



September 12, 2007

Mr. Troy L. Bunch
Planning Director
Office of the Planning Commission
City of Baton Rouge
Parish of East Baton Rouge
Post Office Box 1471
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821

RE: Rouzan TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development)
BMG No.: 05-001
General Implementation Plan Submittal

Dear Mr. Bunch:

Transmitted herewith, for your review and inclusion in the Planning Commission schedule, are the following items relative to the referenced project:

- 1) Two (2) Full-Sized Sets of the General Implementation Plan
- 2) Two (2) Half-Sized Sets of the General Implementation Plan
- 3) One (1) A-22-A Application for Traditional Neighborhood Development: General Implementation Plan
- 4) One (1) Check in the Amount of \$3,200.00 for Planning Commission Processing Fee
- 5) One (1) Check in the Amount of \$200.00 for Advertising/Public Notice Fee
- 6) Two (2) TND Project Narratives
- 7) Two (2) TND Rezoning Plat & Legal Descriptions
- 8) Two (2) Act of Sale (Proof of Ownership)
- 9) Two (2) Conceptual Traffic Studies
- 10) Two (2) Drainage Impact Analysis

Please note that we are concurrently submitting one (1) copy each of the Conceptual Traffic Study and Drainage Impact Analysis to the Department of Public Works.

I trust this information fulfills the requirements of the General Implementation Plan submittal; however, should you have any questions, comments, or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office. We look forward to working

David B. Fazekas, P.L.S.

Wesley L. Wilkerson, ASLA

11328 Pennywood Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Murray L. McCullough, P.E.

Russell J. Rome, P.E.

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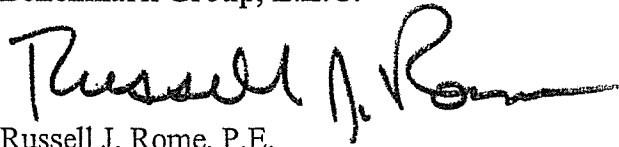
Rec 10-2-2007

Page 2
Mr. Troy L. Bunch
September 12, 2007

with you and your staff on this project and appreciate your assistance in preparing our submittal.

Sincerely yours,

Benchmark Group, L.L.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell J. Rome". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell J. Rome, P.E.

RJR:rjr

Cc: Tommy Spinosa, 2590 Associates, LLC
Grant Conway, 2590 Associates, LLC

Rouzan: Design for the future

In its design and philosophy, Rouzan represents a development strategy superior to the conventional suburban model that has been standard operating procedure since the end of World War II. As concerns rise over Middle East oil supplies and the recent real estate market slump, more municipalities across the U.S. are choosing a development pattern that accommodates growth while retaining a high quality of life for their citizens. Some call it Smart Growth; some call it New Urbanism. At its core is a belief that people come first.

Rouzan reflects this approach admirably. Following the same structural tenets that created Beaumont Lane, Rouzan's design calls for a mixed-use neighborhood that puts many of life's daily needs and desires within walking distance of most homes. The bones of its layout allow and encourage human interaction and ease. It is designed to increase in beauty and value with age, while weathering social, economic, and global uncertainties far better than conventional suburbia.

But you knew all that already. What matters in the short term is how Rouzan will affect its new neighbors; specifically, the citizens of the Southdowns Neighborhood.

Many questions and concerns have arisen regarding Rouzan, especially the proposed rezoning from A-1 to mixed-use TND along its Perkins Road border. These concerns aren't surprising, given the kind of development that has been foisted upon the American Public during the past 60 years. The difference, in this case, is that Rouzan's design actively accommodates the needs and desires of not just its own future residents, but the residents of the neighborhoods that will border it. Here, then, is a brief discussion of current concerns and how Rouzan will address them as it seeks the rezoning necessary to allow its existence.

Traffic and connectivity

Rouzan expects to generate about 900 vehicular trips per day, a number that is actually significantly lower than a conventional suburban subdivision with the same number of houses would generate. Why is that the case? The difference is how those trips are managed.

