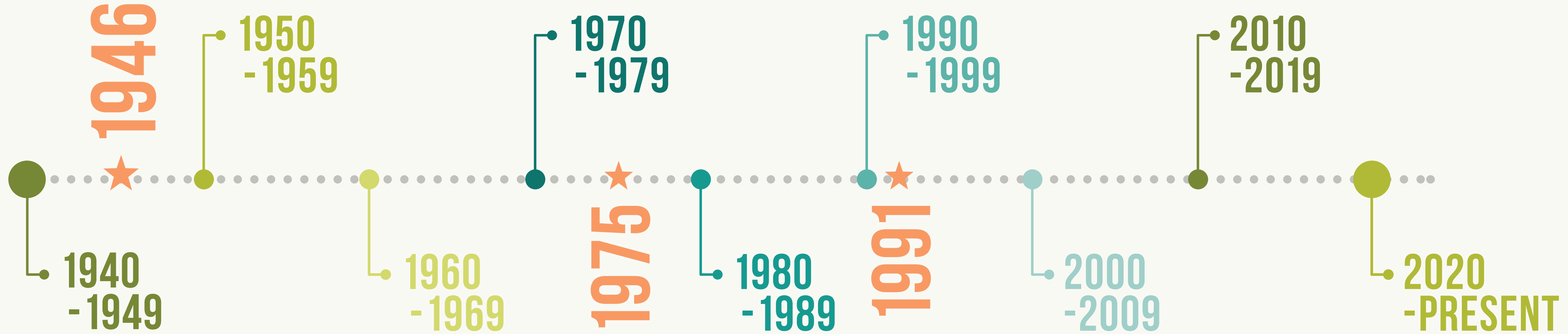




# RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION FOR THE PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE



## BREC SUPERINTENDENTS

**Ralph Hileman** (1946-1960)  
BREC's first full-time Superintendent

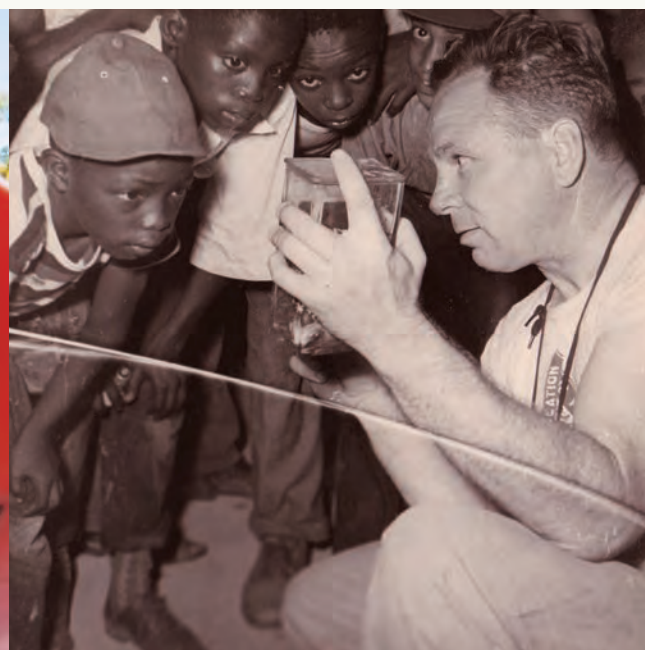
**Eugene Young** (1960-2002)  
Served as BREC's Superintendent for 42 years

**Mark Thornton**  
(2003-2005)

**Bill Palmer**  
(2006-2012)

**Carolyn McKnight**  
(2012-2018)

**Corey Wilson**  
(2019-Present)





# 1940-1949

## 1940

**Baton Rouge Metro Airport** – Ryan Airport was built by the Federal Government during WWII.

**Greenwood Park** – 640 acres were acquired by the Federal Government to use as storage and work area for bombs and repairs of planes, trucks and other equipment.

## 1941

**Edna Mae LeBlanc** – Between 1941 and 1945, Edna Mae LeBlanc was the Recreation Director. She received a Federal Government W.P.A. Grant which provided some of the first supervised recreation programs in Baton Rouge. By 1945, the budget reached \$10,646.40. The Recreation office was in the old City Park Center which had been an indoor building for a merry-go-round.

**Advisory Group** – BREC formed the Advisory Council which met once a month and was composed of the Mayor, representatives of the American Legion, the Legion Auxiliary, the School Principal, school board members, Police Juror, and members of the PTA.

**City Park** – The first story hour was conducted with assistance from the library. State Times sent a photographer to take pictures.

**City-Parish Track Meet** – The first city track meet was held in August, under direction of Aldrich Standard with over a hundred registered participants held at Baton Rouge High School.

**Doll Show** – On August 22, Victory Park hosted the first doll show with approximately 75 participants and 300 spectators.

## 1945

**Recreation and Park Growth** – Recreation and park acreage was 176.9 acres. There was one nine-hole golf course and eight clay tennis courts. Two parks were in operation including City Park. Four full-time and two part-time employees operated the program.

# 1946

## RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSION

Fred Benton, Sr. wrote an act to create the Recreation and Park Commission as a political subdivision of the State of Louisiana. Emma Benton, his wife, lobbyists and other citizens pushed to get the act through the legislature. The Act was approved by the governor on July 18, 1946 and became part of the Louisiana State Constitution, ACT 246, Senate Bill No. 195 of 1946.



**City Appropriation** – The city appropriated \$20,000 for recreation programs. Three parks were transferred to BREC for operation and maintenance.

**USO Centers** – The Police Jury made buildings available for recreation. Four centers were in operation: City Park Youth Center; USO Recreation at Terrace Street; South 13th Street; and Downtown Center at St. Louis Street.

**First Superintendent** – The Recreation and Park Commission hired its first full-time Superintendent, Ralph Hileman.

**Operating Budget** – Operating budget was \$34,000.

## 1947

**Commission** – The Recreation and Park Commission as an organization began operations on January 4, 1947.

**Baton Rouge Plan of Government** – Citizens of Baton Rouge adopted a new plan of government which included the Recreation and Park Commission as a separate entity, The Plan of Government for the Parish of East Baton Rouge and the City of Baton Rouge, August 12, 1947.

**First Tax Election** – This election approved one million dollars for Memorial Stadium, improvements to swimming pools and improvements to other parks. A total of \$600,000 was approved for operations. Tax funds for capital outlay in that year were \$119,451.49.

## 1948

**Greenwood Park** – The Federal Government declared Ryan Field ordinance of 640 acres as surplus and sold it to the Police Jury using BREC's payment of \$18,000. This was paid for by the 1947 Bond Issue. The Police Jury turned it over to BREC for recreation and park programs with a stipulation that it was BREC's after 20 years.

## 1949

**Agency Size** – The agency had 39 full-time employees, owned 20 buildings and had control of 958 acres of land.



# 1950-1959

## 1952

**Assistant Superintendent** – Eugene Young became Assistant Superintendent of Parks and Recreation. He had a master's degree and experience in recreation.

**Baton Rouge Symphony** – BREC paid the Baton Rouge Symphony for youth concerts for this year and many years in the future.

## 1953

**Director of Parks** – The position of Director of Parks was established and Atwell Champion was hired.

## 1954

**Tax Bond Election** – \$2,625,000 was approved for capital improvements with \$400,000 allocated for operations. The money was used for improvements to downtown offices, recreation center at Victory Park, purchase of 120 acres for Forest Park (\$125,000), construction of Goldsby Field (\$150,000), contribution of Howell Park Pool and center and construction of Clark Park Golf Course. Land for Howell Park Golf Course was purchased and the course was completed. Recreation centers were built at Monte Sano and Anna T. Jordan Parks. Approximately 30 acres of land was purchased at Anna T. Jordan and a pool was constructed. City Park's pool was renovated. Land was also purchased on Gus Young Avenue and a playground and pool were built.

**Move to Laurel Street** – Commission had to move its center and office building to St. Louis Street because the city was to build a new municipal building on the Victory site. The Commission temporarily moved its offices to the old penitentiary warden's house on Laurel Street.

**Commission Budget** – The Commission budget was \$338,343, and citizen visits to parks rose to 1,486,000. The parish population was 197,000, and Baton Rouge was one of the fastest growing cities in the nation.

## 1956

**Baton Rouge Little Theater** – The headquarters were in the Commission Administrative Office. The Commission assisted this group at its Ryan Airport theater by providing maintenance.

**Arts & Science Center** – BREC renovated a building on Florida Street for the Arts & Science Center.

**Senior Citizen Program** – During this year a program for senior citizens was initiated.

**Junior Recreation and Sports Program** – A cooperative program formed with the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board which still exists today.

## 1957

**Webb Park and Howell Park Golf Courses** – City Government purchased Webb Park Golf Course and the Commission opened both Howell Park Golf Course and Webb Park Golf Course in April.

**Tax Election** – A tax election failed by a large majority of votes. Citizens objected at the time to building Howell Park Golf Course because they believed recreation should be for children only. The Commission had to cut back on programs with the loss of this tax election.

**Budget** – Recreation expenses were \$562,304.

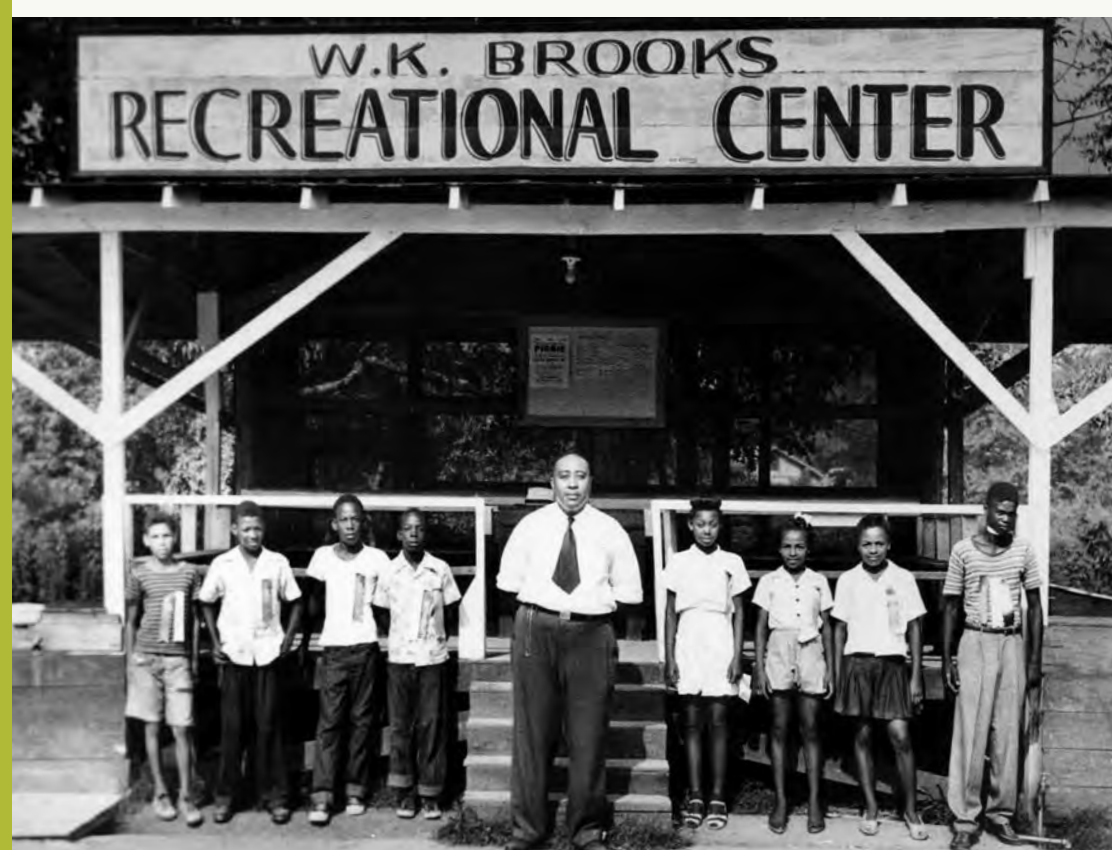
## 1958

**City Park Lake** – City Park Lakefront was developed.

**Anna T. Jordan Pool** – The pool at this park was completed.

## 1959

**Capital Projects** – The commission had 25 parks covering 1,389 acres. 235 acres of land were purchased at an average cost of \$1,524 per acre. By this time the Commission had completed all its capital projects from the 1954 bond issue except a children's zoo and a shelter at Inniswald (Jefferson Terrace Park).





# 1960-1969

## 1960

**Tax Election** – The Commission lost another tax election as the economy slumped. There were limited funds and BREC struggled to hire employees and maintain parks.

**Eugene Young becomes Superintendent** – In December, Ralph Hileman accepted a job in Kansas City and Young took over as Superintendent. During this time the Commission was forced to downsize due to lack of funds. The year ended in the black with a total of \$941.00. Total expenditures were \$710,994.00.

## 1961

**Volunteers** – The Commission began to streamline operations, upgrading salaries and reaching out to the community for volunteer help and donations. There were 85 full-time employees which was down from 95 in 1959.

**New Interstate** – Half of Victory Park was lost when the Interstate routed through downtown Baton Rouge.

**Councilman Woody Dumas** – Woody Dumas became an important supporter of the Commission, and with his help, the development of the first nine holes of Greenwood Golf Course and club house began. Most of the materials and labor came from donations because the Commission had no capital improvement funds.

**BREC AS AN ACRONYM** – The public relations committee came up with this acronym with the “B” and “R” standing for Baton Rouge and “R” “E” “C” standing for Recreation. The “C” also standing for Commission. The overlapping of letters was unavoidable. It was heavily publicized and became the symbol for all BREC activities. This four-letter acronym was the best public relations move the Commission ever made because it unified the organization.

**Capital Improvements** – During the next 5 years, BREC made plans for future improvements but was unable to proceed due to lack of funding. BREC still managed to improve operations and reach out to more people. Greenwood Golf Course was completed mostly by volunteers.

**Interstate 10** – The Federal Government took part of the City Park land for Interstate 10.

## 1962

**Howell Park Baseball Diamonds** – The City Parish Council appropriated \$71,451 for two baseball diamonds at Howell Park. Also, ball fields were built at Perkins Road and Brooks Park. These funds came from the sale of Victory Park and City Park land to the Federal Government for the Interstate.

## 1964

**Integration** – Federal Judge West handed down a decision that BREC must integrate all of its parks and facilities. BREC programs were continuing to grow, especially in sports and athletics.

**Zoo** – The Commission decided to drop the Children’s Zoo project and to seek funds to build a major Zoo.

**Hurricane Hilda** – BREC’s Maintenance Department participated in clean up and storm repairs.

## 1965

**Woody Dumas Elected Mayor** – This was a turning point for BREC. Woody Dumas was elected mayor and was a great supporter of BREC. Early in 1965, the city planned an election for streets and drainage and the Sheriff asked for money for a new jail. The BREC Commission voted to place a one million dollar tax proposal on the same ballot. All these proposals passed and BREC funds were doubled. The most popular item in the election was the construction of a major Zoo. The money was to be split between operations and Capital Improvement. Capital Improvements totaled \$2,813,812. Also, the Commission proposed to acquire additional park land.

**Zoo Funding** – The Superintendent, Mayor and Chairman of the Commission went to Washington and persuaded the Department of Interior to give BREC matching funds for the Zoo.

**Greenwood Park Lake** – A 30-acre lake was dug at Greenwood Park free of cost because the contractor needed the dirt to fill the area at the Exxon Chemical Plant construction site.

**Monte Sano** – The city turned over land at Monte Sano for BREC to use as a park.

**Hooper Road Park** – BREC purchased 237 acres for this park.





## 1966

**Magnolia Mound Plantation** – BREC worked with Louisiana Historical Society and expropriated Magnolia Mound to save it from demolition. BREC and the Louisiana Historical Society started renovations and improvements to the old buildings on 8.8 acres of land to bring it to the authentic tour quality it is today.

## 1967

**Laurens Cohn Arboretum** – Mrs. Cohn gave BREC 15 acres of land to become an arboretum, to honor her husband Laurens Henry Cohn Sr., a World War I veteran, former LSU tiger and devoted lover of nature. This land had been her family's home site.

