How often do we visit museums? Is there more pollution? Are we checking out more library books? How do we rate BREC? Are we recycling more? Are we satisfied with our neighborhoods? How long does it take to drive to work? How many of us attend Live after Five? Do we believe racism is a problem? How many couldn’t pay for food last year? Do we want more roads or more mass transit?
The Baton Rouge Area Foundation has stood with communities for more than 40 years, providing grants to nonprofits and executing projects that improve the quality of life across the Capital Region. We are among more than 700 U.S. community foundations. With assets of more than $500 million, we are ranked among the 30 largest community foundations in America.

The Foundation is funded by generous fund donors and members. With them, we have made tens of thousands of grants totaling more than $225 million. Nonprofits have used the grants to feed and clothe people, protect the abused, preserve the wilderness, create an arts center, educate children who deserve a second chance, protect young girls from cancer, revive downtown Baton Rouge and raise more than $45 million for hurricane relief.

Among our goals is giving people, especially those who live on the margins, a chance to improve their lives. We do so through philanthropy, collaborating with fund donors who create donor advised funds, which are investment accounts for doing good. For more about your community foundation, visit BRAF.org.
Numbers can reveal the world. By interpreting them, we can make decisions that make our lives better. That’s the underpinning of the report you are holding in your hand.

Inside these pages, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, with help from the community and partners, offers about 50 indicators for East Baton Rouge Parish. The indicators—statistics—fall into nine categories and tell us about the quality of life. You will discover how residents rate the library, public schools and BREC. And you will find statistics on public safety, health, social well-being and six other categories.

Think of Baton Rouge CityStats as a guidemap for improving our parish. Annually, it will tell us where we have been, where we are, where we need to go.

CityStats began about a year ago, when hundreds gathered at community meetings to craft visions for East Baton Rouge’s future. Chosen by the community and refined by experts, the indicators are designed to drive the community to the shared visions. Check out the visions; they open each of the nine sections.

Within this report, you won’t find data about other cities or surrounding parishes. Austin, Atlanta and Livingston Parish are not like East Baton Rouge, so comparing them would cloud the indicators. Comparisons would also detract from the purpose of the indicators—pushing the community to the common visions.

The Foundation and its donors will use the annual data to assist in making millions of dollars in annual grants. We are sharing the information with you, as well as business interests, nonprofits and local government, hoping that we can work together to solve the issues that emerge from the data in this report.

Christel C. Slaughter, Ph.D.
Baton Rouge CityStats tracks quality of life for East Baton Rouge Parish, using nearly 50 statistical indicators to do so.

CityStats is a roadmap for community improvement, telling us where we are, how far we’ve come and where we need to go.

The project began in 2008 with community meetings. Hundreds of people gathered to define visions for Baton Rouge in nine categories, including infrastructure, environment and social well-being. The indicators are intended to drive EBR to those visions by revealing what is going well and what needs to be fixed.

CityStats is funded by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, its fund donors and members. The Foundation hired Jacksonville Community Council Inc., which has an established history of improving its Florida city through indicators, to lead the first phase of the project. JCCI led the community meetings, where the visions were defined and indicators chosen. JCCI reviewed and refined the indicators.

The indicators are not static. We expect most of the core indicators to be used year after year, but some will be replaced with ones that better reflect the quality of life in East Baton Rouge.

The Foundation hired the Baton Rouge Area Chamber to compile data for this project. The chamber also managed a parishwide poll that provides indicators for this report. The Foundation created this report and the companion website at BRCityStats.org. There are details about the project at the end of this report.

So what’s next? The Foundation and its fund donors will use the indicators to assist in making decisions about grants. We hope for a greater impact from this project as other nonprofits, businesses and local government chart common solutions with Baton Rouge CityStats as the underpinning.
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge appreciates its rich heritage with all of its character, charm and cultural traditions, and celebrates the joys of its friends, families, football and food. The community values and preserves its historical assets, museums and theatres; at the same time, the community embraces new cultural and recreational opportunities with an openness for excellent and diverse opportunities for arts, recreation and entertainment available to all residents. Baton Rouge supports a wide variety of family-friendly and inclusive recreation activities, from youth sports opportunities to hunting and fishing.
**INDICATOR:** Library books checked out

**What it measures**
The number of library books checked out annually through the system.

**How EBR is doing**
The number of books checked out spiked in 2004, then declined each year through 2008. Since 2004, the number of books checked out has dropped about 13%.

