

**PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

**INTRODUCTION**

Goals	Policies for Decision Makers
<b>Public Facilities and Services</b>	
Reliable and efficient public facilities and services designed to meet the needs of Terrebonne Parish for the next 20 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support investment in needed public infrastructure upgrades for water and sewer systems.</li> <li>• Investigate funding mechanisms that will facilitate expansion of sewer system on parish-wide basis.</li> <li>• Support full implementation of GIS-based municipal asset management system to reduce long-term maintenance costs.</li> <li>• Continue to evaluate options for alternative, non-structural solutions for wastewater management practices, such as constructed wetlands, etc., for large developments and for parish-wide applications.</li> <li>• Integrate land use and infrastructure investment policies to avoid expanding new infrastructure before upgrading existing facilities.</li> </ul>

Public facilities and services underpin growth and development in the parish. They also contribute to a good quality of life, making the parish attractive to visitors and to potential new residents. Some of these services, such as water and wastewater treatment can help to influence the location of development. In this regard, parish government is in a position to be pro-active, rather than reactive, about land use and development decisions in the parish.

Below is a discussion on the various important public facilities and services provided by parish government or related agencies.

**DRINKING WATER**

Potable water is provided to all residential, commercial, and industrial consumers in Terrebonne Parish by the Consolidated Water Works District No. 1 (District). The District is governed by a Board of Commissioners which meets publicly twice per month. Appointments to the Board of Commissioners are ratified by the parish’s governing authority, the Terrebonne Parish Council.

The District currently operates two independent water treatment plants distributing water to separate sections of Terrebonne Parish and the 44,500 individual households and businesses which form its customer base. Virtually all of the parish population, plus out-of-parish employees at many local businesses, enjoy the water provided by the District. Under certain emergency conditions, potable water may be supplied from either plant. The primary difference between the two plants is the water source. The Schriever Water Treatment Plant draws surface water from Bayou Lafourche via Lafort Canal. This bayou runs from Donaldsonville, LA to the Gulf of Mexico. Bayou Lafourche obtains most of its water from the Mississippi River. The Houma Water Treatment Plant uses two sources of fresh water. Its primary source for surface water is the Gulf



Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) which picks up storm water runoff and is "influenced" by the Mississippi River to the east, the Atchafalaya River to the west, and by tidal flows. In general, the GIWW flows east/west along coastal Louisiana. During those times when tidal flows from the Gulf of Mexico are in ascendency due to reduced flows from the two flanking rivers, resulting in chloride levels in the GIWW in excess of 250 parts per million (ppm), the Houma plant draws fresh water from Bayou Black.

Both plants utilize the coagulation, sedimentation, filtration, and disinfection process to treat surface source water. Granular activated carbon and sand filters are utilized to filter water and absorb many organic and some inorganic compounds. This process greatly enhances the overall quality of the water, resulting in a better tasting product with a lower odor signature. Chlorine is the primary plant disinfectant. Chloramine disinfectant is injected prior to water entering the distribution system. Water treated with chloramine lacks the distinct chlorine odor of the gaseous treatment and so has improved taste.

Community water systems are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and are thus required to annually inform customers of the quality of the water the system delivers to its customers. Although the District has an enviable record of providing high quality drinking water to its customers free of violations, variances, or exemptions, it is required, nevertheless, to inform customers of certain risks and possible contaminants that may be contained in drinking water. The district does this annually in the form of its Consumer Confidence Report.

The most current report is available at the District's website (<http://www.consolidatedwaterworks.org>). This report contains a great deal of technical information relative to all detected contaminants in the water supply, whether or not the level detected

meets or exceeds the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) or the Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) set by EPA. As defined, the MCL is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. The MCLG is defined as the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. These are set to allow for a margin of safety. Usually, MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

The District tests for several contaminants and, in accordance with EPA regulations, lists all detected contaminants in its Consumer Confidence Report. Drinking water, including tap water and bottled water, comes from a variety of sources. These include rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals, and in some cases, radioactive material, and can also pick up substances resulting from the presence of human or animal activity. The contaminants that may be present in drinking water include:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, which may originate from a variety of sources including sewage treatment plant discharges, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals. Some of these can be naturally-occurring, or may result from urban storm water runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming
- Pesticides and herbicides, which can originate from most of the sources listed for inorganic contaminants.
- Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, usually the by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, but can



also come from gas stations, urban storm water runoff, and septic systems.

- Radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally-occurring or result from oil and gas production and mining activities.

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA has established regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in public water systems. The Federal Drug Administration has set up limits for contaminants in bottled water which must provide the same protection for public health. It is reasonable to assume that drinking water, including bottled water, may contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. However, the presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained from the EPA.

The contaminant that is most visible to the human eye is turbidity or clarity. It is a measure of the cloudiness of the water and is a good indication of the effectiveness of the system's filtration capabilities. Soil runoff is the major source of turbidity in drinking water. The unit used in measuring this contaminant is the Nephelometric Turbidity Unit (NTU). Turbidity in excess of 5 NTUs is just noticeable to the average person. The MCL for this contaminant is 0.3. Both water treatment plants in Terrebonne Parish regularly meet requirements specified for treatment technologies well in excess of 99% of the samples taken.

In addition to turbidity, both District water treatment plants test for microbiological contaminants (fecal coliform and E. coli) which are naturally present in the environment, volatile organics (total trihalomethanes and haloacetic acid), both by-products of drinking water chlorination), radioactive contaminants (caused by decay of natural and man-made deposits and erosion of natural deposits), inorganic contaminants, such as nitrate, lead, copper,

and arsenic, herbicides/pesticides (dalapon), from runoff from the herbicide used on rights-of-way, disinfectant/oxidants, such as chlorine (added at treatment plant), total organic carbon removal (which results from decomposed organic matter present in water sources), and various general chemistries (aluminum, chlorides, sodium, fluoride, etc).

The combined capacity of both water treatment plants is 32 MGD with 80% of this capacity accounted for by the Schriever plant. Peak water usage is 20 MGD which represents about 83% of the total capacity of the Schriever plant. Peak water usage consumes about 63% of the system's total capacity, allowing excess capacity necessary to accommodate growth in the parish.

Consolidated Water Works District No. 1 generates approximately \$15 M in annual revenues and carries an average capital budget (repairs and improvements) of \$1.5 M. The replacement value of its assets is about \$200 M, leading to the conclusion that, perhaps, the District is asset rich, but revenue poor. The rate charged to its residential customers (single occupancy) is \$7.50 (minimum) up to 2,000 gallons; \$2.98/1,000 gallons from 2,001 to 30,000 gallons, and \$3.53/1,000 gallons over 30,000 gallons. These last two rates also carry an energy adjustment charge. Commercial, industrial, and institutional rates are only \$0.25 more per 1,000 gallons after the \$15.00 minimum charge for up to 2,000 gallons.

The Board of Commissioners of the District has been faced with a number of issues which will impact the capabilities of the District, its ability to support Terrebonne's long term growth and economic development, and the District's finances over the next twenty years. These issues are discussed below.



### Consolidation Plan

The District must decide if it should build an additional transmission line from the Schriever plant to the center of the urbanized area. This will give the District redundant water delivery capabilities with three transmission lines. Part of this plan also includes the construction of an 8 MGD treatment "pod" at the Schriever plant. The estimated cost of this plan is approximately \$22M, with about 64% of this cost accounted for by the additional transmission line. The District estimates an annual savings from operation and maintenance of \$600,000 if this plan is implemented. Annual debt service is estimated at \$1.7M for twenty years.