Rouzan will calm and control traffic through street design, with an abundance of connections that will join with the existing street grid to provide 10 routes in and out of the new neighborhood—unlike conventional suburban subdivisions, which funnel all traffic onto one collector road and then onto major thoroughfares, such as Perkins Road. A good example of this latter approach is Woodchase, which borders the proposed Rouzan site to the east. Rouzan, by contrast, adopts a “sieve” strategy, as opposed to a “funnel,” giving residents and nonresidents alike the option of choosing a route other than Perkins Road.

Civil engineer and former head of the Baton Rouge Public Works Dept. Charles Hair wrote in the Nov. 2, 2005 issue of *The Advocate*, "To reduce [traffic congestion], we must provide more streets or reduce the number of cars." He also quoted from Baton Rouge's current subdivision regulations on the topic: "The arrangement of new streets shall make provision for the continuation of the principal existing streets..."

Rouzan does exactly that.

In addition, if our rezoning request is approved, a single layer of neighborhood services along the south side of Perkins Road will allow Rouzan residents and others to leave their cars in their garages and walk to many conveniences. This is known as "internal capture," which is simply engineer-speak for "fewer car trips."

Connectivity and mixed-use have been proven thousands of times to be traffic-*solving* approaches. With care and reality-based design, Rouzan's insertion into Southdown's urban fabric will have minimal adverse impact.

Sewer and drainage

According to sewer consultant Bill Monroe, who designed much of East Baton Rouge's sewer system, there is adequate capacity for Rouzan's development. As for drainage, although it's not a zoning issue, Rouzan's development team eventually will be obliged to play by the same rules as any other project: No development will be allowed until drainage and sewer issues have been designed, submitted and approved by the Baton Rouge Public Works Department.

Public library

There seems to be significant common ground on this topic. A library is an appropriate component in a mixed-use environment, and, as mentioned above, drainage and traffic concerns will certainly be addressed.

Neighborhood alignment and consistency: Commercial use

Rezoning a portion of the Rouzan site from A-1 to mixed-use TND is an appropriate strategy from an urban design perspective. A single layer of mixed-use buildings along Perkins Road would do more than provide additional services in the area. The buildings would buffer the neighborhood to the south from the clamor of Perkins Road. With their greater mass and height (although their heights would fluctuate), the buildings also would frame Perkins Road—a five-lane state highway—more appropriately than a residential neighborhood. They would increase tax revenues exponentially, with estimates running between 20 and 40 times the existing level. And, they would provide a model for neighboring businesses, as they demonstrate how aesthetically pleasing good urbanism can be.

Additionally, it bears repeating that these neighborhood services would be within walking distance of many residences within and adjacent to Rouzan. The ripple effect of this will play out in less energy consumption and pollution, healthier citizens, and increased property values.

Long-term performance

These days, discussion of any proposed development project needs to include an analysis of its probable performance during the coming decades. Leading urbanist and architect Andrés Duany encourages professionals and citizenry alike to adopt a 100-year mindset when making decisions that affect urban environments.

So: When gas prices soar, when housing markets slow, which development pattern will prove more resilient: a traditional neighborhood such as Rouzan, or a conventional subdivision? Already, examples abound, pointing toward the former model as more likely to successfully ride the vagaries of market and supply/demand fluctuations.

According to a Reuters report released in February 2007, close-in, higher-density suburbs are performing better than more distant “exurbs” in housing price, volume, and the length of time it takes to sell properties.

In a January 2007 report titled “The Market Acceptance of Single-Family Housing Units in Smart Growth Communities,” authored by Mark Eppli, professor and Robert B. Bell, Sr., Chair in Real Estate at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisc.; and Charles Tu, associate professor of Real Estate at the University of San Diego, hard numbers demonstrate the ability of Smart Growth communities to power through market downturns.