![Library Books Checked Out](chart.png)

Source: East Baton Rouge Library System
**INDICATOR:** Attendance at cultural events

**What it measures**
Percentage of people saying they attended big events in East Baton Rouge from a survey for this project. With future annual surveys, the data will become more meaningful as trends appear over time.

**How EBR is doing**
Baton Rouge loves college sports. More than half of respondents in a survey representing the parish attended a college sports event in 2008. Mardi Gras does well in Baton Rouge as well, with nearly 40% saying they attended a Mardi Gras parade or related event.
**INDICATOR:** Total attendance at cultural facilities

**What it measures**
Combined attendance at the Louisiana Art and Science Museum, USS Kidd, LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge Zoo and Manship Theatre. Only full data for 2005 and 2006 were available for this report. In subsequent years, a trend will emerge as we receive more full data from each organization.

**How EBR is doing**
As a whole, East Baton Rouge did well, with attendance rising at cultural facilities in 2006 compared to 2005. Below is a breakdown for each organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LASM</td>
<td>183,892</td>
<td>217,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS Kidd</td>
<td>51,932</td>
<td>38,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSU-MOA</td>
<td>5,432</td>
<td>8,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR Zoo</td>
<td>247,968</td>
<td>266,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manship Theatre</td>
<td>50,572</td>
<td>43,892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LASM, USS Kidd, LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge Zoo, Manship Theatre
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge has a broad, diversified economy, providing good jobs at high wages for its residents. The region supports and retains an educated and flexible work force and employment opportunities that match local skills. Economic growth is managed responsibly to ensure the sustainability and the economic vibrancy of all parts of the region. Residents enjoy a range of housing opportunities and choices to meet all needs, and all neighborhoods thrive.
INDICATOR: EBR unemployment rate

What it measures
How many people are capable and looking for work but can’t land a job. An unemployment rate of about 3% is ideal because it accounts for job mobility. Caveat: The unemployment rate does not include people who have given up looking for work.

How EBR is doing
The rate declined after Katrina to an average of 4.4% in 2008. Local employers have complained about the difficulty of finding qualified workers, which is partly due to an economic expansion.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
**INDICATOR: Net job growth**

**What it measures**
Net job growth is jobs created minus jobs lost. When coupled with higher wages, increases in net job growth show a growing, strong economy.

**How EBR is doing**
Net jobs have grown year-over-year since 2003. Hurricane Katrina propelled job growth in 2005 and 2006, the two best years for the economy since 2003.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
**INDICATOR: Net migration**

**What it measures**
The number of people leaving or entering the parish. It’s the difference between people moving to and relocating from the parish.

**How EBR is doing**
People are moving out of the parish again after Katrina boosted the population. Net migration has been a nagging problem for Baton Rouge, as people have been exiting for other states and for surrounding parishes.

---

**INDICATOR: Patents issued**

**What it measures**
Patents issued is an indicator of an area’s intellectual capital. It is also an indicator of the new economy.

**How EBR is doing**
A sharp decrease in the middle of the decade, followed by an uptick in 2007.
**INDICATOR:** Median family income

**What it measures**
Median family income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half with income above that amount and half with income below that amount.

**How EBR is doing**
It depends. The white population is doing well, with a rising median family income that reached $81,513 in 2007. The black population, though, is facing a declining family income, which was $32,889 in 2007. The difference between the two is dramatic—and should be a concern.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
**INDICATOR:** Residential building permits

**What it measures**
The number of building permits for constructing residences.

**How EBR is doing**
A post-Katrina rush to build residences has waned. Still, construction permits for housing remained steady through the measured period.