**City Beautification** – The program was operating under BREC's direction and getting laws passed to stop litter, require property to be presentable and improve landscaping in the community.

**Land Purchases** – BREC purchased Harding Street Park in Baker, Nairn Drive and the land between Perkins Road.

**Olympia Field** – BREC started construction of this stadium at Perkins Road Park.

**Great Society Program** – During the late 60s, the Federal Government approved the "Great Society" program. This gave BREC matching funds for the purchase of land. BREC acquired more parks from 1967 through 1982 than any other period in its history.

**Park Improvements** - During this period BREC was also getting matching funds for the improvement of parks. The operating budget went from \$865,983 in 1965 to \$2,145,117 in 1974. During this time, BREC was developing parks all over the parish and providing programs that people had been requesting for a long period of time. BREC became the most popular government agency in the area. The work force began to increase with part-time employees. The Capital Improvements program was in full swing. BREC spent \$544,064 in recreation programs.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – BREC completed its design of the service building and first phase of the sewer system.

**First High School Rodeo** – The program department conducted its first high school rodeo at Greenwell Springs Park.

**BREC Growth** – BREC had 197 junior softball teams and 50 adult softball teams. There were 1,875 acres of land and maintenance crews were cutting approximately 950 acres. The City Park Clubhouse was being used for private parties for children and classes were being conducted by BREC instructors. Permanent BREC employees were paying into social security and city parish retirement systems. Electricians were replacing all athletic fields with the new iodine lights to save on energy costs. Greenwood Park Lake was 90% complete.

## 1968

**1954 Bonds** – BREC made its last payments on bonds for the 1954 tax election. This was the last bond election. After 1965, BREC proposed new elections that started a pay-as-you-go plan where BREC only spent money as it was collected and the Capital Project was started. Therefore, BREC paid no interest on its capital improvements projects.

**Major Projects** – Major projects included the first phase of the Baton Rouge Zoo, the Cohn Arboretum, Olympia Stadium, Gus Young Center, the back nine of Dumas Golf Course and the purchases of a number of parks.





# 1970-1979



**1970** **Opening of Zoo** – On Easter Sunday, the Zoo was opened to the public. There were traffic jams because the Zoo was so heavily publicized. The Sunday Advocate had a front page story with pictures and a full page of pictures inside.

**New Park Openings** – On Mother's Day, BREC opened the Cohn Arboretum to the public. BREC also opened Gus Young Center, Olympia Field, Expressway Park, seven neighborhood parks and three softball fields. The Shrine Circus was one of the largest events held at the stadium.

**Concessions** – BREC operated its own concessions. Most of the funds were generated from the stadiums and the Zoo. Concessions prices in 1970 were 15 cents for drinks, 35 cents for hamburgers, 25 cents for hot dogs and 15 cents for snow balls. Concessions net profits in 1970 were \$19,827.00

## 1971

**Senior Citizen Housing** – BREC began operating recreational programs for seniors who live in public housing.

**Federal Parks** – The Federal Government had developed parks along the interstates and turned them over to BREC for operations. BREC received national publicity for these projects.

## 1972

**Park Growth** – BREC had 72 parks totaling 1700 acres of land, 142 buildings and 137 activity areas.

**Sharp Road Park** – The Sharp Road Baseball Park was completed.

## 1973

**Federal Grants** – BREC received 8 grants from the Federal Government to purchase 8 parks. BREC built its first set of tennis courts at Highland Road Tennis Center.

**BREC Reorganization** – BREC reorganized its park department into four districts. Each district had a foreman and crew.

## 1974

**Tax Election** – There was an overwhelming vote for BREC which included an additional millage for capital improvements and renewed one millage for operations.

## 1975

**Community Development Funds** – The city gave BREC \$100,000 to purchase parks and equipment. BREC purchased a second-hand computer which greatly enhanced accounting operations. BREC was seeking matching grants to purchase 16 more parks.

**Sherwood Forest Park and Independence Park** – BREC, with Mayor Dumas and the Congressional Delegation, negotiated with the Federal Government to acquire 125 acres and several buildings at Sherwood Forest Park. Mayor Dumas got the Council to turn over 80 acres of the downtown airport in what was to become Independence Park.

## 1975

### GOLD MEDAL AWARD

BREC won the Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Administration from Sports Foundation, Inc.





## 1976

**Capital Improvements Program** – BREC was again fighting to survive because it did not have enough operating funds to sustain the current rate of growth. More than 32% of its funds came from fees and charges. BREC employed 101 full-time employees and 403 part-time employees. BREC reorganized its Capital Improvements Program hiring a new full-time superintendent to head the program. BREC started remodeling Independence Park Center where dance, gymnastics, drama, playschool activities and exercise programs began. BREC received \$235,289 in a community development grant from the city/parish to acquire parks.

## 1977

**Two Mill Tax Approved** – The citizens of East Baton Rouge recognized BREC's need for operating funds, and they approved a two mill tax on March 8, 1977. Programs expanded and facilities were better maintained. The General Services Administration allowed BREC to start renovating facilities at Sharp Station. During this year, BREC received its largest amount of funding for one year from the Federal Government totaling \$1,242,388. Most of this came from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Other highlights included a new senior citizen center at Sharlo Terrace, a net profit of \$72,874 for concessions, and Southern University began to use Memorial Stadium for football games.

**BREC's Greater Baton Rouge Zoo** – BREC's commitment to excellence was acknowledged by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) through accreditation of the Baton Rouge zoological facility.

## 1978

**Staff Recognition and Change** – Some members of the BREC Commission and staff were recognized by the National Association of Counties for outstanding work. BREC moved its administrative offices to North Sherwood Forest Boulevard. The BREC organization was divided into seven departments and had 137 full-time employees. Atwell Champion retired after serving 25 years as Director of Parks and was replaced by Bill Palmer. BREC's income from fees and charges increased to more than a million dollars and the expenses totaled \$4,594,258. BREC completed initial work at the Zoo, and an animal education program was initiated.

**Horse Activity Center** – BREC began construction of the Farr Park Horse Activity Center on River Road, south of LSU. BREC received more than \$200,000 to start the project through Mayor Dumas and the City Council. Governor Edwin Edwards provided another million to complete the arena and camping area.

**The National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.** – This organization recognized BREC with the County Achievement Award for the program for seniors.

## 1979

**Garden Center at Independence Park** – BREC started to build the new Garden Center at Independence Park and it was completed in the same year. The Baton Rouge Garden Club and BREC paid for the building. A Garden Center Board was organized with members from various garden clubs and one BREC employee.

**Magnolia Mound** – The Commission formed a new agreement with the Magnolia Mound Board of Trustees. The Commission purchased the 4.6 acres of the Hart Residence and offices of the Mound were moved to this location.

**New Equipment and New Centers** – BREC purchased a new IBM system and 34 computers to improve accounting operations. New centers were opened at Cadillac Street, Kerr Warren and Forest Park. Baseball diamonds were completed at Independence Park, and the Lions club handicap park was developed and financed by 14 Lions clubs. The Junior League built the outdoor kitchen at Magnolia Mound for \$30,000.

**Safety Program** – BREC hired its first safety director and introduced a new safety program.

**Central Warehouse** – BREC opened a central warehouse for maintenance and increased its operations to 6 foremen for operating the department.

**BREC Attorney** – The State passed legislation to allow BREC to hire its own attorney and no longer use the District Attorney for legal matters.

**Publicity** – More than 450 news articles relating to BREC appeared in the paper in 1979.

**The National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.** – This organization recognized BREC with the County Achievement Award for the Magnolia Mound Facility.

**The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services** – This group recognized BREC with the International Year of the Child Award for special service provided to children.





# 1980-1989

## 1980

**Saia Land Donation** – Frank “Tickie” Saia made a land donation in Melrose East which was worth \$400,000. These funds were with a federal grant to make improvements to Saia Park and Independence Park.

**Public Survey** – BREC Planning Department conducted a survey which revealed that 92% of area households had someone in their home who used BREC facilities.

**BREC Growth** – New recreation centers were completed at Nairn Drive and Antioch Park. A new trailer campsite was opened at Greenwood Park. During this year, BREC had 110 parks in the parish, totaling 3,048 acres and 29 recreation centers were in operation. More than 1,200 persons participated in the Gulf States tennis tournament hosted by BREC. Day camp programs also began to increase during this year. The Zoo population increased to 832 as a result of donations and births of animals and reptiles.



**Magnolia Mound Restoration** – BREC bought the overseer’s house at Magnolia Mound and began restoration. The first History Day Camp was initiated at this site.

**The National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.** – This organization recognized BREC with the County Achievement Award for The Lions Handicapped Park.

**Delta Haven** – Delta Haven center at Webb Park was opened. This center was established to help teenagers recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. BREC was working with the school board at this time but later overtook the operation completely when school funds were short. BREC reorganized the program staff by appointing two assistant directors under the Director of Recreation. Later this program was turned over to the Community Resource Department.

**Planning and Engineering** - The BREC Planning and Engineering Department developed a master plan for the development of Magnolia Mound.

**Zoological Directors** – A National Meeting of Zoological Directors was held in New Orleans and approximately 100 Directors took a side trip to visit the Baton Rouge Zoo. They were very impressed, and the Zoo gained national recognition.

**Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund** – The FLWC fund was eliminated which cut BREC’s capital improvement programs, but BREC received some community development funds. BREC was operating 29 centers and added 44 additional acres of park land from two donated parks. Net income from concessions was \$120,144 and total expenditures were \$10,485,534.

**The National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.** – This organization recognized BREC with the County Achievement Award for the Baton Rouge Garden Center.

## 1982

**Baton Rouge Recession** – During the recession, more people than ever were using BREC parks for the quality and value of programs and facilities provided.

**Finance Director** – Mike Proctor became the Finance Director in the summer of 1982. BREC had 147 full-time people on staff and 382 part-time and seasonal employees with a total of 31 capital improvement employees.

**The National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C.** – This organization recognized BREC with the County Achievement Award for the Memorial Arboretum Horticulture Study.

**Capital Improvement** – David Thornhill was appointed Capital Improvement Superintendent.

**National Recognition** – BREC was selected to be a part of the National Sports Festival, and the BREC organization was recognized by the National Association of Counties as an outstanding Recreation and Parks Department.

**New Parks** – BREC opened the Nairn Drive Park, Alsen Center and the Saia Pavilion. BREC received the donation of one additional park. Improvements included cart paths at Dumas and Howell Golf Courses.

**Bicycle Race** – Louisiana National Bank held its first Bicycle Race at Forest Park.

**Baton Rouge Playmakers** – BREC entered an agreement and relationship with Playmakers. BREC hired a director and began drama programs at playgrounds and centers.

**Zoo Attendance** – A total of 802 groups visited the Zoo with docents providing many learning experiences and activities.

**Parking Lot Barriers** – BREC started using pipe barriers around parking areas to stop cars from driving on activity areas.







## 1984

**Tax Election** – BREC had a great year with the passage of four mills. Half of the money went to capital improvements and the other half to maintenance and operations. There were 26 million in improvements to be completed over the next ten years.

**National Senior Games** – The National Senior Games were held in Baton Rouge and most of BREC personnel and facilities were involved in this very successful program. This event sparked more participation in all of BREC Senior Programs.

**Baton Rouge Gallery** – BREC did extensive work on the City Park Clubhouse so the Baton Rouge Gallery could relocate to this site.

**New Parks** – Hooper Road, Sharp Road and Cedarcrest Centers were built.

**Capital Improvements** – Although BREC promised only \$7,873,257 in the Capital Improvement Program in 1974, they had made \$14,598,755 in improvements by 1984. Some of the funds came from Federal grants. BREC was operating 34 recreation centers, and sports programs were expanding.

## 1985

**National Sports Festival** – BREC improved facilities for the upcoming National Sports Festival to be held in 1985. BREC completed construction of the Velodrome which was to be used for this event. Mayor Pat Screen and the Sport Festival raised a half million dollars for the Velodrome, and BREC provided the land. The proceeds were given to BREC after the event.

**Zoo Concession** – A new concession facility was constructed at the front of the Zoo for selling souvenirs.

**Horse Activity Center** – The first full year of operations at the horse center was highlighted by a very successful therapeutic riding program for children with disabilities, eventually becoming the award-winning Hearts and Hooves program.

**Maplewood Maintenance Shop** – BREC made improvements to its maintenance department with the opening of the Maplewood Maintenance Shop. A seventh foreman was hired.

**Maintenance Committee** – A maintenance committee composed of maintenance supervisors from area industries was created to research for better management techniques and to assist in evaluating current maintenance operations. Through the recommendation of this committee, the Maintenance Department began to computerize its operations. The Human Resources Department also began to computerize all personnel records.

**New Parks** – BREC received Sugar Land Park through a donation and purchased Spanish Town Park, Barringer Road Park and Bayou Manchac Park.

## 1986

**State Fair Grounds** – BREC purchased the State Fair Grounds from the Baton Rouge Jaycees. BREC continued to work successfully with the Jaycee Foundation at that location so they could continue their annual fair.

**Train for Zoo** – BREC purchased its own train for the Zoo, built two bridges and began installing train tracks.

**Sports Academy** – BREC took the operation of the Sports Academy and improved its boxing and athletic programs.

**New Purchases** – BREC purchased the Berwick property on Nicholson Drive for the visitor's center at Magnolia Mound. Also, one lot was purchased on Iowa Street and two lots were donated. BREC tried during this year to come to an agreement with the Port Commission to purchase their land at the Horse Center.

**First Baseball Leagues** – BREC started its first baseball leagues. Previously, it had only offered softball.

**AAZPA Southern Regional Conference** – The Zoo hosted the AAZPA Southern Regional Conference. The Zoo was also re-accredited.

**BREC Growth** – The total number of day camps increased to 17 with more than 3,308 participants. A new Senior Center was opened at Sharp Road. BREC was operating 125 parks with a total of 3,484 acres. BREC spent \$8,305,786 in operations and \$3,241,012 in capital improvements.



# 1987

**Tax Election** – On May 2, 1987, 62% of the voters approved a 4 mill tax for maintenance and operations.

**North Sherwood Forest Center** – BREC opened its North Sherwood Forest Center in an old government fire station building across the street from its main office.

**Farr Park Horse Center** – The land at Farr Park Horse Center was purchased for \$300,000 with funds that came from the Farr Estate and assistance from Governor Edwards's office.

**Donations** – Margie Cohn donated 27 acres to the Cohn Arboretum as a wildlife area and William Wray gave BREC a 33 acre park.

**Highlights** – Operations began for the Cypress Bayou Rail Train at the Zoo. The tee ball program expanded rapidly with 83 teams involving 1,500 youth. Day camps increased from 17 to 24. The Recreation Department was now operating 35 centers in the parish and eight-week summer programs were operating at 47 locations.

**Highland Road Tennis Center** – The new tennis center building was opened at Highland Road.

**BREC Maintenance** – BREC maintenance crews worked with a movie company to produce "Everybody's All American" which had many of its scenes shot at Memorial Stadium. Maintenance personnel showed a decrease in injuries during this year as a result of safety officers training and preventive maintenance programs.

## 1988

**BMX Track** – The BMX track on Perkins Road opened April 1, 1988 and was hailed by the National Bicycle League as one of the best in the nation. State BMX championships were held in October. Friday night races were held at the Velodrome where AT&T sponsored a Spring Sprint Race.

**Administrative Changes** – The Commission instituted a policy that all hiring and termination was required to be handled by the Personnel Office. BREC had 158 full-time employees, 415 part-time year-round employees and 44 Capital Improvement employees. Fees were increased at the Zoo. BREC organized and hired its first horticulture crew. A Computer Committee was organized to make recommendations on reorganization of the Finance Computer Operation. The result was the purchase of a used system computer.

**Expansion** – Recreation centers at Mayfair, North Street and Drusilla were completed. Plank Road Park, totaling 75.8 acres and Madison Avenue Park, totaling .97 acres were purchased. Play equipment was installed in 22 parks. A new concession stand was added and two mobile concession units. New tennis courts were opened at Highland Road.

**Growth** – A total of 149 volleyball teams were participating in BREC programs. Magnolia Mound had 2,500 persons attend Plantation Day and 200 attended the Candlelight Tour. Forty-three artists and 108 guest artists exhibited at the City Park Gallery. Dance classes were held at Independence Center for 3 to 12 year olds.

