

Louisiana, Missouri: Continued Growth And A Vibrant Community

Like just about every other small rural Missouri town, Louisiana has had its challenges. With peak populations at the beginning of the last century – 5,130, and again during World War II – 4,670, we currently have about 3,200 residents. It would be easy to assume that our numbers will continue to decline, but we are optimistic that the situation will change. New infrastructure, a revived community spirit, and the assets that make the community special are things to build on, and there is a plan in place to do so.

The plan is led by a vision for what citizens want Louisiana to be:

A community that all citizens look on with pride and appreciation. A community that people grow up in and want to remain in or return to, and one that attracts new residents, businesses, organizations and institutions who are positive, energetic contributors to Louisiana's continued growth and improvement.

The goals that will make this vision a reality, include:

- To make Louisiana's historic architectural resources a key



contributor to the City's visual and cultural attractiveness;

- To leverage Louisiana's within-city natural resources and proximity to other natural resources in ways that will return economic, environmental and social benefits to community residents;
- To ensure that Louisiana's zoning designations, special area designations and city boundaries encourage future growth and development, and also support proper maintenance and use of current structures;
- To ensure that Louisiana's housing stock condition, affordability and availability is viewed positively by current residents, as well as businesses and individuals looking

to relocate;

- To see that city services and those of public institutions fully serve the needs of the community;
- To have civic and community groups that freely collaborate and provide important contributions to Louisiana's well-being;
- To have a highly-functional transportation system for both business and personal use; and
- To have sufficient employment opportunities that provide adequate wages and benefits to the extent that people are motivated to either remain or move here, and to demonstrate a commitment within the community that is supportive to both existing and new businesses.

These goals are tied to objectives that measure the progress, and every objective has a set of strategies for completion.

One measure of progress is the infrastructure improvements that have been accomplished or are underway. Huge among those is the replacement of the Champ Clark Bridge across the Mississippi River. Once the new bridge opens, we expect traffic through the City to greatly increase. Accordingly, the plan calls for a complete reexamination of land use zones, City boundaries



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When the new Champ Clark Bridge opens in fall 2019, traffic through Louisiana is expected to greatly increase. Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Transportation.

and zoning ordinances – a task that Louisiana’s Planning and Zoning Commission is busy completing. Economic development strategies are focused on businesses that could capitalize on the increased interstate traffic. A collaborative of local elected officials is busy advocating for Highway 54 lane increases between Louisiana and Kingdom City.

Not long ago, Louisiana reinvested in water and sewer treatment facilities. The City is currently working on a

major project to provide new water and sanitary sewer service, improved storm water control, complete street resurfacing and new sidewalks for Louisiana’s principle east-west thoroughfare, Georgia Street. The main north-south route through town, Route 79, also known as 3rd Street, will be repaved once the Mississippi River bridge is complete.

The rise in community spirit was best reflected during a recent wind storm. The City’s Sunset Park suffered major

damage. Large, ancient trees were blown down and destroyed the park’s picnic pavilion. As luck would have it, the Rotary Club had already planted new trees there that provided a head start on that need. More importantly, the club took the lead on rallying the whole community to replace the pavilion. The result was enough donations to build the new pavilion that was twice as large, more attractive and significantly more functional than anything the City had in the past.

Another rallying point was that 2018 was Louisiana’s bicentennial year. It was marked by a week full of celebration and events capped off with an outstanding Fourth of July fireworks, again through community donations. The same spirit of generosity also enabled the City to commission a wonderful work of art honoring one of Louisiana’s most important historical residents, John B. Henderson. Mr. Henderson was co-author of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, an enactment that ended slavery. His bust now stands in Riverview Park. Visitors there also have a great view of the new bridge.

Louisiana has many more reasons for optimism. It sits right on the Mississippi River, offering great recreational opportunities from boating and fishing to waterfowl hunting and eagle watching. Access the river from downtown and purchase gas just across at the marina. We are at the junction of both east-to-west and north-to-south rail lines. Louisiana has a private port facility on the south end of town with additional warehousing soon to be built by the Pike County Development Authority to service port users.

Downtown is home to one of the largest assemblages of Mesker Buildings in the country. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Mesker Brothers Iron Works in St. Louis prepared and shipped numerous commercial buildings to small communities around the United States, typified by unique sheet metal façade; often, the establishment’s name was produced in the masonry work of an upper floor. Unfortunately, some of these buildings have been lost over time

and others are abandoned, but there has been a recent increase in interest from various potential purchasers.

In 1987, Louisiana's downtown was listed as a National Historic District and in 2005 was granted the North Third Street Historic District. This has allowed business owners within the districts to apply for Historical Structures Tax Credits that may be used to lower taxes owed for an individual, or a business that either does the work or purchases the credits. Louisiana's Historic Preservation Commission, a body appointed by the mayor and approved by the City Council, is responsible for seeing that the standards set for the appearance and maintenance of historic structures are upheld.

Scattered throughout the City are a number of historical homes where pride of ownership is apparent. Others are waiting for the right owner to come along and coax them back to their original beauty. In cooperation with the Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, a resident has been researching these structures and plans to have smart phone readable placards in front of each one, allowing visitors to access detailed information at each location.

The list of attributes continues. The Louisiana RII School District is known for its excellence. The District was honored as Missouri High School Activities Association's Class 2 State Quiz Bowl Champions the last two years and runner-up the year before that. The YMCA would rival any in the state, with a full-sized indoor pool, indoor walking track and all the normal amenities you would expect. Pike County Memorial Hospital is located here and has a state-of-the-art emergency facility manned around the clock, plus all the other health care services most would ever need.

The Riverview Cemetery has a history all its own. It provides a fabulous view high above the Mississippi River Valley that numerous artists have taken advantage of over the years when participating in the annual Plein Air Event. If you enjoy outdoor sculpture, St. Louis University's Lay Center sits

right outside of town. Visitors can hike trails past wonderful works of original art while getting exercise at the same time.

As Mayor, I know we have challenges. We need to generate more commerce within the city limits. I hope we can find a way to provide more hiking and biking opportunities. After the Georgia Street project is complete, street tree

rehabilitation is needed. There are streets and utilities in other parts of town that also need attention. Still, with this much happening now and so much more to build on, I like our chances for remaining a robust and vibrant community for many years to come. 🌿

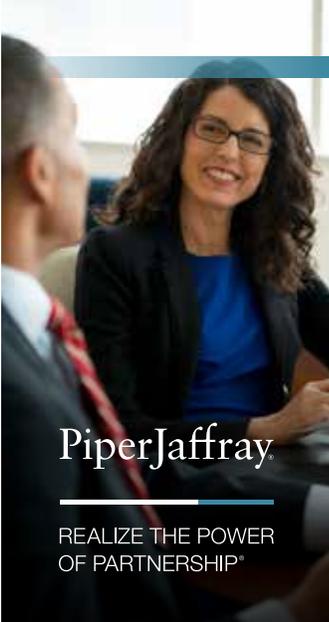
Marvin Brown is the mayor of Louisiana. Contact the City at (573) 754-4132.

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