### Old City of Houma Distribution System Plan

The distribution system and plan which comprise the Old City of Houma water system is approaching 80 years in age. Many of the lines within this system are undersized, calling into question the fire-fighting support capabilities of many of these components. In addition, much of this system is experiencing corrosion and other potential health-related issues. The District has estimated that the cost of making these system upgrades could go as high as \$30M. The strategy to attack these problems would be to focus on system repair and to replace critical valves in order to isolate problem areas. The problems, however, are so widespread that the District would be able only to handle them on an incremental basis. Should the estimated cost for this fall closer to \$25M, the District would be faced with debt service of approximately \$2.0M over 20 years

### Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District

According to the District, approximately 80% of the raw water for Terrebonne Parish is drawn from Bayou Lafourche through a 40-year agreement with the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District (BLFWD). This agreement expires in 2014. At that time, the

District will be faced with two options, either join the BLFWD, or find another raw water source. Although Terrebonne is able to draw fresh water from the GIWW, this is not a dependable source due to periodic salinity issues. In reality, another raw water source for Terrebonne Parish may not be feasible.

In 2005, the State Legislature expanded the BLFWD area to potentially include Terrebonne Parish (Act 2). Current membership is comprised of Lafourche and Assumption Parishes, as well as a part of Ascension (west bank). Joining the BLFWD and having a seat (4 seats actually) on the board would assure Terrebonne Parish of a steady supply of fresh water for the future...but at a price. The District estimates that by joining the BLFWD the cost of raw water will increase significantly when the required millage rate (2.11 mills) is factored in. This millage would be on top of the per 1,000 gallon rates the District charges to its end users in Terrebonne Parish. However, this millage increase would bring Terrebonne Parish water consumers in line with what the other members of the BLFWD have been paying for years. Nevertheless, the Parish Council as well as the voters of Terrebonne Parish will have the final word in whether the parish becomes a member of the BLFWD. At this time, total raw water demand for Terrebonne Parish is from 6.5 to 7.5 billion gallons per year. By joining the BLFWD, Terrebonne would get four seats on the 12-member board and account for 50% of its revenues.

The current millage rate for the BLFWD expires in 2014 and must be presented to the voters of the member parishes in 2013 for renewal. Terrebonne voters should also get to vote on the proposition which will approve membership in the BLFWD and approve the millage levy as well. The Consolidated Water Works District No. 1, if it decides that membership in the BLFWD is best for the long-term interests of Terrebonne Parish, should begin a serious public education campaign well in advance of the actual election. Voters will want to know the following:



- Why it would be in Terrebonne's best interests to join the BLFWD? W
- What are the costs of membership?
- What is/are the viable alternative(s), if any, to membership in the BLFWD?
- What are the costs of each alternative?
- If membership is approved by Terrebonne voters, what will BLFWD do with the money it receives from Terrebonne water consumers?
- What is the District's plan should Terrebonne voters reject membership in the BLFWD?

## WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Community wastewater treatment in Terrebonne Parish is handled by the Pollution Control Division of the Public Works Department. This division is responsible for the operation and maintenance of a great deal of infrastructure, including two sewage treatment plants, approximately 260 miles of gravity mains (8" to 30" lines), about 121 miles of forced mains (4" to 30" lines), 161 sewer lift stations, nine package treatment plants, one oxidation pond, and seven holding basins.

The North Sewage Treatment Plant (NTP) has a treatment capacity of 18 million gallons per day (MGD), but is permitted only for 16 MGD. The South Treatment Plant (STP) is permitted at its capacity of 8 MGD. The NTP discharges into St. Louis Canal which eventually flows into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW). Discharge for the STP is pumped over a mile to the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC) which flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, Pollution Control is seeking a grant to allow discharge from the STP to flow into a proposed assimilated wetlands project just south of the treatment facility. This project, if funded, would allow discharge from the STP to help build wetlands and add a layer of storm surge protection in an area depleted of wetlands. The Pollution Control Division operates in accordance

with its discharge permit issued by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ).

In terms of excess capacity at this time, the North Treatment Plant under dry weather conditions has unused capacity of approximately 10 MGD. However, due to excessive infiltration and inflow problems, the excess capacity at NTP shrinks to an average of about 2 MGD during wet weather conditions. At the South Treatment Plant, normal dry weather demand leaves about 5 MGD of excess capacity. However, this facility is also adversely impacted by infiltration and inflow conditions during wet weather. At those times, STP has an average of 2 MGD in excess capacity.

Excess capacity at the NTP can accommodate the wastewater needs of approximately 17,300 new residential units. In terms of added population—and assuming no net internal migration in the parish—the North Treatment Plant could accommodate in excess of 40,000 new residents at current household sizes. In terms of capacity, the NTP will not need to be expanded until well beyond the planning horizon, based on the population projections used for this plan update.

On the other hand, the South Treatment plant can accommodate the needs of approximately 1,700 new residential units, representing more than 4,000 new residents. In the south part of the parish, however, internal migration has been in evidence as residents of some of the lower lying communities have moved north to avoid storms and flooding. Although most of this movement has been above the GIWW to communities such as Schriever and Gray, some intra-parish migrants have settled in the upper and less vulnerable reaches of the southern part of the parish, including the eastern part of the City of Houma. This could mean that the STP may reach its permitted and design capacity within the planning horizon, unless it is expanded.



Fortunately, due to the extensive sewerage infrastructure already in place in the urbanized area of the parish, this is the very area of the parish where new development and sewer connections could be most easily accommodated through infill development. In areas of the parish outside of the sewer service area, new development could be accommodated most easily next in north Terrebonne Parish which is served by the North Treatment Plant.

In the past, and on-going even today, the provision of public community sewer service throughout Terrebonne Parish has been the topic of discussion. Although the benefits of parish-wide sewerage are considerable in terms of public health and environmental improvements, the estimated costs of building a parish-wide system are daunting. A recent study has placed the cost of such a system, including collection lines, gravity and force mains, lift stations, and other system improvements, at \$300,000,000.00. Since some of the collection lines needed would be required to span long distances between tap-in sites, the public in general would be forced to pay operating costs for parts of the system where such costs could not be reasonably recouped. This could change over time, however, as the availability of public community sewerage makes adjacent vacant property more attractive to development, at least in the northern portion of the parish. Nevertheless, according to Pollution Control, the expansion of public community sewer service into new areas of the parish will create no problems that cannot be handled with sufficient funding.

At the present time, new service is paid for in one of two ways. For new subdivisions, the developer is required to pay for the system necessary to serve the development, plus any upgrades that become necessary by virtue of the new demand. For extensions of service mains, payment may be effected either through the parish alone—as would be the case for extensions made in anticipation of new development, or in hopes of guiding new

development to specific areas of the parish—or by a public/private combination depending on the circumstances and the negotiated terms. Also, Pollution Control is currently studying, through its engineering consultant, the feasibility of using sewer impact fees to help shift the cost burden associated with new sewer infrastructure from taxpayers in general to actual users of the new infrastructure.

Regardless of the structure of future funding mechanisms for sewer service in Terrebonne Parish, Pollution Control is funded through several different fees, but no funding support comes from the parish General Fund. These fees include:

- Sewer user fees: a monthly fee paid by all system-wide users in Terrebonne Parish.
- Connection fees: a one-time fee paid to connect to the system.
- Development fees: a one-time fee paid by the developer for lots in new subdivisions at \$170/lot at this time.
- Septage fees: a per use fee paid by septic tank cleaners/vacuum trucks to pump collected effluent from septic tanks into the sewage treatment plant.
- Assessment fees: fees paid by property owners who enter into an agreement with the parish to share in the costs of establishing new sewer system in a neighborhood, for example. These are assessed on a linear foot/front foot basis, currently \$26 per linear foot, but this fee structure is under study. Under this arrangement, the cost of each linear foot of sewer service main is shared roughly on a 1/3-1/3-1/3 basis, assuming the cost of one linear foot of such service is around \$78.00.