## 1989

**Santa Maria Golf Course** – The Commission worked to purchase Santa Maria Golf Course with 160 acres. During the year there were several meetings with people protesting the purchase, but it resulted in one of the best buys the Commission ever made.

**National Hot Air Balloon Championship** – In August, the National Hot Air Balloon Championship was held at Airline Highway Park. This event required the time and dedication of BREC employees. The National Guard volunteered and completed moving dirt at Airline Park.

**Zoobilation** – The Zoobilation was a wonderful fundraiser at the Zoo. Population at the Zoo grew to 913 specimens of 221 species and there were 33 endangered species.

**Improvements** – Recreation centers at Flannery Road, Lovett Road and Independence Park were completed and opened. The visitor center was completed at Magnolia Mound. Horse stalls were added to Farr Park Horse Arena. Athletic fields were completed at Independence, Zachary and North Sherwood Parks.

**Horizon Plan** – BREC became a participant in a City/Parish plan for future use of land and resources. The plan involved a parish-wide survey to determine best use of green spaces and open space for the future. All participants in the Horizon Plan were given goals and objectives and yearly follow-ups were made to determine progress. BREC was the lead agency for parks and recreation.

**Regional V National BMX Event** – Over 200 riders from 11 states participated in this event.





## 1990

**1990 Public Opinion Survey** – Robert Miller and Associates conducted a citizen survey throughout the parish which revealed that one or more persons in 94% of homes used BREC facilities. Citizens indicated parks were safer and well-maintained, had more activities, and added to their quality of life.

**Donations** – Exxon gave BREC \$25,000 to plant live oak trees along Independence Boulevard. Baton Rouge WCYO donated \$4,000 for this tree planting. The Baton Rouge Rose Society donated 400 rose bushes for the Independence Rose Garden. The Baton Rouge Garden Club donated \$6,000 worth of pear trees for the Garden Center. Four parcels of land were also donated to BREC.

**Santa Maria Golf Course** – BREC completed its one million dollar purchase of the Golf Course from bankruptcy court early in January. Soon after, the rest of the course was purchased from an individual. That winter was especially harsh and damaged all of BREC's golf course greens. BREC purchased 73 new golf carts.

**Program Highlights** – The Zoo continued a close working relationship with the LSU Veterinary School and worked on many projects. Plantation Day and the Civil War Reenactment Affair were held at Magnolia Mound. There were eight flower shows at the Garden center in addition to 51 other events. The Baton Rouge Gallery had 16 exhibitions as well as 20 Sunday activities.

**Expenditures** – BREC spent \$11,607,780 that year in its operations. Net profits from concessions increased to \$70,734.

**NRPA Citizen Board Award** – BREC was given this award for achievements in the recreation and park movement that resulted in an excellent and unique park system.



## 1991

### GOLD MEDAL WINNER

The big news of 1991 was the receipt of the National Gold Medal Award from the National Sports Foundation for Excellence in Park and Recreation Administration. BREC received a plaque and national recognition for being the best park and recreation system in the country.





# 1992

**Mission Statement** – BREC reviewed and restructured its mission statement to reflect its purpose in the community. Parks and recreation are statistically proven to provide benefits to a community by decreasing crime, improving the environment and enhancing the quality of life of citizens. BREC needed a statement that would clearly identify its mission.

**Recreation Program Brochures** – To better inform the public, BREC began distributing 13,000 Recreation Program Brochures twice a year to area citizens. BREC printed this booklet through its own printing shop.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – Due to high sewer costs at the Zoo, BREC designed and constructed its own sewer system. It functioned so well that it received national recognition. It saved BREC \$19,000 a year in sewer cost. The Zoo received a \$75,000 grant along with funds from Friends of the Zoo to develop a new master plan. The Commission also opened the new Amphitheater at the Zoo.

**Expansions and Improvements** – Pride Center and Airline Center were opened. Magnolia Mound was emphasizing African American history with exhibits in the visitor's center and acquired four former slave cabins out of which at least one complete cabin would be reconstructed at the Mound. A new Farr Park Maintenance Shop was opened. A new 2,300 sq. ft., part glass and part metal greenhouse was under construction at the Cohn Arboretum. Several parks were purchased through RTC Auctions: Burbank, Starwood Courts, Woodstock and Jefferson Highway. BREC acquired 14 parcels of land.

**Program Highlights** – Over 3,000 youth participated in BREC dance programs and summer day camps. The Community Resource Department formed a working relationship and tree planting program with Southern University through the agricultural department. The first Family Day Program sponsored by BREC and City Wide Broadcasting was a huge success drawing thousands of participants.

**Hurricane Andrew** – This hurricane hit Baton Rouge causing many problems for the maintenance department. Many repairs were made and maintenance was involved in major clean-up duties.

**Human Resources Department** – The H.R. mission and goals were defined, and functional job descriptions were implemented. The department also hired 25 JTPA employees for Hurricane Andrew Clean-up, and defined Self Insured Workers Compensation goals and objectives.

**Bluebonnet Swamp** – BREC purchased 12.33 acres for the Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center.

**Donations** – Mrs. Marie Bickham donated to BREC its third largest park – the 165 acres for Bickham Park near Baker. Other donated parks were Lafitte Hills with 2.2 acres from Mrs. Cydne Mitchell, 8.8 acres donated to North Sherwood Forest Park from the federal government GSA Administration, 14 acres to Duchess Drive from Federal R.T.C. and 7.3 acres at Claycut Bayou Park from Richard Hill. By this time BREC had 32 of its 144 parks from donations.

**Expansions and Improvements** – BREC was the successful bidder in two federal RTC Land Auctions for the purchase of Elvin Drive with 18 acres and Burbank with 18.85 acres. BREC's first gazebo was built in the newly created Botanical Gardens at Independence Park. BREC had 135 tennis courts and was building tennis courts at Greenwood Park and Forest Park. The Carriage House at Magnolia Mound was renovated.

**Community Resource Department** – In October, John Seimen joined the BREC staff as the Director of a new department called Community Resource Development Department. The responsibility of the department was to work with various community groups and the news media.

**Program Highlights** – BREC hosted 27 special events that included activities such as Model Rocket Contests, Dog Shows and Disc Golf Competitions. Golf revenues increased at BREC's five older golf courses with a total of 145,000 rounds of golf. A total of 388 children participated in the summer horse camp at Farr Horse Park, and hayrides became very popular. Magnolia Mound marked the 200th Anniversary of this historical site, and the history day camp increased to 180 children. The number of BREC employees becoming Certified Leisure Professionals was increasing.

**Personnel Department** – This department was renamed Human Resources Department to better reflect the broader, more professional role which it serves. H.R. not only continued to provide recruiting and staffing services to all of BREC, but more importantly, additional emphasis was placed on safety, skill, professional development, a broadening of employee benefits as well as continued efforts in system controls.





## 1993

**Preparations for National Accreditation** – BREC staff began work for accreditation review to take place in 1994. Policies and procedures were reviewed and updated, and a self-review of all operations was made. All standards had to be researched, written and substantiated by documentation. All agency standards would be reviewed by a National Board. The Rules and Regulations Manual for the Personnel Department was updated.

**Expansions and Improvements** – Four recreation centers were opened after improvements at Pawnee, Farr Park, Elvin Drive and Jefferson Highway Park. Two new tennis centers were constructed at Greenwood and Forest Parks. Camping spaces and a waste water transfer station were added to the camp grounds at Farr Park. BREC opened its new Zoo entrance. BREC was successful in obtaining two more parks through RTC auctions: Boulevard de Province Park with 2.5 acres and Quarter Horse Park with 21.93 acres. BREC's budget was \$18,054,501 including operations and capital projects.

**Program Highlights** – Docents at the Zoo increased to 53. Friends of the Zoo developed a number of special events to raise money for Zoo projects. The Zoo day camps were filled to capacity with 275 children attending.

**Camps for At-Risk Youth** – The Community Development Department raised over \$65,000 for programs for disadvantaged and at-risk youth. A number of "Dream Camps" for these youth were organized.

**Award** – Louisiana Urban Forestry Council recognized BREC with an Outstanding Project Award for Independence Park.



## 1994

**Tax Election** – In March, BREC was successful with citizens passing two tax proposals. One was for \$24,000,000 for Capital Improvements and 2 mills to operate these improvements. 1994 marked the close of the 1984 Capital Improvements Program and only six projects were left to be completed.

**Expansions and Improvements** – BREC completed and opened Alaska Street Park, constructed soccer fields on the police land at Independence Park, built two ball diamonds at Cedar Ridge Park and increased plantings in the Botanical Gardens. BREC acquired the following parcels of land: Burbank addition, Alaska Street Park, South Harrell's Ferry Road Park, Kathy Drive Park, Seventh Street Park, addition to Bluebonnet Park and addition to Baywood Park totaling 238 acres. The Cohn Arboretum received extensive renovations with miles of new concrete walks, a new entrance and the completion of the new Conservatory. Palomino Tennis Center was opened in Central. BREC tied in all of its utilities at Santa Maria Golf Course to various utility company lines.

**State Disc Golf Championship** – BREC hosted the State Disc Golf Championship at Highland Road and Greenwood Park. More than 600 people participated in this tournament.

**Bluebonnet Swamp** – The Nature Conservancy gave BREC the majority of Bluebonnet Swamp (78 acres). The facility would become an important nature preserve for Baton Rouge. BREC purchased an additional 24 acres of the swamp.

**Zoo Veterinary Hospital** – State Senator Mike Cross, State Representatives Kip Holden and Mike McCleary were responsible for getting bills passed in the Legislature for \$750,000 for a Zoo Veterinary Hospital. BREC had to fund another \$250,000 for the facility.

**Magnolia Mound Fire** – A fire destroyed a large section of the main house at Magnolia Mound costing over \$85,000 for repairs. The facility had to be closed most of the year while repairs were being made.

**Community Resource Department** – Grants to develop programs for at-risk children totaled \$70,000. The Urban Restoration Enhancement Cooperation donated \$10,000 for Dream Camps.

**Maintenance Department** – The department increased to nine foremen with nine crews working out of five maintenance shops. BREC began to improve its fueling stations under the guidelines of EPA.



**NATIONAL  
ACCREDITATION**

In 1994, BREC received its accreditation plaque in Washington and became certified as an Accredited Park and Recreation System. BREC was one of the first four agencies in the country to obtain accreditation.

## 1995

**North Sherwood Family Recreation Center** – This center was a renovated government warehouse. The center covers one acre and includes a fitness center, indoor track, meeting rooms, kitchen, preschool area, small auditorium and children's play area.

**Donations** – BREC received donations of 8.8 acres for the Industriplex Plex, 10 acres for Lebrant Park, 20 acres for Human Point in Zachary and 14.01 acres for Western Watson Park. Exxon gave a \$175,000 grant to the Bluebonnet Swamp project. International Paper donated more than \$80,000 in wood for the boardwalks. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality provided a \$225,000 grant for a parking area and demonstration grant which was completed during the year. The Herb Society raised \$12,000 for the herb garden as part of the botanical gardens.

**Expansions and Improvements** – Three new centers were opened to include Kathy Drive, Cedar Ridge and North Sherwood Forest Family Center. BREC acquired a 6.3 acre addition to Plank Road Park and 3.2 acres for Kernan Avenue Park. BREC purchased two vans for the Seniors Program to give them more opportunity to travel. BREC had 173 parks totaling 5,148 acres. BREC rebuilt its track and field course at Highland Road Park.

**Program Roof Policy** – BREC instituted a requirement that all roofs should be pitched roofs and as much as possible existing roofs shall be replaced with metal materials. BREC started an extensive re-roofing program.

**George Felton Retires** – The Zoo's first and only director up to this time, and his wife Florence Ann, Commissarian for the Zoo resigned. Paul Price, a Zoo Director from Nebraska was hired to take charge of the facility.





## 1996

**Foundation for a Historical Louisiana Award** – BREC received the Foundation award for being committed to historic preservation. An award was also presented to BREC by Playmakers for its commitment to the arts.

**NRPA Board of Trustees** – BREC hosted the spring meeting of the Board of Trustees for the National Recreation and Park Association.

**Special Programs** – BREC expanded activities of Christmas in the Park and Easter in the Park held annually at Independence Park.

**BREC Website** – BREC joined the Internet with a web page describing all activities.

**Expansion and Improvements** – A new center was opened at Longfellow Park. New parks were opened at Acadian Thruway, River Bend and Clifford Seymour. BREC completed construction of a new maintenance shop in Zachary and relocated its warehouse to North Sherwood Forest Park. A 2,000 sq ft Forestry Office was also completed at North Sherwood Forest. The Snack Bar at the Zoo was completed which tremendously increased operation of this facility. Construction was moving forward at Bluebonnet Swamp and an additional 101 acres was purchased for this facility. The revised master plan for the Zoo was completed and paid for by Friends of the Zoo. The Herb Society was spending \$28,000 on the Herb Gardens in the Botanical Gardens at Independence Park. BREC entered the year with 177 parks totaling 5,263 acres of park land. BREC operating expenditures were \$18,135,925 and capital improvements were \$3,287,342.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – BREC's commitment to excellence was acknowledged by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) through re-accreditation of Baton Rouge Zoological Facility. BREC's zoo is one of only 172 accredited zoos in the United States.

**Administrative Office Complex** – Offices were constructed in the Administrative Office complex for Recreation staff as well as a new print shop.

**Program Highlights** – The Jean Lafitte Air Gun Range was the site for National Air Gun Championships. The National BMX Races took place at Perkins Road Park. The Art Gallery began an art mural project in downtown Baton Rouge. Over 40,000 people attended the Family Day in the Park sponsored by BREC and radio station Q106.5. The Farr House Activity Center was caring for 52 horses including 28 who were privately owned. Private owners paid for board and most of these animals were used for day camps and riding lessons. Over 3,000 registrations were made for children to participate in the HAC day camps. Day camps were extended an additional two weeks during the summer. Thousands of persons of all ages participated in year-round sports programs. Programs were almost equally divided between participating youth and adults – 52% for youth and 48% for adults. Docents who present Zoo Education Program to area children increased to sixty-one.

**NACPRO** – This organization presented with the Exceptional Contributions Award recognizing BREC's outstanding achievement in the field of parks and recreation.

## 1997

**Tax Election** – Sixty percent of the voters decided to renew BREC's old millage. Citizens voted against the second proposal for a small tax increase. The proposal lost by 1,800 votes. BREC had to increase fees, recruit more volunteers and seek contributions. The Capital Improvement Program had to slow down its activities.

**Expansions and Improvements** – BREC opened a number of facilities including the Bickham Center, Bluebonnet Swamp facility, the Highland Road Observatory and Mills Avenue Park. A donation of a building on North Beck Street was received. BREC built a curved pavilion at Reams Road Park and added a roof over the back pens at the Horse Center. Improvements included extensive site work on the Scotlandville Parkway near Harding Boulevard, three new tennis courts and a new lighting system at Independence Park, extensive repairs to walkway, restroom, drainage, cart areas, netting around the driving range, and installation of a new pump in the water system at Santa Maria Golf Course. There were also improvements to the Baton Rouge Gallery at City Park.

**National Recognition for Commission Members** – Bill Cocreham received an award as an outstanding Board Member in the Parks and Recreation Movement. Rip Wilkinson was named Vice-chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Recreation and Park Association. Medric Stein was elected to the National Citizens and Board Member branch of NRPA and Chuck Moran was elected to the Southwest Regional Council of NRPA.

**Bluebonnet Swamp Facility Opens** – The Bluebonnet Swamp opened in May, and over 5,000 people attended the opening ceremonies. The Interpretive Center cost over a million dollars and paths and trails leading into the swamp stretched for over a mile. By the end of the year people from every state in the union and 27 countries as well as large number of locals visited the center. Day camps and education program were initiated.

**Highland Road Observatory** – BREC developed an agreement with LSU and Baton Rouge Astronomical Society to complete the Highland Road Observatory. BREC provided a building and LSU purchased a huge telescope. BREC furnished operating personnel while LSU provided personnel for teaching purposes and operation of the telescope. The Baton Rouge Astronomical Society provided volunteer personnel to assist both programs. The building and programs were open to the public in July.