---

**INDICATOR:** Home Internet access

**What it measures**
Percentage of people who have Net access at home.

**How EBR is doing**
With each annual survey, a trend will appear. In the first survey, three of every four households had Net access.
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge celebrates its wealth of educational assets. Its schools provide high-quality education and prepare students for a lifetime of success and social responsibility. Children arrive at school ready to learn, perform well in school and continue on to higher education or other community opportunities to learn. Parents value their children’s education, and the community values and supports local educators. Educational and training institutions provide Baton Rouge’s adults with opportunities for continued education, including literacy training, developing workforce skills, or enjoying lifelong learning.
**INDICATOR: Population with bachelor’s degree**

**What it measures**
The percentage of residents 25 and older with at least a bachelor’s degree.

**How EBR is doing**
The percentage of residents with bachelor’s degrees was rising steadily from 2005 to 2007.

---

**INDICATOR: Population with high school diploma**

**What it measures**
The percent of residents 25 and older with at least a high school diploma.

**How EBR is doing**
The percentage of residents with high school diplomas was flat from 2005 to 2007.
**INDICATOR: High school dropout rate**

**What it measures**
The percentage of public school students in 9th through 12th grades who dropped out of school during the year.

**How EBR is doing**
The rate jumped nearly 50% in 2006 over 2005. This was the latest data available when this report went to press.

---

**INDICATOR: High school graduation rate**

**What it measures**
Percentage of 12th graders who received their diplomas in the year, a result computed by graduates divided by total enrolled 12th graders.

**How EBR is doing**
Overall, the high school graduation rate jumped to over 90% in 2006 after a dip in 2005. But high school dropout rates also rose in 2006, which could account for some of the corresponding jump in the graduation rate.
**INDICATOR:** Core classes taught by highly qualified teachers

**What it measures**
The percentage of core classes taught by highly qualified teachers under the No Child Left Behind Act. Teachers are certified based on their education, national certification and other accomplishments.

**How EBR is doing**
A considerable drop in 2006 and 2007 from higher numbers in 2004 and 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: La. Department of Education*
**INDICATOR: Fourth-grade LEAP passage rate**

What it measures

The state accountability program requires students in fourth and eighth grades to pass standardized tests in the major subjects before advancing a grade.

How EBR is doing

Except for an uptick in math, Louisiana Education Assessment Program scores in fourth grade have been flat for other subjects. East Baton Rouge schools rank in the bottom third among Louisiana parishes.

**INDICATOR: Eighth-grade LEAP passage rate**

What it measures

The state accountability program requires students in fourth and eighth grades to pass standardized tests in the major subjects before advancing a grade.

How EBR is doing

Louisiana Education Assessment Program test scores for eighth-graders have been relatively unchanged for all subjects except science. East Baton Rouge schools rank in the bottom third among Louisiana parishes.
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge is known as a green city, and preserves and enhances its natural beauty, wildlife, river, green spaces, farmland and environmentally critical areas. Residents, businesses and government actively participate in conservation and environmentally-responsible behavior. The air, water and land resources of Baton Rouge are clean and support the area’s unique ecosystems, and are open for local residents to experience and explore.
**INDICATOR:** Curbside residential recycling

**What it measures**
Tonnage of recycled material picked up curbside from homes.

**How EBR is doing**
Curbside recycling has jumped each year since 2005. In 2006, the city-parish switched to rolling plastic containers for recycling, which made it more convenient to recycle.
**INDICATOR:** Total residential and commercial recycling

**What it measures**
Total amount of waste recycled by businesses and homes. The tonnage for residential recycling includes not only curbside recycling, but also yard waste, compost, batteries and more.

**How EBR is doing**
Commercial recycling in Baton Rouge has exploded, rising by more than 40% from 2003 to 2007. Meanwhile, total residential recycling soared in 2005 because of Katrina, then slipped back in 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commercial (in tons)</th>
<th>Residential (in tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>91,067</td>
<td>74,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>74,204</td>
<td>73,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>102,663</td>
<td>102,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>143,419</td>
<td>94,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>127,331</td>
<td>103,794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: East Baton Rouge Parish
**INDICATOR:** Toxic releases

**What it measures**
Nearly 650 chemicals and chemical categories that industrial and other facilities manage through disposal, recycling, energy recovery and treatment. The EPA collects the data from manufacturing, metal and coal mining, electric utilities, commercial hazardous waste treatment and other industrial sectors.

