to improve adjacent thoroughfares such as Williams Boulevard, Veterans Boulevard, and Airline Drive.



Some of the major corridors in Kenner, such as Chateau Boulevard and portions of Loyola, West Esplanade, and Vintage, are already attractive, well landscaped streets.

CC1. Commission an independent commercial/retail market study to determine the future market potential of Kenner's commercial corridors, with a particular focus on vacant/underutilized commercial properties.

This is the same action item that is outlined above as action item ED3. It is relevant to the city's immediate economic development efforts, and it is also relevant to the vitality of Kenner's thoroughfares. Understanding the characteristics of the commercial market is the first step to prescribing redevelopment strategies for fallow properties along the corridors.



Understanding the characteristics of Kenner's commercial/retail market is the first step toward addressing the issue of vacant and underutilized commercial properties.

CC2. Based on the results of a commercial/retail market study, develop land use and commercial recruitment strategies for vacant and underutilized commercial properties in Kenner.

The results of the market study will help to craft the future land use and zoning strategies for properties along Kenner's thorough-

fares. If the market can support additional commercial development and if commercial vacancy is a temporary phenomenon, then few changes in land use and zoning may be needed. If, on the other hand, Kenner does have excess commercial space for the foreseeable future, then perhaps alternate land uses may be called for to spur redevelopment on these vacant sites. Mixed use development with housing located above commercial uses may be one adaptive strategy. Another strategy may be to capitalize on demographic changes by encouraging the construction of senior housing on the site of fallow properties.

CC3. Pending the outcome of the commercial/retail market study, examine the feasibility of retaining a retail attraction consultant to work with JEDCO to attract new commercial tenants to Kenner.

This is the same action item that was outlined above as action item ED4. If the market study suggests that demand does exist for Kenner's present inventory of retail property, then retaining a retail attraction specialist would be a worthwhile strategy. If the market study indicates that Kenner has a substantial oversupply of retail property, then adaptive reuse would be a more intelligent strategy than further marketing efforts.

CC4. Ensure that Kenner's new zoning regulations allow for sufficient flexibility in the redevelopment of vacant commercial properties, including permitting new types of development, such as mixed use development.

According to the city's planning department, Kenner's present zoning ordinance is too inflexible when it comes to allowing certain types of development. For instance, the ordinance all but prohibits "mixed use" development that features residential uses above ground floor commercial activity. The mixed use development type is one that has become increasingly popular in recent years. It has the benefit of creating the kind of convenience and street level activity that appeals to young adults. Particularly given questions about the overall demand for conventional retail space in Kenner,

the new zoning ordinance should allow greater flexibility in the kinds of uses that are permitted along Kenner's thoroughfares. For example, the new regulations should allow a half-vacant strip shopping center to be redeveloped into an attractive mixed-use building.

CC5. Ensure that Kenner's new zoning regulations incorporate national best practices for new development along Kenner's commercial corridors, including strong standards for parking, landscaping, signage, and urban design

While the present zoning regulations are overly restrictive in some regards, they provide insufficient guidance in other ways. Based on the quality of the built environment, Kenner's zoning regulations have historically been overly lax in regulating aesthetic appearance. Much of the older development along Kenner's thoroughfares is characterized by:

- overly large and overly tall signage
- insufficient landscaping
- unattractive and overly prominent parking lots
- unattractive building facades.

The new zoning regulations that are in the process of being written provide an excellent opportunity to institute more exacting aesthetic standards throughout the community. Newer commercial development along Loyola Drive and West Esplanade, for example, has generally been held to a higher aesthetic standard. The new zoning ordinance is an opportunity to mandate the same or even higher level of quality throughout the city.

CC6. Examine the feasibility of establishing a formal design review process for new development along select commercial corridors

As was discussed in the context of Rivertown and Laketown, a discretionary design review process—in addition to base zoning regulations—may be an appropriate strategy for new develop-



Mixed use development, combining residential and commercial uses, should be permitted under Kenner's new zoning ordinance. This kind of development could breathe new life into Kenner's commercial corridors and could revitalize vacant commercial properties. Photo by JoelInSouthernCA



Zoning regulations exert a profound influence on the physical environment. The top picture is a newer commercial development along Loyola Drive while the bottom picture typifies the more lax standards for commercial development that guided development along Kenner's older commercial corridors.

ment along Kenner’s commercial corridors. There is ample precedent within the New Orleans region for a discretionary design review process for suburban thoroughfares. The City of Mandeville has a design review process in place along many of its major streets; Jefferson Parish holds development along Veterans Boulevard to a higher aesthetic standard; and New Orleans has a design review process in place along a number of streets, such as Harrison Avenue in Lakeview. Kenner’s thoroughfares may not require the same degree of careful oversight as Rivertown and Laketown, but



Effective sign regulations are often the difference between an attractive and a profoundly unattractive commercial corridor. The first picture is of older commercial development along Loyola Drive near I-10. The second picture represents the restrained signage that is typical of newer development in Kenner, in this case at the corner of Loyola and West Esplanade.

a discretionary design review process should be contemplated as the city’s zoning ordinance is being overhauled.

CC7. As a component of Kenner’s new zoning regulations, examine the feasibility of “amortizing” overly large, unsightly, and poorly maintained signage along key commercial corridors

One of the most glaring aesthetic problems with many of Kenner’s major thoroughfares is the clutter of overly large, overly tall signs. What most attractive suburban boulevards have in common is an absence of visual clutter, where signage is restrained and where greenery is the dominant feature of the streetscape. One way to improve the quality of signage over time is to “amortize” signs that are no longer in conformance with more stringent sign regulations. The way that the amortization process works is that a community first passes new signage regulations. Existing businesses then have a certain period of time (five to ten years, for instance) to bring their signage into compliance. This way, communities do not have to wait for the arrival of entirely new development in order to improve their appearance, and existing business owners do not have to come into compliance overnight. This is a technique



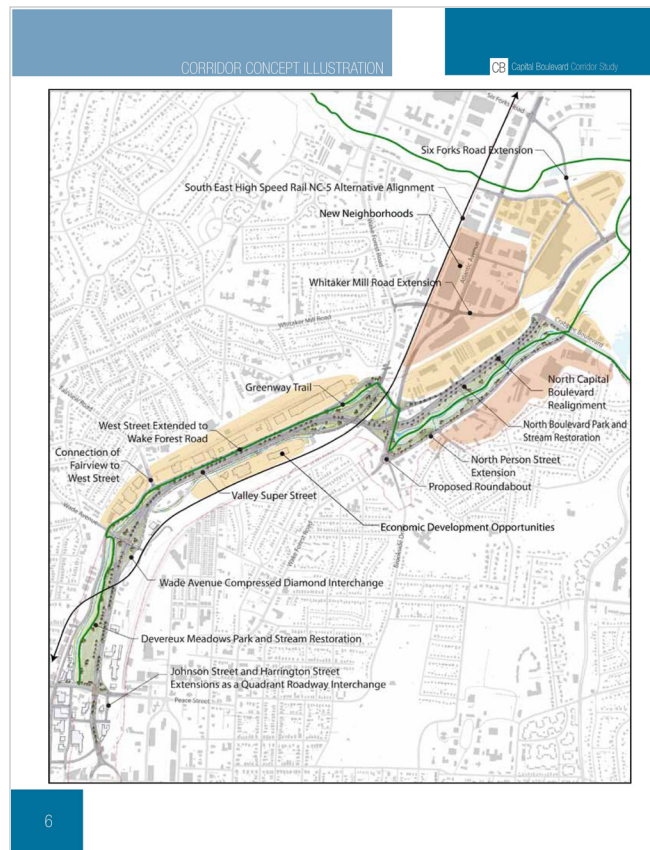
that was incorporated into the newly adopted zoning regulations for Fat City in Jefferson Parish, so there is regulatory precedent for this approach within the community.

CC8. Examine the feasibility of establishing a landscape matching grant program to encourage landscaping improvements to older commercial properties along major corridors

In many *urban* areas, one program that has been used to spur the revitalization of old commercial main streets is a façade improvement program. Typically, the local government administering such a program provides a matching grant to property owners to rehabilitate the exterior of their structures. Such programs are credited with dramatically improving the appearance of older commercial streets and attracting new investment. As Kenner's thoroughfares are suburban in character, an analogous suburban-oriented approach would help to improve the appearance of older commercial properties. A landscape improvement grant could dramatically improve the appearance of shopping centers and other commercial buildings that were developed before the advent of more stringent landscaping requirements. Operating under the same matching grant principle as a façade improvement program, such an initiative could result in substantial improvements in the appearance of older commercial properties at a relatively low cost to city government.

CC9. Commission a commercial corridor improvement study that will outline an aesthetic vision for Kenner's older commercial corridors, identify needed capital improvements, identify funding scenarios, and develop a phased approach to implementation

Before undertaking a major capital campaign to improve the streetscapes of Kenner's major thoroughfares, the city must have a clearer picture of what such an initiative would specifically entail. A corridor improvement study in which Kenner would retain an urban design and engineering firm would provide the specific



The Capital Boulevard Corridor Study in Raleigh, North Carolina is an example of another community's efforts to transform a major commercial corridor into a more vibrant, attractive, and "livable" street.

basis for future capital investments. This study would entail a detailed assessment of costs, the preparation of a variety of design/cost scenarios, a proposed phasing schedule, development of an implementation plan, and perhaps the selection a street segment or segments that would make for a promising pilot project.

CC10. Based on the results of the corridor improvement study, secure local, state, and federal funding to implement a pilot project of comprehensive streetscape improvements along one of Kenner's commercial corridors

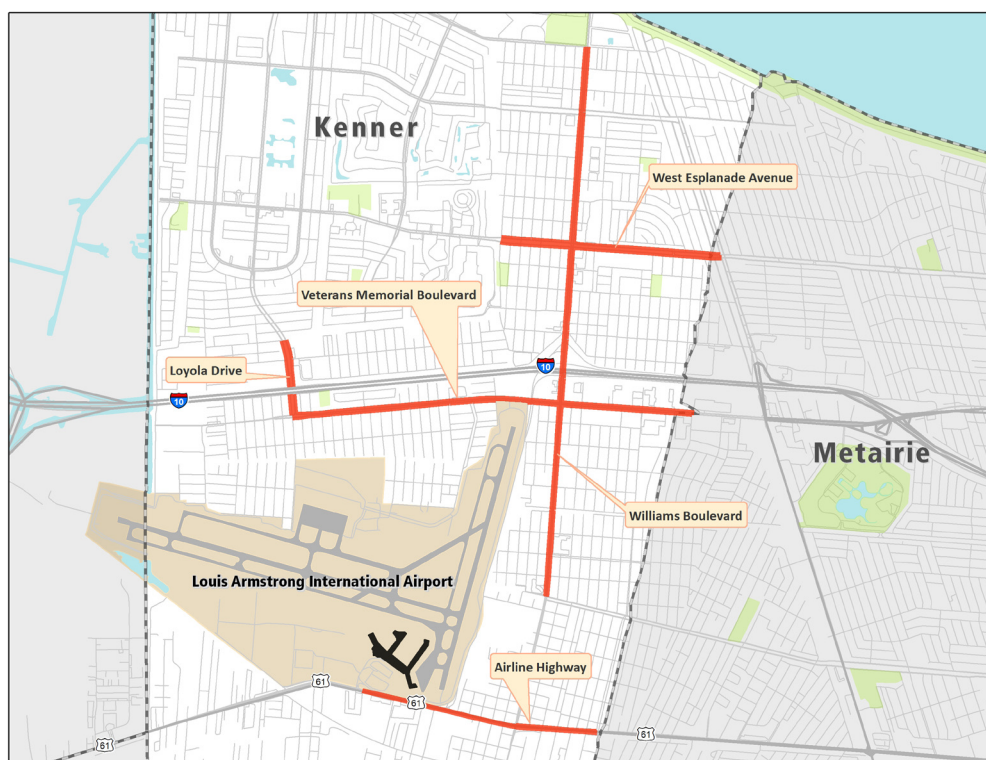
In the context of limited local, state, and federal budgets, the most likely way for Kenner to actually implement a comprehensive streetscape initiative is to start with a pilot project along a single thoroughfare or even a small, distinct stretch of thoroughfare. This project should be ambitious, and it should not settle for half

measures. Pedestrian and bicycle amenities, landscaped neutral grounds, the burying of overhead powerlines, and additional street trees should all be on the menu of improvements. The advantage of a pilot project is that it would give Kenner residents a tangible example of the kind of dramatic aesthetic transformation that streetscaping can produce. This, in turn, could generate further public support to replicate streetscape projects throughout the community, and it could even generate support for a dedicated local funding stream.

Based on a preliminary examination of the thoroughfares that have the greatest aesthetic needs, GCR has identified the following Kenner road segments as candidate areas for a pilot streetscaping project:

- **Williams Boulevard from Joe Yenni Boulevard to Vintage Drive (0.38 miles)**
- **Williams Boulevard from Joe Yenni Boulevard to I-10 (a larger project that includes the segment from Joe Yenni Boulevard to Vintage Drive, 1.64 miles)**
- **Williams Boulevard from I-10 to West Metairie Avenue (1.25 miles)**
- **Veterans Boulevard from the Kenner city line to the Airport Access Road (0.84 miles)**
- **Veterans Boulevard from the Airport Access Road to Loyola Drive (1.4 miles)**
- **Loyola Drive from Veterans Boulevard to Emerson Street (0.45 miles)**
- **Airline Drive from Roosevelt Drive to the Airport terminal (1.63 miles)**
- **West Esplanade from David Drive to Arizona Avenue (1.25 miles)**

Collectively, these street segments total approximately 8.5 miles. At a very approximate (though very generous) cost of \$9 million dollars per mile¹³, a single pilot project could cost as little as \$3.4 million—a figure that could conceivably be met through outside funding sources.



The street segments highlighted in the above map are those that are prime candidates for a corridor improvement initiative. These have been selected based on traffic volume, visibility, opportunities for new investment, and their current aesthetic condition.

¹³This figure was derived from a review of streetscaping projects undertaken by other communities throughout the United States. Depending on the complexity and breadth of work, this cost could be as low as \$1 million per mile. The \$9 million figure cited within this report includes a wide range of improvements such as undergrounding overhead utilities, installing additional lighting and landscaping, and installing pedestrian improvements, such as enhanced crosswalks.

CC11. Develop a funding strategy to implement comprehensive streetscape improvements along all of Kenner's major corridors, as outlined in the commercial corridor improvement study

Kenner does not have nearly the resources to undertake a major streetscaping initiative for the full 8.5 miles of thoroughfare that have the greatest needs. However, such an initiative could potentially be phased in over a period of 10 to 20 years. External funding from the Airport (discussed below) could also be part of the financial equation. It is also possible that not all of the aforementioned street segments would necessarily have to receive the same comprehensive (and costly) treatment.

While this initiative would be ambitious, funding should not be a reason for inaction. To put the cost of a comprehensive streetscape initiative in context, \$42.4 million is currently being spent on widening 1.2 miles of I-10, from Veterans Boulevard to Clearview Parkway, just to the east of Kenner. The price tag for this project is approximately the same as the cost of a deluxe, streetscaping project for nearly every unsightly thoroughfare in Kenner. In contrast to a major streetscape initiative, though, the I-10 widening project that is recently underway will yield little direct benefit to Kenner. It may improve commute times slightly, but its primary purpose will be to help cars and trucks whiz more rapidly through Kenner and Metairie. A comprehensive streetscape initiative, on the other hand, would produce abundant redevelopment opportunities; it would substantially enhance the appeal of Kenner's neighborhoods; it would elevate property values and the tax base; and it would dramatically improve visitors' overall impression of Kenner. In the context of a \$42 million interstate expansion and a \$1 billion improvement to the Airport, Kenner should not be intimidated by the cost of a 10 – 20 year citywide streetscape initiative. A funding strategy, which could potentially be rolled into the corridor improvement study described above (action item CC9), would provide the city with tangible options for funding such an initiative.



Comprehensive streetscaping enhancements could transform this stretch of Williams Boulevard. Burying the overhead wires, replacing the stop lights with more permanent fixtures, improving landscaping, and providing accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians would have a profound effect on the aesthetic appeal of the street.



Rendering of comprehensive streetscape improvements along another stretch of Williams Boulevard.

CC12. Leverage funding for the redevelopment of the Airport to improve traffic flow and the quality of the streetscape of major roads in the vicinity of the Airport and the Airport approach to/from I-10.

This is the same action item that is outlined above as action item A4. A \$1 billion, state-of-the-art terminal at Louis Armstrong Airport should absolutely be accompanied by major aesthetic improvements to the streets that will lead to the gleaming new facility. It is not unreasonable to suggest that 1 - 5% of the project cost be dedicated to dramatic streetscape enhancements. As visitors leave the Airport terminal, the condition of these roads will influence their first impression of the entire New Orleans region.