## 1998

**Administrative Offices** – BREC purchased a new computer system and new programs to prepare to meet the Y2K requirements. A new phone system was installed in the Main Office.

**Program Highlights** – More inner-city programs were developed with BREC putting more money into these programs. Magnolia Mound was re-accredited after completing five years of operation since its first accreditation. The Playmakers program was moved to Cedarcrest Park to give them their own building for classes and theater productions. BREC concessions began to cater many social affairs at BREC facilities. The Horse Activity Center taught 1,600 riding lessons during this year, and registered 300 children in day camps. In the Spring, 45 children participated in Playmakers Production at Cedarcrest Park. Over 650 children participated in the Junior Golf Program. There were 70 tournaments held at BREC's golf courses. Bluebonnet Swamp provided eight educational sessions, three art camps and many other activities during the year. The Baton Rouge Arts Council assisted with grant funds for the art programs. There were senior programs at nine sites including the Senior Citizens Fall Festival at Farr Horse Park which drew approximately 200 seniors and visitors. The seniors program is increasing its tour opportunities and exercise programs.

**Farr Park** – For the first time, BREC made special efforts to attract LSU opposing football fans to use the camp grounds at Farr Park. This tremendously increased the use of the facility.

**Survey by Advocate** – BREC enjoyed a favorable public perception in the government survey sponsored by the Advocate showing a 78% approval rating from the public.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The George Felton Zoo Hospital was opened in the fall. Hibernia Bank donated money for a large pavilion at the Zoo for public functions. Phil Frost was hired as the new Zoo Director in January and with his presence and with a new Education Director, the programs and attendance moved forward at the Zoo. Inventory included 44 orders, 91 families, 320 species and 1,114 specimens.

**Outreach Programs** – Senator Cleo Fields obtained a \$200,000 grant through the Legislature to provide funds for programs for inner-city youth. Wilson Fields also obtained a grant for \$45,000, and William Daniels provided \$15,000 for use in the Community Resource Development programs. Kip Holden got the legislature to approve \$200,000 for improvements at Anna T. Jordan. Approximately 27 different programs were being conducted through this department.

**Expansions and Improvements** – BREC purchased a tract of land which was a 6 acre parcel next to Santa Maria Golf Course. The Seventh Street Park was completed and a dedication ceremony included ribbon-cutting by Mayor Tom McHugh. Eight additional tennis courts were constructed at Independence Park. Extensive work was done on the mountain bike trails at Hooper Road Park with the help of BRAMBA. It is considered one of the best facilities and programs in Louisiana. Improvements were also made to the BMX bike tracks. The Commission spent time negotiating for a free 200 acre tract of land for a golf course in the northern part of the parish.

**Maintenance Department** – The maintenance department was organized into ten operational crews and completed over 3,779 work orders during the year. An extensive training program has improved this department's operation.

**Award** – The USA Today award recognized BREC's Santa Maria Golf Course as the best course to play in Louisiana for under \$50.

**Gold Medal Finalist** – BREC was a finalist for the National Sports Foundation Gold Medal Award for excellence in Park and recreation.

## 1999

**Approval Rating** – A poll commissioned by the Morning advocate showed that BREC's approval rating was at 72 percent.

**Expansions and Improvements** – Independence Park began \$2 million in construction of an activity building. BREC also opened its soccer fields on Burbank Drive, one of the finest soccer complexes in the South. BREC purchased 25 acres of land for a park in the Stevendale area for a recreation facility, and Mills Avenue and Kernan Avenue centers were under construction. BREC spent \$2,226,750 on capital improvement projects, and work was completed on the cleaning of Scotlandville Parkway.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The opening of the L'aquarium de Louisiane in the spring was well received by the public.

**Highlights** – Congress approved legislation to restart the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and BREC's Commissioner, Rip Wilkinson, was elected Chairman of The National Recreation and Park Association. Superintendent Eugene A. Young was selected as a Lifetime Trustee of The National Recreation and Park Association and awarded The Distinguished Professional Award of the American Recreation and Park Society, and Mona Pellerin took over as director of the senior program.

**Children's Camps** – Pride Park hosted its first day camp which was filled to capacity, and the specialty camp for underprivileged children "WIN" at Hooper Road Park was a big success.

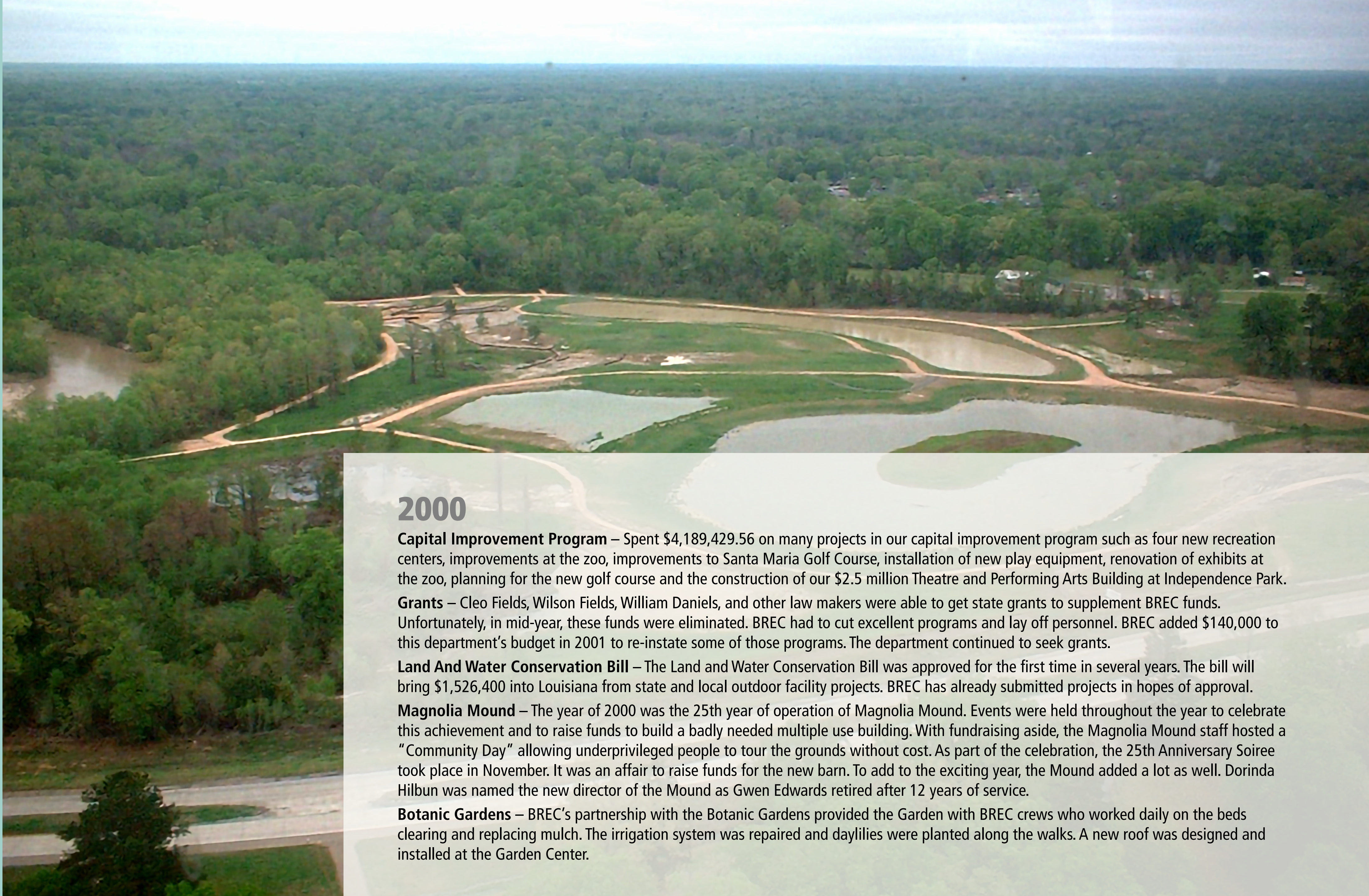
**Baton Rouge Zoo** – Attendance and revenue increased over 20 percent with the help of docents who supported the Zoo by donating more than 2,500 volunteer hours to the Zoo's education programs.

**Park Rangers** – BREC hired three park rangers to cut vandalism, improve traffic flow, and maintain order at the parks.

**Community Resources Department** – The Community Resource Department doubled its funding of inner-city programs by \$400,000.



# 2000-2009



## 2000

**Capital Improvement Program** – Spent \$4,189,429.56 on many projects in our capital improvement program such as four new recreation centers, improvements at the zoo, improvements to Santa Maria Golf Course, installation of new play equipment, renovation of exhibits at the zoo, planning for the new golf course and the construction of our \$2.5 million Theatre and Performing Arts Building at Independence Park.

**Grants** – Cleo Fields, Wilson Fields, William Daniels, and other law makers were able to get state grants to supplement BREC funds. Unfortunately, in mid-year, these funds were eliminated. BREC had to cut excellent programs and lay off personnel. BREC added \$140,000 to this department's budget in 2001 to re-instate some of those programs. The department continued to seek grants.

**Land And Water Conservation Bill** – The Land and Water Conservation Bill was approved for the first time in several years. The bill will bring \$1,526,400 into Louisiana from state and local outdoor facility projects. BREC has already submitted projects in hopes of approval.

**Magnolia Mound** – The year of 2000 was the 25th year of operation of Magnolia Mound. Events were held throughout the year to celebrate this achievement and to raise funds to build a badly needed multiple use building. With fundraising aside, the Magnolia Mound staff hosted a "Community Day" allowing underprivileged people to tour the grounds without cost. As part of the celebration, the 25th Anniversary Soiree took place in November. It was an affair to raise funds for the new barn. To add to the exciting year, the Mound added a lot as well. Dorinda Hilbun was named the new director of the Mound as Gwen Edwards retired after 12 years of service.

**Botanic Gardens** – BREC's partnership with the Botanic Gardens provided the Garden with BREC crews who worked daily on the beds clearing and replacing mulch. The irrigation system was repaired and daylilies were planted along the walks. A new roof was designed and installed at the Garden Center.





**Louisiana State Archives** – The Louisiana State Archives donated a statue “Playground” a sculpture by Al LaVergne to the Gallery.

**Bluebonnet Nature Center** – In September, a national program of Project W.E.T. (Water Education Teacher) was held at Bluebonnet Nature Center. One location in each state is selected each year to teach children about water and its effects on the environment.

**Gingerbread House Park** – BREC placed greater interest on the senior programs, and attendance grew greatly. Five new programs across the parish opened. The sixth district fire fighters gave BREC a building, and it was renovated as the first all senior center, Gingerbread House.

**Independence Park** – At Independence Park, a new croquet area opened, and a shuffle board program was started.

**Bickham Center** – In May, 125 gymnastic students participated in a gymnastic meet at Lovett Road and Bickham Center.

**BREC and Highland Road** – In June, a fitness program was added to the Highland Road Center. BREC partnered with the BMX parents association and held the NBL Mardi Gras Cajun Classic. A new track was added for younger children. BREC’s Highland Road Observatory, LSU, and Baton Rouge Astronomical Society held popular programs including the Saturday night camp fire and Saturday Science programs. With LSU, we were able to acquire computers and have them available to teachers for science research projects.

**Recreation Centers** – Area Two opened two more centers, Kernan Avenue and Blueberry Park Center. Activities in the area included dance, karate, tutoring, aerobics, weight lifting, adult volleyball, basketball, and many more.

**Mills Avenue** – Mills Avenue was added to Area Four located north of Southern University. State grants allowed funding for programs for inner city children. However, the grants were eliminated during the middle of the year.

**Annual Events** – Easter in the Park was held on Saturday, April 15th with 4500 attendees. On Friday night, October 27th, over 1500 attended the Halloween program. Christmas in the Park was the highlight of special events this year. The program is ten year old at Independence Park. Highland Road and Greenwood Disc Golf course were popular during the year. The Baton Rouge Flyers hosted seven PDGA Tournaments in addition to the Louisiana State Disc Golf Championships.

At the BREC Bluebonnet Nature Center, Broadmoor Gifted Art Show was held in March as well as the Lamar “Art Is” Billboard contest in April. The nature center hosted the Louisiana Snake Festival on May 20th. The purpose of this program was to educate the public about snakes and the history of our native snakes.

**WIN Organization** – In Area One, a summer camp for underprivileged children was possible with the collaborate work with the WIN organization.

**Golf** – BREC sponsored the first area wide High School Golf Championship.

**ITF Jr. Tennis Championship** – Highland Road Park held the ITF Jr. Tennis Championship for the first time. 96 boy and girl tennis players that participated.

**Renovations and Improvements** – At Santa Maria Golf Course, the department paved additional parking and completed part of a new electrical serve to the building. At Farr Park, two new buildings were completed for an additional 120 stalls. Work was completed on rebuilding LeBrent Park and new play equipment was installed at Expressway Park, Brooks Park, and Progress Park. Two tennis centers at Howell Park were rebuilt and improvements to the mountain bike facilities were implemented. Game areas were completed at Independence Park.

**ExxonMobil** – ExxonMobil agreed to give the Zoo its largest donation of \$300,000 for its 30th Anniversary. The donation is to be used toward the development of a new endangered tiger survival exhibit.

**Beaver Creek Golf Course** – The legal donation of the 199 acres for the proposed Beaver Creek Golf Course was completed.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – During the month of June, the Zoo received its third perfect rating without any violations from the USDA. In addition, the Zoo won first place in the Clean Business of the Year Award, a Keep America Beautiful Award. At the Zoo, planning was underway for a new otter exhibit and a new tiger exhibit. A bear exhibit was renovated in 2000.





## 2001

**Independence Park Theatre** – The center located at 7800 Independence Boulevard at Independence Park opened in February. On April 24th, the Grand Opening was held at a benefit performance by Jamie Wax called “Goin’ to Jackson.” The theatre became a member of the Southeast Theatre conference and the American Association of community Theatres. On May 10th, a dedication was held with Jamie Wax performing on stage. The building saved BREC over \$30,000 in rentals for programs including many dance programs. The Louisiana Art and Artist Guild which is sponsored by BREC moved to this location.

**Highland Road Observatory** – A new program introduced this year, Traveling Solar Telescope program, conducted telescope programs away from the observatory. Astronomy Day was held on April 28th with 200 visitors.

**J.S. Clark Park** – After a long negotiation, BREC and The First Tee signed a contract in December. Clark Park will receive extensive renovations in 2002 and become a Family Golf Learning Center. The First Tee will provide \$100,000 toward improvements and BREC will provide the rest of the funds.

**Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center** – Tropical Storm Allison hit Baton Rouge and the Swamp, being a water shed, was pushed to its capacity. Curious visitors came to watch the rushing water through the swamp. Over 7,250 elementary school students from around the state visited on school field trips. The staff attended a number of conferences in the area to find more ways to enhance our programs at the swamp. The staff took the swamp’s exhibits to many programs around the parish such as Environmental Education Symposium at LSU, Earth Day Downtown, and Ocean Commotion at the Pete Maravich Center.

**Blackwater Conservation Area** – A great deal of planning and construction for the Blackwater Conservation Area, a new park site on Hooper Road, was conducted in 2001. This area was developed by BREC, the Corp of Engineers, and the Department of Public Works. The site was projected to open in March of 2002 under BREC’s operation.

**Santa Maria Golf Course** – Due to Tropical Storm Allison, Santa Maria Golf course had to be closed for 13 days, and much damage was done to the course by flooding. However, the course survived its problems of nature and went on to have 95 corporate outings and golf tournaments. Many improvements were made to the clubhouse, parking area, and the course. Sales in the clubhouse were high due to technological advances and new products. A new USGA approved handicap system was installed. Golfers can obtain an official handicap rating. It is a computerized score entry station.

**Equestrian Facilities** – The Equestrian Center had a 15% increase in income and filled the day camps and lesson times to capacity. There were 265 stalls with the capability to add 100 more temporary ones. BREC, LSU, and other groups created a partnership to further the equestrian education.

**AQHA Sugar Bowl Classic** – The AQHA Sugar Bowl Classic was held the week after Christmas at the Horse Center and was bigger and better than ever before. The show attracted people from allover the nation, and it has a two million dollar economic impact on the Baton Rouge area.