Without funding from the General Fund, which emphasizes Pollution Control's reliance on various fees and grants (EDA, etc.,) and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for loans to support project,



the need for a strategic plan is more important for this parish division. Currently, however, Pollution Control does not operate based on a strategic plan. Its decisions are driven by available funding and are, therefore, financially constrained. Since Pollution Control is part of the TPCG Public Works Department, it operates within the framework of a strategic plan, if any, utilized by this department.

In terms of level of service (LOS) standards, Pollution Control strives to meet the discharge standards specified in its LDEQ discharge permit. In a real sense, however, this is not a true user-driven LOS standard. Pollution Control operates and maintains a large collection infrastructure with 381 miles of mains, 161 lift stations, two sewage treatment plants, and other assets. Although it has not a consumer-driven service standard, Pollution Control works to continuously upgrade the system it operates in order to provide a higher level of service to the people of the parish. For example, as this is written, many renovation efforts or new construction projects are underway in the parish. These projects include upgrades or new construction of 21 lift stations. Some of the new stations will be equipped with emergency generators and large fuel tanks, and several new force/gravity mains feeding into these lift stations. Also underway is the renovation of the North Treatment Plant, and infiltration/inflow remediation work where needed. In addition, the Pollution Control is seeking grant funds to allow for the construction of the wetlands assimilation project at the South Treatment Plant. Overall, it is expected that the net result of these projects will be a higher service standard and improved functioning during storms when electric power is lost at those lift stations to be equipped with emergency generators.

Pollution Control also works to remedy serious problems, such as Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO), when they occur and are reported. Such an overflow is defined as an unintentional release of sewage from a collection system before it reaches the collection

plant.

Sewage released in this manner can contaminate groundwater or surface water, causing serious water quality problems and threaten drinking water supplies. It can also back up into homes, businesses, or places of public assembly. Such overflows are unhealthy, destructive to public and private property, bad for recreation, tourism, and economic development, and hard on sanitary sewer system equipment.

Sanitary Sewer Overflows occur both in wet and dry conditions. Wet condition SSOs occur when excessive storm water runoff infiltrates the sewer collection system, resulting in overflows at virtually any location on the system. Dry condition SSOs are more likely to be caused by clogged and/or collapsed sewer lines, a condition that can be made worse by a lack of systematic maintenance, although this is not the case in Terrebonne. Despite dry conditions, ground water seepage can be a contributing factor in some areas. Undersized sewer lines can also contribute to the problem in both types of overflow situations.

In general, the causes of SSOs can be attributed to many factors. Among these are:

- storm water or ground water infiltration
- broken pipes or equipment (pump) failures
- age-related deterioration exacerbated by soil-related factors in conjunction with weather-related temperature extremes
- tree roots growing into sewer pipes
- inadequate flow capacity due to undersized pipes or obstructions (which can be caused by a number of factors, including grease build-up)
- rapid development of a jurisdiction or a sub-area which can cause sewage flows to exceed system capacity
- lack of funds for scheduled or preventive



maintenance

Not all of these SSO causes are present in Terrebonne Parish. The most frequent causes of SSOs here are broken pipes, which may be caused by environmental conditions, contractor negligence, improper construction methods, tree roots and other obstructions, soil-related factors such as subsidence (major problem according to Pollution Control), and ground water infiltration and/or storm water inflows (which can be heavy at times). Despite having experienced twenty-four SSO problems in the last two years (average of one per month), the parish not under a Consent Decree with the Environmental Protection Agency relative to these SSO problems. This is due to the fact that the parish does not have a growing backlog of such SSO problems. Although a large part of the collection system was built many years ago of fairly brittle terracotta piping, most of the newer infrastructure has been constructed with more modern (and flexible) piping materials which are less susceptible to breakage over time.

In addition, SSO problems in the parish are addressed as they occur. Over the last two years, the collection system of the North Treatment Plant has experienced 13 SSO occurrences; the South Treatment Plant eleven. Overall, 18 of these occurrences have involved overflows at sewer manholes; six have involved mains. However, about 81% of the occurrences overall have been associated with gravity mains, leading to the conclusion that blockages, breakages, or excessive infiltration/inflow problems may be the cause(s) of these reported SSO problems. Pollution Control indicates that SSOs ("vast majority") are more in evidence during wet weather than in dry conditions in the parish. This is fortunate, and probably helps Pollution Control to address SSO problems as they occur. In other communities where infrastructure may be older, more susceptible to problems in both wet and dry conditions, more dispersed or spread out, and subject to more severe environmental conditions,

SSOs are much more numerous and problematic, causing maintenance crews to work hard to overcome the growing backlog.



One particular factor was cited as contributing to the SSO problem at isolated locations in the parish. This factor is grease discharge from commercial and multi-family developments. Commercial operations in the parish, such as restaurants, are required to have grease traps and have them cleaned out periodically, according to Pollution Control. However, enforcement of this requirement is ineffective for various reasons. Pollution Control does not have the manpower to dedicate to this objective and, apparently, other parish departments with inspection responsibilities may not have sufficient manpower either. In addition, apartment complexes are generally constructed without grease traps, according to Pollution Control, and grease discharges from these facilities contribute to blockages and SSO problems in the system. The problem could be eliminated through minor changes to the applicable building code and better enforcement.

Regardless of the problem or its cause(s), Pollution Control addresses each SSO occurrence on a timely basis. However, with sufficient funds, time and manpower, Pollution Control will be able to eliminate the causes of most of the SSO problems in



the parish. Even infiltration and inflow problems are not as numerous now because of better, more flexible materials (PVC pipe) and fewer joints as compared to terracotta pipe sections.

Pollution Control, however, is not totally free of problems, some of which are serious enough to potentially impede its progress or the performance of its mission. These include the near-constant need for additional funding which will allow for the hiring of additional personnel and the purchase of video equipment and vacuum trucks. The former is needed to inspect sewer lines for potential or actual problems, thus either taking preventive measures to eliminate the problem, or to pin-point the exact location of actual problems, thereby saving time and money in quickly effecting repairs. Vacuum trucks are largely an emergency measure to pump down the smaller lift stations that fill up when power is lost. If this is not done, and the power outage lasts long enough, the entire collection system feeding into a particular lift station can fill up causing massive SSOs if the system is subjected to continued usage. During times of general evacuation in the parish, Pollution Control does not consider this to be a serious problem since system usage should be reduced considerably due to evacuation of residents, or else subject to only very minor flows which will not result in problems before power and system operation can be restored.

Another existing problem is that of odors produced by the treatment of sewage. Although such odor generates a great deal of complaints from the surrounding neighborhoods, depending on wind direction, this is a very costly problem to remedy, according to Pollution Control. Since odor is not regulated at this time, this is not a priority item on Pollution Control's "fix-it" list. It may in the future, however, become subject to regulation, at which time steps will need to be taken—and funding found—to eliminate the problem or at least get the situation within permit parameters.

Pollution Control is concerned about changes in future LDEQ permitting requirements that will affect limitations of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which are discharged into receiving streams. These elements are not currently regulated by Pollution Control's discharge permit. When these nutrients come under permit requirements, both the NTP and STP will need to undergo modifications in order to meet permit specifications. It is believed that such modifications will be expensive, even though full implementation and compliance may be phased in over a number of years.

In conclusion, a good sewer system is one of the necessary foundations of local and regional growth. Without a good, well-maintained sewer system, Terrebonne Parish cannot provide business with needed access to such service, nor can it keep its urbanized area strong, or control sprawl. The parish must be able to offer a high-quality sewer service (as well as water and other utilities) in its urbanized core if it expects to encourage businesses and residents to stay, return, or relocate there.