CC13. Secure funding for soundwalls along I-10 in Kenner.

For those arriving at Louis Armstrong Airport and for those arriving in the New Orleans region by car, the view from I-10 provides another critical first impression of Kenner and the entire region. Unfortunately, the view is far from flattering, as it is dominated by open drainage canals, a tangle of powerlines, and service entrances to big box stores and apartment buildings. The easiest way to improve this utilitarian aesthetic while also reducing highway noise would be to install sound barriers, similar to those installed along the interstate in Metairie. Kenner should work with the Regional Planning Commission to secure funding for this improvement.

Goal: Improve code enforcement practices to prevent decline in Kenner’s stable neighborhoods and to attract new investment to struggling neighborhoods.

The surveys that GCR conducted and the feedback of the Economic Development Committee highlighted a number of concerns about the condition of Kenner’s neighborhoods. “Neighborhood blight” was cited as one of the most significant threats to the city’s well-being, and this concern was supported by a number of anecdotal observations. According to Committee members, formerly stable neighborhoods have become somewhat dilapidated, and even largely middle class areas are seeing emerging blight and quality of life problems. To better understand these problems, it is useful to see neighborhoods in the context of market dynamics. When markets are functioning properly, blight rarely occurs, and owners continually reinvest in their properties. When markets falter, however, maintenance is deferred, absentee ownership increases, blight arises, and the market appeal of the neighborhood is further undermined.

Virtually all of the action items that this plan recommends—from improving Rivertown to beautifying Kenner’s commercial corridors—are fundamentally about bolstering market demand for Kenner’s neighborhoods. By improving the overall economy and quality of life in Kenner, there will be robust demand for Kenner’s neighborhoods, thereby obviating the need for aggressive code enforcement. In the meantime, though, code enforcement is an important tool that the city can use to enhance the market appeal of its neighborhoods.

It should be noted that different strategies are called for in different neighborhoods. Code violations, by themselves, will likely be most effective in those neighborhoods that are already stable. Aggressive code enforcement can ward off emerging problems and can bolster residents’ confidence in the quality of their neighborhood. In struggling neighborhoods, code enforcement may have to be paired with more aggressive action. Property owners



Residential blight is a nagging problem in some of Kenner’s neighborhoods.

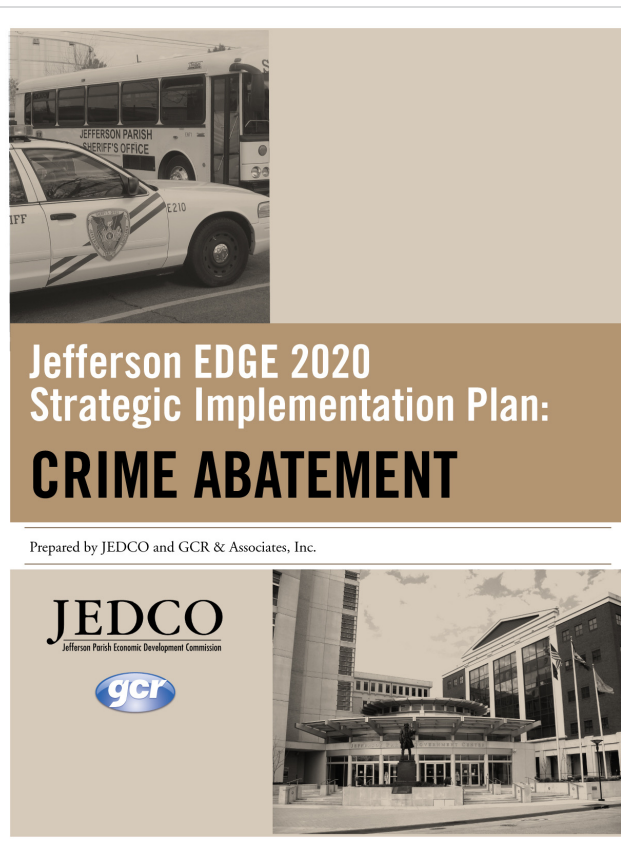
may not have the resources to fully address code violations. More ambitious projects, such as public acquisition of blighted property and public-private redevelopment partnerships, may be needed to jump start market forces in these areas.

CE1. Commission an independent, third party review to evaluate the effectiveness of Kenner's building and property maintenance codes and the effectiveness of enforcement efforts

A third party perspective, particularly one that is familiar with code enforcement "best practices," would provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of the codes that Kenner currently enforces. Jefferson Parish undertook a similar process several years ago and made a number of subsequent changes to strengthen the regulatory tools at its disposal. This included the adoption of new standards for hotels and motels and the adoption of a property maintenance code. A similar review of Kenner's codes could yield better crafted, more stringent standards for enforcement.

CE2. Based on the recommendations of the third party review, determine whether additional staff are needed to ensure effective enforcement

Sometimes one of the most basic ways to improve the performance of government is simply to provide additional, qualified staff. As part of a third party review of Kenner's code enforcement practices, the staffing of Kenner's code enforcement division should be evaluated in comparison to similar communities and their code enforcement case loads. Jefferson Parish, for example, embarked on an aggressive code enforcement push in 2007. This effort was accompanied by the addition of eight full time code enforcement officers and four clerical staff in order to strengthen the Parish's capacity for enforcement. An objective evaluation of Kenner's code enforcement staffing should be undertaken to determine the need for additional staff.



The crime abatement element of the Jefferson EDGE 2020 plan resulted in a number of strengthened building and property maintenance codes in Jefferson Parish.

CE3. Continue the practice of strategic, geographically focused code “sweeps” in order to prevent further neighborhood decline and catalyze investment in struggling neighborhoods

In recent years, both Kenner and Jefferson Parish have conducted an on-going series of code enforcement “sweeps” in targeted neighborhoods. These high profile, interdepartmental efforts have yielded two main outcomes. First and most fundamentally, they have resulted in a tremendous number of violations and subsequent corrective measures. Rather than waiting on individual complaints, Kenner and the Parish have proactively sought out violations before they become more severe and turn into full fledged blight. Secondly, the high profile nature of the sweeps conveys the commitment that Kenner and Jefferson have to preserving neighborhood quality. To those property owners that maintain their property, the sweeps inspire confidence in the future of the neighborhood. To those property owners that have been more negligent, the sweeps put them on notice to make improvements to their property or face fines.

CE4. Pursue outside grant funding, such as federal Choice Neighborhoods grants, to develop revitalization plans for neighborhoods in Kenner that are no longer attracting market rate investment

For those Kenner neighborhoods in which there has not been market investment for some time, code enforcement by itself will probably not effect a turnaround. A more substantial jolt is needed in these areas such as market activity would be kick started. This revitalization “jolt” may take many forms—site acquisition, tax credits to support new housing, infrastructure improvements, community amenities, social services, and other forms of public private partnerships. For several years, there has been a program in place, the federal Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) to do exactly this. The purpose of the choice neighborhoods program is to provide public dollars to transform depressed neighborhoods into communities that people would once again choose to live in. The CNI program offers both planning and implementation grants to realize this goal. The city of Kenner, in partnership with community organizations and the Kenner Housing Authority, should pursue funding for neighborhood revitalization through this program.

A federal Choice Neighborhoods grant is helping to pay for the transformation of the Iberville housing project in New Orleans into a mixed-use, mixed-income community.



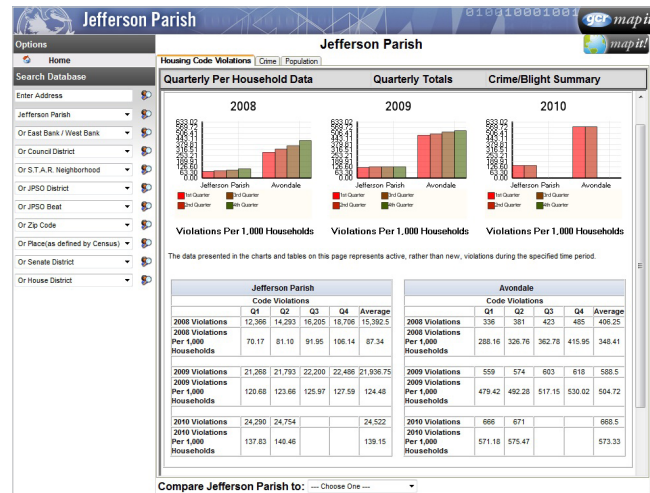
CE5. As part of an independent, third party review, determine whether effective administrative procedures are in place for publicly driven acquisition and redevelopment of blight

A standard tool that many large cities use to address the most persistent blight is to publicly acquire and transfer property through a public redevelopment authority. Unlike New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and other large cities, Kenner does not have a redevelopment authority in place. This is not to suggest that a redevelopment authority is the right mechanism for dealing with Kenner's most stubbornly blighted areas. As a component of the aforementioned third party review of code enforcement (action item CE1), the advantages and disadvantages of a redevelopment authority should be studied. Whether through a redevelopment authority or through city government, public acquisition can be a powerful redevelopment tool. Within the last several years, Jefferson Parish (which also does not have a redevelopment authority) took matters into its own hands and simply acquired a number of persistently blighted properties along Eisenhower Avenue in Metairie. The property that once housed a number of blighted structures is now green space.

CE6. Develop a monitoring system and annual performance metrics for code enforcement, such as the number of violations issued and resolved within certain targeted areas.

For both internal tracking purposes and for reasons of community outreach, Kenner should establish and continually monitor code enforcement performance metrics. These could cover a number of categories: the number of violations issued and resolved, the amount of new investment as measured by building permits, the number of blighted homes demolished, and other quantitative metrics. These should be reported to the administration and Council on an annual basis, and they should also be reported to the public. Monitoring and publishing these data would improve enforcement tactics and increase account-

ability. These data would also increase the public's confidence in code enforcement efforts and in the future stability of their neighborhood.



Annual performance metrics and a tracking system, such as this code enforcement website developed for Jefferson Parish, will create concrete, quantifiable basis for judging the success of Kenner's code enforcement efforts.

Goal: Improve the political climate in Kenner to foster greater public trust in the transparency and effectiveness of City government.

If there is any doubt about the connection between a community's political climate and economic development, a recent report by Site Selection magazine should put it to rest. In 2011, Site Selection ranked Louisiana the 7th best state in the country to do business, the highest ranking that Louisiana has ever achieved. The stratospheric improvement in the state's business climate has been due to a number of factors, not the least of which are the stringent ethics reforms that have been adopted in recent years. Improved ethics procedures and the accompanying perception that Baton Rouge has become less political have contributed mightily to Louisiana's improved image.



Kenner is not subject to the same level of scrutiny as Louisiana state government, and Kenner has not necessarily had the same problems that state government has historically had. Nonetheless, the recent Site Selection report is a reminder that communities should continually strive for improvements in their political climate. From the comments of the Economic Development Committee and Kenner residents, it is clear that there is room for improvement. The action items that the Plan proposes in this regard focus on professionalism, responsiveness to the public, and transparency.

P1. Invoke a new spirit of cooperation, decorum, and professionalism in City government to engender greater public confidence in the quality of local government

A local government that is constantly squabbling and scoring

political points is one that is perceived as being less professional. This perception can affect the business climate, and it can affect residents' overall satisfaction with their community. There is no specific deliverable or measurable outcome associated with this action item. Rather, it is the first action item within this section in order to serve as an important reminder of the importance of decorum. While bitter partisan divisions are the norm in Washington, D.C., there is a critical difference between what happens in Kenner and what happens at the national level. If residents are fed up with local political bickering, they can always move to another jurisdiction. For as bad as the political discord in Washington is, Americans are not likely to "vote with their feet" by moving to another country. Thus, political in-fighting at the local level can exact a more immediate price, in the form of lost residents and businesses. Kenner's elected officials will always have legitimate differences of opinion, but they should continually strive to maintain a positive, collegial tone in their dealings with one another.

Kenner's elected officials will always have legitimate differences of opinion, but they should continually strive to maintain a positive, collegial tone.

P2. Initiate a series of recurring, semiannual "listening sessions" in neighborhoods throughout Kenner in which elected officials meet with residents to hear their concerns in an informal setting

One of the best ways for government to improve its standing is simply to listen to the concerns of residents. A format that would

work particularly well would be to schedule recurring, semiannual listening sessions at a location within each council district. A council member and a member of the administration could be present in an informal discussion/question and answer format to hear the concerns of residents and to discuss on-going City initiatives. The informality of these events would be the key to their success. They should be held away from City Hall, and the focal point should be listening and casual dialogue instead of scripted presentations. These sessions should provide residents with a greater sense of the responsiveness of government and a greater awareness of the programs in place to address their concerns.

P3. Adopt standards for public meeting protocol to ensure the continued timeliness and professionalism of Kenner's public meetings

While this is less of a problem in Kenner than in other governmental bodies within the region, public meetings that are not professionally run can undermine residents' confidence in the quality of local government. A chaotic public meeting that fails to stay on schedule implies a chaotic city government and unreliable city services. The administration and City Council should continually strive for greater timeliness, professionalism, and efficiency in official public meetings.

P4. Update the City of Kenner's website to create a web-based tool that will allow residents to track quantitative indicators of the City's success in tackling problems and improving quality of life

Greater transparency with residents inspires greater trust in government. To that end, the city should create a user-friendly portal on its website that would allow residents to track city-wide indicators and, where relevant, neighborhood-level indicators. These could include sales tax collections, crime data, building permit activity, code enforcement activity, and the status of capital projects. By being able to evaluate data over a period of time, residents will be able to track progress and, therefore, have greater confidence in city government and the overall direction of the city. Elected officials and department heads will also have a stronger incentive to deliver quality services to residents.



Regularly scheduled "listening sessions" in an informal setting are one way to engender greater trust in elected officials and greater confidence in the responsiveness of local government.



The City of Kenner's website should be updated to include a portal that provides quantitative indicators of the City's progress in addressing certain issues, such as crime, blight, and capital projects.

P5. Commission an independent, third party review of ethics rules and regulations to determine whether improvements are needed in transparency, contracting practices, and other areas of ethics.

Stepped up federal prosecutions and a number of high profile convictions within the region have heightened public demand for stronger ethics rules and more government transparency. Government at all levels should continually strive for higher ethical standards. To that end, Kenner should commission an independent study that would examine current City practices in contracting, disclosure, and overall transparency with the goal of aligning Kenner with national “best practices” in ethics.

P6. Following the recommendations of the third party review, implement recommended changes to ensure that Kenner has among the strongest ethics policies of any local government in Louisiana.

Kenner should strive to be the standard bearer in Louisiana for transparency and ethical practice in local government. If the third party review succeeds in identifying needed reforms, the City should promptly enact those recommended policies and procedures.

Goal: Pursue improvements to the transportation infrastructure that will improve the convenience of living in Kenner as well as the appeal of Kenner's neighborhoods and commercial corridors

Of all of the thematic areas that this Plan addresses, transportation may seem least connected to economic development and quality of life. In reality, though, transportation is a powerful component of residents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the community in which they live. A community where traffic is perpetually gridlocked offers a very different quality of life than a community where biking and walking are realistic modes of transportation. Improved quality of life is one of the major benefits of a balanced, efficient transportation system.

Kenner has several unique opportunities to transform itself into a more convenient place to live and work. The first is the fact that the city is bracketed by two major bicycle paths: one along the Mississippi River and the other along Lake Pontchartrain. These are both primarily used as recreational amenities (as well they should be), but through improved connectivity with Kenner neighborhoods, they could become serious transportation alternatives for those who are inclined to lead an active lifestyle. Lest that notion seem farfetched, consider some of the job centers that lie along these two paths:

- *The Treasure Chest Casino and Pontchartrain Center (over 800 jobs)*
- *East Jefferson General Hospital and adjacent medical facilities (over 5,300 jobs)*
- *Causeway corridor between Lake Pontchartrain and 17th street (over 11,100 jobs)*
- *Louis Armstrong Airport and south side of the airport (nearly 800 jobs)*
- *Elmwood between Jefferson Highway and the Mississippi River (over 5,100 jobs)*



The Mississippi River and Lakefront bike paths are in close proximity to over 23,000 jobs. Better connectivity to these paths would enhance their recreational value, as well as their viability for bicycle commuters.

Collectively, these employment centers constitute over 23,000 jobs. To put this figure in perspective, Kenner as a whole is home to approximately 22,700 jobs¹⁴. Some of these employment centers are closer to Kenner than others are, but the furthest job center (Elmwood) is only a 20 minute bicycle commute from the Kenner/Jefferson line. With the bicycle facilities that are already in place and with improved north-south connections, Kenner could even brand itself as a community for those who enjoy an active lifestyle.