**Baton Rouge Gallery** – The Gallery’s emphasis was spent on the Capital Improvement Program. Plans were finalized for expansion. The plan called for 2,300 additional square feet of exhibition space. After fundraising, the bid was awarded in December with construction to start in early 2002.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – By the end of the year, BREC had almost completed its new jaguar exhibit. Only a small part of the front structure needed to be put into place. At the end of the year, a inspection team visited the zoo to ensure that the zoo was continuing to meet and maintain professional and qualitative standards. The final results of the accreditation will be known early in 2002. In addition, the zoo won the clean business award for the second time in a row. Boo at the Zoo went an extra night in 2001.

**Otter Exhibit** – Mrs. Paula Garvey Manship donated \$175,000 toward the construction of the new otter exhibit. Zoo visitors will be able to see otters both under and on top of the water.



**Senior Programs** – There were 35 seniors who participated in BREC’s dance program at Independence Park. The weekly tea dances were enjoyed by another 60 seniors. At Jefferson Terrace, seniors enjoyed line dancing. BREC had two teams of Senior dancers, BRECettes and the “Jammin’ Grannies,” in the program who performed at various functions.

**Outdoor Adventure Camp** – An Outdoor Adventure Camp was offered for the first time this year for children ages 11-14. The Special Events Specialist organized the camp which was attended by 35 teenagers. There were four sessions with different themes. The program was so successful that it will be offered in 2002.

**USTA National Junior Tennis League** – BREC participated in the USTA National Junior Tennis League during the summer. The program introduced boys and girls ages 8- 18 to tennis activities. Over 180 participants enjoyed this six week summer program. The program was rated as one of the top 48 in the country. Two tennis leagues, a high school league and a beginners’ league, were started in the fall.

**Park Operations and Maintenance** – One of the largest projects of the year was the renovation of the 50 year old Webb Park Pool. Everything except the pool itself was dismantled and replaced.

**Adult Sports** – For the first time, slow pitch softball program was organized into three categories: majors, competitive, and recreational. Participants were given a choice as to where they wanted to play. There were 55 male teams and 94 female teams.

**Community Resource Development** – The department focused on character building during the summer. Presentations were made to groups such as Top Teens, Youth Lock Ins, Delteens, The Academy of Performing and Visual Arts and three Safe Night sites. Family Day in the Park was sponsored by BREC and City-Wide Broadcasting, a local group of radio stations. There were over 41,000 in attendance.

**The Botanic Garden Foundation** – The Botanic Garden Foundation, a group of garden societies, received their not for profit 501(c)(3) status approval. In October, sixteen new directors were appointed at their annual meeting. The Foundation is responsible for administrative functions, fund raising, and conducted classes/seminars. Members of the Foundation help BREC personnel with maintenance and supplying plants.

## 2002

**Highlights** – Mark Thornton replaced Eugene A. Young as Superintendent, and a Community Assessment Study conducted by Volunteer Baton Rouge, Nonprofit Resource Center indicated that BREC had a significant positive impact on the parish, and that the citizens continued to support the organization and its mission.

**Park and Recreation Conference** – More than three hundred professionals attended the Southwest Regional Park and Recreation Conference in Baton Rouge hosted by BREC. This conference provided additional professional training for our staff.

**Expansions and Improvements** – This year marks the completion of phase one of the Oak Villa Tournament Ballfield Complex, completion of Blackwater Conservation Area, the renovation of the 50-year-old Webb Park Swimming Pool, and the creation of the Recreation and Parks Foundation. Also, the second phase of the South American Cloudforest exhibit opened providing a new home for the jaguars.

**Tropical Storm and Hurricanes** – Park operations and maintenance department responded to some major weather events: Tropical Storm Allison and Hurricanes Isadore and Lili. These events provided challenges, especially for the tree crews.

**Beaver Creek Golf Course** – Completed and opened to the public on September 13, 2002, Beaver Creek was one of the most important objectives for 2002, and it was the largest, single capital improvement project in BREC's fifty-year history.

**Art Gallery Expansion** – The 2,500 sq ft expansion of the gallery was completed. Primary funding came from the generous gift of Mrs. Paula G. Manship, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and the BREC Capital Improvement Fund.

**Blackwater Conservation Area** – The 62.5 acre Blackwater Conservation Area was opened as a satellite conservation area. This new facility was well used by many groups, day campers, and the general public.

**Bike Trail Improvements** – The Hooper Road and City Park bike trails were renovated.

**Dumas Course Renovations** – The front nine greens on the Dumas course were renovated and reopened with positive comments from the public.

**Public Relations Committee** – The committee chose "It all starts at BREC" as the tagline for a marketing plan based on the Champions of BREC concept. Television, radio, print media, internet and promotional brochures all increased in quantity and distribution.

**Gold Medal Awards** – BREC was proud to be among the top four recreation departments in the nation.

**Pugsley Award** – Eugene Young received the Pugsley Award presented by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration. The Pugsley Medal is the most prestigious award given in the parks and recreation field.

**Grant for Independence Park Theatre** – Independence Park Theatre and Cultural Center received a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts Decentralized Fund.





## 2003

**Expansions and Improvements** – Renovations were completed at the J.S. Clark Golf Course, and the course was scheduled to open in May 2004. Construction on Webb Park's Senior Citizen Center began, and the bottom land hardwood walking trail at Highland Road Park was completed. Phase I of the skatepark facility was completed and opened to the public while construction began on the Cross Country Equestrian Course at Farr Park. All golf maintenance was centralized under the golf department rather than park operations and improvements were made to the recreation centers at Maplewood and Hamilton Avenue, and Perkins Road.

**NRPA Gold Medal Award** – BREC was again named as one of the top finalists among the nation's recreation departments.

**Strategic Plan** – The "Imagine Your Parks" campaign began with over 125 public meetings held in the fall in an information gathering phase of the plan. Staff had a chance to hear directly from the public to determine areas in need of improvement.

**Highlights** – There were four in-house productions at the Independence Park Theatre, and the Otter Exhibit at Baton Rouge Zoo was completed. Many part-time employees were moved to full-time employees thereby improving BREC's retention of trained employees and allowed BREC to recruit staff with higher qualifications.

**Foundation Director** – Carl Stages was hired as the first Director of The BREC Foundation

**Special Events** – Events were modified to allow for concessions and arts and crafts vendors which added financial support for the continuing expansion of special events.

**Tree Maintenance Program** – This program was improved through reorganization and the certification of the horticulture manager as a certified arborist.

**Playgrounds Maintenance** – Safety and maintenance were the primary goals in the reorganization that allowed for additional playground staffing.

**Magnolia Mound** – The Historic Barn was completed with designs for an enclosure.

**Grants and Donations** – A state grant for \$1.5 million with a match of the same amount, was awarded for the Education Building and Conference Center to complete the initial Master Plan for Bluebonnet Swamp. BREC also received a \$5.1 million donation for new offices for the Florida Boulevard building.

**Public Relations** – BREC substantially increased its public relations and marketing efforts by implementing and completing its first year of the "Champions of BREC" series while redesigning and installing a new web site.



## 2004

**BREC** – In February, BREC became the first park and recreation agency to hold the accomplishment of ten years of accreditation.

**Tax Election** – In April, BREC held its ten-year renewal for 50% operating tax funding as well as 100% of its capital tax funding. 74% of the voters supported the renewal of 4.15 mills for operating and 2.05 mills for capital construction. A ten-year capital plan was approved for a "pay as you go" funding totaling \$45 million.

**BREC's New Office** – In October, Phase 1 was completed of the renovations of the Florida Blvd Building.

**Planning and Engineering** – The Planning and Engineering Department coordinated more than one hundred citizen and community meetings for the development of the citizen driven vision for BREC. The department continued to work on projects to complete the 1994 Capital Improvement Plan, opening three recreation centers, completed Phase 1 of the Clark Golf First Tee Project, and work on the course at Farr Park.

**November Tax Election** – In July, the Strategic Plan, "Imagine Your Parks Plan," was approved by the BREC Commission. The plan provided a ten to twenty year direction for BREC and reflected the desires of the citizens. The Commission developed a CIP plan for a November election. The result was a success, and the 3.253 mills were approved to fund construction and maintenance of a \$70.5 million CIP to implement the Imagine Your Parks Plan.

**Park Operations Department** – Under the Strategic Plan, additional funding was recommended to the Park Operations Department. The additional funding was to improve maintenance in all areas through the information technology plan, employee training, and organizational services to the public. New equipment was purchased in the fall to reinforce the objective.

**National Marketing Awards** – The BREC Communications Department was awarded two national awards from NRPA, the Best Website Award and the Best Overall Communicator Award.

**Employees** – The Employee Assistance Program was added to employee benefits, a new Compensation Plan, and a merit based performance evaluation plan was completed in the fall.

**The Brooks Park-McKinley Middle School** – BREC and East Baton Rouge School System discussed entering into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement which would provide the following: to trade property, develop new facilities, and to share use of those facilities. Development was set to start in 2005 and completed in two years.

**BREC Foundation and The Development & Grants Department** – The department directed the Gift Acceptance Policy and Guidelines and BREC's Naming Policy approved by the Commission.

**State Capital Outlay** – Funding was requested in the State Capital Outlay. The funding request incorporated finances for the continued development of Bluebonnet Swamp Education and Conference Center as well.



## 2005

**Imagine Your Parks** – The first full year of operations and development in our Imagine Your Parks strategic plan passed by voters in November 2004. The strategic plan provided for improvements in all areas of BREC: safety and security, quality in facility design and construction, quality in maintenance operations, and quality in programming and customer service which were all identified as priorities by the public during the planning process.

**Hurricanes Katrina and Rita** – These storms had a substantial effect on BREC. The parish population grew instantly by 50,000 putting a strain on all BREC facilities, and construction costs rose 25 percent. BREC coordinated with the City-Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness, FEMA and its contractors, the Federal and State Response teams, and the Red Cross to provide facilities and resources, both human and financial, for the response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

**Grants and Donations** – The Capital Improvement Fund received \$38,710 from a state grant for the Farr Park cross country facility while the General Fund realized \$79,369 of donations. The largest item was for the Observatory; a vehicle funded by LSU for \$50,041. The total of 2005 grants and donations was \$118,079.

**Labor Expenditures** – Labor expenditures were reduced from \$15,061,000 in 2004 to \$14,937,000 in 2005.

**Kudos Marketing Award** – The National Recreation and Park Association's Kudos Marketing Award for "Best Overall Communicator" for populations over 100,000 was awarded to BREC's Communications Department. This marked the Department's second consecutive year to receive the award.

**President's Award** – Phil Frost, Director of BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo, was presented the "President's Award" by the American Zoological and Aquarium Association.

**Recreation Highlights** – BREC introduced an all-inclusive therapeutic program which allowed children with disabilities to participate in the same activities as other children. BREC also restructured its entire League Sports Department to work with outside groups like Scotlandville Sports and the Louisiana Youth Coaches Alliance. Summer tennis camps had an 11 percent increase in participation rates while the program's operating costs were cut by 10%.

**Lantern Awards** – The BREC Communications Department won two top honors from the Southern Public Relations Federation for its "Imagine Your Parks" campaign.

**Baton Rouge Art Gallery** – 2005 was a banner year for the gallery with a 110% increase in art sales and higher attendance.

**Recreation/Outreach Department** – After Hurricane Katrina, the Roving Leaders were trained using Red Cross techniques to supply recreation for displaced persons living in trailer villages.

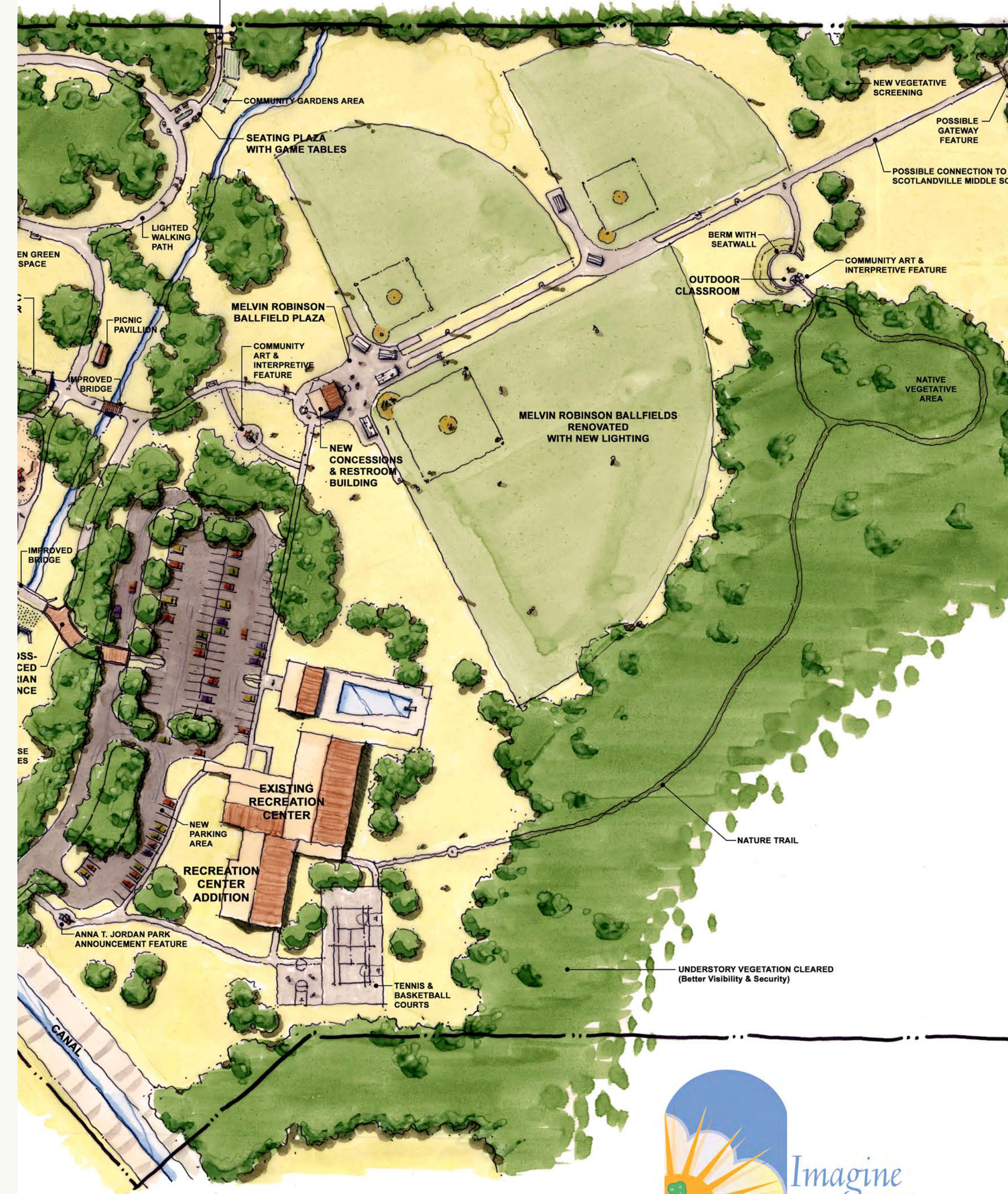
**Golf Department** – The first phase of the Information Technology Master Plan began in 2005 allowing BREC to better track inventory, merchandise sales, and rounds played.

**New Park** – A new community park site was acquired in Zachary, LA.

**Oak Villa** – The ball field and parking on phase II of the Oak Villa tournament ball field complex was completed.

**Champions of BREC** – BREC celebrated this programs 3rd successful year by featuring each of the Champions of BREC in a 30-second commercial. There was also a "BREC-fest of Champions" held to honor the inductees to the BREC Hall of Fame.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Zoo played a key role in providing relief to the Audubon Nature Institute during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. BREC employees were the first group to deliver supplies to the Audubon Zoo, and they also assisted with generator issues at the Zoo and Aquarium. In addition, animals from the Audubon collections, including river otters and Asian small-clawed otters, were temporarily relocated to the Baton Rouge Zoo.



