

# Proposals suggest new look for city

## Officials: River, bayou offer opportunity

BY SAMUEL R. IRWIN  
Special to The Advocate

**DONALDSONVILLE** — A planning group commissioned by the city government and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers unveiled a preliminary city development master plan to a small group of officials and interested residents.

The plan focuses on new ways of making use of the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche by developing commercial and public facilities along the historic waterways.

Posters of possible architectural concepts for Railroad Avenue in Donaldsonville lined the walls of City Hall on Wednesday night as Carl Capone, the chairman of the city's Industrial Development Committee, told the audience the meeting was the first formal presenta-

tion of the master plan.

"We've finally got the plan to a point of presentation to the city," Capone said.

Mayor Leroy Sullivan Sr. and Councilmen Guy Poche and Raymond Aucoin attended the meeting to represent the city.

Project manger Mark Wingate of the Corps of Engineers said the master plan is nearly 75 percent complete.

"These are ideas based on what you have told us. They're not set in concrete," Wingate said. "The purpose of the plan is to set a direction for economic development tourist-type improvements in the city."

The plan, presented by landscape architects Jose Barro of the SJB Group of Gonzales, Joseph Furr of Joseph Furr Design Studios and Thomas Holden of Holden Associates, both of Baton Rouge, called for relinking the junction of the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche with a hydrology interpretive center.

"We're letting our imagination go wild," Barro said.

"Donaldsonville is positioned well to take advantage of eco-tourism," Furr added.

Bayou Lafourche was cut off from the Mississippi River in 1905 by the Corps of Engineers for flood-control purposes, but Furr said the grassy area around the pumping station controlling the bayou's water flow could be developed into a park linked to the rebuilt earthwork walls of the Civil War-era Fort Butler.

"This might be a pie in the sky idea, but we need to dream big," Furr said. "If you dream small, you get small results."

Furr's plan called for developing a waterfront market district of boat landings, cafés, restaurants, grassy amphitheatres and fountains along Bayou Lafourche to the La. 1 (Marchand Drive) bridge.

The bayou development at the La. 1 bridge would "green link" with a pedestrian-friendly Railroad Avenue, which would lead eco-tourists back to the Mississippi River.

"Donaldsonville grew from the river," Furr said. "We want to go

back to the river."

Holden called for redevelopment of Railroad Avenue by building colorful, brick-paved pedestrian crosswalks along the street.

Furr also suggested that each crossing intersection of Railroad Avenue should be reconstructed with paver bricks, which would make the street distinct and slow vehicular traffic.

Barro suggested establishing proper welcome signs at the main entries to the city on La. 1 using the architectural image of the parish courthouse as a common theme.

Barro's plans also called for connecting Louisiana Square, the grassy meadow in front of the parish courthouse, to the waterfront Crescent Park via a pedestrian-only Houmas Street.

Barro's plan also relocates the National Guard Armory, on the western side of Louisiana Square.

Capone said the master plan will dovetail with a separate Mississippi River riverfront development plan being designed by the Corps of Engineers.

## Jury convicts BR man of murder attempt

BY STEVEN WARD  
River parishes bureau

An Ascension Parish jury deliberated just 30 minutes before finding a Baton Rouge man guilty of kidnapping and trying to kill a Paulina woman who was shopping in November at Tanger Outlet Center in Gonzales.

Michael Leon Shoemaker, 42, 17565 Lake Azalea Drive, was convicted Wednesday of attempted second-degree murder by a unanimous vote of the 23rd Judicial District Court jury, Assistant District Attorney Robin O'Bannon said Thursday. The attack occurred about 8:20 p.m. Nov. 20 in the Tanger Center parking lot.

O'Bannon said the victim was

gled, screamed and blew the van's horn, O'Bannon said.

Shoemaker managed to get the victim into the van, where he overpowered her and started choking her, the prosecutor said.

During the struggle, Shoemaker tried to take the victim's keys away from her, but she would not give them up.

Witnesses who heard the victim's screams called 911.

Just before Gonzales police arrived, O'Bannon said, Shoemaker pulled out a bungee cord to use on the victim. But police leveled guns at Shoemaker and ordered him out of the van, O'Bannon said.

O'Bannon said Shoemaker has a long history of violence and has spent a good deal of his adult life in

tempted aggravated rape.

As a result of a plea bargain in that case, Shoemaker pleaded guilty to two counts of forcible rape and was sentenced to two consecutive 15-year prison terms. While he was serving time at Angola, Shoemaker was convicted of simple escape and sentenced to an additional four years in prison.

Shoemaker was paroled in 1997 after serving 15 years of his 34-year prison term, O'Bannon said.

Court records also show that as a juvenile, Shoemaker was accused of 30 separate criminal violations, including rape and kidnapping.

In 1980, O'Bannon said, Shoemaker was convicted of aggravated rape and sentenced to a juvenile life sentence — prison until age 25.

## W. Feliciana emergency responders set exercise

Baker-Zachary bureau

**ST. FRANCISVILLE** — The West Feliciana Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness plans to conduct a full-scale exercise Saturday for all the parish's emergency responders.

Director Jesse Means of the West Feliciana Emergency Operations Center said the exercise, being staged from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., "is to test and improve local response capability to terrorist incidents."

Means said all West Feliciana's local emergency-response agencies will be participating, along with personnel from the Louisiana State Pen-

itentiary at Angola and the River Bend Nuclear Power Station.

Most activities will be near the sheriff's sub-station north of St. Francisville on U.S. 61.

Activities also will take place at the new Emergency Operations Center in the 911 Dispatch Building on West Feliciana Parkway, Means said.

"Emergency vehicles and uniformed personnel will be involved, and the public should not be alarmed," Means said.

For information, call the West Feliciana Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness at (225) 721-1911.

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