Another transportation opportunity, albeit long range, is for Kenner to become involved in discussions about a rail connection between Baton Rouge, Louis Armstrong Airport, and Downtown New Orleans. Funding and political support for this concept are uncertain at the present, but a number of substantive steps have been taken to advance this idea. The Baton Rouge based Center for Planning Excellence has formed the CONNECT coalition to advocate for improved transportation connections between New Orleans and Baton Rouge including the possibility of a rail link.



¹⁴The source of this employment data is the Census Bureau's local employment dynamics database. Data are from 2009 and 2010.

This coalition includes a number of influential members including the City of Baton Rouge/East Baton Rouge Parish, the City of New Orleans, Jefferson Parish, and the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission. Because Louis Armstrong Airport would be a logical stop for a rail connection, Kenner residents could benefit from convenient park and ride access to either Baton Rouge or New Orleans.

In addition to quality of life and convenience, another reason why transportation is an important component of economic development is that it can facilitate social mobility. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), the average annual cost of owning a mid-sized car in the United States is over \$9,500. This is a hefty sum at any income level; but for the poor and working class residents of Kenner, this cost is particularly acute. Through better transportation alternatives, poor or working class households could reduce their transportation costs. Rather than spending this money solely for transportation purposes, lower income residents could instead save more money, make a down payment on a house, secure a loan for a small business, or use the savings for any number of more economically productive uses.

While Kenner will unquestionably remain an automobile dependent city for the foreseeable future, the following action items are included because progress is indeed underway in the realm of both bicycle improvements and a New Orleans-Baton Rouge rail connection. Kenner should proactively engage in these conversations; otherwise, decisions will be made without the City's input.

T1. Actively participate in the forthcoming bicycle and pedestrian master plan in Jefferson Parish in order to identify high priority capital improvements that will make Kenner a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly community

Jefferson Parish will soon be embarking on a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan. The funding for this study has been secured, and it should encompass both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the Parish. Kenner's planning department

should take an active role in this project and should work with the planning team to identify opportunities to improve the city's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Given that Kenner already benefits from the Lakefront and Mississippi River bike paths, Kenner should work with the planning team to identify ways to create better north-south connections to these paths. Improving residents' awareness of cycling as a legitimate means of transportation is another important topic that Kenner should broach in the context of this study.



Kenner's active participation in the forthcoming Jefferson Parish bike plan could set the stage for major improvements to Kenner's bicycle infrastructure. Pictured here is a linear bike path envisioned along Belle Chasse Highway in unincorporated Jefferson Parish.



A commuter rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge could enhance the appeal of Kenner's neighborhoods by making it a convenient place to live for those working in either New Orleans or Baton Rouge.

Photo by Natasha Lloyd



Where feasible, the City of Kenner's new zoning ordinance should encourage pedestrian oriented, rather than automobile oriented, development.

Photo by Stephen Rees

T2. Improve connectivity to the existing bicycle paths along the Riverfront and Lakefront through improved signage and new bicycle facilities (e.g. bicycle lanes, ramps) that intersect with the existing paths.

Following the completion of the bicycle/pedestrian master plan, Kenner should seek local and outside funding to construct bicycle facilities that will improve connectivity. Under the existing federal transportation law, a certain portion of federal transportation funding must be dedicated to non-motorized transportation infrastructure (i.e. bicycling or walking). In comparison to highway and transit capital projects, the cost of these improvements is minimal. Kenner should work closely with the Regional Planning Commission to secure funding for an improved network of bicycle facilities.

T3. Actively participate in the CONNECT coalition to ensure that Kenner's interests are well represented in discussions about a rail connection between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

The concept of a rail connection between New Orleans and Baton Rouge is politically controversial, and it could be years away from actually being implemented. Nonetheless, a number of major jurisdictions, stakeholders, and government agencies are actively pursuing the concept through the CONNECT coalition. It behooves Kenner to become engaged in these conversations. Critical issues such as the location of a potential station and the frequency of service could have a profound impact on potential real estate activity and on the convenience of the system for Kenner residents.

T4. Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations improve the pedestrian quality and overall aesthetic appeal of new development.

A complaint that was aired multiple times in the surveys that GCR conducted is that Kenner is not pedestrian friendly. One

way to remedy this problem is to adopt zoning regulations that encourage pedestrian activity, such as requiring that buildings be built to the sidewalk and that parking be limited and discreet. Not only for Rivertown and Laketown but for all of Kenner, the city's new zoning ordinance should require that new development be designed both for the automobile and for the pedestrian.

Postscript: Transforming Kenner Into A Boutique City

At the outset of the *Kenner 2030* planning process, a concept that arose a number of times was the notion of transforming Kenner into a “boutique city.” But what exactly does this term mean? Based on the comments of the Economic Development Committee, a boutique city implies a community that is truly a community of choice—the kind of sought-after place that residents from throughout the New Orleans region would want to live in. It also implies a city with a unique identity that looks and feels different than the communities adjacent to it and that is distinctly attractive from an aesthetic standpoint. Finally, it is a community that is characterized by an exceptionally high quality of life: vibrant commercial districts with their own distinct identity, tree-lined boulevards, lifestyle amenities, and a dynamic economy.

Collectively, the action items that the Plan recommends will create exactly this kind of community. As this Plan is implemented over the next 15 - 20 years, Kenner will be able to boast of:

- *A gleaming new Louis Armstrong Airport*
- *An improved “front door” to the city along I-10*
- *Vibrant, mixed use activity centers at Rivertown and Laketown*
- *Landscaped, tree-lined boulevards throughout the city*
- *One of the best shopping centers in the region in the Esplanade Mall*
- *A network of bike paths connecting to the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain*
- *Exceptional public schools, including a signature charter school*

Thus, in a way, the concept of transforming Kenner into a boutique city underlies all of the action items that this Plan proposes. The boutique city concept tackles the fundamental genesis for the Plan head on—the concern about Kenner’s ability to attract a next generation of residents and businesses. A boutique city is one that, by definition, is continually attractive to successive generations of residents and businesses. It is therefore the fundamental goal of the plan and the primary goal that all of the action items in this plan are oriented towards.

A boutique city is one that, by definition, is continually attractive to successive generations of residents and businesses.



Summary Matrix of Action Items

The following matrix provides a concise listing of all of the goals and action items that the plan recommends. The Mayor's Office is ultimately responsible for implementation and will assign key personnel to each individual action item. The matrix provides the supporting agencies/departments that may assist with implementation, an estimated cost associated with the action, and an estimated timetable. This matrix provides a more concise, user friendly way for individuals to understand the full breadth of the plan and to monitor the city's progress in following through on implementation.

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
Goal: Support the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport into a world class facility that will spur economic development and revitalize adjacent neighborhoods				
A1	Ensure that Kenner's interests are well represented in the selection of consultant teams and in the execution of subsequent studies regarding the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport	Mayor's Office, Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
A2	Work with consulting teams and the Aviation Board to expand the "footprint" of Airport redevelopment efforts to include the neighborhoods, streets, and commercial districts adjacent to the airport itself	Mayor's Office, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
A3	Ensure that Airport redevelopment efforts prioritize the Aberdeen Street corridor project--the beautification and revitalization of the northern entrance to the Airport	Public Works, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
A4	Leverage funding for the redevelopment of the Airport to improve traffic flow and the quality of the streetscape of major roads in the vicinity of the Airport (Airline, Veterans, Loyola, etc.) and the Airport approach to/from I-10.	Mayor's Office, Public Works, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Long term (0 - 10 years)
A5	As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, identify opportunities for major new economic infrastructure, such as intermodal facilities and distribution and cargo centers on underutilized Airport property	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
A6	As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, develop a vision, land use, and marketing strategy to optimize the use of the commercial and industrial properties adjacent to the Airport, such as those along Crestview and Bainbridge Street	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
A7	As part of the Airport redevelopment studies, determine the market potential for a new complex of high quality hotels, retail, and conference facilities that could better capitalize on business travel to the New Orleans region	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund;	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
Goal: Continue to push for the expedited redevelopment of Airport buy out properties into economically productive uses				
B1	Work closely with on-going UNO study to identify optimal land uses and disposition strategies for buy out properties	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
B2	Coordinate with UNO, the Airport, and the City of New Orleans to ensure that the buy out properties generate new economic activity instead of duplicating, for instance, commercial activities that already exist in Kenner	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
B3	Ensure that Kenner zoning regulations and public infrastructure are not obstacles to the redevelopment of the buy out properties	Planning Department, Public Works, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
B4	Continue to engage the Airport and City of New Orleans to push for an expedited disposition of buy out properties	Mayor's Office, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
Goal: Transform Rivertown into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district that will function as Kenner's town center				
R1	Commission a "small area plan" for Rivertown that will engage the public, that will develop a coherent land use and urban design vision, and that will establish a specific implementation plan and funding mechanisms for the revitalization of Rivertown	Planning Department, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Estimated cost for consultant-driven study: \$50,000 - \$75,000; Baptist Community Ministries; Regional Planning Commission; Jefferson Community Foundation; Greater New Orleans Foundation; Center for Planning Excellence; Project for Public Spaces; OCD-DRU - resilience grant funding; CPEX; Certified Local Government (CLG) grants	Near term (0 - 3 years)
R2	Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations foster an attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian oriented district	Planning Department, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
R3	Examine the feasibility of permitting quality, mid-rise residential and mixed use development along the Mississippi River levee in the vicinity of Rivertown	Planning Department, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
R4	Commission a design standards manual to ensure that new development in Rivertown exemplifies “best practices” in architecture and urban design	Planning Department, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Could be included in cost of R1; the higher the budget for the study, the more likely it is to garner interest from renowned urban design practices	Near term (0 - 3 years)
R5	Explore the possibility of selling or leasing publicly owned land in Rivertown to facilitate mixed use projects that exemplify the new vision for Rivertown	Mayor’s Office, Finance Department, Planning Department, JEDCO, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Staff time; covered by general fund	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
R6	Develop a Rivertown capital improvement plan that will identify potential improvements to the Rivertown streetscape, publicly owned building, and parks and playgrounds	Planning Department, Public Works	Could be included in cost of R1; the higher the budget, the more likely it is to include these elements (evaluation of infrastructure, cost estimates, etc.)	Near term (0 - 3 years) for plan; long term for implementation (0 - 10 years)
R7	Ensure that adequate, recurring funding exists for the Rivertown Main Street program’s efforts to market and promote Rivertown	Rivertown Advisory Committee, Planning Department	Annual budget of approximately \$45,000 - \$100,000 for Main Street budget;	Near term (0 - 3 years)
R8	Attract an annual event or events, such as Oktoberfest, that will elevate the profile of Rivertown to the entire New Orleans region	Mayor’s Office, Rivertown Advisory Committee	Staff time to attract an event; cost of public services (e.g. safety, sanitation) to be negotiated with event organizer	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
Goal: Transform Laketown into a thriving, signature, mixed use district that will capitalize on its unique Lakefront location				
L1	Continue to aggressively recruit the Coconut Beach volleyball complex to Laketown	Mayor's Office	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
L2	Formally adopt the 2028 Laketown Master Plan, subject to public comment and review.	Mayor's Office, City Council, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
L3	Coordinate with the State to issue a request for proposals (RFP) that will solicit public-private development proposals from local and national developers	Mayor's Office, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
L4	Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations allow for sufficient flexibility in the redevelopment of Laketown, including residential, commercial, and hotel/conference uses	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
L5	Establish a Laketown design standards manual and design review commission to ensure that new development in Laketown exemplifies "best practices" in architecture and urban design.	Planning Department	Estimated cost for design standards manual: \$20,000 - \$40,000; staff time for implementation of Laketown design review commission	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
L6	Ensure that a redeveloped Laketown includes provisions for public access, such as publicly accessible commercial areas, a waterfront promenade, or parks and plazas	Planning Department, Parks and Recreation	Staff funding; covered by general fund	Medium term to long term (0 - 10 years)
L7	Ensure that a redeveloped Laketown is designed to be resilient to flooding.	Planning Department	Staff funding; covered by general fund	Medium term to long term (0 - 10 years)
L8	Retain an independent fiscal analyst and fiscal impact consultant who would determine the fiscal costs and benefits of proposed development plans	Mayor's Office, Finance Department, Planning Department, JEDCO	Approximately \$50,000 - \$100,000 to retain fiscal impact consultant	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
Goal: Work closely with the management of the Esplanade Mall to facilitate on-going redevelopment efforts				
E1	Formulate an Esplanade Mall working group whose purpose will be to work with Mall management to monitor redevelopment efforts and represent the interests of the City of Kenner	Mayor's Office, Planning Department	Staff funding; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
E2	Ensure that there is an adequate and visible security presence at the Mall in the form of Kenner police and/or private mall security	Mayor's Office, Kenner Police Department	Staff time, to be coordinated with other patrol needs throughout the city	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
E3	Examine the feasibility of the "town center" development concept in the immediate vicinity of the Mall	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
Goal: Aggressively market Kenner in a targeted, cost efficient manner to existing and prospective businesses and residents.				
ED1	Continue to retain JEDCO staff to represent Kenner as articulated in the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between Kenner and JEDCO.	Mayor's Office, City Council	\$75,000 per year, as per Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between Kenner and JEDCO	Immediate (0 - 1 year) and on-going
ED2	On an annual basis, devise and refine economic development goals and performance metrics for JEDCO staff as articulated in the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between Kenner and JEDCO.	Mayor's Office, City Council, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year) and on-going
ED3	Commission an independent commercial/retail market study to develop an accurate, nuanced analysis of commercial/retail supply and demand in Kenner	Mayor's Office	\$30,000 - \$60,000; LED, CDBG, EDA, GNOF, Jefferson Community Foundation, BCM	Near term (0 - 3 years)
ED4	Pending the outcome of the commercial/retail market study, examine the feasibility of retaining a retail attraction consultant to work with JEDCO to attract new commercial tenants to Kenner	Mayor's Office, JEDCO, Planning Department	\$50,000 - \$75,000 per year; grant funds would be unlikely as not for a definite service; would have to come from City of Kenner or other source	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
ED5	Initiate a Facebook and Twitter presence for the City of Kenner to promote positive news, major developments, and the overall quality of life of Kenner	Mayor's Office	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
ED6	Develop promotional materials for Realtors and social organizations (e.g. 504ward, Young Leadership Council) to emphasize the benefits of owning or renting in Kenner.	Mayor's Office	May be able to obtain a small grant; Jefferson Community Foundation; GNOF; \$5,000 - \$10,000 for research and production	Near term (0 - 2 years)
ED7	Work with JEDCO to ensure that data on vacant, developable properties in Kenner is continually updated.	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 2 years) and on-going
ED8	Develop marketing and promotional materials on available commercial properties in Kenner for site selectors, prospective businesses, and key economic development partners (GNO Inc., Louisiana Economic Development).	Planning Department, JEDCO	May be able to obtain a small grant; Jefferson Community Foundation; GNOF; \$5,000 - \$10,000 for research and production; may be wrapped into same grant as ED6	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
ED9	Conduct a “cluster analysis” of existing businesses in Kenner and emerging regional economic strengths to examine Kenner’s potential to create a concentration of economic activity in a particular industry or industries.	Planning Department, JEDCO	May be able to obtain small grant: EDA, CDBG, GNOF, LED, GNO, Inc., GNO, Inc. Foundation, Entergy; \$20,000 - \$50,000	Near term (0 - 3 years)
ED10	Examine best practices (in micro-lending, marketing, technical assistance) from communities around the country to facilitate entrepreneurship and wealth creation for Kenner’s growing Hispanic population.	Planning Department, JEDCO	Staff time; covered by general fund; perhaps supplemental funding from Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Archdiocese	Near term (0 - 3 years)
Goal: Support efforts to provide high quality public education for Kenner residents				
PE1	Actively support the on-going school reform efforts of the Jefferson Parish School Board and Superintendent Meza	Mayor’s Office	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year) and on-going
PE2	Advocate for the establishment of a new public charter school in Kenner	Mayor’s Office	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year) and on-going
PE3	Work with the School Board to prioritize capital improvements to schools located within Kenner	Mayor’s Office, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
PE4	Commission a feasibility study to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of creating a separate City of Kenner school district	Mayor’s Office	Cowen Institute? Private donations?	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
PE5	Closely monitor school reform efforts and changes in the performance of public schools located within Kenner	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years) and on-going
PE6	Actively engage the School Board and School Administration if test scores at public schools located within Kenner fail to improve.	Mayor’s Office	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
Goal: Transform Kenner’s older commercial corridors into economically prosperous, aesthetically appealing boulevards				
CC1	Commission an independent commercial/retail market study to determine the future market potential of Kenner’s commercial corridors, with a particular focus on vacant/underutilized commercial properties.	Mayor’s Office	\$30,000 - \$60,000; LED, CDBG, EDA, GNOF, Jefferson Community Foundation, BCM; same as ED3	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CC2	Based on the results of a commercial/retail market study, develop land use and commercial recruitment strategies for vacant and underutilized commercial properties in Kenner	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
CC3	Pending the outcome of the commercial/retail market study, examine the feasibility of retaining a retail attraction consultant to work with JEDCO to attract new commercial tenants to Kenner	Mayor's Office, JEDCO, Planning Department	\$50,000 - \$75,000 per year; grant funds would be unlikely as not for a definite service; would have to come from City of Kenner or other source; same as ED4	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
CC4	Ensure that Kenner's new zoning regulations allow for sufficient flexibility in the redevelopment of vacant commercial properties, including permitting new types of development, such as quality, mixed use development	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund; funding already secured for revision to zoning regulations through UNO	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CC5	Ensure that Kenner's new zoning regulations incorporate national best practices for new development along Kenner's commercial corridors, including strong standards for parking, landscaping, signage, and urban design.	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund; funding already secured for revision to zoning regulations through UNO	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CC6	Examine the feasibility of establishing a formal design review process for new development along select commercial corridors	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
CC7	As a component of Kenner's new zoning regulations, examine the feasibility of "amortizing" overly large, unsightly, and poorly maintained signage along key commercial corridors.	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CC8	Examine the feasibility of establishing a landscape matching grant program to encourage landscaping improvements to older commercial properties along major corridors.	Planning Department	On a pilot basis, small grants may be available from Jefferson Community Foundation or GNOF; beautification groups like Parkway Partners; corporate sponsors; on recurring basis, probably would have to be funded from city funds;	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
CC9	Commission a commercial corridor improvement study that will outline an aesthetic vision for Kenner's older commercial corridors, identify needed capital improvements, identify funding scenarios, and develop a phased approach to implementation	Planning Department, Public Works	RPC, TIGER planning grants, Sustainable Communities planning grants, CDBG, Transportation 4 America, Smart Growth agency, GNOF, OCD-DRU, CPEX;	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
CC10	Based on the results of the corridor improvement study, secure local, state, and federal funding to implement a pilot project of comprehensive streetscape improvements along one of Kenner's commercial corridors	Planning Department, Public Works	TIGER, transportation enhancements funds from RPC, state bond funds, CDBG, OCD-DRU; funding from airport revitalization	Medium to long term (0 - 10 years)
CC11	Develop a funding strategy to implement comprehensive streetscape improvements along all of Kenner's major corridors, as outlined in the commercial corridor improvement study	Mayor's Office, Planning Department, Finance, Public Works	Most likely would have to come from a local source to essentially re-do all of the streets; could bond it out; total project cost for entire city; in current dollars, anywhere from \$34 million - \$60 million; state transportation funding; state capital project fund	Long term (0 - 20 years)
CC12	Leverage funding for the redevelopment of the Airport to improve traffic flow and the quality of the streetscape of major roads in the vicinity of the Airport (Airline, Veterans, Loyola, etc.) and the Airport approach to/from I-10.	Mayor's Office, Public Works, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund; same as A4	Long term (0 - 10 years)
CC13	Secure funding for soundwalls along I-10	Mayor's Office, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund	Long term (0 - 10 years)
Goal: Improve code enforcement practices to prevent decline in Kenner's middle income neighborhoods and to attract new investment to struggling neighborhoods				
CE1	Commission an independent, third party review to evaluate the effectiveness of Kenner's building and property maintenance codes and the effectiveness of enforcement efforts	Inspections and Code Enforcement	Approximate cost of study: \$30,000 - \$75,000	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CE2	Based on the recommendations of the third party review, determine whether additional staff are needed to ensure effective enforcement	Inspections and Code Enforcement	unknown; unit cost per inspector's; cost to be determined based on study recommendations	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CE3	Continue the practice of strategic, geographically focused code "sweeps" in order to prevent further neighborhood decline and catalyze investment in struggling neighborhoods	Inspections and Code Enforcement	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year) and on-going
CE4	Pursue outside grant funding, such as federal Choice Neighborhoods grants, to develop revitalization plans for neighborhoods in Kenner that are no longer attracting market rate investment	Planning Department, Kenner Housing Authority, Inspections and Code Enforcement	Staff time; covered by general fund to pursue grant; total grant amount could range from \$150,000 - \$250,000	Medium term (0 - 5 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
CE5	As part of an independent, third party review, determine whether effective administrative procedures are in place for the transfer of blighted properties to third parties for redevelopment	Inspections and Code Enforcement, Planning Department	Covered by cost of independent study: \$30,000 - \$75,000; follow through on establishing redevelopment authority or other mechanism may be more expensive	Near term (0 - 3 years)
CE6	Develop a monitoring system and annual performance metrics for code enforcement, such as the number of violations issued and violations resolved within specific targeted areas.	Inspections and Code Enforcement	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
Goal: Improve the political climate in Kenner to foster greater public trust in the transparency and effectiveness of City government.				
P1	Invoke a new spirit of cooperation, decorum, and professionalism in City government to engender greater public confidence in the quality of local government	Mayor's Office, City Council	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
P2	Initiate a series of recurring, semiannual "listening sessions" in neighborhoods throughout Kenner in which elected officials meet with residents to hear their concerns in an informal setting	Mayor's Office, City Council	Staff time; covered by general fund; incidental expenses associated with advertising and meeting logistics	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
P3	Adopt standards for public meeting protocol to ensure the continued timeliness and professionalism of Kenner's public meetings	Mayor's Office, City Council	Staff time; covered by general fund	Immediate (0 - 1 year)
P4	Update the City of Kenner's website to create a web-based tool that will allow residents to track quantitative indicators of the City's success in tackling problems and improving quality of life	Mayor's Office	Establishment of website: \$50,000 - \$100,000; on-going hosting and support \$6,000 - \$10,000 per year	Medium term (0 - 5 years)
P5	Commission an independent, third party review of ethics rules and regulations for the Kenner City government to determine whether improvements are needed in transparency, contracting practices, and other areas of ethics.	Mayor's Office, City Council	Study would cost approximately \$25,000 - \$50,000; could be funded internally or could be funded through Jefferson Community Foundation, GNOF	Near term (0 - 3 years)
P6	Following the recommendations of the third party review, implement recommended changes to ensure that Kenner has among the strongest ethics policies of any local government in Louisiana.	Mayor's Office, City Council	Staff time; covered by general fund	Near term to medium term (0 - 5 years)