The above Conceptual Master Plan represents preliminary ideas for Anna T. Jordan Community Park. Some of these proposed features may be implemented in Phases.





## 2006

**BREC's 60th Anniversary** – BREC celebrated 60 years of providing parks and recreational opportunities for all the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish.

**Imagine Your Parks** – BREC continued its commitment to the community through the “Imagine Your Parks” program by polling the public and holding public meetings to determine what is expected in facilities like Baker and Anna T. Jordan Community Parks.

**Expansion and Improvements** – Several improvements were underway at Farr Park including fence maintenance and remodeling the indoor arena and horse activity center. Crews were hard at work preparing the new Florida Boulevard administration building. BREC solicited bids for the construction of two single use restrooms at City Park. Construction was also in progress at Brooks Park for new restrooms, sidewalks, benches, and bike racks and renovations were underway at the North Sherwood Forest Recreation Center.

**Aftermath of Katrina and Rita** – BREC continued to help residents displaced by the hurricanes by cooperating with and aiding organizations like The Baton Rouge Boys and Girls Club. The BREC Foundation also partnered with the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge’s Mainstream Committee to build the Renaissance Playground dedicated in April to the children affected by these storms.

**Safety at BREC facilities** – Interim Superintendent Bill Palmer formed a special committee to develop a plan to improve BREC security. The committee decided to increase the park rangers’ presence.

**Magnolia Mound** – Volunteers helped restore the kitchen garden just in time for the Creole cooking demonstrations and slavery narrative education programs. The 6th Annual Petite Antiques Forum was held in January.

**Senior Activities** – Baton Rouge seniors continued to enjoy the recreational activities BREC provides to the community including quilting bees, watercolor classes, tea dances, and senior tours.

**Public Relations** – BREC announced the 2006 “Champions of BREC” and hosted the 4th Annual “BREC”-fest of Champions and Volunteer Recognition.

**Veterans Plaza** – BREC helped fund this memorial to Baker’s Veterans of Military Service.

**Memorial Stadium** – BREC’s Recreation/Outreach Department hosted the 25th Annual Doug Williams Football Camp and the coinciding 3rd Annual Dance Clinic. The theme was “Developing Physical Skills, Leadership, and Character in our Youth”.

**Ironkid Triathlon** – Howell Park is set to host the 3rd Annual Ironkid Triathlon on June 10th.

**Golf** – The Golf Department held several tournaments including the Big BREC Skills Challenge, the Senior Spring Classic Scramble, the Howell Park Championship, the Mardi Gras Mania Tournament, and the Dumas Memorial Tournament. Webb and Santa Maria golf courses re-opened on May 13th and 27th respectively.

**Summer Camps** – BREC continued to provide the community with several summer camps including the Highland Road Observatory Camp, Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Camps, Baton Rouge Zoo Camp, Horse Lovers Camp, Magnolia Mound History Camp, Baton Rouge Gallery Camp for Inspiring Artists, and Independence Park Theatre Camp.

**Bluebonnet Swamp** – This facility hosted its 8th Annual Snake Festival on May 20th.

**E-Marketing** – BREC’s communication department has implemented this strategy using streaming video, a re-designed website, and e-newsletters like Golf Newsie.

**Tennis** – The new sport wall opened at Independence Park.

**Annual Report** – BREC created a streamlined annual report to increase marketability and mailed it to 2,000 community leaders.





## 2007

**Tax Election** – With 66% of voters’ approval, a tax funding nearly 50% of BREC’s operating expenses was renewed.

**First Community Park** – BREC opened its first community park with a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of Anna T. Jordan Community Park.

**Free Dreams Teen Center** – The Free Dreams Teen Center opened with partners agencies including the Big Buddy Program, Boys & Girls Club, Health Care Centers in the Schools and the Louisiana Primary Care Association at the Belfair Recreation Center.

**Safety at BREC Facilities** – BREC partnered with the Baton Rouge Police Department to put cameras in parks to help deter criminal activity and upgrade technology for quicker communication between the two agencies.

**BREC Inventory** – BREC operated 186 parks spanning 5,170 acres.

**Swimming Pools** – Community Endeavor Agreements were signed with the YMCA to operate BREC swimming pools, providing 702 swimming lessons and distributing 732 bathing suits.

**Program Highlights** – Summer camps, dance, martial arts, music, after-school and playgroup classes in the northern part of the parish set record attendance figures.

**Volunteers** – The Louisiana State Legislature passed the Marchand Act to provide a \$500 tax deduction for BREC volunteers who donate at least 30 hours in a calendar year to the park system.

**Adult Leisure** – The Adult Leisure Division was created to serve a broader audience than 65+ through art classes, computer classes, dance classes, water aerobic classes, Pickleball and active adult travel programs.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Flamingo Café opened at the Baton Rouge Zoo.

**Bluebonnet Swamp** – This facility celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a “Swamp Stomp” event attended by 2,000 people.

## 2008

**Community Parks** – BREC celebrated the opening of its second community park, City-Brooks Community Park which joined Anna T. Jordan, as the first two of 12 community parks planned for the parish as part of the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan. The project included a renovated golf course, new tennis center, BREC’s first dog park, playgrounds, walking and bicycle trails, interactive foundation and more.

**National Marketing Awards** – The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) named BREC one of the top four park systems in the country when it was designated a finalist for the national Gold Medal Award for the 12th time in its history – winning twice.

**Hurricanes Gustav and Ike** – The entire system shut down for 30-days to clean up extensive damage caused by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike including flooding, downed power lines, trees and limbs. Recreation centers were used as shelters and parks used to stage military and utility company equipment and staff and BREC offered camps for children ages 4-13 while school was out.

**Burbank Sports Complex** – 10 new fields were built at Burbank Sports Complex to create a total of 22 soccer fields in preparation for Region III Soccer Championship Tournament in 2010. The park also got three new ball fields and improvements to the lake, restrooms and shelters.

**Golf** – Dumas Golf course reopened to the public after renovations which added three lakes, irrigation system and new cart paths.

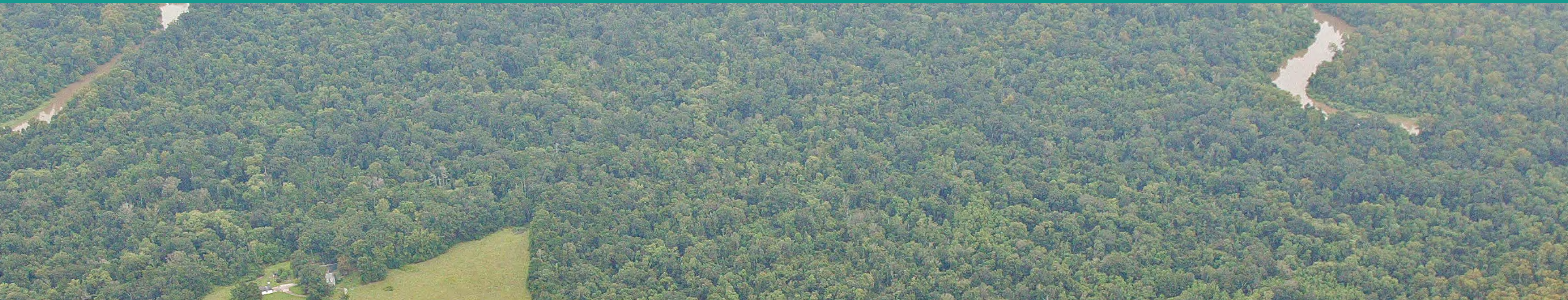
**Administrative Building** – BREC’s new administrative building opened to the public in the center of the parish in the “old Sears building” donated by the Milton J. Womack family. One side of the building was created for public use through camp rooms, meeting rooms, fitness center, interactive playroom and Commission room, while the other side was designed to be utilized by staff.

**Imagine Your Parks** – In all, 34 major construction projects were completed as part of the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan.

**Employees** – BREC staff consisted of 954 employees, 429 of which were full-time, 72 season and 451 part-time.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – 59 animals were born at the Baton Rouge Zoo which cared for 1,857 animals representing 347 species. Zoo upgrades included a new “Conservation Plaza” and expanded Cypress Bayou train station.

**Recreation Highlights** – The Recreation Department offered Urban Initiatives Program which introduced tennis, golf, leadership, mentoring and health-related programming to at-risk youth in the parish.





## 2009

**National Accreditation** – BREC achieved national accreditation for the third time in its history, more than any other park system in the country except for the three other systems that joined BREC as the first in the country to achieve the prestigious accomplishment.

**BREC Inventory** – The BREC system was comprised of 184 parks totaling 5,473 acres and more than 400 buildings.

**Maintenance Department** – BREC's maintenance department completed hurricane clean-up one year after Hurricane Gustav struck Baton Rouge, removing 1,100 uprooted trees and 25,000 hanging tree limbs. FEMA reimbursed BREC \$2.5-million for debris clean-up and \$569,000 for building and grounds damage.

**Expansion and Improvements** – 18 major construction projects were completed including at least the first phase of: Howell, Zachary, Highland Road and Independence Community Parks, the State-of-the-Art Realm of the Tiger exhibit at the Baton Rouge Zoo and the third and largest dog park in BREC's system at Burbank Park.

**Public Attendance** – More than 14,000 people attended functions in the Eugene Young Administrative Building located in Womack Park including the Tea Dance, wedding receptions, City-Parish meetings, and awards banquets.

**Frenchtown Road Conservation Area** – The 500-acre Frenchtown Road Conservation Area was acquired fulfilling the number one priority of BREC's Natural Resource Management Department. The site sits at the confluence of the Amite and Comite Rivers.

**Athletics Department** – BREC's Athletics Department served 673 teams playing in BREC sports leagues which provided both competitive and recreational opportunities.

**Tennis Recognition** – Baton Rouge was named one of the top 10 best Tennis Towns by the United States Tennis Association (USTA). BREC and The Greater Baton Rouge Community Tennis Association submitted the application and five-minute video. In addition, BREC tennis received the Louisiana Facility of the Year for the City-Brooks Tennis Center.

**Golf** – For the first time since 2003, all seven of BREC's golf courses were fully operational and visitors played 156,281 rounds with Webb Memorial Golf Course serving the highest number of golfers.





## 2010

**Health and Wellness** – BREC and the LSU Kinesiology Department created a program to educate youth on the benefits of playing on playground equipment and making healthy food choices.

**Christmas Festival** – BREC and the Dream Center Church held a Christmas Festival at the newly constructed Howell Community Park hosting 2,000 families while BREC's Caroling in the Park at City-Brooks Community Park attracted 300 visitors over two nights.

**Tennis Tournament** – BREC Junior Grand Prix Tennis Tournament was recognized as the largest tournament in the state on Grand Prix circuit with 200 players participating.

**Golf** – BREC Golf and Mary Bird Perkins hosted the Merrill Lynch Open at Santa Maria Golf Course with some of the nation's up and coming golfers helping to raise more than \$150,000 for the fight against cancer.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Baton Rouge Zoo celebrated the opening of the state-of-the-art Realm of the Tiger Exhibit with a ceremony that included the President/CEO of the national Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Two male Sumatran tigers came from the Los Angeles Zoo and three Malayan tigers came from Fort Worth.

**Zoo Lights** – The Zoo also began the annual holiday tradition Zoo Lights featuring larger than life animal and holiday themed lighted displays.

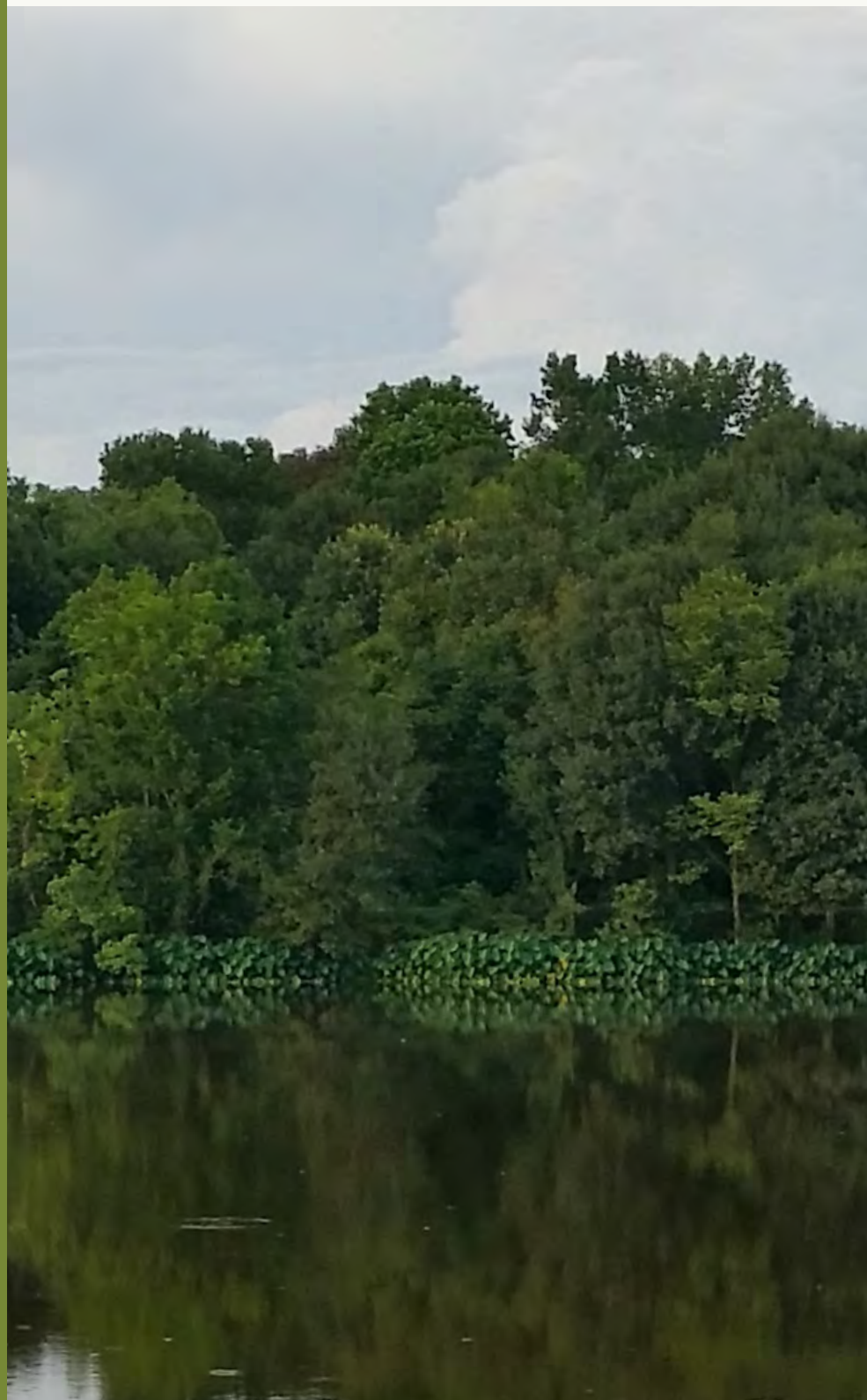
**IPT Website** – Independence Park Theatre launched a new website at theparktheatre.com to provide rental information, event calendars and contact information.

**Magnolia Mound** – Magnolia Mound was reaccredited by the American Association of Museums, one of only 11 museums accredited in Louisiana.

**Conservation Department** – BREC's Conservation Department planted more than 1,700 native trees through five tree planting events held in conjunction with Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Blackwater United Methodist Church.

**Bluebonnet Swamp** – Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center's Rockin' at the Swamp event was launched in March and hosted more than 700 visitors and the Audubon Society and LSU worked with BREC to launch the first bird monthly bird banding program at the facility.

**Sponsorship and Donations** – Raising Cane's began its sponsorship of BREC Dog parks and the Sue Turner family donated \$775,000 for the creation of a visitor center at Magnolia Mound.



## 2011

**Greenwood Community Park** – Greenwood Community Park opened featuring an 18-acre lake, waterfront theatre, ExxonMobil Cypress Bayou Science Trail, tennis center, dog park, disc golf course, large playground and splash pad. The park became the home for outdoor adventure offering boat rentals and kayak and canoe classes to more than 250 people through the newly created Paddle Up program.