Because a sewer system is a collection system—as opposed to a water system which actually distributes water from one or more sources—problems in sewer systems are much more difficult to fix. For example, a repair or addition to the system in one area may cause problems downstream in the system's capacity if the changes are not properly accounted for on a system-wide basis. To properly address Terrebonne Parish's future needs for sewage treatment capacity and infrastructure, a sewer master plan is essential. The last such plan was completed nearly 30 years ago and has reached the end of its useful life. Currently underway is a new sewer master plan for the parish which will prioritize the upgrades, facilities, and infrastructure that will be needed to handle expected population growth in the next 30 years. Without such a master plan there is no way to be certain that any money spent on the sewage collection infrastructure is being spent effectively.





**HOUMA POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Houma Police Department (HPD) serves a population of 33,727 residents (2010 census data) within a 14.2 square mile area known as the City of Houma. Also known as the Urban Services District, Houma is the only incorporated municipality within Terrebonne Parish and is governed, along with the rest of the parish, by the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government.



The Department has an authorized strength of 82 sworn officers (some of whom serve in administrative capacities). Currently, HPD is in the process of utilizing a federal grant to hire five replacement officers to bring the number of sworn officers up to its authorized level of 82. Also, HPD has 18 non-sworn personnel (dispatchers, clerical, etc.), bring the current total of HPD employees to 100. The Houma Police Chief is appointed by the Terrebonne Parish President, subject to ratification by the Terrebonne Parish Council.

Since 2002, the number of calls for service, as reported by HPD, has averaged 31,305 annually, or about 86 calls per day. Over the last nine years, the number of calls has not fluctuated by more than 5.4% up or down from this average, leading to the conclusion that the number of calls received each year is not trending higher or lower year to year. The Houma Police Department has one headquarters building located at 500 Honduras Street in the City of Houma. This building about 30 years old and is in need of a number of repairs. All officers begin and end their shifts at this location. For faster response times, HPD has divided the city into precincts or



districts—East and West—with the Intracoastal Waterway serving as the dividing line. Each precinct or district is further divided into three zones. Officers are assigned duties in each zone.

HPD also maintains a foot/bike patrol for downtown Houma based in a parish-owned building located at the corner of Main and Goode Streets. In addition, a patrol officer is stationed at the Mechanicville Gym where HPD maintains a “safe haven” site.

Although HPD does not operate under a Strategic Plan *per se*, it does develop annual goals and objectives with an Action Plan as required by parish administration. The development of a Strategic Plan is now possible given the stability that has come to the Department with the appointment and confirmation of a permanent (as opposed to *interim*) Police Chief. The chief benefits of the Strategic Plan over the annual exercise of goal-setting is the longer time frame (typically 5 years) and a more thorough analysis of the long-term needs of the Department and planning to set these in motion.

The HPD has had the benefit of a manpower allocation study of sorts performed in 2008 by an outside consultant hired by parish administration. As reported in this study, based on 2009 FBI/UCR *Crime in the United States* (Table 70), HPD should have 112 sworn officers to serve a population the size of the City of Houma (estimated for 2009 in this report as 32,477). As reported above, HPD has an authorized strength of 82 sworn officers, thirty less than the recommended strength. Based on the city’s 2010 population of 33,727 citizens, HPD should have 115 total employees of which 84 should be sworn officers. Obviously, the HPD is a bit understaffed, at least by the standards set by the FBI and based on cities in the southern part of the U.S.

The incorporation of best practices in policing is standard operating procedure for HPD, as it is for many police departments around the state and



nation. The Police Chief has access to a network of other police chiefs where such practices are readily discussed, including successes and failures. The HPD is committed to employing best practices, modified for the local community as needed, to achieve an overall reduction in crime in the community. It is readily admitted that communication with and the trust of the community are necessary in building a strong foundation with the community that leads to a reduction in crime.

To support communication and build trust with the community, HPD employs a number of best practices which include



Neighborhood Watch (a 900% increase in the number of Watch neighborhoods since 2008), a school resource officers, the Weed & Seed program, the Downtown Houma beat, Walk & Talk program, school talks by uniformed police officers, summer camps, and the Young Marines program. In support of these programs, the HPD maintains an informative website ([www.houmapd.com](http://www.houmapd.com)) which contains a great deal of information useful to citizens seeking to become more informed in crime prevention and the activities of the Department. The HPD also produces informational brochures with tips on avoiding auto burglary, robbery, and residential burglary. It also produces brochures informing residents and visitors on having a safe Mardi Gras season, and many of these are written in Spanish to facilitate communication between the HPD and the growing Hispanic population in the parish. These brochures are distributed at Neighborhood Watch meetings and similar venues.

The Houma Police Department has also implemented COMPSTAT (COMParative STATistics), a crime analysis and police management process first developed by the New York City Police Department. This program, which has been successfully employed by several large police departments in the U.S., including New Orleans, is designed to assist HPD in allocating manpower resources and developing plans

to reduce crime and identify problems in particular areas of the community such that proactive measures can be implemented to prevent crime before it takes place. Such efforts increase the overall productivity of the HPD by helping to place a patrol in the right place at the right time.

Through the COMPSTAT process, crime data is collected, analyzed, and mapped. Through scrutiny of police performance measures, management is held accountable for the performance of their areas of responsibility as measured by COMPSTAT data. The COMPSTAT process utilizes four elements: accurate and timely intelligence; effective tactics; rapid deployment of personnel and resources; and thorough follow-up and assessment to ensure desired results have been achieved. This process also helps to increase the flow of information between management and operational units and gives commanders the flexibility to allocate resources where they can be most effective.

Despite being understaffed, HPD has worked to reduce the number of violent and property crimes in the city and has been successful at least partially. For example, all violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) in the City of Houma declined by 24% from 2009 to 2010. All classes of violent crimes decreased from 2009 to 2010, but murders and robberies had above average years in 2009, making their incident declines much more pronounced. Unfortunately, HPD's efforts were not as successful in 2010 in the category of property crimes. This category, which includes burglary, larceny theft, and motor vehicle theft, increased by nearly 14% from 2009 to 2010. Motor vehicle theft increased nearly 34% from 2009 to 2010. It had actually declined by 12% from 2008 to 2009. Reasons for such an increase in property crimes in the community vary, but many believe that the economy in general may be a contributing factor.



In responding to calls, HPD maintains a goal of 3-4 minutes after its dispatcher receives the call, that is, from the time the call is received directly by the police dispatcher. While HPD has been fairly successful in meeting its response time goal for service calls *directly received*, not all such service calls are directly received by HPD. The majority of service calls are handled by the 9-11 dispatcher first and then handed off to the HPD. In these cases, HPD reports that its response time is longer, much longer in some cases. In some instances, the information passed on to HPD by the 9-11 dispatcher is incomplete or inaccurate resulting in unexpected situations when the responding police officer arrives on the scene. In other areas around the state, police, fire, and EMS personnel are housed at the 9-11 facility so that an incoming call to 9-11 can be immediately routed to the appropriate responder agency dispatcher for action. This arrangement saves time, which can be critical in emergency situations, allowing a much faster response time (officer on scene) and providing, therefore, a higher level of service to the public. It is generally accepted that in emergency situations, some of the details of information received initially are lost as the need for quick communication of this information to others in the chain increases. It is much more efficient, therefore, to have the initial caller immediately put in touch with a person from the appropriate responder agency.



For many years the Houma Police Department has been funded by a 5-mills *ad valorem* property tax levied on all eligible property within the corporate limits of the City of Houma. For a time, at least, this was sufficient to meet the needs of HPD. This is no longer the case. Currently, this millage



generates approximately \$1.7M annually for HPD, but its annual budget (capital and operating) over the last five years (see Figure 8.1) has averaged a little more than \$8.025M. Despite drawing substantial funds each year from the sales tax component of the Public Service Fund, the Police Department's budget has needed an average of more than \$3.13M, plus a sprinkling of grant funds, from the parish General Fund to balance its budget. However, this budget does not take into account HPD's growing capital and serious maintenance needs. Since there are many other competing demands on the TPCG General Fund, and grant funding at the level needed is not something that can be relied upon from year to year, Parish Government and the Police Department should look for ways to reduce its reliance on the General Fund each year to make up budget shortfalls. This could mean a concerted effort to reduce expenditures and/or searching for another more stable and, perhaps, dedicated funding source for HPD operations and capital needs. In this regard, a 5-year Strategic Plan could prove useful.