Action Number	Implementation Action	Supporting Agency/ Department	Cost and Potential Funding Source(s)	Timetable
Goal: Pursue improvements to the transportation infrastructure that will enhance the convenience of living in Kenner as well as the appeal of Kenner's neighborhoods and commercial corridors				
T1	Actively participate in forthcoming bicycle and pedestrian master plan in Jefferson Parish in order to identify high priority capital improvements that will make Kenner a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly community	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by general fund; funding for study has already been secured	Near term (0 - 3 years)
T2	Improve connectivity to the existing bicycle paths along the Riverfront and Lakefront through improved signage and new bicycle facilities (e.g. bicycle lanes, ramps) that intersect with the existing paths.	Planning Department	Cost is unknown, pending recommendations of Jefferson bike plan; Local capital improvement plan, federal transportation enhancements (TE) grants, Airport redevelopment funding for bike/ped amenities on streets in vicinity of airport.	Medium to long term (0 - 10 years)
T3	Actively participate in the CONNECT coalition to ensure that Kenner's interests are well represented in discussions about a rail connection between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.	Mayor's Office, Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)
T4	Ensure that new Kenner zoning regulations improve the pedestrian quality and overall aesthetic appeal of new development.	Planning Department	Staff time; covered by the general fund	Near term (0 - 3 years)

Implementation: Understanding the Price Tag

Every aspect of the *Kenner 2030* plan has been crafted with implementation in mind. The action items that the plan recommends are indeed ambitious, but they are fundamentally realistic. They are realistic insofar as they are within the purview of Kenner city government, and they are realistic in relation to the total price tag of the plan. To ground the plan in financial reality, an estimated cost has been associated with nearly every one of the individual action items. These line item costs are provided within the previous matrix. At this level of detail, though, it is difficult to get a sense of the total cost of the *Kenner 2030* initiative. GCR has therefore compiled a summary table that more clearly conveys the costs associated with each goal and with the entire project. For each goal, the costs are broken into a number of discrete categories, such as studies/analyses and capital costs.

Expense Category	Amount	Notes
Goal: Support the redevelopment of Louis Armstrong Airport into a world class facility that will spur economic development and revitalize adjacent neighborhoods		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Goal: Continue to push for the expedited redevelopment of Airport buy out properties into economically productive uses		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Goal: Transform Rivertown into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use district that will function as Kenner's town center.		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$75,000	For Rivertown small area plan, design standards manual, and Rivertown capital improvement plan
Operating expenses	\$45,000 - \$100,000 per year	For operations of Rivertown Main Street organization

Expense Category	Amount	Notes
Goal: Transform Laketown into a thriving, signature, mixed use district that will capitalize on its unique Lakefront location		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$105,000	For Laketown design standards manual and fiscal impact analysis
Goal: Work closely with the management of the Esplanade Mall to facilitate on-going redevelopment efforts		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Goal: Aggressively market Kenner in a targeted, cost efficient manner to existing and prospective businesses and residents		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$88,000	For commercial/retail market study, economic cluster analysis, and promotional materials for Realtors
Operating expenses	\$138,000 per year	For retention of JEDCO and annual cost of retail attraction consultant
Goal: Support efforts to provide high quality public education for Kenner residents		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$100,000	For feasibility study for independent Kenner school district

Expense Category	Amount	Notes
Goal: Transform Kenner's older commercial corridors into economically prosperous, aesthetically appealing boulevards		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$145,000	For commercial/retail market study, commercial corridor study
Operating expenses	\$63,000	For annual cost of retail attraction consultant
Capital and related costs	\$60,000,000	For establishment of landscape matching grant program and for comprehensive corridor improvement program along all major corridors
Goal: Improve code enforcement practices to prevent decline in Kenner's middle income neighborhoods and to attract new investment to struggling neighborhoods		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$53,000	For study assessing changes to Kenner codes and enforcement practices and necessity of redevelopment authority
Operating expenses	unknown; cost to be determined based on study recommendations	For additional legal and inspection staff; cost hinges on recommendations of study analyzing codes and code enforcement
Goal: Improve the political climate in Kenner to foster greater public trust in the transparency and effectiveness of City government.		

Expense Category	Amount	Notes
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Studies, reports, analyses	\$38,000	For third party review of ethics rules in Kenner
Technology	\$75,000	For design and implementation of web-tool displaying quantitative indicators of progress in Kenner
Operating expenses	\$8,000 per year	For on-going hosting and support of web-tool displaying quantitative indicators of progress in Kenner
Goal: Pursue improvements to the transportation infrastructure that will enhance the convenience of living in Kenner as well as the appeal of Kenner's neighborhoods and commercial corridors		
Staff time	n/a - general fund	
Capital and related costs	Unknown, pending recommendations of Jefferson bike plan	For installation of bike infrastructure throughout Kenner (paths, lanes, ramps, signage, etc.)

Expense Category	Amount	Notes
Summary		
Approximate annual operating costs (excluding “staff time”)	\$246,000	Does not include cost of additional code enforcement and legal staff (cost unknown at this time)
Approximate cost of all studies, reports, analyses	\$604,000	External funding sources (e.g. RPC, Jefferson Community Foundation, external grants) may cover much of this cost
Approximate cost of all capital improvements	\$60,000,000	External funding sources (e.g. RPC, DOTD, Airport) may cover much of this cost
Approximate cost of technology enhancements	\$75,000	For design and implementation of web-tool displaying quantitative indicators of progress in Kenner
Total	\$60,679,000	

There are a number of noteworthy figures in this table, and there are also a number of important qualifiers. First, the cost of the initiative is quite modest in the context of Kenner’s overall budget and in the context of other recent investments in the region. Consider the following:

- *The Huey P. Long Bridge is currently being widened and modernized at a cost of \$1.2 billion.*
- *The estimated cost of a new terminal for Louis Armstrong Airport is \$1 billion.*
- *The Mercedes Benz Superdome recently underwent a second round of post-Katrina renovations, totaling \$336 million.*
- *A 1.2 mile stretch of I-10 is currently being widened at a cost of \$42.4 million.*
- *The City of Kenner’s annual budget is approximately \$60 million.*

The total estimated cost of the *Kenner 2030* initiative is \$61 million in non-recurring costs and approximately \$250,000 in annual recurring costs. Furthermore, this is a multi-year, 15 to 20 year project. Many of the studies that this plan recommends should be funded and executed in the first few years of the initiative, but their aggregate cost is extremely small in relation to the other aforementioned projects in the region—a total of just over \$600,000. Unfortunately, given the extreme budgetary constraints that Kenner faces, even coming up with 1% of the city’s budget in supplemental funding is challenging if not impossible. It is for this reason that the plan identifies a number of grant programs and external funding sources that could cover much of the cost of these critical initial studies.

It cannot be overemphasized though that funding—from whatever source—is an absolute precondition to implementation. For as modest as the cost of the plan is, it will not and cannot be implemented unless funding is secured. It should also be noted that the *Kenner 2030* plan is fundamentally cautious and targeted in its recommendations. The estimated total price tag of \$61 million does not come with many superfluous features. If the City intends to achieve the goals and the vision that the plan outlines, it should aim to secure the full \$61 million in funding that the action items require.

Another noteworthy aspect of the price tag is that the overwhelming majority of the total cost (98%) is for infrastructure improvements to the city's major commercial corridors. While this is a substantial cost, this is by definition the kind of project that should be undertaken over the full 15 – 20 year horizon of the plan. Thus, in any given year, the cost of this initiative in the form of debt service payments would be far lower. Also, the City of Kenner would not necessarily have to foot the entire bill for this initiative or even a majority of the bill. The critical leverage point that Kenner should explore is the potential \$1 billion overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport. Whether from Airport funding, federal highway funds, or state capital outlay dollars, external funding could potentially support improvements to many of the corridors that provide access to the Airport. It is too much to assume that external funds could cover the entire cost of the corridor initiative, but a substantial portion of Kenner's roads could potentially be folded into the overhaul of Louis Armstrong Airport.

External funding from grants and other sources could cover a substantial portion of the cost of the proposed corridor enhancements initiative.



The proposed enhancements to Kenner's commercial corridors constitute the single greatest cost in the Kenner 2030 plan.

However, much of the funding for this initiative could come from external resources.

There are also a number of caveats to these estimates. Some costs are too uncertain at this point to assign even an approximate dollar figure. For example, the Jefferson Parish bike plan will surely identify opportunities to create bike lanes on Kenner streets, better signage, and better access points to the Riverfront and Lakefront bike paths. These will likely be fairly inexpensive projects, but their ultimate cost will be unknown until the plan is completed. Similarly, the cost of a major public-private redevelopment effort in one of Kenner's most depressed neighborhoods (action item CE4) is also an unknown. Those cost estimates will necessarily be a component of a preliminary redevelopment plan.

A final important caveat to these numbers is that they do not include the critical recurring cost of staffing the initiative itself. The cost associated with many of the action items is simply shown as "staff time," as many recommended actions are fundamentally administrative in nature. Given the breadth and ambition of these tasks, though, it is imperative that Kenner find additional capacity to monitor and administer this strategic plan. Along with revenue, administrative capacity is absolutely essential to ensuring that the plan is implemented.

Implementation: Creating and Sustaining Momentum


Almost every community has experienced the phenomenon of the grand, ambitious plan that “sits on a shelf” and is forgotten almost as soon as it has been completed. How does this happen, and how can it be avoided in this instance? How can we ensure that the *Kenner 2030* plan will remain relevant and will actually be implemented?

The first thing to understand is that responsibility for implementation fundamentally lies with the city of Kenner. A plan cannot implement itself as a plan is only a document. People—the Mayor, the Council, and City employees—are fundamentally responsible for implementing it. As human behavior and outside circumstances are unpredictable, it is therefore impossible to somehow guarantee implementation. That responsibility, as with any plan, rests with the entity that commissioned the plan in the first place.

