Schools, housing enhance Zachary's popularity

By JAMES MINTON
Baker-Zachary bureau

ZACHARY — Commercial and residential growth continues at a rapid pace in East Baton Rouge Parish's northern most municipality.

Neighborhood schools, affordable housing, employment opportunities and access to transportation arteries continue to attract newcomers to the Zachary area.

Zachary's population nearly doubled between 1970 and 1990, and the city's Chamber of Commerce now estimates the population is 12,000.

Zachary residents are eligible for most of the services provided by the city-parish government but they also enjoy the added benefits of local police and fire protection, street maintenance, local ambulance service, concentrated business clusters, cultural and recreational activities and utility services.

The city operates under a home rule charter with a mayor, five at-large City Council members and an elected police chief. The city also has a municipal court with an elected judge.

Most of the city government's offices — city hall, fire station, police station, museums and court — are located within walking distance of each other on Main Street at the railroad tracks.

The police department has one part-time and 35 full-time officers and 12 reserve officers. It operates a segment of the city-parish's enhanced 911 emergency communications network.

The fire department, which includes full-time and 40 volunteer firefighters, is staffed with paramedics, arson investigators and fire prevention officers. The city has a Class 3 fire insurance rating inside the city limits and Class 5 in protected area surrounding Zachary.

Zachary High School, Northwestern Middle School and Zachary Elementary schools are all located within the city limits.

During the last year, Zachary officials have mounted an effort to create a school district for the city and surrounding area that would enable local residents to keep up with the growth in student population.

Although state voters approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the district, the movement is stalled in a dispute with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Lone Memorial Hospital, which serves northern East Baton Rouge Parish, is located in Zachary, and offers highly-specialized medical treatment, day surgery, a fully-equipped emergency room and an obstetrics unit.

Information on natural gas, water, sewerage, garbage collection and recycling services is available by calling 654-6871.

Electricity is supplied by Dixie Electric Membership Corp. (654-9355) and Entergy Corp. To request Entergy service, call 1-800-368-3749 (1-800-ENTERGY).

Power outages on Entergy's system can be reported by calling 1-800-960-8243 (1-800-9-OUTAGE).

The Zachary Newcomers Club was formed in 1984 to provide a medium by which new families may become better acquainted to Zachary and the surrounding community.

Information on the club may be obtained by calling the Chamber of Commerce at 654-6777.

The Chamber of Commerce's offices are on Main Street, across from City Hall.

The Historic Village, located in the block behind City Hall, includes the McHugh House Museum and Cultural Center, the Allison Agricultural and Rural Life Center, Miss Sis' Magic House, a children's science museum, and a recent addition, the Zachary railroad depot.

The Historic Village, library, BREC and city of Zachary offer a variety of recreational and educational activities for children during the summer.

The city also continues to develop a recreational complex for baseball, softball, football and soccer leagues at a new park on Mount Pleasant Road.

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