**Extreme Sports Park** – The new Perkins Road Community Park offers a 30-thousand square foot Extreme Sports Park. A new playground was constructed for the park which had more than 83,000 visitors with BREC's first skate camp at maximum capacity and many well-attended events and programs.

**Liberty Lagoon Water Park** – Liberty Lagoon Water Park opened during Memorial Day weekend. More than 74,000 people enjoyed the facility including day campers, and participants in swimming lessons and water fitness and kayaking classes.

**Sandy Creek Community Park** – BREC purchased the 395-acre site for Sandy Creek Community Park located in the northeast portion of the parish.

**Camps** – The ExxonMobil YMCA and BREC's Howell Place gymnasium opened with BREC providing an eight-week camp for 60 children each week.

**Golf** – 500 public school children participated in BREC's First Tee golf program as part of the school system's physical education program. The national organization awarded the local chapter with its highest honor, the Eagle certification.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Baton Rouge Zoo acquired a pygmy hippo from the Louisville Zoo, only one of 50 in the United States and hosted more than 12,000 people at the inaugural Zoo Lights event.

**Geaux Fish Rodeo** – Greenwood and Forest Community Parks hosted Geaux Fish Rainbow Trout Fishing Rodeos as BREC brought in thousands of pounds of rainbow trout from a company in the Midwest.

**Tennis Award** – The Forest Community Park tennis center won the Facility of the Year award from the Louisiana Tennis Association with 26 schools competing in the Junior Grand Prix Tournament.

**Football Games** – Nine high schools utilized Memorial and Olympia Stadiums as their home fields with 98,000 people attending football games between the two stadiums.

**Park Operations** – The Park Operations Department mowed 1,628 acres of turf every week, the equivalent of 1,515 football fields.





## 2012

**Superintendent Carolyn McKnight** – Carolyn McKnight became BREC’s 5th Superintendent after the retirement of long-time BREC staff member and Superintendent Bill Palmer. McKnight was the first female and first African American Superintendent in BREC’s history, served in the Texas Air National Guard and was an executive at the Dallas Recreation and Parks Department.

**Imagine Your Parks** – While the Imagine Your Parks plan outlines the creation of new parks and renovating existing ones, it also recommended a study of obsolete land, which BREC commissioned to determine which properties are not providing value to taxpayers. 69% of neighborhood park renovations funded by the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan were completed.

**Groundbreakings** – Groundbreakings were held for the Central Sports Park and the first two trail segments in the Capital Pathways Project to create a connected trails system throughout the parish.

**Safety at BREC Parks** – BREC teamed up with law enforcement through the BRAVE initiative to combat high crime in the 70805 zip code offering programs and events at Howell Community Park such as the Youth 360 after-school program, Family Fun and Fitness Fair and utilizing the Belfair Teen Center. BRAVE was credited with a 20% reduction in crime for the last six months of the year.

**Donations** – BREC received the largest donation in its history from Sue Turner for the Magnolia Mound Visitor Center and a \$1-million grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana for the development of the Capital Area Pathway Project and a BREC on the Geaux mobile playground unit to serve play deserts in East Baton Rouge Parish.

**Fundraising Campaigns** – Residents of College Town and Webb Parks held fundraising campaigns to enhance planned improvements to these neighborhood parks, a model which will be utilized in future neighborhood park renovations.

**Green Initiatives** – BREC began installing LED and compact fluorescent fixtures to reduce power consumption and limit light pollution.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – BREC teamed up with the national non-profit group KaBOOM to build a new dream playground in just one day at Flannery Road Park.

**Team Automotive Group Sportsplex** – A ribbon-cutting celebrated the official opening of the Team Automotive Group Sportsplex, a state-of-the-art gymnasium boasting three courts. Through a public-private partnership, the facility is operated by the Baton Rouge Basketball and Volleyball Association.

## 2013

**Imagine Your Parks** – BREC completed 80% of largest portion of the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan, construction of twelve community parks: Anna T. Jordan, City-Brooks, Forest, Greenwood, Highland Road, Howell, Jackson, Independence, North Sherwood Forest, Perkins Road, Sandy Creek and Zachary Community Parks. 70% of IYP funded neighborhood parks were completed with 20 projects finished in one year alone.

**Milestones in 2013** – Renovations of swimming pools at City-Brooks and Howell, grand opening of Frenchtown Road Conservation Area, groundbreaking for the Turner Visitor Center at Magnolia Mound, completion of the Grand Pavilion at Highland Road Community Park, Central Sports Park, North Sherwood Forest basketball court and Zachary Community Park activity hubs as well as a ribbon-cutting for the first BREC on the Geaux mobile playground unit.

**Health and Wellness** – BREC becomes a member of the Mayor’s Healthy BR initiative and helps fund the Healthy BR website. BREC staff offered the Healthy BR 5-2-1-0+10 program to its summer camp attendees, encouraging healthy eating, exercise and sleep habits to the children.

**BREC on the Geaux** – BREC on the Geaux served 1,200 children by through its mobile playground making 81 visits to ten housing authority complexes and eight parks. The mobile playground also served three elementary schools during recess in the fall serving more than 600 children.

**After-School Programs** – BREC expanded its Youth 360 after-school program through partnerships with East Baton Rouge, Central and Zachary system expanding to nine locations.

**Baseball** – BREC, BRAVE and Istrouma Baptist Church teamed up to bring baseball back to inner city neighborhoods and served more than 1,000 children.

**BREC Inventory** – Through the obsolete land program, BREC reduced its inventory from 184 parks to 181, saving on maintenance and staffing costs.

**Geaux Green Committee** – BREC’s Geaux Green committee is formed to help increase sustainability efforts, drive a green initiative and develop an Environmental Sustainability Policy for responsible growth and environmental stewardship. Initial efforts are focused on recycling, reducing waste and reusing resources.



# 2014

**Imagine Your Parks 2** – BREC held dozens of community meetings, focus groups and an online data collection survey to help craft a new 10-year strategic plan “Imagine Your Parks 2: Better Parks, Better Living.”

**Tax Election** – The plan and 10-year tax renewal comprised of BREC’s traditional construction budget and approximately 50% of its operating budget was approved by voters.

**National Accreditation** – At the same time, BREC underwent the rigorous accreditation process earning an unprecedented fifth accreditation in its history.

**LRPA Conference** – BREC hosted the Louisiana Recreation and Parks Association conference, providing presentations to fellow colleagues across the state.

**Imagine Your Parks** –The initial Imagine Your Parks strategic plan ended with more than 120 major construction projects and in 2014 milestones included: the first phase of Central Sports Park, education building and Walls Project mural at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, Sandy Creek Community Park trails and parking lot, Plaza area and Garden Building at Independence Community Park and renovations to 20 neighborhood parks.

**BREC Inventory** – The BREC system now encompasses 6,624 acres across 181 parks with twelve community parks, 151 neighborhood parks, special use facilities and a growing trails system.

**BREC on the Geaux** – BREC on the Geaux served five elementary schools, attended many health-related community events and announced that a second unit would be added to the fleet in 2015.

**Recreation Programs** – The Recreation Department offered more than 1,665 programs and events to residents of East Baton Rouge Parish.

**Sponsorship and Donations** – The Lauren Savoy Olinde Foundation begins an effort to construct large-scale shade sails at community parks starting with Perkins Road.

**Brew at the Zoo** – The first annual Brew at the Zoo debuted selling out weeks in advance and bringing more than 2,000 adults to the Zoo for an evening beer tasting event to help raise money for conservations issues and to fund a survey to help create a new master plan for the Zoo.

**Volunteers** – 2,185 volunteers provided 25,928 hours to BREC, saving taxpayers more than \$573,000.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – Two Malayan tiger cubs were born at the Baton Rouge Zoo representing 1% of the breeds’ population across the world.

**Conservation Department** – BREC hired a full-time naturalist to expand conservation programming at its 24 conservation areas. The popular programs include Woods Walks, Nature Hikes, BioBlitz and camping to teach residents about ecology.

**Public WiFi** – BREC launches an effort to becomes the largest public WiFi provider in the parish, by creating dozens of hotspots in parks across the system.





# 2015

**Imagine Your Parks 2** – BREC launches its new 10-year strategic plan called Imagine Your Parks 2: Better Parks, Better Living with the following milestones achieved:

- New splash pads at Highland Road and Jackson Community Parks.
- Children’s tennis courts, playground and recreation center at Highland Road Community Park.
- Phase two of Central Sports Park.
- Downtown Greenway trailhead and Walk-Ons basketball court at Expressway Park.
- KaBOOM playground built in a day at Hartley-Vey-Gardere Park.
- Pilot Club senior playground installed at Greenwood Community Park.
- Levee trail to Riverbend Park.
- Developed parish wide bicycle/pedestrian trails map for greenways and blueways throughout the parish.

**Expansion and Improvements** – Began construction on Knock Knock Children’s Museum, Anna T. Jordan Community Park recreation center and Zachary Community Park playground and splashpad.

**Safety at BREC Parks** – BREC joined Pennington Biomedical Research Center, University of Kansas and North Carolina State University to launch a pilot of Play Streets for Safe Play in high-risk neighborhoods. 600 children increased their steps to an average of 11,208 versus their normal average of 7,236 per day.

**Financial Assistance** – BREC offers more than \$100,000 in financial assistance to its award-winning summer camps.

**BioBlitz** – BREC launched its popular BioBlitz program utilizing the free iNaturalist app. In a 24-hour period, citizen scientists identified 266 species at just one site.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Baton Rouge Zoo received a grant for ProjectArk (Animals Reaching Kids) in which the Zoo Mobile visits schools with a large percentage of at-risk students in grades 4-5. Results show a 10% increase in factual knowledge about animals and a 45% shift toward a positive attitude toward snakes and other animals.

**BREC on the Geaux** – BREC on the Geaux added a second mobile playground unit serving 72,000 participants in schools, parks, housing complexes and events. The box trucks and program was highlighted at the National Recreation and Park Association’s national conference.

**BREC Inventory** – Through the obsolete land study, BREC placed an undeveloped parcel of land for sale, returned an aging building to City/Parish and partnered with Front Yard Bikes to better utilize a recreation center and park that received little to no visitors.

**Park Operations** – Park Operations outsourced the mowing of smaller parks to outside contractors while in-house staff continue mowing community parks, special use facilities and larger neighborhood parks.



# 2016

**Gold Medal Finalist** – BREC was named a finalist for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) prestigious Gold Medal award, meaning it was designated one of the top four park systems in the country.

**Tax Election** – Voters approved a tax renewal for approximately 50% of BREC’s operating revenues, rejecting nearly every other tax initiative on the ballot.

**2016 Flooding Response** – When historic flooding hit East Baton Rouge Parish, 33% of the BREC workforce suffered damage. Despite that BREC acted quickly, opening short-term shelters, sending mobile recreation units to shelters, operating emergency camps, staging emergency response equipment and repairing damage to re-open parks for respite and healthy activity.

**Water Detention Centers** – More than 30 BREC parks served as storm water detention centers, reducing flooding to nearby neighborhoods and businesses.

**LEO Program** – In July, police shot and killed an African American man sparking weeks of civil protest. Weeks later, five law enforcement officers were ambushed and three killed. BREC responded by hosting a news conference with community leaders offering solutions to the racial divide, launching the Youth Chat with LEO program to help law enforcement and local youth get to know each other better and created events such as Biking with the Badge and an NBA basketball clinic among others.

**Planning and Engineering Award** – BREC’s Planning and Engineering Department received a 2016 NACPRO award for excellence in park and recreation facility design for the recreation center and new playground/splashpad improvements at Highland Road Community Park.

**Public WiFi** – BREC’s public WiFi program now spans 46 facilities and parks and is the largest provider of free Internet access in the state.

**Expansion and Improvements** – BREC had more than \$35-million in construction projects completed or underway continuing the improvements made by the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan including: phase two of Central Sports Park, Perkins Road Community Park and Pennington trails and fitness station, Zachary Community Park playground and splash pad, recreation centers at Anna T. Jordan Community Park and Jefferson Highway Park, disc golf course at Scotlandville Parkway and new airfield at Farr Park.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Baton Rouge Zoo is the most visited attraction in Baton Rouge with approximately 250,000 visitors annually. The AZA found the Zoo positively impacts the community by generating \$17.6M in economic activity, \$6.23M in salaries and wages and spending nearly \$4-M in goods and services.

**Summer Camps** – BREC summer camps were voted the best in Baton Rouge by 225 Magazine.



## 2017

**Gold Medal Finalist** – For the second year in a row, BREC was named a finalist for the prestigious National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Gold Medal award for excellence in park and recreation management.

**National Awards** – NRPA also honored BREC with two national awards for excellence in innovative program for the LEO program bringing youth and law enforcement together and for environmental stewardship.

**Expansion and Improvements** – BREC completed more than 30 major construction projects including Knock Knock Children’s Museum, expansion of Liberty Lagoon Waterpark, expansion and air-conditioning of five recreation centers, the first boat launch in the BREC system at Highland Road Community Park, six neighborhood park improvements and a tournament pavilion at Beaver Creek Golf Course.

**Liberty Lagoon** – The Liberty Lagoon expansion included the installation of the first surfing simulator in the state. The Shockwave was a hit with approximately 19,000 rides taken and 163 surfing lessons given by staff. It generated more than \$26,000 to help fund programs such as low-cost swimming lessons.

**CMAQ Grant** – BREC received the largest grant in its history, \$3-million Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant to create a seven mile bicycle/pedestrian trail to connect Scotlandville Parkway to Memorial Stadium.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – Staff held public meetings, commissioned a survey and met with community leaders, church groups, alumni groups and stakeholders to determine the best plan of action to renovate and potentially relocate the Baton Rouge Zoo.

**Internal Auditor** – BREC hired an Internal Auditor to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of its many departments, policies, and processes.

**Opioid Epidemic** – BREC and the Capital Area Human Service District partnered to provide informational booths at 55-events to educate the community about the deadly opioid epidemic and created a program to teach area youth about the crisis.

**STEM Lab** – Through a partnership, BREC conducted an eight-week STEM lab where attendees participated in engineering challenges. With more than 1,900 visits, participant survey results indicated a 75% increased interest in pollution, 79% increased interest in building things and 84% increase in the perception that engineering is cool.

**Surveys** – BREC launched a comprehensive survey of the entire system to create a long-term plan to ensure accessibility for everyone at all parks regardless of ability.

**Health and Wellness** – The Communications Department teamed up with Pennington Biomedical Research Center to create a “Burn with BREC” page allowing users to calculate the calories they burn while visiting BREC parks. A brochure highlighting the page and health benefits of parks was handed out to health organizations across the parish.





# 2018

**Superintendent Retirement** – Superintendent Carolyn McKnight announced her intention to retire at the end of her contract, giving the BREC Commission time to create a search committee, hire a search firm and conduct a national search for her replacement, a five-month process.

**Gold Medal Finalist** – BREC was named a finalist for the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal award for the third year in a row for excellence in park and recreation management.

**ADA Transition Plan** – The Commission approved an ADA transition plan, agreeing to invest \$1-million per year for 20 years to ensure accessibility for all in every BREC park.

**Brand Standards** – The Commission also approved new brand standards for signage in all parks to improve wayfinding and branding.

**Expansion and Improvements** – BREC’s Planning and Engineering staff began the design, construction, or completion of 71 capital improvement projects including the first phase of the repurposing of Howell golf course to create a 144-acre community park, the expansion of the Botanic Garden at Independence Community Park, renovations to North Sherwood Forest Community Park, flood damaged facilities and the bicycle/pedestrian master plan for the parish.

**Bike Share Stations** – BREC partnered with Gotcha Bikes to place bike share stations in seven parks.

**Master Plans** – BREC hired nationally renowned consultants Sasaki Associates and Torre Design Consortium to create master plans for the Baton Rouge Zoo and Greenwood Community Park after a vigorous debate lead to a Commission vote to keep the Zoo in its current location.

**Food Bank and Zoo Lights** – Since the Flood of 2016, the Baton Rouge Food Bank has been in perpetual crisis with empty shelves. The Baton Rouge Zoo partnered with the agency for its Zoo Lights event offering half-priced admission to anyone who brought a food donation bringing in a ton and a half of food supplying nearly 3,000 families with meals during the holidays.