That being said, there are a number of procedures that can be implemented to substantially improve the odds that the *Kenner 2030* plan will remain a vital document that will guide Kenner for years to come. These procedures are as follows:

1. **Hire staff and/or secure consultants to monitor implementation.** This is the most fundamental and least flashy aspect of implementing the plan. Kenner absolutely must retain a staff member and/or consultants whose primary responsibility is to “mind the store.” If Kenner attempts to fit the responsibility for plan monitoring and implementation into the schedule of an already busy employee, implementation will fall by the wayside. Long range planning and special projects will always take a back seat to more immediate deadlines. Given the breadth of topics that this plan covers, GCR estimates that Kenner should retain 1 – 2 FTE employees (or an equivalent level of effort to a consultant) whose sole responsibility would be to monitor this plan and advance implementation. These

A plan cannot implement itself, as a plan is only a document. People—the Mayor, the Council, and City government—are fundamentally responsible for implementing it.



Prepared by JEDCO and GCR Inc.

Jefferson EDGE 2030 Quality of Life Action Item Update Summary Matrix – June 2012

Economic Development

In response to concerns about quality of life in Jefferson Parish and its impact on the community's economic competitiveness, JEDCO initiated the Jefferson Edge 2030 Quality of Life initiative. This initiative has produced eight “strategic implementation plans” which include a series of action items to address particular quality of life issues. Implementing the action items requires the total cooperation and keen interest of all involved, including JEDCO, the Jefferson Parish government, numerous other entities, and frequently State and Federal agencies. In 2008, JEDCO retained GCR & Associates, Inc. to prepare semiannual reports outlining the status of each of these action items and overall progress toward implementation. The following table summarizes the progress made toward each of the economic development (ED) action items.

ED = Economic Development

Action Item	Action Item	Report as of Jan 2012	Report as of Jun 2012
Action Item	Action Item	Actual Item	Essential Progress
JEDCO Action Items			
E03	Continue to aggressively market the first 40 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park.		
E04	Identify partners and potential funding sources for Phase II development of the remaining 50 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park.		
E05	Work closely with EDCs, Orleans Health System, and WJGH to facilitate the expansion of medical facilities throughout the Parish.		
E06	Aggressively market Jefferson Parish as a headquarters for energy companies.		
E07	Continue to aggressively recruit out to businesses in Jefferson Parish to support business retention, expansion, and access to capital.		
E08	Ensure that the Louisiana Small Business Development Center maintains a presence at the Churchill Technology and Business Park.		
E09	Seek permanent financing and support for an on-going marketing effort for Jefferson Parish.		
E10	Conduct a review of the Jefferson Parish permitting office to improve performance and to make the permitting process more business friendly.		
Other Action Items			
E01	Revisit existing efforts of GCR Inc. and commission a comprehensive study and action plan for the workforce development infrastructure in the New Orleans region.		
E02	Continue changes in the federal tax code that would discourage off-shore oil and gas exploration.		
E03	Work to pressure funding in the federal defense budget for weapons systems that are produced in Jefferson Parish and in the New Orleans region.		
E04	Identify major national growth industries and the potential for locally based companies to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities.		
E05	Partner with the Port of New Orleans, GCR Inc., and the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce (BRAC) to expand opportunities for international shipping and trade.		
Other Action Items			
E06	Support the development of a high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, with a stop in Jefferson Parish.		
E07	Support the implementation of transportation projects of regional significance, such as a light rail line to the Airport, improvement to the I-49 Expressway, and the construction of a 403.		
E08	Collaborate with major railroads and the Regional Planning Commission to implement the New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway Study.		
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Action Items			
E01	Modify land use regulations and invest in infrastructure to develop an “Entertainment West” commercial and industrial node.		
Jefferson Parish Film Study Action Items			
E01	Collaborate with Jefferson Parish legislative delegation to remove the state motion picture, digital media, music production, live theater, and motion picture infrastructure tax credits.		
E02	Collaborate with the Airport to create a master plan for the redevelopment of “unused” program.		

Prepared by **JEDCO** and **GCR**

In order to monitor the implementation of their Jefferson EDGE initiative, JEDCO prepares “report cards” on the status of each action item every 6 months to a year.

staff should respond to the city's Planning Department, and primary ownership of the plan within City government should rest with the Planning Department. Sufficient staff time to monitor and administer the plan is an absolutely indispensable component of implementation.

2. Prepare semiannual reports on progress toward implementation. At the conclusion of JEDCO's *Jefferson EDGE 2020* planning initiative, JEDCO made the decision to produce semiannual "report cards" that indicate the level of progress on each action item. These reports provide a concise, color-coded overview as well as a more detailed explanation of the progress that has been made and remaining obstacles. These reports serve a number of valuable functions. They maintain the freshness of the plan and ensure that it does not become stale. They also introduce a measure of accountability in that there will be a clear indication of how successful the "owner" of each action item has been in making progress. These progress reports should be published on the City of Kenner's website so that the public may also be aware of the city's progress.

3. Formulate citizen-based working groups that will have a review and oversight role of each element of the plan. In order to broaden ownership of the plan and responsibility for its implementation, the City should formulate volunteer working groups comprised of community stakeholders. These groups will be responsible for continued oversight of elements of the plan, and they will be responsible for monitoring implementation from a citizen's perspective. Generally, these working groups should correspond to the eleven distinct goals that the plan outlines. Certain goals could be combined into a single working group (Laketown and Rivertown for example), as these groups should not become too numerous and cumbersome. Having strong working groups behind the plan is one way to ensure that the plan takes on a life that is independent of the roster of elected officials at a given time.



Citizen working groups help to ensure that elected officials remain focused on the Kenner 2030 plan. They also provide an effective mechanism for translating concepts into implementation.

4. Get the broader public involved and increase their ownership of the plan. Due to budget and time constraints, the general public was not a principal contributor to the *Kenner 2030* plan. They did provide important responses to surveys, but they did not have a major role in formulating and vetting the plan's recommendations. If the public is to have ownership of this plan, they must be involved at some point. Fortunately, a more public oriented planning process that is being led by UNO will soon follow the *Kenner 2030*, Committee-driven plan. This will be a prime opportunity to obtain broader public support for this plan's recommendations. With public involvement comes innumerable positive outcomes: a plan that is more responsive to residents' needs, a plan that remains a living document, and elected officials that are held accountable for implementing the plan. If the public believes in the merits of the plan, they will insist that elected officials honor its aims and follow through on implementation.

5. Revisit the plan on an occasional basis and make necessary edits. One reason why plans occasionally become stale is the simple fact that they are not revised periodically. If the fundamental assumptions on which the plan is based change over time, then naturally many of its recommendations will no longer be relevant. Once every 2 – 3 years, the Planning Department should involve the Economic Development Committee, the topic-specific working groups, and the general public in an effort to formally revise the plan as necessary.

6. Provide an orientation to the plan to newly elected officials and to new department heads in city government. A primary reason why even the best crafted plans sometimes wither and die is that they are associated with a certain elected official or senior level administrator. When there is inevitably changeover, either in the political or administrative realm, the new generation is either unaware of the plan or consciously allows it to become dormant. Public involvement and the formulation of stakeholder working groups will help to mitigate this phenomenon, but another way to ensure the vitality of the plan is to create a formal mechanism for orienting new officials to the document. Whenever there is an election and whenever there is a change in a department head, the Planning Department should have the responsibility of formally introducing newly elected officials and new department heads to the plan.

Implementation of a strategic plan fundamentally hinges on the will of the civic leadership. If there is ample will and commitment to the plan, it will be implemented. There is no substitute for leadership, but these recommendations will help to build a stronger “infrastructure” for plan implementation.

One way to ensure the vitality of the plan is to create a formal mechanism for orienting newly elected public officials to the document.

Implementation: Getting Started

In the realm of plan implementation, there is much truth to the bumper sticker wisdom that “the longest journey begins with the first step.” For this reason, GCR has identified the critical first tasks that will get the implementation process underway. It is important to remember that the time horizon of the plan is approximately 15 – 20 years. Many of these tasks will not be concluded within the next three to five years. Nonetheless, it is imperative that Kenner get started immediately on all of the goals that the plan outlines, for the sake of actual accomplishments and for the sake of preserving momentum. The first 12 – 24 months following the adoption of the plan will be a critical period.

The following tasks are those that will jump start implementation in the first 12 – 24 months:

General Administrative Responsibilities

- Hire two FTE staff in the Planning Department that will monitor implementation and provide technical assistance to support implementation.
- Prepare up to three semiannual “report cards” that indicate progress in implementing the plan
- Formulate citizen work groups covering each of the goals that the plan outlines
- Strive for greater public involvement in the strategic planning process

Louis Armstrong Airport

- Secure a major role for Kenner on the steering committees for the Airport studies that will soon be underway.
- Initiate conversations with consultant teams and Airport officials about expanding the “footprint” of redevelopment efforts to encompass adjacent roads and commercial areas.

Airport Buy-out Properties

- Work with UNO to complete the study recommending disposition strategies for buy-out properties.
- Adopt internal deadlines for the disposition of the properties and ensure that executive leadership (Mayor, Aviation Director, JEDCO Executive Director) is aware of deadlines.

Rivertown

- Establish a Rivertown Main Street Organization
- Secure funding for a Rivertown Small Area Plan
- Craft new zoning regulations that are appropriate for Rivertown as part of the new citywide zoning ordinance.

Laketown

- Continue to aggressively recruit Coconut Beach
- Formally adopt the 2028 Laketown Master Plan as the official vision for Laketown
- Craft new zoning regulations that implement the vision of the 2028 Laketown Master Plan
- Begin to formulate an RFP for a master developer in coordination with the State

Esplanade Mall

- Formulate an Esplanade Mall working group
- Increase week-night police patrols at the Mall

Marketing and Business Recruitment

- Devise annual economic development goals and metrics in coordination with JEDCO
- Initiate a social media presence for Kenner

Public Education

- *Formulate a closer relationship with Jefferson Parish school officials and school board*
- *Create a template for annual reports on public school performance in Kenner*
- *Submit an application for a charter school in Kenner*

Commercial Corridors

- *Initiate conversations with consultant teams and Airport officials about expanding the “footprint” of redevelopment efforts to encompass adjacent roads and commercial areas (also a “getting started” action for Airport redevelopment).*
- *Secure funding for a corridor improvement study*
- *Craft zoning regulations that incorporate stronger aesthetic standards and the amortization of non-conforming signage*

Code Enforcement

- *Commission a third party review of Kenner’s code enforcement practices*

Political Climate

- *Initiate a series of semiannual “listening sessions”*
- *Commission an independent review of ethics rules*

Transportation

- *Engage in the forthcoming Jefferson Parish bicycle plan*
- *Begin a dialogue with the CONNECT coalition*

Concluding Thoughts

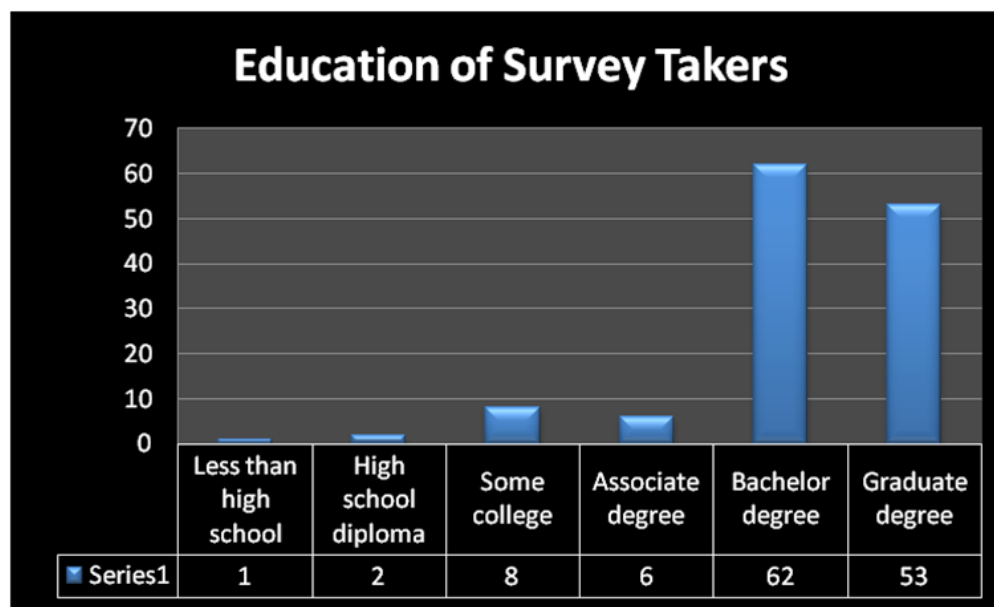
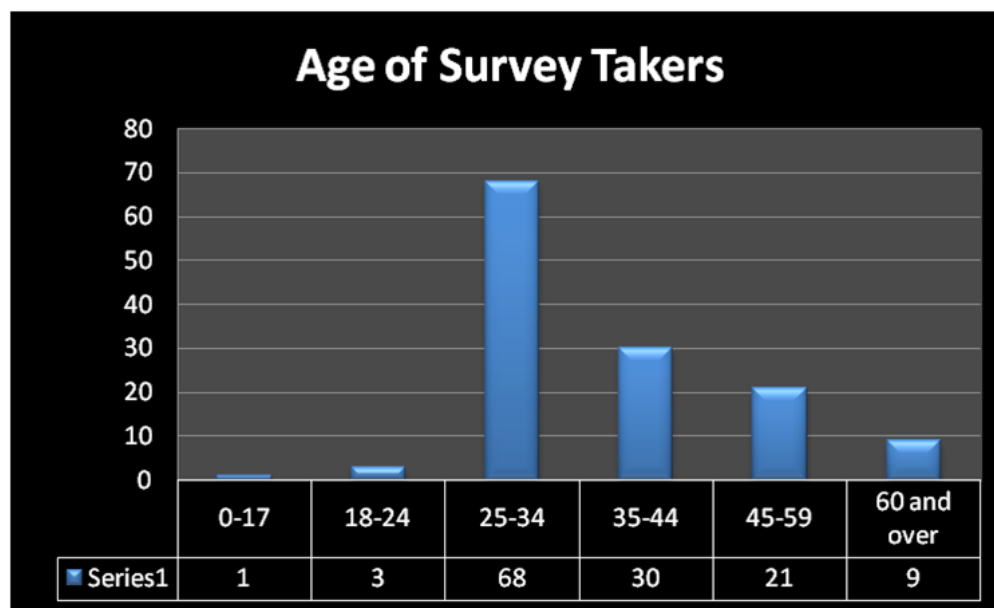
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

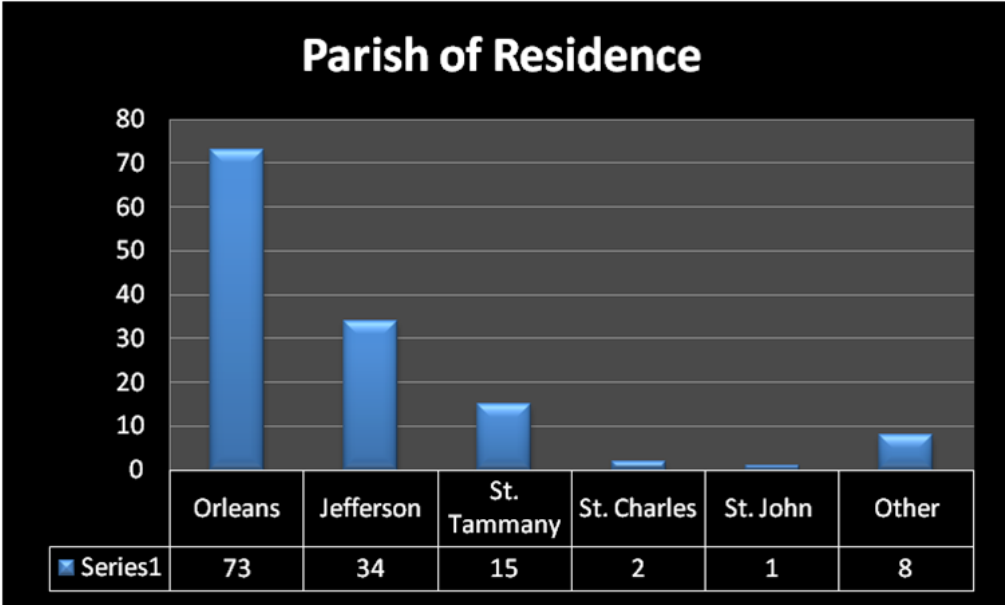
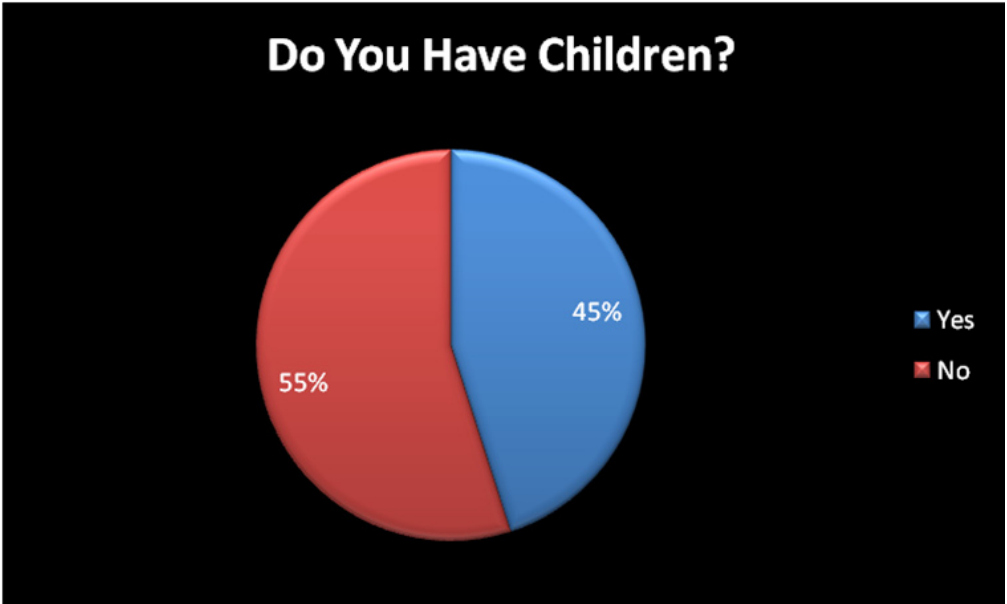
Kenner is truly a community at a crossroads. There is unequivocal, quantitative evidence that Kenner has experienced moderate decline in recent years. If unaddressed, this pattern of decline will likely continue unabated. The lesson from other suburban communities around the United States is clear—decline and disinvestment are inevitable in the absence of forceful action. In suburb after suburb, yesterday's brand new ranch houses and shopping centers have become today's middle aged neighborhoods and deteriorating strip malls.

