

The *Louisiana Municipal Review*, the official publication of the Louisiana Municipal Association, serves as a medium of exchange of ideas and information for municipal officials in Louisiana. Published monthly, the *Louisiana Municipal Review*, circulation 3,525, is read by all Louisiana mayors, municipal governing body members, municipal administrators, municipal clerks, city attorneys, chiefs of police, chiefs of fire, other key municipal employees, sheriffs, parish presidents, state government officials, members of the state Legislature and Congressional Delegation, and others.

Subscription rate: \$12 per year; Single copy: \$1.50. Louisiana residents add 8 percent sales tax.

Editorial offices: Louisiana Municipal Association, 700 North 10th Street, Suite 400, Post Office Box 4327, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4327, (225) 344-5001, (800) 234-8274, FAX (225) 344-3057.

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Rates for display, professional-listing, and classified advertising available upon request from Tommy Darenbourg, Managing Editor, (225) 344-5001, FAX (225) 344-3057, editor@lma.org. Third class postage paid at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday
8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon Friday

LOUISIANA MUNICIPAL REVIEW
(USPS 832-560) (ISSN 0164-3622)

Postmaster - Send address changes to:
LOUISIANA MUNICIPAL REVIEW
Post Office Box 4327
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4327

President's Message

LMA's district leaders deserve high praise

The LMA's 2009 road trip, which takes us to 10 of our state's communities throughout the month of July, provides yet another opportunity to highlight the Association's leadership and services. These meetings, built on a "Power of Membership" theme, allow me, my fellow officers, and members of the Association's staff to visit with you in every geographic part of the state. Every mayor, council member, municipal clerk, city attorney, chief of police or fire, city administrator, and mayoral secretary or assistant is important to the Louisiana municipal-government family! We greatly value your membership and participation in the Association. We sincerely appreciate your trust in us and our ability to get the job done. I'm pleased to report that the Louisiana Municipal Association continues to function well and effectively for you under the sound and capable leadership of our Executive Board and our executive director, Tom Ed McHugh.

My year as LMA president has been filled with many blessings. The LMA staff is superb in their work on our behalf. My fellow officers are always available to provide able support and wise counsel. These distinguished public servants - Mayor Susan Menard of Cankton, our LMA first vice president, and Mayor Bobby Washington of Cullen, our LMA second vice president - continue to garner high praise for their leadership and service. During the last few months, Tom Ed McHugh and the LMA lobbying team have shepherded our efforts during the just-concluded regular session of the Legislature. For the most part, the outcome of this session was very good. I feel from reports I've received and which you will hear at the LMA district meetings this month, that municipal governments have secured more gains than losses.

The LMA Executive Board includes your district vice presidents, who have been instrumental in the success of our Association this past year. They have helped our Board and staff stay focused on the Association's services to our membership and developing and fine-tuning programs that benefit our villages, towns, and cities now and in the years to come.

On your behalf, allow me to thank these fine men and women who have served generously and selflessly as your representatives on our Board. They are Mayor Carroll Breaux of Springhill, District A; Mayor Eugene Smith of Arcadia, District B; Mayor Vern Breland of Sterlington, District C; Mayor Wayne McCullen of Natchitoches, District D; Councilwoman Vivian Brossett of Boyce, District E; Mayor Glenn Brasseaux of Carencro, District F; Mayor Lawrence Henagan of DeQuincy, District G; Mayor Bobbie Bourgeois of Slaughter, District H; Mayor Mayson Foster of Hammond, District I; and Mayor David Camardelle of Grand Isle, District J. Please join me in saluting their generous voluntary service which has enriched and strengthened our Association during this past year!

At the district meetings, you will be delighted to hear about the outstanding victories that LMA has secured for municipal governments. In this issue, and next month's issue as well, you will receive reports regarding municipally-related legislation that came out of this year's regular legislative session.

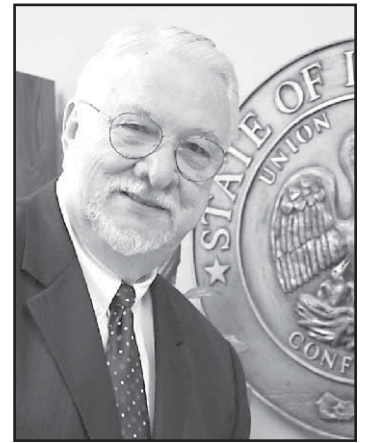
Allow me to thank you, our members, for your participation in the legislative process. Your communications - phone calls, e-mails, letters, and face-to-face contacts - with your legislators have meant a world of difference. Your efforts to reach out to our state senators and representatives have made them more aware of the issues and challenges we face on the front lines of local government statewide.

