Livingston Parish is undergoing rapid expansion

Advocate Staff

Livingston Parish has experienced rapid growth in recent years, providing a home for many people who work in Baton Rouge and Hammond as well as Livingston Parish.

Denham Springs, the largest of the parish's eight municipalities, lies across the Amite River from Baton Rouge and is accessible by Interstate 12 or U.S. 190.

Denham Springs, founded 97 years ago, includes an antiques village in the old downtown area, where a festival is held each spring.

Train Station Park - an open air, covered pavilion at the corner of North Range and Railroad avenues - sits on the edge of the antiquites village and offers free weekly concerts in the spring, summer and fall.

The area has an active theater group and well-known adult and children's choirs.

In 1877 William Denham settled on property near the Amite River that had several natural springs. Shortly before the Civil War, when yellow fever raged, some people moved to the area believing the natural springs contained minerals that prevented the disease. Practically all of the natural springs have ceased to flow, leaving little but a name behind.

Denham Springs has a mayor, Jim DeLaune, and a five-member Board of Aldermen.

The Livingston Chamber of Commerce, located on Government Drive next to City Hall, has information on businesses, demographics and various services in the area. The telephone number is 665-0150.

South of Denham Springs, the parish maintains much of its rural character, while to the north and east, suburban areas of Baton Rouge such as Walker continue to undergo rapid development.

The town of Livingston, the parish's seat of government, sits in the center of the parish and is home to the parish courthouse, school board office and parish governmental offices, including a permit office, which new residents must visit before utility companies will turn on the new residents' electricity.

Like Denham Spring, Livingston can be reached from Baton Rouge via I-12 or U.S. 190.

The municipalities of Albany, Springfield and Killian are located further east, while Port Vincent and French Settlement, both of which feature Cajun influences, are located south of Denham Springs.

Livingston Parish President Dewey Balfa tours the public schools, relatively inexpensive land and clean environment as fuel for the parish's rapid growth. Livingston Parish schools generally score above average when students take state and national standardized tests.

All parish high schools have college preparatory, vocational and enrichment courses. The parish's special education department includes physical and occupational therapists, paraprofessional training units, speech therapists and teachers for students classified as gifted, according to school officials.

While some municipalities have their own building codes, the parish does not have one for residences constructed in rural areas, where there is also no zoning.

Public services include a Council on Aging, the Youth Services Bureau, a library system and recreational districts, which provide residents with parks and sports facilities.

Municipal water, natural gas, sewer and trash service are available in towns and many rural areas of the parish.

Residential telephone service may be obtained from South Central Telephone Co. at 557-6111.

The Livingston Chamber of Commerce, located near Government Drive next to City Hall, has information on businesses, demographics and various services in the area. The telephone number is 665-8155.

Once reliant on timber and small farms as a base for its economy, Livingston Parish still has large tracts of land devoted to timber production - mainly pine in the south and cypress in the central portions of the parish.

The parish has little heavy industry, however, the parish has $250 million high-tech observatory going into operation north of the town of Livingston.

The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory is intended to detect gravitational waves.

Parish attractions include the newly opened Tickfaw State Park dedicated to ecotourism and education.