**Figure 8.1 - Houma Police Department Budgets 2007 to 2011**

YEAR	2007 <sup>1</sup>	2008 <sup>1</sup>	2009 <sup>1</sup>	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2011 <sup>1</sup>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
Capital	342,000	362,500	567,000	512,538	-
Operating	6,505,741	7,231,204	8,115,224	8,298,381	8,194,932
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,847,741</b>	<b>7,593,704</b>	<b>8,682,224</b>	<b>8,810,919</b>	<b>8,194,932</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>					
P.S. Fund <sup>2</sup>	4,605,882	4,859,722	5,091,256	4,991,982	4,920,525
Genl. Fund <sup>3</sup>	2,241,859	2,733,982	3,590,968	3,818,937	3,274,407
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,847,741</b>	<b>7,593,704</b>	<b>8,682,224</b>	<b>8,810,919</b>	<b>8,194,932</b>
<sup>1</sup> Adopted Budget					
<sup>2</sup> Public Safety Fund					
<sup>3</sup> A small amount of this total comes from grants generated by Police Department.					



Police departments are by nature very transportation-intensive. A significant number of its vehicles are in service and on the road each day. It is no surprise, therefore, that HPD maintains a fleet of 101 vehicles which include automobiles, SUVs, trucks, vans in various configurations, ATVs, and watercraft.



It is also not surprising that the patrol operations of HPD generate a great deal of vehicle miles on an annual basis. In order to maintain a very serviceable patrol fleet which is ready for duty at all times, HPD maintains an active fleet replacement program. This is accomplished by selling off as surplus older patrol vehicles which have accumulated from 60,000 to 100,000 miles and are from 4 to 5 years old. This is the ideal, of course, but annual budgetary constraints do not always permit its achievement. For example, of the 50 vehicles assigned to the patrol division currently, 26% are 5 years or older and are still in service. Of these, four vehicles (30%) are assigned to the patrol division's vehicle pool as spares. Three of these pool cars are 2000 model year vehicles and should have been replaced several years ago. Despite these constraints, there is no indication that HPD's patrol operations or its mission are adversely impacted at this time.

The headquarters building of the Houma Police Department, located at 500 Honduras Street, was a state-of-the-art facility when it was dedicated in 1980. However, this building has not been able to adequately accommodate the needs and requirements of the technological changes which have occurred over the last twenty years or so. Its electrical system is outdated. The building's electrical circuits were not designed to handle the widespread use of computers, fax machines, etc. As a result, overloaded circuits and tripped breakers in this building are not uncommon. Space, too, is at a premium as the Department's needs have increased.

For example, more space is needed to adequately maintain and preserve vital evidence in an efficient manner. Systems and building components have aged and are beyond useful life. The air conditioning system is inadequate; windows leak; the roof leaks; toilets regularly back up and overflow into the building. This problem has been traced to a large live oak tree whose roots have grown into a sewer line, causing blockages which result in the back ups and overflows. Due to the size and age of this Live Oak, only recently has the Tree Board agreed to allow the offending tree to be removed in order to alleviate this problem. Security has also been mentioned as a concern, not surprising given the times. For example, the grounds, vehicles, and the HPD building itself are not secure. HPD staff has mentioned the need for a security fence to prevent unauthorized entry onto the site and into the building. It will be difficult to pay for all these upgrades and repairs in a single year's budget. However, the HPD should work with the parish to begin to program the needed improvements over a period of years until completed.

**TERREBONNE PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

The Sheriff of Terrebonne Parish is the chief law enforcement officer for the parish under the Louisiana Constitution. The Sheriff here, as in all other parishes, is elected and serves a 4-year term before standing for re-election. Although the Sheriff has jurisdiction throughout Terrebonne Parish, law enforcement responsibilities within the City of Houma fall to the Houma Police Department primarily.

The Terrebonne Parish Sheriff's Office (TPSO) maintains and staffs nine separate divisions within the organization each responsible for distinct functions within



the organization. The Sheriff and most of the administrative staff are located in the Courthouse Annex in downtown Houma. Other facilities include the large motor pool complex on Capital Drive, the Rifle/Pistol Range on Savanne Road and the former parish library building on the corner of Roussell and Goode Streets, also in downtown Houma. This renovated facility houses additional Sheriff Department administrative personnel. The Motor Pool Complex, in addition to the automotive maintenance facility, boats, trucks patrol cars, and unmarked vehicles, also houses the TPSO training facility which is only one of 16 certified training centers in Louisiana. This facility is used by other law enforcement agencies around the state.

One of the most important divisions within the TPSO is the Criminal Division and its Corrections function. The purpose of the Corrections function is the staffing and operation of the Criminal Justice Complex located at Ashland south of the City of Houma on LA 57. This facility contains 612 adult beds. The Juvenile Complex is adjacent to this facility, but is operated by Terrebonne Parish directly. This facility contains 60 beds with 40 assigned to male inmates.

The Adult facility is relatively new and is considered a state of the art facility. It was built on land which was parish-owned near the parish landfill site. Despite its relative newness, the Ashland facility is, and has been subject to flooding from storm surge such that the facility had to be protected behind a levee and sandbagged. Contingency plans include the evacuation of inmates at this facility should future storm surges result in serious flooding threats. Evacuation requires transportation of inmates to other less threatened or "safe" jail facilities elsewhere in areas of the state not threatened, and requires heightened security measures during the trip to ensure that all inmates are safely delivered to alternate sites.

The Sheriff and Terrebonne Parish are faced with the need for an expanded jail facility, one that could handle more inmates. A twenty percent expansion would add 122 beds; a 30% increase in size would accommodate 184 additional beds. The majority of these would be for male inmates. Any expansion of the current facility would be expensive, although costs vary considerably and could be affected by a number of factors. Some of these factors include: type of design; contents; fabrication methods; land preparation; security level needed; original facility designed to accommodate future construction and expansion; equipment needs; compliance with standards; construction management costs; etc.

A "planning" number for jail construction costs is difficult to pin down, but, for planning purposes a 20% expansion of the Ashland adult facility will fall in the \$60,000 to \$70,000 per bed range, although the actual figure could be higher or lower depending on many of the factors cited above. Using a mid-point figure of \$65,000 per bed, a 122-bed expansion could cost in the neighborhood of \$8,000,000. However, without detailed analysis of the existing structure, there is no way to be sure of the estimated cost for such an expansion.

Regardless of the cost of expanding the Ashland Criminal Justice Complex, the location of the site itself makes such an expenditure of public funds highly unattractive. Why spend such funds when the facility is at risk from storm surge flooding? Why spend public funds to make only the newly constructed expansion flood-proof? Indeed, this appears to be Parish Government's position as regards funding a jail expansion at the current site.

So the dilemma: despite the need to expand the Ashland Criminal Complex and the availability of inexpensive or free land to accommodate the expansion at the current location, the flooding risk in this part of the parish requires either a massive expenditure to flood-proof this facility—if it is even



possible to achieve complete flood-proofing—or the construction of a new and larger jail complex on higher ground elsewhere in the parish, probably in the Schriever or Gray communities in north Terrebonne Parish. Estimated costs for the effective, long-term flood-proofing in place alternative are very difficult to calculate, but will not be cheap. Costs of constructing a new, expanded, relocated jail complex (assuming approximately 735 beds) could easily approach \$48,000,000. Of course, this does not include the cost of building a new (and possibly expanded) juvenile facility on the new site. Yet, given the Parish Government's opposition to spending serious capital funds at the existing site, the Sheriff and the parish are left with no inexpensive alternatives for jail expansion. Construction of a satellite jail on higher ground to accommodate expansion needs is not cheaper in the long-term because the additional necessary operating costs for two facilities will eventually exceed construction costs and do nothing to eliminate the need to evacuate inmates when flooding threatens the Ashland complex.