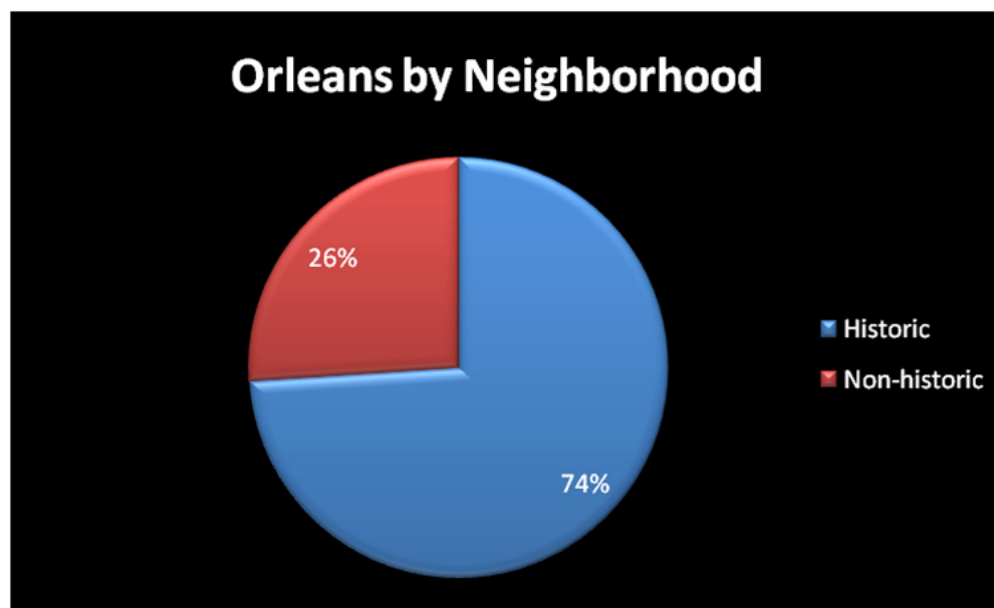
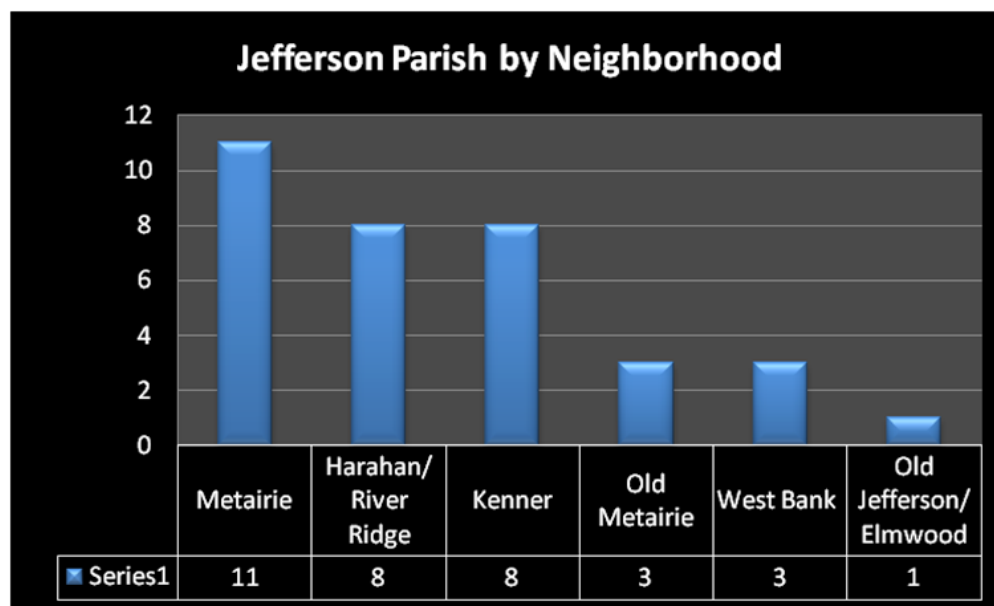
The communities that have bucked this trend are those that are able to attract a next generation of residents and businesses. Through quality of life, lifestyle amenities, and a high quality physical environment, these communities are able to persuade residents to invest in a 30 to 40 year old house that may be smaller than what is available in another community. People choose to live in a community that offers these amenities even if the community is not brand new. This is the key to Kenner's economic future—overcoming an aging housing stock, aging commercial corridors, and aging infrastructure to attract a new generation of residents and businesses.

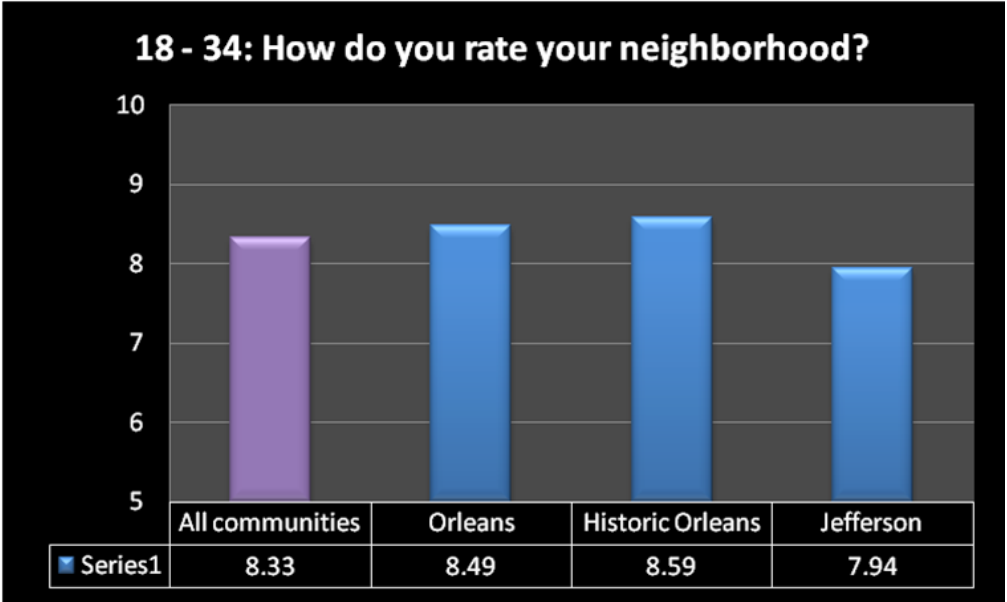
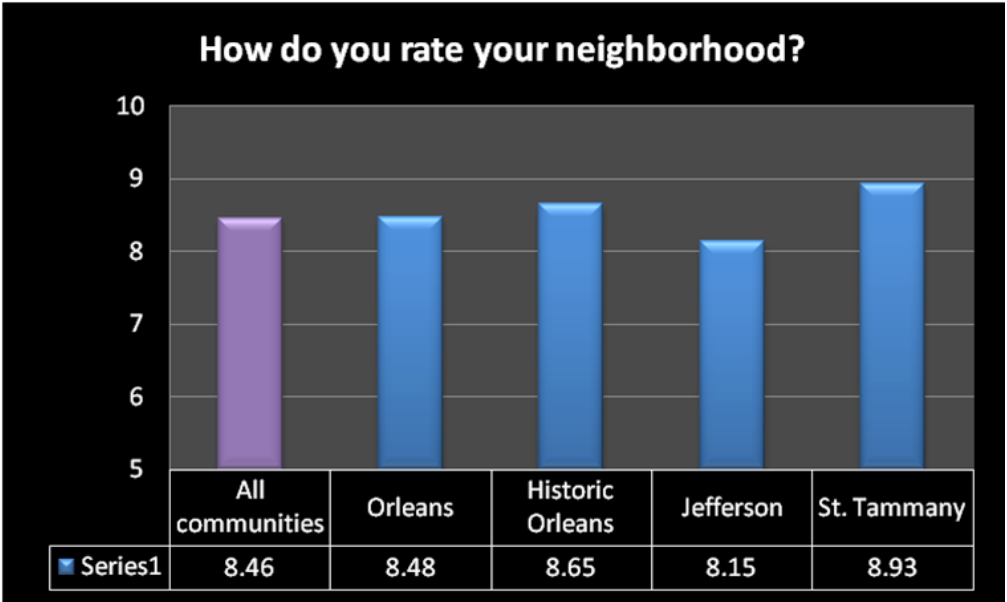
This plan recommends a number of forceful actions to do just that. Through improved commercial corridors, quality public schools, vibrant commercial districts at Laketown and Rivertown, and a host of other improvements, Kenner will once again be a community that is sought after. Continued decline is not inevitable, but forceful action to reverse recent trends is an imperative.

Appendix

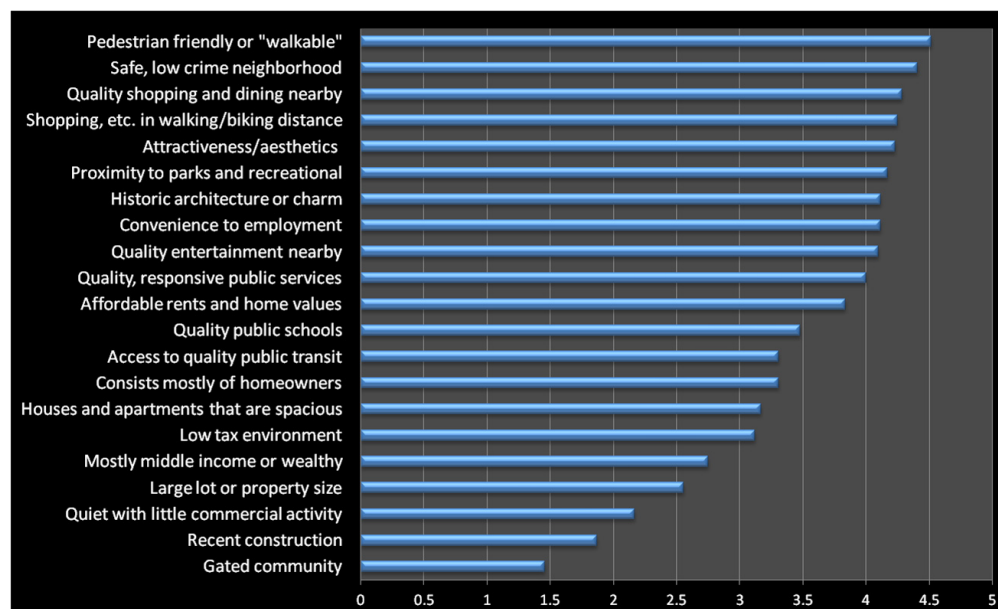
Facebook Survey



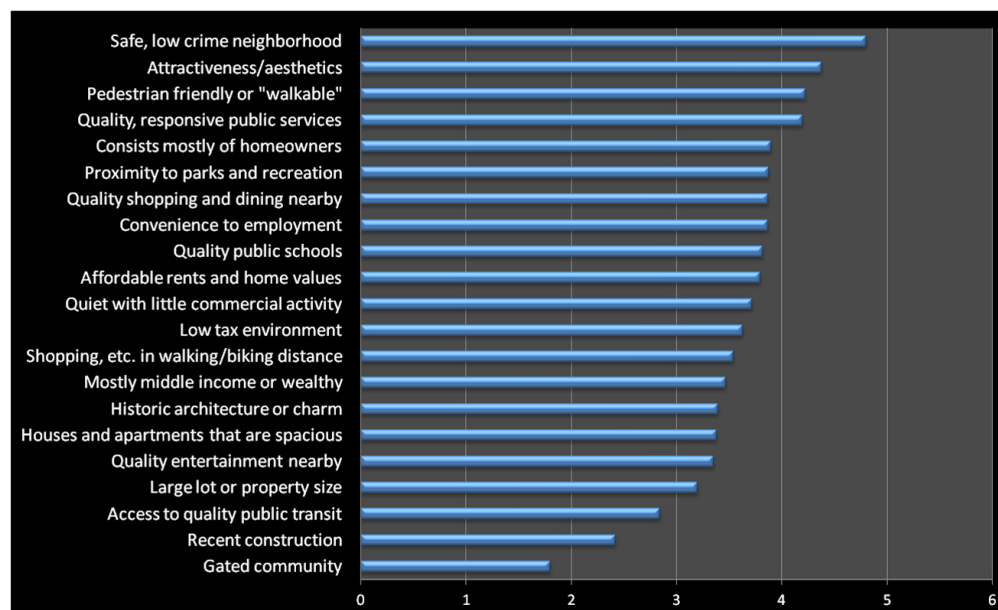


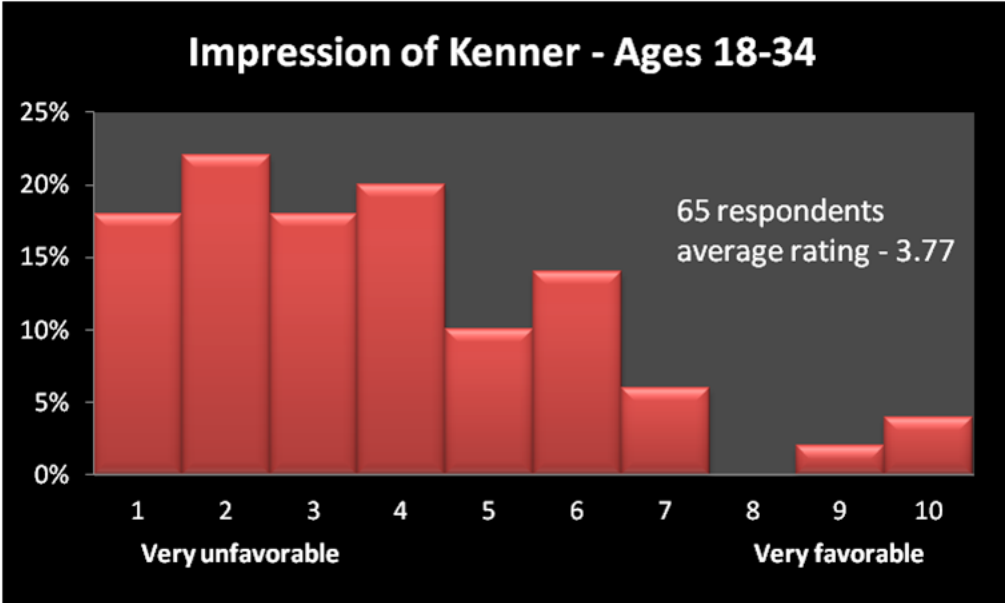
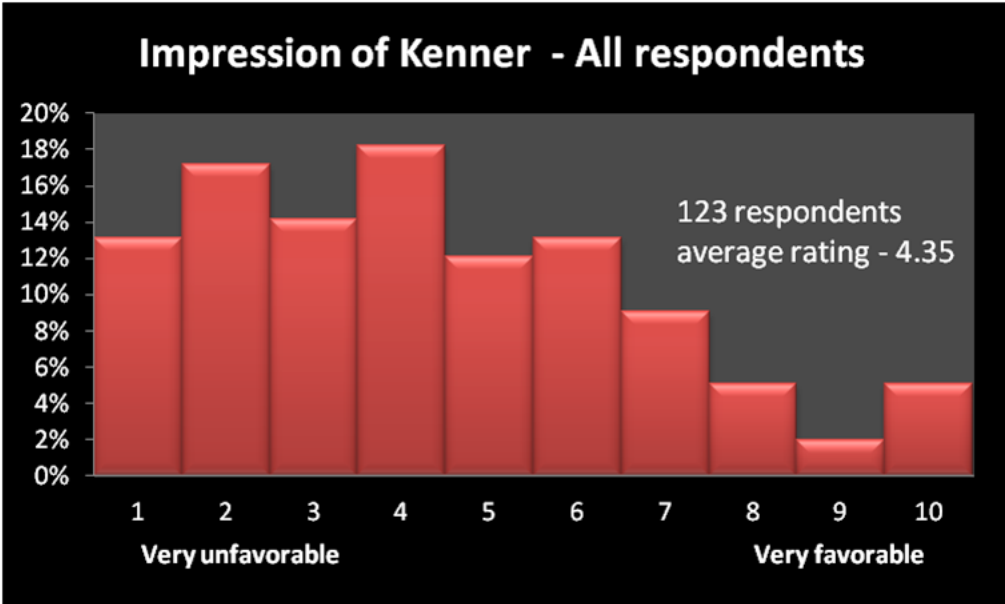