Good leadership is vital to the success of any organization. This Association benefits from the best leadership and stewardship possible. The strong leadership we are fortunate to have continues to steer our ship and adds prestige and honor to the Louisiana Municipal Association and its member villages, towns, and cities.

As we celebrate the nation's independence, I am very proud to be part of an organization that gives everyone the opportunity to participate and contribute meaningfully to our American way of life in the villages, towns, and cities we're blessed to call our own. As elected officials, we must honor the duty of using our presence, influence, and service to enrich not only our communities but also the Louisiana Municipal Association. Let us give thanks for the blessings that are ours as American citizens, and let us practice wise stewardship, prudence in our decision making, and generosity in our public service to others.

Our 72nd Annual Convention is very near! An outstanding program awaits us in the City of Alexandria. I thank Mayor Jacques Roy for his hard work in preparing for these days of relaxation and learning. The convention theme, "Cities Mean Business!" gets off to a rousing start with an address by our special guest speaker, Stephen Moret, secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, at the first of our two general sessions on Friday morning, August 7. Please make every effort to participate in this convention, for which more detailed program and registration information appears elsewhere in this issue.

We look forward to the LMA district meetings this month and the LMA convention on August 6-8. Your public service inspires me, and your active participation in the good work of our Association will richly benefit your villages, towns, and cities.



Bill H. Robertson

Bill Robertson

BILL H. ROBERTSON
Mayor, City of Minden
LMA President

Planning for community progress and economic viability

By PATRICK C. MOORE, FASLA, APA
Moore Planning Group

Across Louisiana, downtowns are coming back, pedestrian trails are a new priority, and traditional neighborhood developments are on the rise. More municipal leaders see the connection between quality of life and long-term prosperity, and many have brought master planning processes to their cities and towns. The enthusiasm stems in part from the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan, which raised our collective expectations about how sustainable design can impact a community's economic viability. Now, interest in planning is set to expand further as recovery funding for Hurricanes Ike and Gustav and the federal stimulus package provide more opportunities to improve the built environment.

But while a master plan can call for a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, a new town square, tranquil bike trails, or a signature park, completing such projects can be overwhelming, especially since so many local governments work under staff and budget constraints. A few tips can ensure that municipalities invest in outcome-driven plans that make good business sense and include a clear path toward implementation.

When engaging in a master planning process, keep in mind these six guiding principles:

1. **Participation.**

The public must "own" a master plan in order for it to come to fruition. Provide opportunities for participation through well-run community meetings or easy-to-use websites. You know your plan is off to a good start if it successfully converts what the community has expressed into appealing design elements, sustainable programs, and equitable policies.

2. **Expectations.** From the beginning, don't over-promise. The elements described in a master plan won't happen overnight, and it's important the public understands this early. The community's continued support and interest is crucial along the way, so incorporate a strong communication strategy to keep constituents informed and engaged.

3. **Infrastructure.** Understanding your current infrastructure is absolutely essential if you want to create a greener city, attract potential investment, and stay on schedule. Ask your planner what will be required to ensure new projects tie in correctly with existing transportation and sanitary sewer systems. Consider adding a thorough digital infrastructure mapping program to the planning process.

4. **Implementation.** Be sure the plan has a built-in implementation strategy that prioritizes projects into short, medium, and long-term goals in transparent fashion. A good decision-making matrix weighs each project's

return-on-investment, its ability to attract ancillary projects, and whether it meets the community's vision.

5. **Management.**

Identify early who will manage the plan's short, medium, and long-term goals. A lack of staff may make this particularly challenging for some cities, but responsibilities should be delineated for the plan to stay front and center.

6. **Resource Development.** Understand clearly how to supplement local funds with state, federal, nonprofit, and private resources. Be sure your plan includes strong data that can help you articulate your case.

Remember, community master plans can go in one of two directions. With the right steps, they can transform a community. Without them, they are at risk of becoming "studies" that wither on the vine. Ensure your planning process is wired for action and that your community's hard work and investment translates into well-deserved tangible results. Good luck!

(Editor's Note: Patrick C. Moore is principal of the Moore Planning Group, LLC, landscape architects and site planners, with offices in Alexandria and Baton Rouge. The firm's website is www.mooreplanninggroup.com.)



Patrick C. Moore