**How EBR is doing**
Toxic releases have increased 32% from 2003 to 2007.

---

Source: Environmental Protection Agency
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge’s strength is in its people, and its diverse and spirited residents are actively engaged in the governance of their community. Governing bodies throughout the region work together for the common good, and are responsible and responsive to local needs. Baton Rouge retains the connectedness of a small-town feel while planning together for a smart-growing region. Local government is open, inclusive and ethical, and provides high-quality services for all residents.
**INDICATOR: Perception of services of fire department**

**What it measures**

On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of fire department services. The ranking is from our poll of EBR residents.

**What residents think of the fire department**

The fire department averaged 4.41 in our survey. The EBR fire department has earned the ISO Class 1 Rating for many years, an accomplishment that reduces home insurance costs.

**INDICATOR: Perception of services of police and sheriff’s office**

**What it measures**

On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of services provided by the police and sheriff’s offices. The rating is from our poll of EBR residents.

**What residents think of police and sheriff’s office**

The police and sheriff’s office averaged 3.79 in our survey.
INDICATOR: Perception of services of the BREC parks system

What it measures
On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of BREC, the park system, in a representative survey of the population.

What residents think of BREC
BREC had an average rating of 3.82.

Source: CityStats survey
**INDICATOR:** Perception of services of library system

**What it measures**
On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of library system services. The rating is from our poll of EBR residents.

**What residents think of the library system**
The library averaged **4.47** in our survey.

---

**INDICATOR:** Perception of services of public schools

**What it measures**
On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of public schools. The rating is from our poll of EBR residents.

**What residents think of the school system**
The public school system averaged **2.55** in our survey.
INDICATOR: **Perception of services of public works department**

**What it measures**
On a scale of one to five, where 1 is poor and 5 excellent, the rating of the Department of Public Works. The rating is from our poll of EBR residents.

**What residents think of DPW**
DPW averaged 3.39 in our survey.

INDICATOR: **Satisfaction with current neighborhood**

**What it measures**
How satisfied or dissatisfied residents are with the immediate area where they live.

**What residents think**
Residents are satisfied with the areas where they live, with 83.5% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. A trend will appear as this question is asked in subsequent years of the survey.
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge residents live healthy, active and productive lives, and understand what they need to do to take care of their bodies and their wellness across their full lifespan. All residents have access to first class health care, including mental health assistance and a level one trauma center. Preventive health care and good behavioral choices result in lower rates of preventable disease and mortality.
**INDICATOR: Mortality rates**

**What it measures**
Deaths per thousand from cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

**How EBR is doing**
Mixed. Mortality rates for cancer were rising from 2003 to 2005, the latest data available. Meanwhile, rates of death from heart disease were flat and death caused by diabetes had dropped.
INDICATOR: New cases of sexually transmitted diseases

What it measures
Number of new cases of HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.

How EBR is doing
Unfortunately, data for the various diseases are not very current. These figures represent a base year. In coming years, we will learn more.

Source: Louisiana Office of Public Health
INDICATOR: Percentage without health insurance

What it measures
The percentage of people with and without health care coverage. Health insurance includes insurance from employers, Medicare, Medicaid, self-insurance, union insurance and military insurance.

How EBR is doing
Time will tell whether the number goes down. When the survey was taken in late November and December, 12.5% said they didn’t have health insurance coverage.

Source: CityStats survey
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: The region enjoys a superior multi-modal transportation system, with excellent infrastructure that meets the needs of local residents, businesses, travelers and visitors. Public transit and green transportation are preferred options for all residents, and the community is pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly. The physical infrastructure of the community is able to meet resident needs. Stormwater and related systems are in place to prevent public health emergencies and flooding.
INDICATOR: **Average commute times**

**What it measures**
Time it takes for Baton Rouge residents to get to work.

**How EBR is doing**
Commute times have dropped a bit after a slight increase in 2006. The indicator below provides the longest one-way commute from our survey.