Jail complex authorities indicate that there is a need for more beds, "...as many as possible." Within the next few years, the Sheriff and parish officials will need to have a serious discussion about jail alternatives in the parish and how to fund the chosen alternative. In the meantime, the Sheriff and his staff must devise ways to protect the Ashland complex, which includes the juvenile facility, from storm surge. This has been done to a large degree by the construction of a ring levee around the facility. However, the TPSO must have effective contingency plans in place to bring about the safe and secure transportation of inmates should the ring levee prove inadequate at some point.

#### HOUMA FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Houma Fire Department (HFD) serves a population of 33,727 residents (2010 census data)

within the corporate limits of the City of Houma, an area of approximately 14.2 square miles. Also known as the Urban Services District, Houma is the only incorporated municipality within Terrebonne Parish and is governed, along with the rest of the parish, by the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government. The Department has sixty employees (some of whom serve in administrative capacities). The Houma Fire Chief is appointed by the Terrebonne Parish Council, subject to ratification by the Terrebonne Parish Council.

The HFD is divided into five divisions: Administration, Training, Maintenance, Prevention, and Suppression. The HFD maintains four fire stations strategically located around the city and one Administration Bldg. which houses offices for the Fire Chief and other administrative and training personnel. The four station locations, which comprise one district, are the following:

- North Houma (ladder company)
- South Houma Memorial (engine company)
- East Houma (engine company)
- Airbase (engine company)

Two of these stations (North Houma and South Houma Memorial) are situated on one side of the Intracoastal Canal and two on the other side, providing more than adequate service to the residents, businesses, and airport in Houma. These stations are manned 24 hours a day in three 8-hour shifts. The HFD uses overtime to maintain minimum staffing requirements at these four stations since firefighters work a 24 on and 48-hour schedule. Each fire company (station) has a minimum staffing requirement of three personnel per 8-hour shift: a fire captain, an equipment operator, and a firefighter. Since the ladder truck is operated from the North Houma fire station, more personnel are at this shift are necessary to handle this vehicle.



The Houma Fire Department is also a medical first-responder and answers calls for life-threatening medical emergencies and auto accidents with injury. Calls for the HFD's medical emergency services are routed to the department through the 9-11 dispatcher. This service does not necessarily duplicate similar services provided by Acadian Ambulance. All of Acadian's medical responders are certified paramedics or EMS personnel. The HFD does not have paramedics on its staff and only has a few certified EMS personnel. The HFD is called for life-threatening medical emergencies because of its ability to respond within 4 to 5 minutes given its four station location in the city. In addition, injury auto accidents can be serious, often requiring injured persons to be extracted from wrecked autos with specialized equipment which is carried by HFD.

Although HFD does not have a 5-year strategic plan (the current Fire Chief was hired in May 2009), the department must prepare a list of goals and objectives as part of the yearly budgeting process employed by parish government. This list must also show accomplishments from the previous year's goals and objectives. While not as long-term or visionary as a 5-year plan, this annual exercise, nevertheless, affords the department ample opportunity to evaluate its performance against its goals and objectives from the previous year.

In FY2010, the number of calls for service, as reported by HFD, totaled 1,290, or about 25 per week. This number includes structure fires (3.8% of total), non-structure fires (7.4% of total), EMS

<b>Houma Fire Department Service Calls, 2010</b>	
Total:	1,290
• Structure fires	(3.8%)
• Non-structure fires	(7.4%)
• EMS calls	(49.5%)
• HAZ MAT calls	(5.0%)
• Others	(34.3%)

incidents (49.5% of total), hazardous materials incidents (5.0% of total), and other dispatches categorized as emergency/non-emergency (34.3% of total). From these figures it can be concluded that the Houma Fire Department in FY2010 spent most of its time on service calls involving life-threatening medical emergencies and/or auto accidents with injury. Fire-related calls accounted for only 11.2% of total service calls. Overall, the small number of fire-related calls is due at least in part to the HFD's educational and public presentation efforts in the community and the number of school children and citizens these programs reach. In FY2010, these two programs educated and provided information on fire prevention to nearly 5,300 people in the community.

As mentioned previously, HFD's average response time to both fire and EMS calls was 4:15 minutes. Its stated goal for response to calls of this nature is between four and six minutes. This is largely attributable to the location of the four fire stations in the city. Each station is given a response area which is defined by the distance that can be traveled from the station in each direction in no more than six minutes on the roadway network around the fire station. Given this parameter, the coverage area of each station is approximately 1.5 miles in each direction. Should the city grow geographically in the future through annexation, which would also add population to the city, another fire station and additional personnel may be required to provide adequate fire protection services through the HFD.

The Fire Department not only is meeting its response time goals, but in 2010 it has been able to bring fires under control and resolve other calls in an average of 28.5 minutes. According to Department figures, time to control is projected to improve to a little more than 25 minutes. What this means is that from the time HFD arrives on the scene of a fire, it is brought under control in less than 30 minutes. The same standard of performance applies to injury auto accidents. This means that from the time HFD arrives



at the scene of an injury auto accident, the accident victim is on the way to the hospital via ambulance in less than 30 minutes.

Fire protection services outside of the City of Houma and in the rural areas of the parish, are provided by a number of volunteer fire districts whose personnel all receive professional training. Those volunteer units adjacent to the city limits are available to assist HFD should the need arise. The parish fire district map is shown on the following page.

Increased traffic congestion could hamper the HFD's ability to maintain its response time to answer fire and injury auto calls. However, depending on the time of day the call is received, HFD is faced with traffic congestion situations now. As traffic congestion increases, maintenance of response time goals will become more challenging. One development that could substantially improve response times, particularly during peak hours, is the fiber optic system currently nearing completion and full operational status. This system will allow real time monitoring of traffic on certain thoroughfares in the parish and has the ability to interconnect traffic signals, and include a "pre-emption" feature which would allow emergency vehicles and transit buses (hustling to maintain schedules) to pre-empt or change signals to green to maintain flow. Not only would this feature reduce traffic-induced delays encountered by emergency vehicles and transit at signalized intersections, but it would also allow emergency vehicles in particular to more safely and quickly pass through congested intersections without having to cautiously approach with sirens blaring and lights flashing, enter, and then move through the intersection against the signal. Movement with the signal is much more efficient and safe.

Although the majority of fire stations are at least 30 years old, no serious problems have been encountered. The Fire Department Administration building is the oldest with some of the structure

dating from the early 1900s. This site was the original fire station for the City of Houma. Nevertheless, this building has been well maintained, modernized, and expanded to meet new administrative needs. The HFD reports that many upgrades have been made to electrical systems and other improvements at fire stations to keep this functioning properly. With only one female fire fighter at this time, retrofits at older stations have not been expensive necessities, although retrofits could become necessary in the future if/when additional female fire fighters are added to shifts. The South Houma Memorial Fire Station was opened in the last two years and it built to current codes. It replaced an older facility which operated from a somewhat isolated location ("boat launch" fire station). This station was given to the Police Department which uses it as its Special Operations base. The Fire Department has spent in the last few years nearly \$300,000 upgrading its facilities and works to stay on top of routine maintenance needs.