**Park Operations** – BREC’s Park Operations Department purchased a second sports turf robot to paint athletic fields to free up valuable staff time and funding. In two years, the first robot allowed 22 new soccer fields and 16 new baseball fields to be effectively maintained, lessening the need for repainting and allowing more elaborate paint jobs such as breast cancer awareness on all fields.

**Natural Resource Management** – BREC commissioned NRPA conservation consultants to review BREC’s growing conservation program. The Commission accepted the recommendations to separate programming and natural resource management into two separate departments with increased staffing.

**Green Force** – The Natural Resource Management team created the “Green Force” a specially trained volunteer group that contributed more than 1,000 hours to working on trails, cataloguing species, mitigating invasive species and much more.







## 2019

**Superintendent Corey K. Wilson** – Corey K. Wilson is named as the sixth Superintendent in BREC's history. The New Orleans native served as the agency's first Chief of Business management providing in-house legal services and supervising the Communications, I.T., Finance and Human Resources Departments.

**National Accreditation** – BREC achieved an unprecedented sixth national accreditation meeting 150 out of 151 standards and was recognized at the NRPA conference as one of two systems to achieve national accreditation in 1994, repeating rigorous process every four years.

**Gold Medal Finalist** – At the same conference, BREC was also recognized as a finalist for the prestigious national Gold Medal award for the fourth year in a row.

**Chief Legal Officer and Chief Operating Officer** – The BREC leadership team welcomed its first Chief Legal Officer and Chief Operating Officer, taking over the duties previously filled by Superintendent Wilson.

**Munis System** – BREC began an initiative to implement the Munis ERP financial management software system which is estimated to take at least 18-months. The result will allow BREC to operate in a more efficient and transparent manner and is one of many projects to modernize all business and data-gathering functions for the agency.

**Expansion and Improvements** – 28 capital improvements were completed with a total of 83 underway. They include the bridge crossing and trailhead for the Ward's Creek bicycle and pedestrian trail, an urban farm and state-of-the-art fitness court at Howell Community Park, the creation of a Championship Field and improved lighting at Burbank Soccer Complex in partnership with the Baton Rouge Soccer Association, Our Lady of the Lake Foundation and St. Joseph's Academy Foundation, nine neighborhood parks and the master plan for the largest project in BREC's history: the reimagination of the Baton Rouge Zoo and Greenwood Community Park.

**Green Infrastructure** – BREC created a resiliency plan to increase green infrastructure and capacity to protect the parish from future climate events. Models show BREC parks stored more than 9.95-billion gallons of water during the historic flood of 2016, enough to fill the inner bowl of Tiger Stadium 71 times.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – The Baton Rouge Zoo became the first facility in the parish and third in the state to become certified as a sensory inclusive facility.

**Swimming Lessons** – Louisiana ranks second in the nation for drowning deaths and to combat those statistics, BREC partnered with SELA to offer free swimming lessons to children and adults across the parish.

**Master Plan Collaboration** – BREC worked with students from Belaire High School's Creative Sciences and Art Magnet Program to redesign a neighborhood park. The students presented a master plan to the BREC Commission after holding a well-attended public forum for input into the design.

**Surveys** – BREC commissioned a parish wide needs assessment survey to help create new programs and events and guide future construction efforts. The survey shows that 87% of the East Baton Rouge population utilizes BREC parks.



# 2020 - PRESENT

## 2020

**COVID-19 Response** – When Governor John Bel Edwards declared an emergency due to the COVID-19 virus, all of BREC’s indoor facilities, many park amenities and all camps, events and programs came to a halt. The BREC team had to adjust all of the plans and goals made during the previous year and act quickly to serve the public through virtual programs and events and partner with groups to distribute 1-million meals to children not in schools, provide COVID-19 testing and increase the number of hard-hit restaurants selling food and drinks in parks.

**Outdoor Spaces** – Use of trails and green spaces increased by 41% and attendance at golf courses and the Zoo also skyrocketed during the pandemic. BREC’s Park Operations crews worked tirelessly to ensure that parks were sanitized and safe for the increased usage as outdoor activity was declared essential by the Governor and people desperately needed parks for both the physical and mental health benefits parks provide.

**“Play it Safe” Campaign** – BREC’s Communications Department created a “Play it Safe” campaign to educate people how to safely use parks during the pandemic, produced 73 videos to take viewers behind the scenes of BREC facilities and remain active from the safety of their homes, inspirational signage to lift people’s spirits in parks and activity sheets in English and Spanish to keep children engaged and active.

**Expansion and Improvements** – BREC continued its aggressive construction efforts to keep construction companies and their sub-contractors working through the pandemic. The team completed 26 capital projects with a total in planning, design and construction including the reimagining of the Zoo and Greenwood Community Park, dredging and revitalization of the Lakes area, a master plan for the 13th community park at Airline Highway, new recreation centers at Howell and Jackson Community Parks, nature station at Frenchtown Road Conservation Area and a 7-mile greenway to connect Scotlandville Parkway to Downtown Baton Rouge.

**Gold Medal Finalist** – For the fifth year in a row, BREC was named a finalist for the national Gold Medal Award, the highest honor a park system can receive.

**Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan** – BREC and its partners, including City-Parish, DOTD, BRAF and others received approval of a bicycle/pedestrian master plan to create more than 450 miles of connectivity trails across the parish.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** – BREC’s Commission approved a diversity, equity and inclusion statement which will lead to the creation of a robust small business program. They also approved ADA policies and procedures to insure accessibility in all BREC parks and facilities.

**Commissioner Davis Rhorer** – Commissioner Davis Rhorer, who was the long-time Executive Director of the Downtown Development District, died of complications from the COVID-19 virus.

**Groundbreaking** – BREC staff and elected officials held a socially distanced groundbreaking ceremony for the largest construction in BREC’s history, \$40 million reimagining of the Baton Rouge Zoo and Greenwood Community Park project.

**Baton Rouge Zoo** – To ensure everyone can visit the Zoo regardless of income, every Wednesday the Zoo discounts admission to \$1.50 per person. Due to the pandemic, the program saw a remarkable 127% increase over 2019 numbers with 12,363 people attending during these times.

**Recreation Highlights** – When BREC’s popular BREC-A-Boo Halloween programs couldn’t be held, Recreation staff held an all-day drive-in movie event at the Airline Highway Fairgrounds area. The event attracted more than 7,000 people and was replicated the following Easter.





## 2021

**Overcoming Challenges** – 2021 brought multiple challenges to the community and BREC team including devastating weather events such as an ice storm and hurricanes, several serious surges of COVID-19 and the filing of Senate Bill 205 which sought to break up the park system and create three additional, smaller agencies. Despite those challenges, BREC served more than 1-million people at its staffed parks and events and programs requiring registration. All BREC facilities, including Liberty Lagoon Waterpark were able to open and events and programs were held in-person providing much-needed socialization, especially for children.

**Inventory and Budget** – BREC staff maintains and operates 175 parks comprised of 6,565 acres with an annual budget of approximately \$100-million dollars.

**Partnership and Development** – BREC's new Partnership and Development Division hired a firm evaluate the BREC system for sponsorship opportunities, worked with a national consultant to create a community engagement policy which will lead to citizen advisory councils across the parish and with Trust for Public Land to determine the economic impact of BREC on the community.

**Small Business Program** – BREC's newly created Small Business Program began its work to ensure that disadvantaged businesses are considered in all purchases made by the park system.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council** – BREC staff created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council charged with proposing policy and procedural changes where necessary as well as the creation of educational programs and events.

**Watershed Initiative** – BREC received a \$4.7-million Watershed Initiative grant, the largest in its history, for the reimagining of Greenwood Community Park to include green infrastructure amenities such as deepening, expanding and naturalizing waterways to better retain storm water and protect nearby homes and businesses from flooding.

**New Software Systems** – Agency wide efforts to become more efficient, more transparent, and better measure outcomes continued with the implementation of new software systems offering online tee times for golf and the ability to purchase digital tickets and memberships for the Zoo.

**Expansion and Improvements** – BREC's planning team continued its aggressive effort to complete construction projects in the park system keeping an important sector of the economy in business. The team had 88 projects of varying scope and size underway in 2021 in design/planning and construction.

They include:

- The reimagining of the Zoo and Greenwood Community Park.
- Dredging and revitalization of the Lakes area.
- A master plan for the 13th community park at Airline Highway.
- New recreation centers at Howell and Jackson Community Parks.
- Education building and master plan for Frenchtown Road Conservation Area.
- A 7-mile greenway to connect Scotlandville Parkway to Downtown.
- The first turfed fields in the system at Central Sports Park.
- Incorporating green infrastructure into all major projects to prevent flooding.

**Prescribed Burns** – BREC implemented the first of what will be on-going prescribed burns of a natural grow area to return nutrients to the respective soil and increase the production of wildflowers, which attract pollinators, save maintenance costs in parks, and attract natural wildlife.

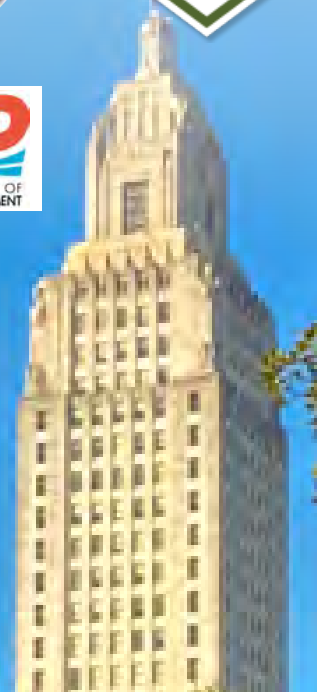
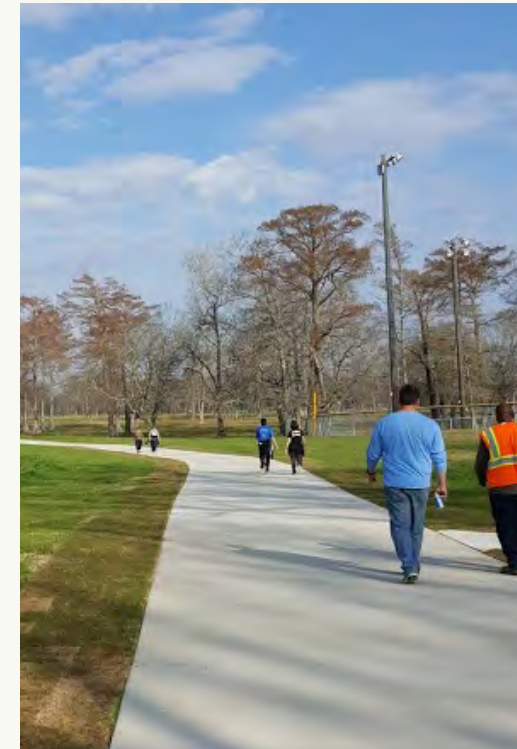




# 2022 AND BEYOND

## GOLD MEDAL

For the 17th time in its history, BREC was again named a finalist for the prestigious National Gold Medal Award and will learn whether it has been named the top park system in the country at the NRPA conference in Phoenix, Arizona in September.



## PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

### East Baton Rouge Parish

March 2020





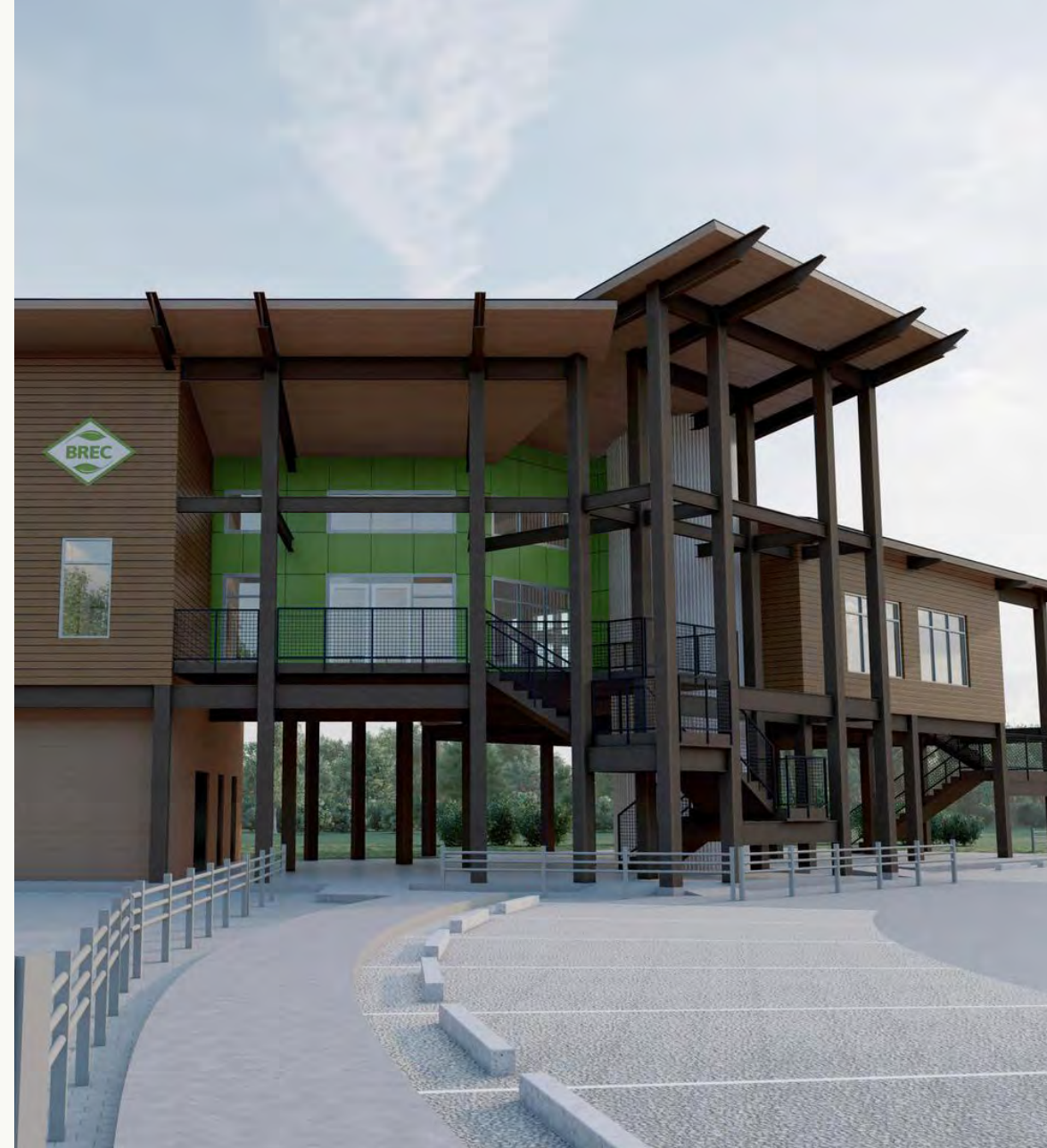
## TRANSFORMATIONAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Despite supply chain issues and skyrocketing inflation due to the COVID-19 virus, large-scale projects are nearing completion including:

- Renovations to Jackson Community Park.
- Nature station at Frenchtown Road Conservation Area.
- New dog park at Lovett Road Park.
- Expansion of the dog park at City-Brooks Community Park.
- New and elevated Recreation Center, swimming pool and pool house at Howell Community Park.
- Bicycle/pedestrian trail to connect Americana to Zachary Community Park.
- Turfed fields and improvements at Oak Villa Sports Complex.
- The dredging of the Lakes.
- The largest project in BREC's history to reimagine the Baton Rouge Zoo and Greenwood Community Park.
- Construction will begin later in the year on the 13th community park in BREC's inventory at Airline Highway.
- Greenway to connect Scotlandville Parkway with Memorial Stadium.
- Boat launch at Manchac Park.
- New master plans for Perkins Road Community Park and Bluebonnet Swamp.
- More sections of the Health Loop Greenway.

### **IMAGINE YOUR PARKS 3**

BREC is preparing to create a new Imagine Your Parks 3 strategic plan and go through the rigorous accreditation process in 2024.



***THERE ARE SO MANY BIG THINGS ON THE HORIZON FOR YOUR PARK SYSTEM  
— WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE NEXT 75 YEARS WILL BRING!***