---

INDICATOR: **One-way work commute**

**What it measures**
The longest one-way commute to or from work.

**How EBR is doing**
This is a baseline year for the survey. Future surveys will reveal whether East Baton Rouge is making progress on this front.
**INDICATOR: Average weekly ridership for bus system**

**What it measures**
Number of weekly riders using Capital Area Transit System.

**How EBR is doing**
Bus ridership climbed to 96,732 in 2004, then fell in the subsequent two years. Ridership was down 16% in 2007 from 2004.

**INDICATOR: Frequency of bus ridership**

**What it measures**
In the previous year, the number of times the respondent in a parishwide survey rode the bus.

**How EBR is doing**
Nearly 90% of area residents didn't ride the bus one time, while 3.3% ride at least a few times a week or daily.
INDICATOR: **Average weekly bus mileage**

**What it measures**
The number of miles driven by the Capital Area Transit System buses.

**How EBR is doing**
An increase in bus miles generally corresponds to a boost in available service. Total miles driven by CATS buses soared 54% in 2006 because of Katrina.

Source: National Transit Database
**INDICATOR: Traffic solutions**

What it measures

Opinions on alternative modes of transportation for reducing traffic congestion.

How EBR is doing

Residents offer a combination of answers. Many want more roads, though 37% believe either a combination of better roads and mass transit or just more mass transit would ease traffic.

---

**INDICATOR: Adjudicated properties**

What it measures

The city-parish takes control of property if taxes are not paid. The property is considered abandoned.

How EBR is doing

The number of adjudicated properties dropped dramatically from 2003 to 2006, then grew sharply in 2007.
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge residents enjoy a safe, inviting environment throughout the community: at home, in the workplace, and on the roads. Crime rates are low, and the community assists with law enforcement in prevention activities and rehabilitation of former offenders. Fire, rescue, police and other agencies work together cooperatively across the region. Area youth reach their potential and become productive members of the community. The region is prepared for disasters and responds quickly and effectively to all emergency situations.
**INDICATOR: Number of crimes**

**What it measures**
Total numbers of criminal offenses and total violent offenses, which are murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Statistics include sheriff’s office and Baton Rouge, Southern University and LSU police departments.

**How EBR is doing**
Violent offenses across the parish surged after Katrina, then fell back to pre-hurricane levels. Meanwhile, nonviolent crimes decreased 16% from 2003 to 2007.
INDICATOR: Participation in community safety programs

What it measures
People choosing to participate in programs like Neighborhood Watch in 2008.

How EBR is doing
As time goes by, this question will reveal a trend. A low number could signal either a safe community or lack of civic involvement. About one of five people participate in community-organized safety programs.

Source: CityStats survey
**Indicators**

**Perception of personal safety in neighborhood**

- **What it measures:** Whether survey respondents feel safe walking alone at night in their neighborhoods.
- **How EBR is doing:** More than four in 10 respondents don’t feel safe walking alone at night in their neighborhoods. The fear crosses racial boundaries, with 46% of blacks and 39% of whites answering the question with a “no.”

**Concern about criminal activity versus a year ago**

- **What it measures:** Whether respondents to a survey are more or less concerned about a crime committed against them or a family member versus a year earlier.
- **How EBR is doing:** Nearly 60% are much more concerned or somewhat more concerned about crime.

---

**Source:** CityStats survey
**Indicator: Number of traffic accidents**

**What it measures**
Vehicle accidents.

**How EBR is doing**
Accidents dropped 19% over the 12 months ending in 2008, a good result considering there were more cars and trucks in the parish after Katrina.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Traffic Accidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>21,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>21,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>22,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>22,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18,189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LSU Highway Safety Research Group
Vision, or what East Baton Rouge wants to be: East Baton Rouge shares a sense of the greater community and a positive self identity, enhanced by the spirit of volunteerism and philanthropic giving of its residents and businesses. Community-based organizations provide quality services to all in need. The most vulnerable populations in the community are respected, empowered and supported. Racial, ethnic and other differences no longer divide but enrich, and all people are accepted and integrated into every aspect of the community.
**INDICATOR:** Racism as problem

**What it measures**
Racism as a problem in East Baton Rouge, where 1 is not a problem and 5 is a serious problem.

**How EBR is doing**
40% of respondents believe racism is a problem in Baton Rouge, while about 24% do not think it is. Surveys in coming years will show differences in perception.
**INDICATOR: Poverty rates**

**What it measures**
Percentage of people living in poverty under the federal definition. The graph includes overall poverty, as well as children and seniors living in poverty.

