Thousands of lights, plenty of cameras and enough action to keep any kid busy from now ’til Christmas, that’s how the upcoming Cajun Christmas Bayou Parade’s shake-down cruise looked from the banks of Bayou Teche.

Ray Pellerin and dozens of elves worked for months to stage a parade of lights on the bayou in downtown Breaux Bridge, and on Tuesday two of the 30-foot long barges set sail, just to see how they looked. Ten more barges are nearing completion for the Dec. 12 and Dec. 19 events.

“This is going to blow the Natchitoches parade out the water,” said one of the onlookers gathered behind Ray Pellerin’s home to watch the spectacle. (That central Louisiana town’s Christmas boat parade, resplendent with lights, is considered one of the state’s prime tourist attractions).

The parade itself will showcase a spectacular series of barges equipped with lighted displays, many featuring special effects such as spraying water and fire, said Melanie Harrington, publicity director for the event and the city’s director of cultural and economic development.

The theme, “Toys, Toys, Toys,” will highlight floats displaying dinosaurs, including a 12-foot T-Rex, tea parties, bicycles, scooters, building blocks, fire trucks, a 20-foot Christmas tree and Santa Claus himself, Harrington said.

The Acadiana Youth Symphony Orchestra will be performing during the parade, which begin at 6 p.m. and end with a fireworks extravaganza.

“Preparation for the Bayou Parade has brought out hundreds of donors donating thousands of volunteer hours since early spring,” Harrington said. Even after the civic center is built there will be maintenance costs to contend with, and the parade could become a holiday tradition that will support the civic center.

Al Red has been a volunteer for years, and this year he was among the first to see how the volunteers show the tiny cuts as evidence of their hard work.

But it’s not all fun and games and hard work. Several citizens have envisioned a community civic center for years, and Pellerin, a businessman in Breaux Bridge, came up with the idea of a parade that would have two purposes.

“It could provide a quality family-oriented holiday event while serving as a fund-raiser for planning and designing the civic center,” Harrington said. Even after the civic center is built there will be maintenance costs to contend with, and the parade could become a holiday tradition that will support the civic center.

Already there’s talk about doubling the number of floats for next year and adding even more animation.

But Tuesday night found everything in working order as the barges floated up and down the bayou behind Ray and Susie Pellerin’s home. Pumps sprayed water from atop the 30-foot teapot, the rocking horse move to and fro and the spectators were unanimous in their approval.

“Never seen anything like it in my life,” said one.