

# CAMERON PARISH PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

District 7  
Darryl Farque  
President

Ernest Broussard, Jr., AICP/CEcD  
Executive Director

District 1  
Magnus "Sonny" McGee  
Vice President

**Testimony for Disaster Recovery Hearing  
As presented by:  
Ernest Broussard Jr, AICP/CEcD  
Executive Director  
Cameron Parish Planning & Development**

Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present on behalf of the general citizenry of Cameron Parish, the impact story that involves the recovery effort and the related issues associated with the Parish.

On September 24, 2005, a category 4 storm entered the Gulf Region and took dead aim on the Cameron Gulf Coast. Hurricane Rita – packing sustained winds of anywhere between 120 and 140 miles per hour, along with its 12 to 20 foot tidal surge – will be a day that will be remembered in infamy not only for Cameron Parish, but the entire Southwest Louisiana community.

In the aftermath of the storm surge, it would reveal that two thirds of the Parish experienced significant inundation, 80% of the industrial tax base was interrupted or disconnected, along with an additional 1,800 households, 2,000 accessory or farm units, and roughly 17,000 to 20,000 head of livestock left unaccountable. What was even more devastating was the complete removal of historical structures such as churches, schools, and cemeteries, with only the Cameron Parish courthouse standing as a monument in testimony to the resiliency of the Cameron people. This day would change the history of the Cameron community.

Today, however, we are proud to say that we are clean; our infrastructure has been re-energized; and we have removed debris. We are rebuilding – brick by brick, platform by platform. We are about 75% repopulated with roughly 80% of the industrial sector fully operational and expanding. The remaining 2,500 people that have chosen not to relocate at this point are still waiting in the wings for timely resolve of insurance issues and government initiatives, as well as the will to face the uncertainty of higher elevations, the introduction of new building codes, increased insurance premiums, not to mention a 30% increase in the cost of construction itself.

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We have found, however, that as we try to re-gentrify our Parish, there are a series of challenges that heretofore have not manifested themselves. The coastal protection plan that was to maintain and restore Cameron's historical outer barriers took significant damage and needs to be rebuilt if it is going to remain the Barrier Islands to the entire Mermentau, Calcasieu, and Sabine water sheds. The vital water and surface transportation infrastructure is proving to be significantly unable to facilitate construction, industrial, evacuation, and general human needs as previously established.

Furthermore, the mechanics of transferring federal dollars from Washington to the State and, ultimately, to the local individuals and communities that desperately need it has been arduous at best, as it is some 20 months after the storm, and the bulk of recovery dollars have still not reached the hands of the needy to which they were intended. Cameron Parish is a self-help, resilient community, that could be classified as a "Champion in Waiting" with its characteristics as a "Signature Community" in Louisiana and the hallmark of its history. It is that resiliency that will promulgate the following generational projects:

- Cameron Square with related waterfront development,
- Calcasieu Pass and East Fork Loop re-dredging,
- Related bridgeworks to Calcasieu Pass, "Monkey Island," and the Calcasieu ship Channel,
- \$5 million sanitary sewer collection system for Holly Beach,
- Significant improvements in shoulder and intersection upgrades throughout the parish.

These will also be augmented by a series of command centers in the northern, more protected sections of the parish that will be a haven for emergency preparedness, law enforcement, fire prevention and other emergency response personnel.

Another challenge we are facing is helping individuals close the loopholes in current insurance premiums and preparing for the high insurance costs to follow. Cameron Parish has a series of systematic approaches to address these problems by pursuing HERO's low-interest, 105% financing program; a \$30 million payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) program in partnership with Cheniere

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Energy; and a restructuring of the entire parish finances to underwrite unbudgeted recovery standards.

In summary, however, it is clear to us that the federal and state government is ill-prepared to handle a catastrophic event such as witnessed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We suggest the following:

- While recovery is local as well as political, FEMA should have regional offices established throughout the states that will be on a demand-response basis that are fully interfaced with local emergency response efforts.
- Future federal endowments should not come under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) initiative or any other program that has significant socio-economic indicators, as presented.
- Assistance should be made directly to the individuals and/or communities affected.
- There should be a concerted, strategic community and recovery plan in place that should be fully implemented with measurable goals adjusted periodically for changes in the economy, community factors, and other indicators in order to endure smart growth and/or "quality community" models, as being suggested

Madam Chairman, on behalf of the entire complement of leadership in Southwest Louisiana with specific reference to Cameron Parish and its immediate citizenry, we thank you for the occasion to bring these issues to light. These hopeful communities are the lifeblood and the first line of defense for a host of socio-economic, energy, defense, and environmental related issues. They should be given prominent consideration. Despite the relatively light population densities, these communities service the entire infrastructure of Southwest Louisiana, the state, and indeed the nation.