**How EBR is doing**
Overall and childhood poverty rates declined from 2003 to 2007, though still about one of every four children lives in poor households. Poverty among seniors is lower than in 2003, but ticked up again in 2007.
**INDICATOR:** Couldn’t pay for food within past 12 months

**What it measures**
From our survey of parish residents, the percentage of people who said they did not have enough money at times in 2008 to pay for food.

**How EBR is doing**
More than one of five respondents said they couldn’t afford to buy food at some time last year. Surveys in coming years will tell whether the situation gets better or worse.

Source: CityStats survey
**INDICATOR: Incidents of child abuse**

**What it measures**
Child abuse incidents reported to authorities.

**How EBR is doing**
The number of reported cases of child abuse jumped nearly 25% from 2003 to 2004, then dropped each year after that.

**INDICATOR: Teen birth rate**

**What it measures**
The percentage of teen girls—15- to 19-year-olds—giving birth in the year.

**How EBR is doing**
The teen birth rate dropped in 2004, then returned to higher levels in 2005 and 2006. Research shows that the longer a female waits to have children, the better her circumstances, especially her earning power. This holds true for women in their 20s as well.
INDICATOR: Couldn’t pay for housing within last 12 months

What it measures
From a survey of parish residents, the percentage of people who said they did not have enough money at times in 2008 to pay for housing.

How EBR is doing
About 14% said they couldn’t afford to pay for housing at some time in 2008. Surveys in coming years will tell whether the situation gets better or worse.
Acknowledgements

The Foundation thanks the hundreds of East Baton Rouge residents who attended community meetings to launch Baton Rouge CityStats. With their input, common visions for what Baton Rouge wants to become were created.

Jacksonville Community Council Inc. and Ben Warner, JCCI’s No. 2, were leaned on for advice to begin CityStats. We are grateful for their patience in answering our questions.

The Baton Rouge Area Chamber provided the research for this project. Jason El Koubi, Kathryn McGovern, formerly of the chamber; and Tim Dawson, John Zachary, Meg Mahoney and Adam Knapp, working now at the chamber, all pitched in to keep CityStats on the rails.

John Boston and his staff at Survey Communications are appreciated for running the survey that provides some of the indicators.

This project was funded by the Foundation’s fund donors and members—together about 1,000 strong. Their generosity and faith let us work each day to make Baton Rouge a better place.
How did we do this?
We didn’t do most of this. The people of Baton Rouge did. Three times in 2008, listening to an open call for participation, Baton Rouge residents showed up at community meetings to launch the indicator project.

Led by Jacksonville Community Council Inc., the participants learned about indicators, defined visions for the community and began picking indicators to propel Baton Rouge to a higher quality of life. A veteran from the Jacksonville Community Council refined the indicators, making sure they matched the desired outcomes defined at the community meetings.

With indicators in hand, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation hired the Baton Rouge Area Chamber to gather data and conduct a survey, which had poll questions to fill gaps in the indicators. The first survey was conducted in winter 2008 by Survey Communications Inc., a Baton Rouge firm with a national reputation.

Why an indicators project?
About 18 months ago, the Foundation began exploring indicators as a means to improve the quality of life in East Baton Rouge. We discovered a growing number of indicators projects across the country and world, and found some had changed their communities for the better.

Our research led us to believe an indicators project should be revived here. (The chamber’s leadership program conducted an indicators project earlier in the decade.) The Foundation and its fund donors will use the indicators to guide millions in annual grants to nonprofits and to choose projects to improve life in East Baton Rouge. We hope nonprofits, business interests and local government rely on the indicators for their work as well.

