ST. FRANCISVILLE _ West Feliciana Parish continues to prepare for accelerated residential and commercial growth as city dwellers seek refuge in the western Felicianas.

Public and private planning groups are organized to capitalize on an influx of new residents without compromising the rural charm that attracts newcomers and supports a flourishing tourist industry.

West Feliciana's property tax base zoomed upward last year with the addition of the River Bend nuclear plant's assets to the tax rolls, resulting in a $13 million tax windfall for taxing bodies this year.

The Police Jury is using some of that money on an ambitious road repair program, including a project to pave most of the parish's major gravel roads.

The School Board is building a $8 million middle school.

To help diversify the parish's tax base, a private organization called the West Feliciana Community Development Foundation is attempting to put together an economic development program that would look for businesses and industries compatible with the parish's rural charm.

The foundation evolved from a project called Feliciana Visions that used a professional planner's expertise for suggestions on how the parish could avoid wasting the tax windfall and letting unregulated growth ruin the parish's quality of life.

The Police Jury has adopted subdivision and zoning regulations, including building codes, in response to concerns that, without them, West Feliciana would suffer the same street, drainage and sewerage problems experienced by other bedroom parishes surrounding Baton Rouge.

The jury also completed work last year on a $2.7 million water system improvement project to improve service to existing customers and accommodate future growth.

The parish's largest employers are the nuclear plant, the Crown Vantage paper mill, Louisiana State Penitentiary, the West Feliciana School Board and The Bluffs on Thompson Creek.