The Fire Department needs to have its fire-fighting equipment and vehicles fully operational at all times, despite their age. Because most fire-fighting rolling stock, such as engines/pumpers and ladder trucks, are not used every day and are well maintained during downtime, they tend to last much longer than vehicles used by a police department. However, these pieces of specialized equipment are expensive and identifying and programming sufficient funds to replace aging equipment and rolling stock is always a challenge. The HFD has been able to set aside funds each year to allow for an accumulation sufficient to purchase equipment and vehicles when necessary. This is done routinely during the budgeting process, although the amount set aside for this purpose will vary from year to year. A ladder truck, for example, will cost about \$750,000 to purchase. Fortunately, these are not replaced annually.

The Houma Fire Department receives the proceeds from a 5-mills *ad valorem* tax dedicated for this





purpose. The Police Department receives the proceeds from a similar property tax. Both taxes are revenue for the Public Safety Fund and each department receives approximately \$1,755,000 annually from their respective dedicated *ad valorem* property tax. This amount increases slightly from year to year based on increasing property assessments. In 2010, revenue for the Public Safety Fund generated by *ad valorem* taxes was \$3,510,184, as reported by the TPCG Comptroller. In 2009, the Public Safety Fund received \$3,301,384 from this property tax. The increase in receipts from 2009 to 2010 was 6.3%.

Also, the Public Safety Fund receives the proceeds of a special sales tax which is actually General Fund money that is dedicated to the Public Safety Fund through the parish’s budget process. In 2010, this sales tax generated \$7,183,279; in 2009, the amount was \$7,333,618, according to the Comptroller. Although the amount of sales tax proceeds actually declined from 2009 to 2010, the Public Safety Fund expects to receive about \$7M annually from this sales tax, barring some unusual occurrence such as a local severe recession. The usual amount of money from the property millage and the sales tax available to the Public Safety Fund annually is approximately \$10.5M.

If the combined budgets of the Police and Fire Departments exceeds available “dedicated” funds (sales tax and *ad valorem taxes* for Public Safety), then one or both departments must request additional funding from the General Fund through the parish budget process.

Figure 8.2 - Houma Fire Department Budgets 2007 to 2011					
YEAR	2007 <sup>1</sup>	2008 <sup>1</sup>	2009 <sup>1</sup>	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2011 <sup>1</sup>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>					
Capital	140,000	519,100	574,020	75,000	-
Operating	4,858,524	5,238,964	5,300,902	5,553,736	5,272,480
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,998,524</b>	<b>5,758,064</b>	<b>5,874,922</b>	<b>5,628,736</b>	<b>5,272,480</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>					
P.S. Fund <sup>2</sup>	4,605,883	4,859,723	5,091,256	4,991,982	4,920,525
Genl. Fund	392,641	898,341	783,666	636,754	354,955
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,998,524</b>	<b>5,758,064</b>	<b>5,874,922</b>	<b>5,628,736</b>	<b>5,272,480</b>
<sup>1</sup> Adopted Budget					
<sup>2</sup> Public Safety Fund					

Figure 8.2 shows the Houma Fire Department’s adopted budgets and funding sources from 2007 through 2011. Expenditures are divided into two categories: capital and operating. Personnel costs are included in the operating expenses category. Two revenue sources are shown: the Public Safety Fund (which receives monies from the city-only *ad valorem* millage for both Fire and Police, and one-third of a parish-wide one percent sales tax which is dedicated to the Public Safety Fund), and the General Fund, should the Public Safety Fund fall short of meeting the budgets of the Fire and Police Departments.

This figure shows that capital expenditures (adopted budgets) vary considerably from year to year, depending on need. No such expenditures were budgeted in 2011. In the last five years, the HFD has been able to purchase needed rolling stock and radio equipment, set money aside for future rolling stock purchases, purchase and install emergency generators at three stations, upgrade computers, and acquire computers for fire-fighting vehicles. Budgeted operating expenditures peaked in 2010 at more than \$5.5M and these expenditures in the



adopted 2011 budget are 5% lower than the figure for 2010. However, total budgeted expenditures (capital and operating) peaked in 2009, corresponding to the peak in Public Safety Fund revenues that same year. Budgeted capital expenditures are much lower in 2010 than in 2009, and nothing was budgeted for capital expenditures in the 2011 HFD approved budget.

Listed as capital needs in the HFD's 2011 goals is the rebuilding of the training tower at the Training Field on Dickson Road, upgrading the Air Truck, enlargement of the North Houma Station to accommodate additional personnel, the acquisition of mobile data terminals for all response units, and a new Airbase Fire Station.

Repairs and maintenance are included in the HFD's adopted operating budgets. Since 2007, HFD has been able to upgrade air conditioning systems at fire stations, re-roof and/or remodel fire stations, paint interiors of stations, and install updated floors and windows at selected fire stations. Still needed to be accomplished in this category is the roof replacement at the East Houma Fire Station.

Despite any financial constraints imposed by the local economic situation, the Houma Fire Department functions at a high level of performance. Its efforts and performance have earned a Class 2 PIAL rating for the city which should translate into a reduction of fire insurance premiums throughout the city. In addition, HFD continues provide enhanced fire equipment training and other opportunities for training and education to promote a more professional fire department. Also, the Fire Department is continuing to install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in residences and conduct numerous presentations in local schools ("Learn Not to Burn" curriculum) and other public venues to promote fire safety and community awareness throughout the year.

The HFD is facing two future situations that will require it to expend both additional capital and operating funds. At the present time, HFD adequately covers its geographic area within the standard response time it has set for itself. However, the possibility of growth by annexation exists and the most likely scenario has the "urban services district" expanding to the north, taking into the city areas which are heavily urbanized and falling within the jurisdiction of the city's zoning ordinance. Other potential areas for annexation into the city, up Bayou Black for example, are not quite as heavily urbanized or zoned. Should annexation occur, HFD will be responsible for additional territory and may find that a new fire station is necessary in order to serve the newly annexed area(s) with the same levels of service and response times currently enjoyed in the rest of the city. A new fire station must be staffed, and this will mean additional personnel.

Under current state law, HFD will be required to add a new District Chief position when the city's population reaches 35,000 people. This could happen within the next ten years. Given the current size of the city, both in terms of geography and population, the Fire Department provides the city with a relatively high level of service. This is evidenced by the 2 Rating from PIAL (Property Insurance Association of Louisiana).

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Although the Houma Fire Department reviews its accomplishments since the previous budget was adopted, and prepares a list of goals and objectives to be achieved, or worked toward, in the new budget year, this exercise is still a year-to-year exercise. The HFD would benefit from the development of a 5-year Strategic Plan which would allow it to focus on a "bigger picture" and set goals and objectives that would be of a longer term. This is not to say that the annual review during the budgeting process is to be abandoned.



This review is a mechanism to view the Department's progress in achieving the milestones and objectives that are necessary to accomplish the longer terms goals it has set for itself in its Strategic Plan. This type of planning process is also a way to preview expected revenues on more than just an annual basis. If the revenue stream can be anticipated, with the assistance of the professionals in the TPCG Accounting Department, HFP will be in a better position to project expenditures over the planning horizon, more thoroughly anticipating operating and capital needs. This can be particularly advantageous in situations where anticipated operating and capital needs exceed anticipated revenues.

2. Based on the revenue stream shown in Figure 8.2, the Fire Department must receive funding from the parish's General Fund in order to meet its operating and capital shortfalls each year. This has been the case over the last five years, since the Public Safety Fund has covered on average over the last five years only 89% of the HFD's capital and operating budget. The additional 11% came from the TPCG General Fund where it must compete for funding with other parish departments and functions, including the Houma Police Department. It would be ideal, of course, if 100% of the Fire Department budget could be covered each year from the Public Safety Fund. This could only be achieved, however, by increasing revenues into the Public Safety Fund through increasing the *ad valorem* millage for the Fire Department (with voter approval) and/or increasing the sales tax or that portion of the sales tax dedicated to the Public Safety Fund. While the latter of these two particular options is highly unlikely from a political standpoint, the former option, that is, the amount of actual sales tax proceeds generated for this account could be increased if retail sales increased in the parish. This option is directly tied to the state of the local

economy in general.

