BREC is the largest and oldest park system in Louisiana, celebrating its 75th birthday in October 2021. BREC enjoys a very high level of community involvement and support to keep the park system vibrant and relevant to meet the ever-changing needs of the community and the challenges provided by nature and man-made events.

In 2004, BREC launched the Imagine Your Parks strategic/master plan to transform what had become an aging, neighborhood-based park system with special use facilities into more of a 'hub and spoke' model park system with twelve (soon to be thirteen) large, staffed community parks, serving as a hub for programming activity, with other surrounding neighborhood parks as well as parish-wide special interest facilities. Community parks contain enough amenities to entertain guests for an entire day; neighborhood parks serve the needs of their respective neighborhoods; and special interest facilities serve specific interests of all parish residents, regardless of location.

In 2014 BREC updated its vision for parks and recreation for the coming decade. Imagine Your Parks 2 considers changes in the park system over the prior decade, new trends in recreation, changes in parish demographics and economy, and input from the community. It establishes eight strategic directions and an action plan for success. Below is a summary of the goals and progress report:

**FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Strategic Direction 1: Continue to place a priority on the wise use of taxpayer dollars.**

**2020/2021 Progress:** In 2017, BREC’s executive leadership embarked on a project to completely modernize BREC’s administrative processes by implementing software systems to replace manual and paper-driven processes. Several implementations, including the financial and human capital management system and new Golf and Zoo sales software systems, were underway when the COVID-19 pandemic began. BREC’s IT team was able to move quickly to equip staff with the technology needed to continue the implementations through remote meetings. The new Golf and Zoo sales system as well the new financial and human capital management systems went live in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Additionally, BREC’s Planning & Engineering team secured over $12 Million in grants for building greenways and implementing green infrastructure design practices to assist with localized flooding.

**2022 & Beyond:** Other software implementations, including a new asset management software system that integrates with GIS and a new capital project management software are currently in implementation. The systems will allow the agency to make more data-driven decisions, be more transparent, and save paper as well as fuel.

**PROGRAMS**

**Strategic Direction 2: Continue innovation in recreation programming**

**2020/2021 Progress:** BREC commissioned an updated parish-wide needs assessment survey, the results of which were used to develop annual program and event calendars by aligning them with new trends, market demands and community-wide needs. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of all indoor facilities and cancelation of in-person events for the first half of the year. Recreation quickly adapted, creating virtual camps, programs, and events to serve the community until socially distanced in-person events and programs could resume. Throughout 2020 and in 2021, BREC continued offering a mix of virtual and in-person offerings.

**2022 & Beyond:** The Recreation Department has a new data division to track usage and survey responses and to spot trends to better serve customers, report to and advise BREC leadership, and tell the story of how BREC serves diverse populations across East Baton Rouge Parish.

**KEEP QUALITY AND ACCESSIBLE PARKS AND FACILITIES**

**Strategic Direction 3: Continue to raise the standard for parks and recreation facilities and ensure equitable access to park and recreation experiences across the parish.**

**2020/2021 Progress:** The seventh year of Imagine Your Parks 2 closed with 88 capital improvement projects under construction, out to bid, in the design phase or completed despite the pandemic. BREC’s Planning and Engineering department worked with partner agencies to gain approval for a parish-wide bike/pedestrian master plan aimed at creating 450 miles of connectivity trails, over 200 of which will be BREC greenways. To date, 24.79 miles of greenways have been built with 20 more miles currently in planning or construction. BREC’s Planning & Engineering team secured more than $7 million in grants for a trail to connect Downtown to an underserved area. Additionally, a

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CONTINUE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATING BREC'S VALUE AND SERVICES
Strategic Direction 6: Increase local awareness of BREC’s programs and facilities and the overall value of BREC.
2020/2021 Progress:

In March 2020, BREC Communications had a three-day notice that all events and programs would be canceled due to the pandemic. While preparing to work remotely, staff created the “Play it Safe” campaign, urging residents to safely use green spaces and trails to remain healthy and active while other areas of the park system were closed and “Refresh Outdoors + Online” which created 70+ behind the scenes video experiences and how-to videos as well as 24 activity sheets (in English and Spanish). The campaigns contributed to a 41% increase in use of trails and green spaces, and golf courses and the Zoo set records for attendance. BREC’s social media pages also saw a spike with a 172% increase in reach on the main Facebook page alone. In 2021, BREC’s Communications department underwent an external audit of processes and procedures and issued an RFP for an update of BREC’s website.

2022 & Beyond: BREC Communications will implement recommendations from the audit, launch its updated website, and use newly developed event debrief reports and monthly reports on the usage of dept. Services to make more data-driven decisions about marketing.

STRENGTHEN AND LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS
Strategic Direction 7: Strengthen and create new partners, including the BREC Foundation to achieve common goals and leverage resources.
2020/2021 Progress: BREC worked with Pros Consulting to create an action plan for maximizing and strengthening existing partnerships and discovering opportunities where strategic partnerships can optimize BREC’s services to the community, which led to the creation of a Partnership and Development division of BREC to create policies and procedures governing partnerships and sponsorships and streamline fundraising efforts in an effort to better leverage community resources to meet BREC’s mission and community needs.

2022 & Beyond: The new division is evaluating all current partnerships and creating new innovative partnerships, working with a national consultant to identify valuable sponsorship opportunities throughout the park system, and is currently conducting extensive community engagement outreach to create new policies and mechanisms to gain more on-going community input about BREC parks.

EFFICIENT & BEST MANAGEMENT OF FACILITIES & OPEN SPACES
Strategic Direction 8: Ensure that BREC’s parks and facilities are operated and maintained efficiently according to best practices and to define standards for park types.
2020/2021 Progress: BREC’s Park Operations Department updated the standards of service for each classification of park: community, neighborhood, and special use facility. Trained maintenance staff are required to meet those standards on a weekly basis. Throughout 2020, Park Ops staff focused on sanitizing parks and facilities (closed or open), not only to ensure the community felt safe, but to also respond to higher usage of BREC parks and amenities and ensure that social distancing guidelines were followed. In 2021, BREC’s Park Operations staff not only dealt with the impacts of the pandemic but also with those of an ice storm and multiple hurricanes that damaged all nature trails, many trees, and pipes, and caused debris to be spread throughout all parks.

2022 & Beyond: Park Operations is implementing the use of technology through the creation of dashboards that allow real time tracking of the progress made toward achieving maintenance standards by measuring mowing cycles, staff leave time, weather conditions, and equipment downtime to measure the impacts. Park Ops will also track staff training, fleet management and employee turnover and will continue utilizing volunteers to evaluate parks on cleanliness, safety, and other maintenance issues.

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