I close by saying, "Cameron Parish: critical to Southwest Louisiana, crucial to Louisiana, and imperative to the nation."

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## **CAMERON PARISH RECOVERY AGENDA**

**TO:** Recovery Allies, Affiliates & Colleagues

### **Mission Statement:**

The leadership of Cameron Parish would like to provide this agenda item to be introduced as a clear establishment our program priorities involving the parish's immediate and long-term recovery efforts. These projects have been ratified by the Cameron Police Jury and have been substantiated through multiple presentations to LRA, the Office of Community Development, and the Governor's office, as well as a myriad of other state and federal agencies.

We therefore, introduce the following:

- I. **Cameron Square**
  - a. The Cameron Square Project includes a multi-building Civic Complex and Square extending from the existing Courthouse to the Cameron Loop. The Civic Complex will include the existing Courthouse adapted to house the Parish Court, District Judge, District Attorney's Office and on the lower level, the driver's license bureau, registrar of voters and office of veteran affairs. The new buildings to be constructed as part of the Civic Complex includes 1) a building to house the Sheriff and Jail; 2) a building to house the Tax Assessor and Clerk of Court; and 3) a building to house the Police Jury, Jury Administration, Office of Emergency Planning and the Coroner. Additionally other new facilities within Cameron Square will house the Public Health Unit, U. S. Post Office, recreation facilities at the end of Cameron Square on Cameron Loop, as well as economic development facilities to support the fishing industry and offshore industry on Cameron Loop. The Cameron Square Project consisting of multi-phases is to be fully implemented over the next three years.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$35 MILLION**

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## II. Calcasieu Pass & East Fork Dredging

- a. In the mid-1980's the Cameron Parish Police Jury in tandem with the West Cameron Port Commission were successful in having a local vote that ultimately approved a multi-million dollar bond issue for the dredging of the Monkey Island Loop. This dredging project was intended to deepen the Loop to twenty-five feet and was envisioned as being an economic stimulus to allow heavy-draft deep water vessels to use the shorelines around the Loop for maritime, fisheries, and other offshore service industries. The aftermath of Hurricane Rita accelerated the amount of silt deposits within the Loop and has now resulted in a maximum draft of only twelve to fourteen feet. The request then as to re-dredge the Cameron Loop including the east fork bypass to a depth of at least twenty-five feet, preferably thirty-five feet, with a total width of the Channel to four hundred feet. This will accommodate heavy ocean-going vessels and result in increased industrial and economic development opportunities as the Parish seeks recovery avenues here at home.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$13 - 15 MILLION**

**Reconnaissance Study-Corps of Engineers- \$500,000**

## III. Holly Beach Sewer System

- a. The essential nature of the project is to provide a safe, healthy system to collect and treat the community wastewater generated by the residents of Holly Beach. From the inception of the Holly Beach community there has been no community sewer system. Individual septic systems have been employed to dispose of the wastewater generated, even though the diminished lot sizes restrict the extent and effectiveness of the field lines. The community is currently not able to comply with State Sanitary requirements for length of field lines. Should this project be implemented, all discharge parameters of the Clean Water Act will be met, as established by the LA Department of Environmental Quality.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$5 MILLION (traditional mechanical system), or \$2 - \$2.5 million (Wetlands assimilation system, amount to be confirmed by future engineering report)**

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## IV. Bridgeworks to Calcasieu Pass Island & Ship Channel

- a. Access corridor to bridge the Calcasieu Pass Loop to regain vehicular access to the island to accommodate and enhance significant economic development initiatives.

**ESTIMATED COST: \$40 MILLION**

- V. Parish staff augmentation for extensive PW management - **ESTIMATED COST: \$5 million**

- VI. Long-term recovery planning and design<sup>1</sup> - **ESTIMATED COST: \$3 million**

- VII. Coastal restoration & enhancement – **ESTIMATED COST: \$25 million**

## VIII. Advanced Planning & Design

- a. Parish Redevelopment
- b. Land Use
- c. Port Development
- d. Tourism
- e. Coastal Restoration

**ESTIMATED COST: \$1million**

<sup>1</sup> In addition to discretionary funding, to re-energize and re-gentrify the population, immediate assistance to augment housing construction and insurance subsidies are paramount.

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