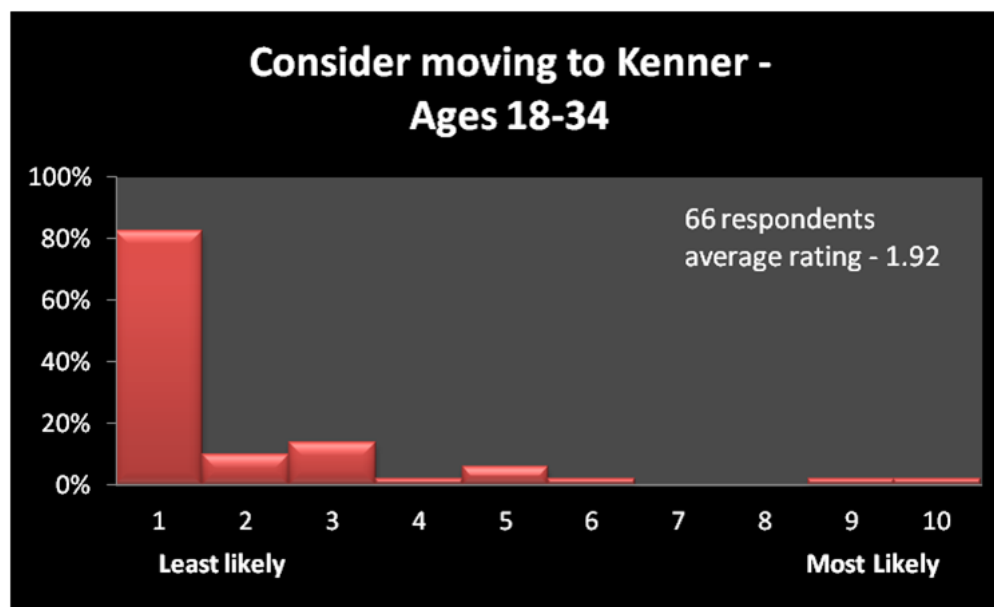
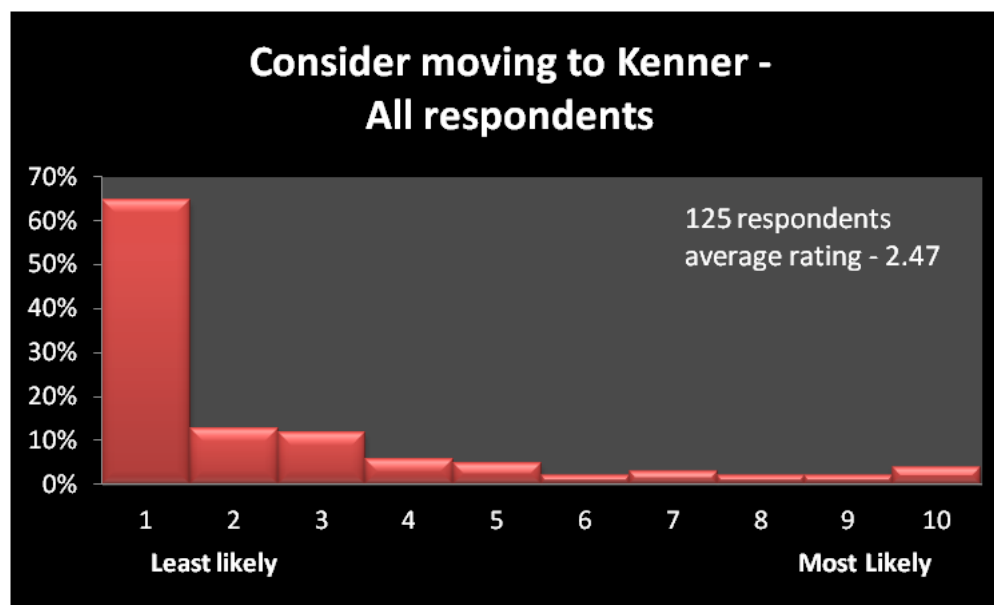
Which characteristics are important to you (18-34)?:



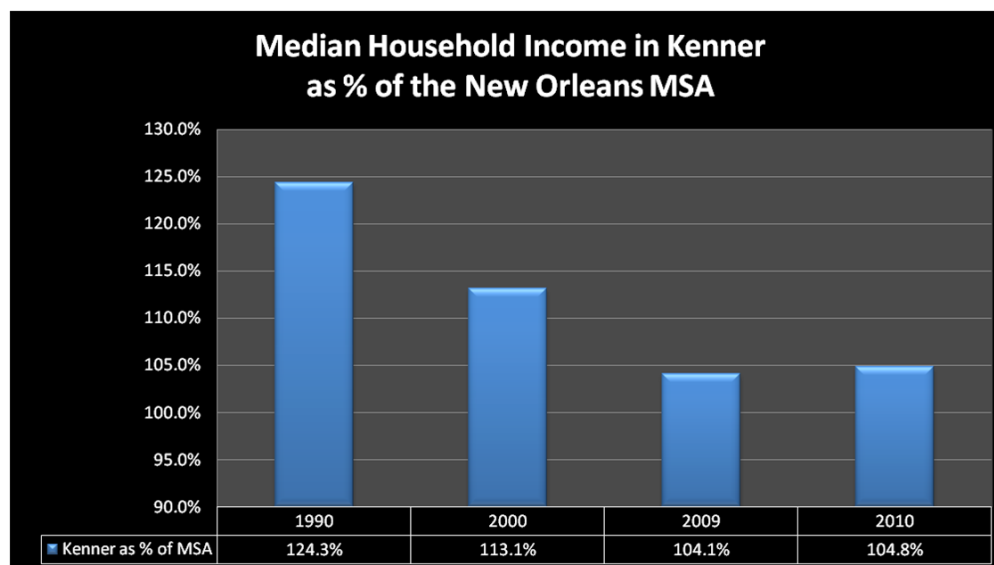
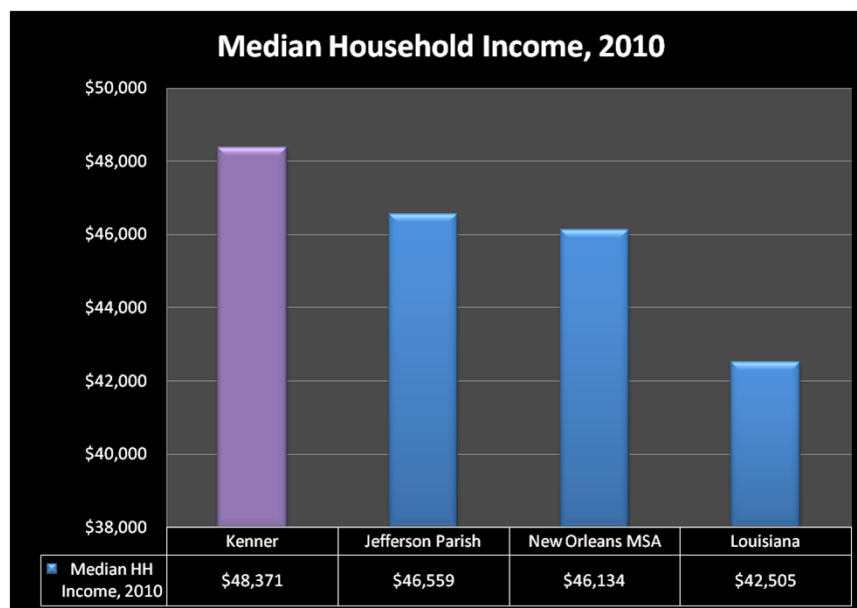
Which characteristics are important to you (35&Older)?:

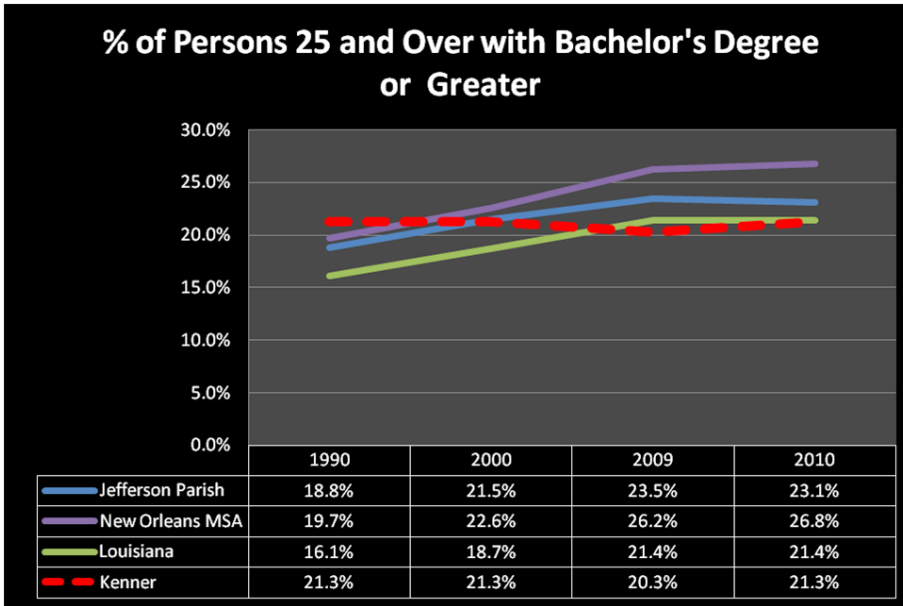
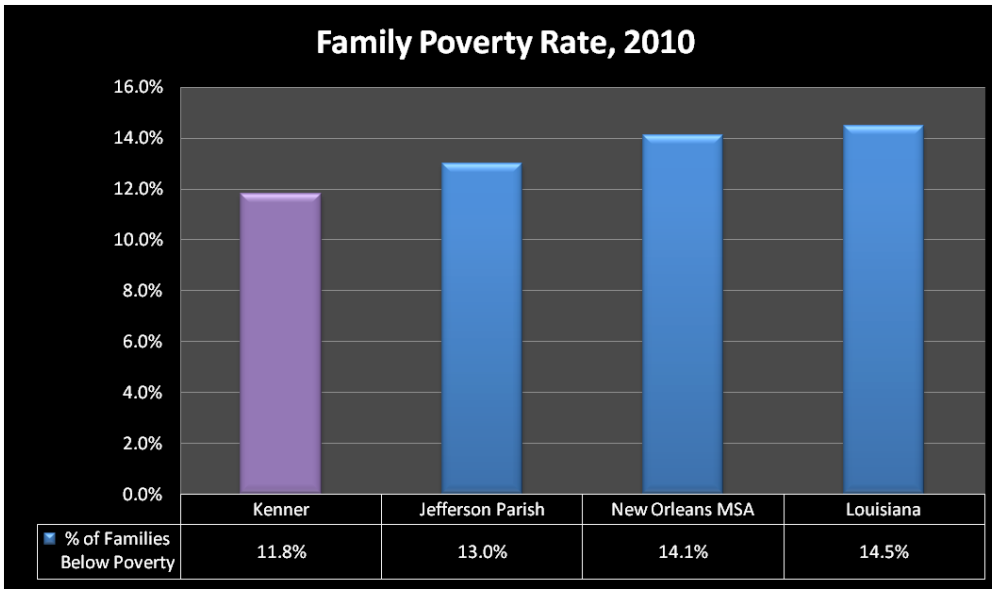




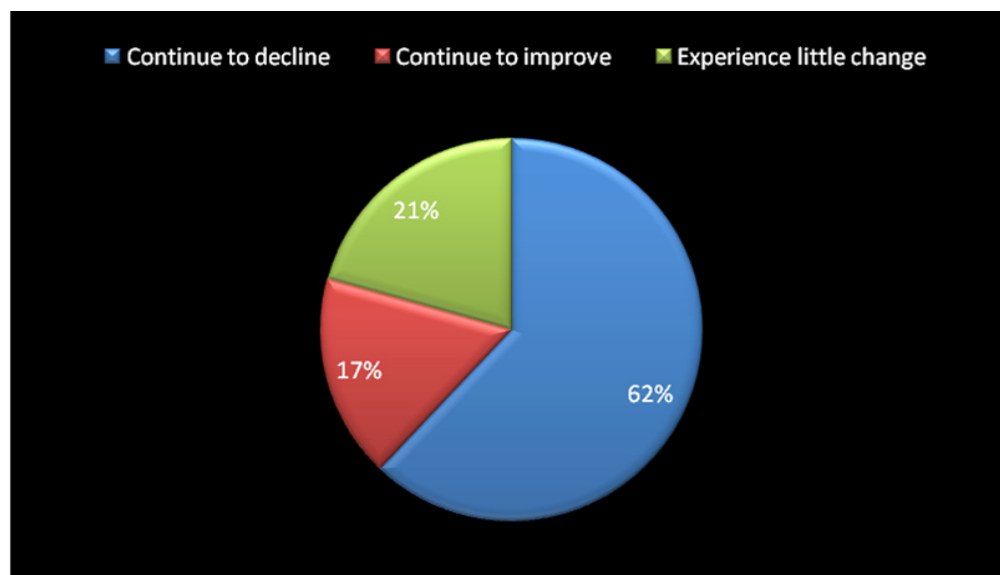


Kenner SWOT Meeting 10/14/2011

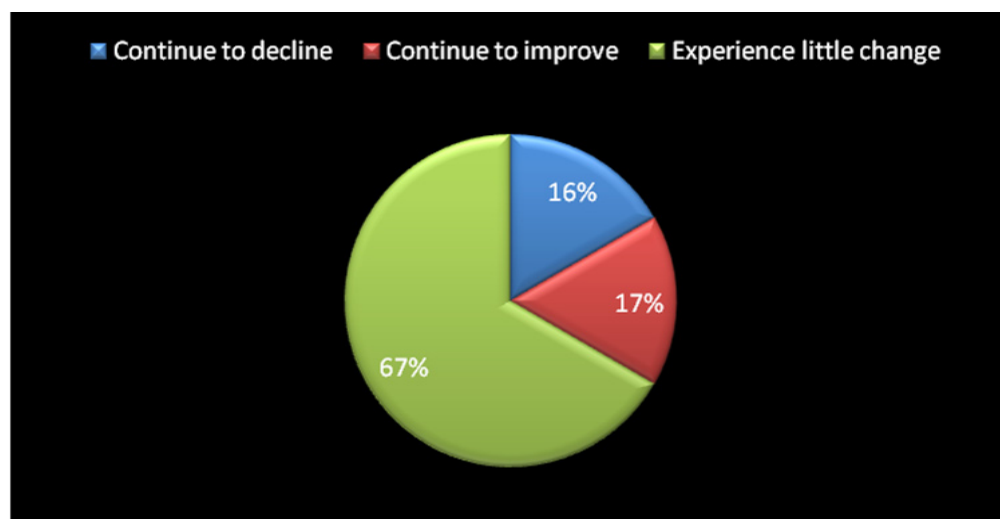




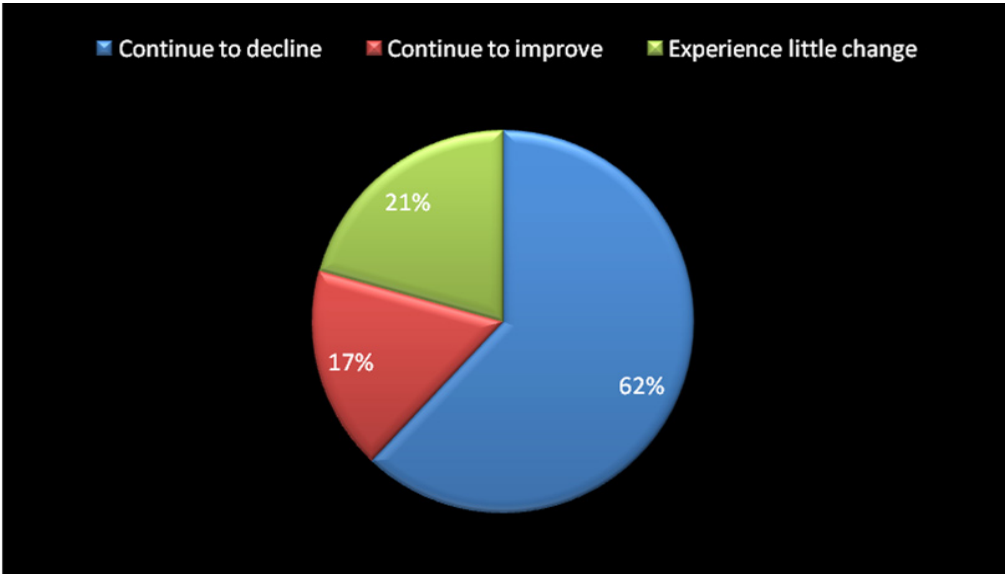
If current trends continue, how would you describe the likely future prospects of Kenner?