Even with 100% reliance on the Public Safety Fund, however, eventually, the budgetary needs of the Fire and Police Departments would exceed the amount available in this fund. Hence, the need for some funding support from the General Fund. It is recommended, therefore, that the Fire Department's annual budget require no more than a ten percent reliance on the General Fund in order to balance its proposed expenditures with available funding. Implementation of a 5-year Strategic Plan (see Recommendation No. 1 above) could help achieve this recommendation.

#### TERREBONNE PARISH RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Organized recreational activities in Terrebonne Parish are provided on a collaborative basis by the Terrebonne Parish Recreation Department (TPR) and the eleven recreation districts located throughout the parish. TPR is a parish department. The recreation districts are separate legally constituted entities with funding provided by millages levied and approved by the voters within the boundaries of each district. The TRP budget is funded through a 10-year 2.21 mills parish-wide property tax which generates for TPR a bit under \$1 million annually and a small allocation from the parish General Fund which averages about \$200,000 each year. The eleven recreation districts do not share in this parish-wide millage, each having its own funding mechanism. This arrangement may seem a bit strange, even unfair on first blush, but an understanding of the mission and purpose of TPR and the various recreation districts explains the difference. A map showing all the recreation districts is shown on the following page.

The Terrebonne Recreation Department has sole responsibility for providing and funding all youth and adult recreation *programs* throughout the parish. The recreation districts are responsible for the





construction, operation, and maintenance of the various recreation *facilities* throughout the parish. These include ball fields for football, baseball, etc., gymnasiums for basketball, volleyball, and other uses. In this distinction, there is little overlap. However, TPR maintains responsibility for the Grand Bois and Coteau Parks since these two are not covered by a recreation district. In addition, TPR provides upkeep (grass cutting, trash pick-up, etc) and maintenance at three other parks whose facilities are very minimal. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, there were only two other jurisdictions in the state (St. Bernard Parish and the City of Kenner) which maintained both a Recreation Department and Recreation Districts.

Since TPR's mission revolves around the provision of recreation programs for youth and adults in the parish, it does not have a capital budget and relies, instead on the various recreation districts for capital facilities. For necessary capital expenditures, such as the replacement of the pavilion at Grand Bois Park which suffered storm damage, TPR relies on FEMA and other grants. However, TPR does exercise a certain level of influence over the capital expenditures made by the various recreation districts. For example, since TPR is responsible for recreation programs and has first priority for use at all district fields, TPR may not locate a program at a particular district field if TPR (based on complaints received from coaches, etc., and inspection) believes the field or facility is not up to an acceptable standard and may contribute to injuries to players using that particular field. With the growth of various youth and adult teams in the parish, the competition for existing fields is stiff. More games could be played at night if more fields were lighted. This would relieve some of the competition for playing fields throughout the parish.

As it has been in the past and will, no doubt, be in the future, the issue of consolidation of the various recreation districts is still discussed today. There are valid arguments on both sides of this issue and

hurdles to overcome should the drive for parish-wide consolidation of the eleven recreation districts gain traction and general support once again. Some recreation districts have much newer and more modern facilities due to a better funding base than others. Some districts are governed by boards which are much more pro-active in anticipating the recreational facility needs of the people in their districts and in efficiently spending district funds for operating and capital improvements to meet these needs. Other boards are not. Because district funding bases vary considerably, the needs of a particular district may not be met as equitably or uniformly as at other districts. These are some of the arguments—largely based on equity and uniformity—in favor of consolidation of the recreation districts under TPR.

On the other hand, the decentralized system of recreation districts used on Terrebonne Parish, has worked relatively well for decades. The type, size, configuration, and mix of recreation facilities in a district are based on what the voters of that district approve and are willing to tax themselves for. Board meetings are held in their respective districts, so residents of each district have easier access to these board members and the meetings where they can more easily express their concerns and be heard. If their concerns are not adequately addressed, residents can take their issues directly to the Parish Council which appoints all board members at each recreation district.

#### TERREBONNE PARISH PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

The public library system in Terrebonne Parish is comprised of a Main Library in the City of Houma, and eight branch facilities around the parish. The Main Library, a recently constructed award-winning facility, is the system's flagship. The system maintains eight branch libraries: North



Terrebonne, East Houma, Dularge, Grand Caillou, Bourg, Montegut, Chauvin, and Gibson. All but the East Houma branch are located outside the City of Houma. The North Terrebonne and Gibson branches are located to serve the Gray, Schriever, and Gibson communities and the northern parts of the parish. The other branches serve their namesake communities and the surrounding areas in the southern part of the parish.

The American Library Association (ALA) has recommended specific standards of performance in several areas of service and accessibility to library services for public libraries. These have been adopted by the Louisiana Library Association (LLA) as well. Accordingly, accessibility standards have been set down for urban (densely populated) areas and for rural areas. For urban areas, this standard is accessibility within 20 minutes travel time (one way). For rural areas, the accessibility standard is 30 minutes travel time (one way). The eight branch libraries allow the library system in Terrebonne to meet the accessibility standards for rural areas. Along with the Main Library, and the East Houma and North Terrebonne branches, the urban standard of accessibility (20 minutes travel time one way) is also met.

In describing these various standards, the ALA and LLA define Levels of Service in many areas of performance and further categorizes them according to three levels: Essential; Enhanced; and Excellent. Such standards are defined for these three levels in the areas of staffing, service hours, and types of services offered, to name a few. For example, staffing levels for the Librarian position (which is defined as meeting certain basic qualifications) are set down as follows:

- *Essential: 1 Librarian for each 12,000 of population in the community*
- *Enhanced: 1 Librarian for each 10,000 population*

- *Excellent: 1 Librarian position for each 8,000 population*

For total Staffing, the Levels of Service are as follows:

- *Essential: 1 staffer for each 2,500 population in the community*
- *Enhanced: 1 staff position for each 2,000 population*
- *Excellent: 1 staff position for each 1,500 population*

Regarding Service Hours, Levels of Service are defined by population served, with Terrebonne Parish falling into the 100,000 to 199,000 population category. For this service standard the Levels of Service are the following:

- *Essential: Open 60 hours per week*
- *Enhanced: 65 hours per week*
- *Excellent: Library facilities are open 70 hours per week*

According to library personnel, the Terrebonne Parish Library system meets the Enhanced Level of Service in almost every measure, and has achieved the Excellent level in a few. The library system set this level of achievement as its goal a few years ago and has striven to attain it.



Recent figures compiled for the Terrebonne Parish Library system include the following:

- Annual visits: 249,240
- No. books and serial volumes: 247,530
- Audio materials: 3,552
- Video materials: 4,673
- Annual Circulation: 310,555
- Loans to other libraries: 746
- Loans received from other libraries: 2,332
- 54 internet terminals for the general public
- Average number of users of electronic resources per week: 597
- Annual operating income from local sources: slightly more than \$3.9M
- Annual operating income from state sources: approx. \$30K

At this time the library system is in the midst of a renovation program for its branches. It has recently completed a rebuild/expansion of the North Terrebonne branch as well as renovations to the East Houma, Dularge, and Grand Caillou branches. Improvements are in the works for the Bourg, Montegut, Chauvin, and Gibson branches. Expansion and possible relocation to accommodate larger facilities are in the works for these branches as the Library Board of Control is researching available property for new library sites in each of these communities.

Clearly, the public library system in Terrebonne Parish is done much to position itself to continue to offer excellent services to the people of the parish. With the high standards it has achieved and maintains, as well as the new and/or renovated facilities it operates around the parish, the Terrebonne Parish Library will be able to handle the expected growth in the parish without undue strain on its resources or its ability to continue to provide excellent service.