Why only East Baton Rouge Parish?
The indicators only reflect East Baton Rouge because the region’s parishes are not alike. Measuring regionally would also have obscured what was happening in East Baton Rouge. If resources are available, we may expand the project to other parishes. Certainly, we will share the knowledge gained from this project with anyone interested in launching an indicators project nearby.

Why are there no comparisons to other towns, such as Austin?
The indicators are for charting progress in East Baton Rouge, not to evaluate progress against other parishes and counties.

There are two reasons for this. One, areas are dissimilar and not comparable. Austin, Texas, is not East Baton Rouge, neither are Jackson, Miss., or Birmingham, Ala. Two, indicators for East Baton Rouge let residents focus on enhancing the parish.
Several key factors of this project should be kept in mind:
• The data provide only numerical indicators of the quality of life. Some important dimensions of the quality of life are not included because quantitative indicators are not available.
• The indicators do not, by themselves, explain why trends move as they do or what should be done to make improvements. They provide the information needed to generate those conversations and encourage community involvement in improving trends.
• This is the first take on this project. In subsequent years, the indicators could change to keep up with the community or because some indicators provide a better measure. But we expect a core group of indicators to be measured annually.
• For more information about the indicators, please contact the Baton Rouge Area Foundation at (225) 387-6126 or email mverma@braf.org.

What are Quality of Life Indicators?
Indicators are quantitative measures of the quality of community life. Indicators that are meaningful and useful reflect a combination of idealism (what we would like to measure) and pragmatism (what we are able to measure). Taken as a set, CityStats indicators provide a roadmap for the community, showing where we have been, where we are now, and what critical areas need attention if we are to arrive where we want to go.

For the purposes of this effort, “quality of life” refers to a feeling of well-being, fulfillment or satisfaction resulting from factors in the external environments. For many people, the quality of close interpersonal relationships, rather than the external environments, is the primary factor in determining happiness. Nevertheless, this project concentrates on the external environments, examining the quality of life from a community perspective.

CityStats indicators are in nine categories—culture and recreation, economy, education, environment, health, infrastructure, public safety, government/civic participation and social well-being. Much of the data are obtained from the records and documents of various public and private organizations. We have provided the most updated data for each indicator as of February 2009, when this report was going to press.

An annual opinion survey provides the remaining data. This random telephone survey was conducted for the project in late November and early December 2008 by Survey Communications Inc. of Baton Rouge. The survey measures resident opinions and reported behaviors on various quality of life questions. The sample is 400 residents representative of the parish population. The survey has a plus or minus 4.9% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. That means if the same survey was conducted among similar respondents, the results would fall within plus or minus 4.9% in 19 of 20 cases.
What are criteria for choosing the indicators?
The Quality of Life indicators have been selected and are maintained based on the following criteria.

Purpose: The indicator is both meaningful (it provides information valuable for community members to understanding important aspects of their quality of life) and useful (it offers a sense of direction for additional research planning and action toward positive community changes and a means of assessing progress toward these desired changes).

Importance: The indicator measures an aspect of the quality of life which a diverse group of people in the community would agree is important in relation to the priorities in the community’s shared vision or goals.

Validity and accuracy: If the indicator trend line moves upward or downward, a diverse group of people in the community would agree on whether the quality of life is improving or declining.

Relevance: The indicator measures an aspect of the community’s quality of life that the community can improve through public decision making and action at the community level.

Responsiveness: The indicator trend line responds relatively quickly and noticeably to real changes in the quality of life.

Anticipation: The indicator anticipates future trends rather than reacting to past trends. A “leading” indicator is generally more useful than a “lagging” indicator because it allows a proactive response.

Understandability: The indicator measures an aspect of the community’s quality of life in a way that most residents can easily understand and interpret in relation to their own lives.

Availability and timeliness: Data for the indicator are readily available and affordably accessible on an annual basis from a credible public or private source.

Stability and reliability: Data for the indicator are collected, compiled and calculated in the same way each year.

Asset orientation: Where possible, the indicator measures a positive aspect of the community’s quality of life (to focus on community assets) and a trend line increase clearly denotes an improvement in the quality of life.

Representativeness: Taken together, the indicators measure the major dimensions of the community’s quality of life.
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