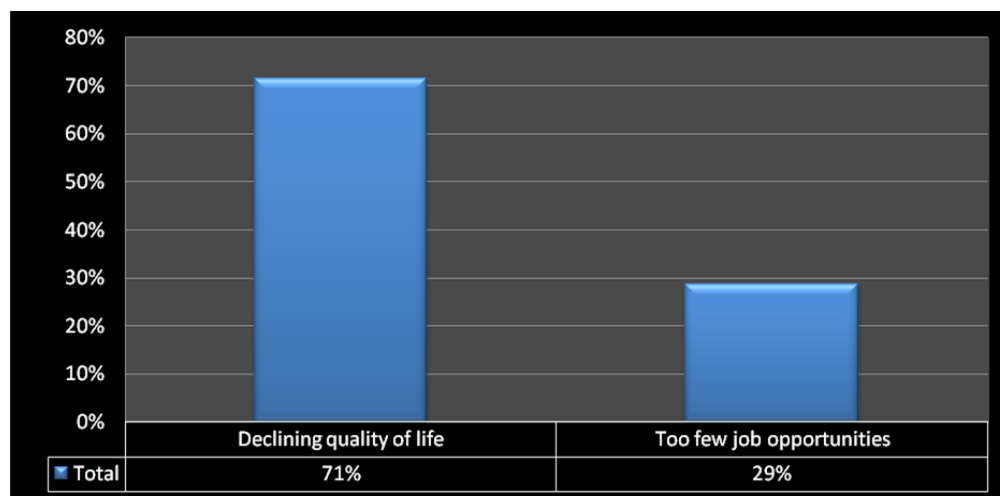
Elected Officials



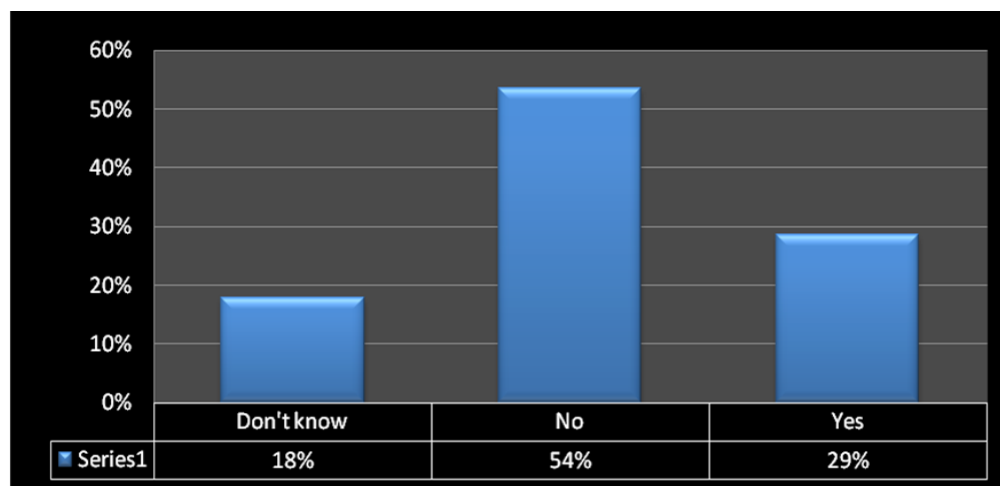
Residents



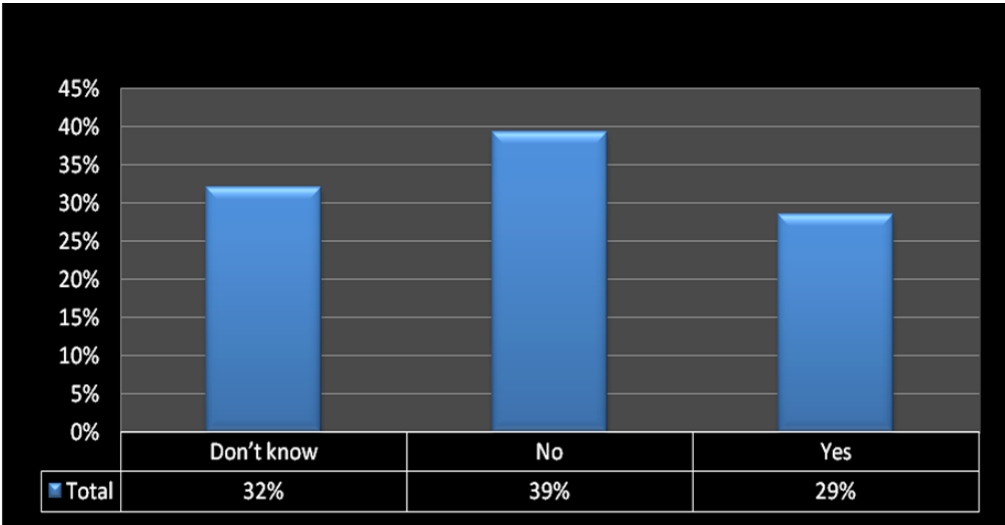
What would you say is the greater threat to Kenner's stability and overall well-being?



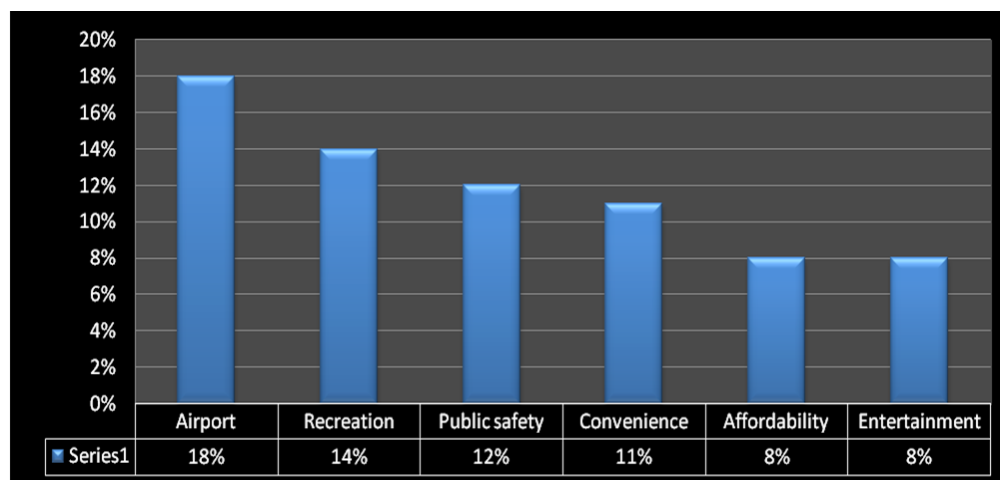
Do you feel that a strong, clear vision has been outlined for the kind of city that Kenner hopes to be in the future?



Do you feel that Kenner has a strong, detailed plan in place to make it a more prosperous, appealing community for residents and businesses?

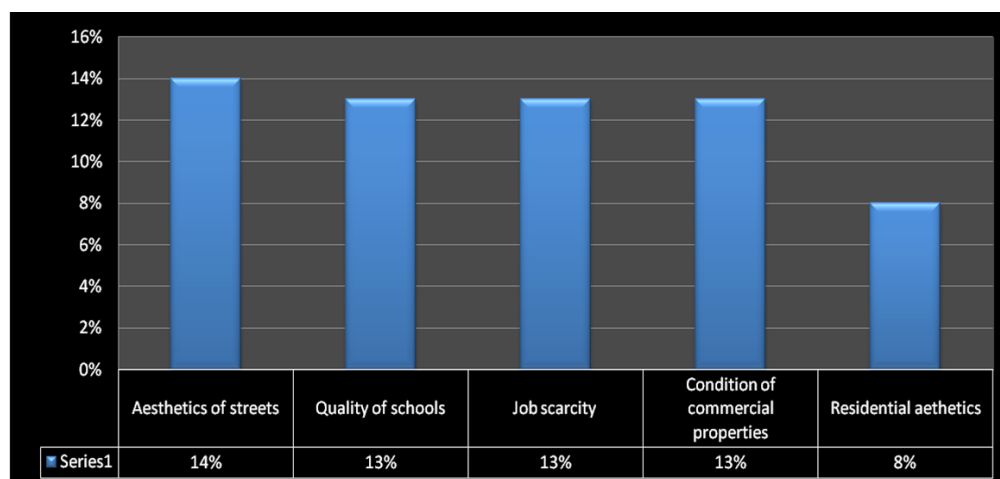


List the greatest strengths or most appealing characteristics of Kenner:



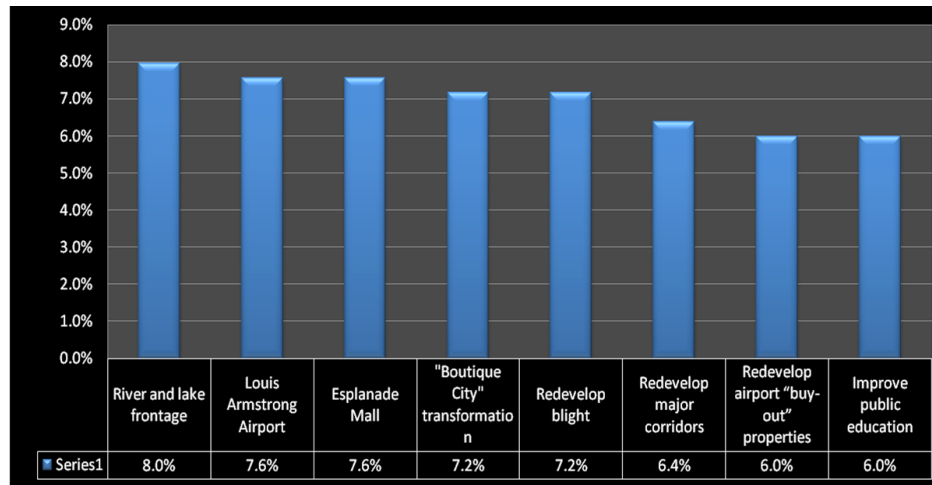
Other strengths (in descending order): attractive housing stock, quality neighborhoods, responsive government, resilience from flooding.

List the greatest weaknesses or least appealing characteristics of Kenner:



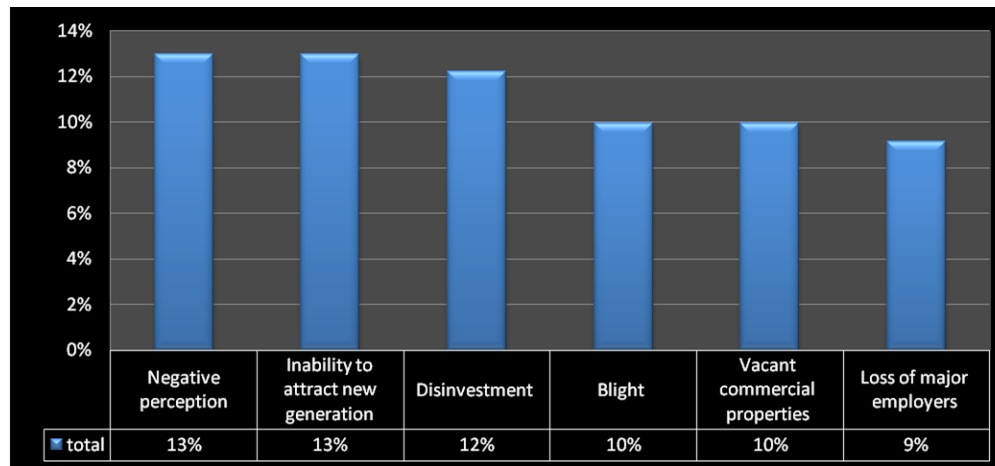
Other weaknesses (in descending order): quality of the housing stock, scarcity of entertainment options, commute times to employment, business “unfriendly” environment, recreation, public services.

List the greatest opportunities to make Kenner more prosperous and appealing:



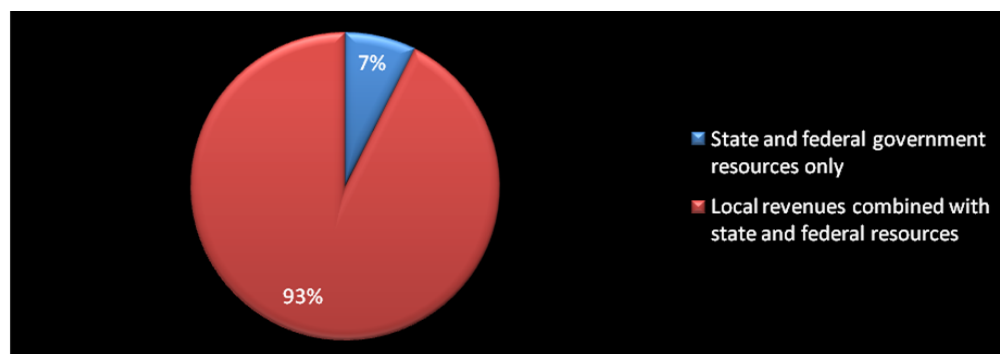
Other opportunities (in descending order): redevelop vacant commercial properties, redevelop Laketown, improve approach to/from Airport, enhance marketing of Kenner, Rivertown as Kenner's "downtown," beautifying residential neighborhoods.

List the greatest threats to Kenner's prosperity:

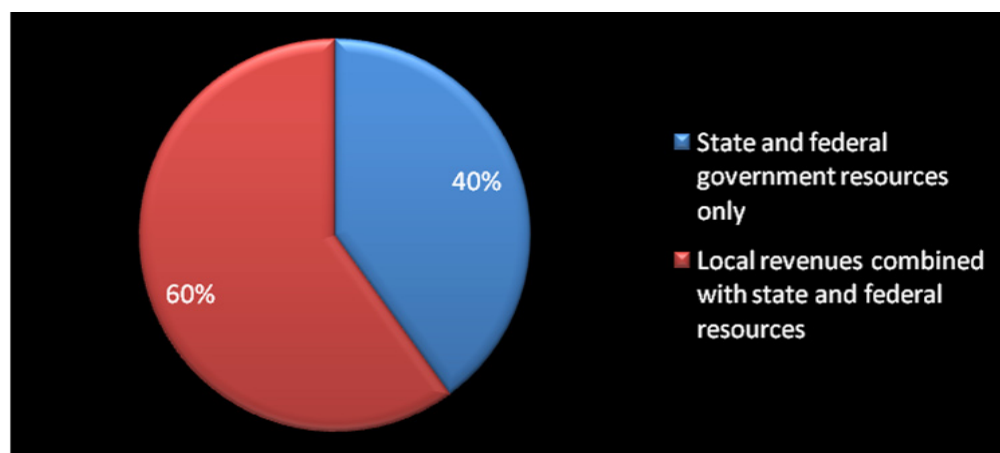


Other threats (in descending order): better public education elsewhere, diminished services and diminished tax revenue, poor first impression from Airport, losing residents to other neighborhoods in the region, risk of increased crime.

Which scenario best describes your view of the best way to fund revitalization efforts in Kenner?



Elected Officials



Residents

