Voters say no to 10-mill tax

Downtown voters Saturday rejected 137-246 a proposed 10-mill tax proposition to finance the operations of the Downtown Development District.

The tax would have run for 50 years and was expected to generate about $200,000 a year in operating expenses. About 1,000 voters were eligible to cast ballots in the election.

The voter breakdown was like this: Ward 1, Precinct 1 — Yes, 71, No, 149; Ward 1, Precinct 3 — Yes, 32, No, 21; Ward 1, Precinct 11 — Yes, 34, No, 75; and absentee ballots — Yes, 0; No, 1.

The tax proposal, if passed, would have given the DDD about $110,000 for staff and general operating expenses. The remainder was to be used for matching funds for local projects such as street signs, lights and sidewalk improvements, according to Kerry Pourciau, city-parish assistant economic development director.

Greg Eaton of the DDD said he was disappointed the tax failed, but said:

"We've made inroads toward what we're trying to do. It's a tax, and we knew that all along," Eaton said. "You've always got to overcome the initial resistance to a tax."

Another factor in the voters' rejection of the tax was a feeling of mistrust of government among residents.

"We knew this was probably bad timing for a tax to be brought up," Eaton said, referring to recent publicity about city-parish finances.

"People aren't sure what's going to be done with the money they have to pay to government, and I can understand that."

Eaton and his staff held a series of public hearings in August that identified several needs. Among those needs were to:

- Establish a downtown newsletter.
- Attract providers of services to the area.

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Election

CONTINUED FROM 1B area.

- Implement a volunteer assistance system.
- Coordinate the staff's work with other governmental agencies.