Eppli and Tu analyzed 4,744 actual single-family housing sale transactions between 1997 to 2005 in the Smart Growth developments of Kentlands and Lakelands in Gaithersburg, Md., and in non-Smart Growth developments in Montgomery County, Md., measuring the possibility of a Smart Growth price premium and the sustainability of that premium. The study employed approximately 30 control variables—such as lot size and house size—to produce as accurate a result as possible. Their analysis revealed a price premium for Kentlands and Lakelands of 16.1 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively, over comparable houses in surrounding conventional subdivisions. That translates to an increase in sale price of \$35,000 to \$42,000 per home in Kentlands, and \$10,000 to \$15,000 per home in Lakelands. The Kentlands percentage was actually an increase of a previous, similar study Eppli and Tu and performed, which had studied the same segment of housing type from 1994 to 1997 and found a 13 percent price premium (Lakelands was not built out at the time of that earlier study). The consistently higher price premiums over an extended period prove two points:

- A significant segment of homeowners are willing to pay more for a home in a Smart Growth development, as opposed to a conventional suburban subdivision
- Smart Growth developments are more resilient during market fluctuations

There is abundant anecdotal evidence of new urban neighborhoods trumping their sprawling neighbors in both price and volume during the market slowdown. Donna Arbogast, sales manager at East Beach Realty, which sells properties at East Beach in Norfolk, Va., says a large part of their success is attributable to the uniqueness of the

community, its location and the character of its architecture. “There’s nothing to compare it to in our market,” she says, “so even though we’re not immune to the outside market, we certainly have a buffer.”

Barbara Warner, sales and marketing manager for Hedgewood in Cumming, Ga., says her firm’s projects in the Atlanta area—such as Vickery and Woodstock Downtown—demonstrated a notable resiliency when the market pulled back. “When people had a choice and the values were the same, they chose the mixed-use neighborhoods. That’s what people love. If they have a choice of being out in the suburbs with other houses that look just like theirs, or being in an urban setting with most conveniences nearby, they choose the latter—especially in Atlanta.”

Rouzan is an urban solution that follows a proven development approach, one that is older than Southdowns itself. That’s one of the reasons Rouzan is such an appropriate counterpart to this venerable neighborhood. Together with Southdowns, Rouzan will be positioned to weather future market uncertainties and retain—even increase—their property values. Their success will help to carry adjacent properties through the downturns.

History: A two-way street

The Rouzan site has been zoned A-1 residential for many decades; little change has occurred in the area during that time, due largely in part to a concerned citizenry that works diligently to retain the scale and character of their neighborhoods—and rightly so.

The developers of Rouzan suggest that the time has come to make a zoning adjustment, that the new neighborhood’s scale and character—including the mixed-use component—would seamlessly complement the existing neighborhoods and increase adjacent property values. Urban environments evolve, and while change isn’t always a good thing, good change is.

History is a two-way street: In much of its built environment, the U.S. is paying for the “sins” of previous generations. Today, Baton Rouge has an opportunity to build something better than a strip mall or cookie-cutter subdivision—a chance to build something worth loving as much as Southdowns residents love their neighborhood.

Some form of change is on the horizon for the Rouzan site and its neighboring communities. With its context-sensitive design and accommodation of future economic and market realities, the Rouzan neighborhood design exemplifies a neighborhood that will fill future generations with pride.

Rouzan Narrative

Vision:

The Vision for the Rouzan development is to create a charming mixed-use village that is pedestrian-friendly, with purely architected homes clustered within walking distance of the village center.

Project Description:

The Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) concept plan for Rouzan proposes a new community with a mixed use of residential, neighborhood services, cultural and open space on 119 acres located in south Baton Rouge, 3-1/2 miles from LSU, 4-1/2 miles from Downtown Baton Rouge and 2/3 of a mile from St. Aloysius Catholic School.

The community will be constructed in phases, but will ultimately consist of 400 low density residential units, 400 medium density residential units, 45,000 square feet of retail space for neighborhood services, 45,000 square feet of office space and 10,000 square feet of cafés/delis/restaurants. It will also contain a 100 student Montessori school, a 20,000 square foot library, a church and 23 acres of open space.

Rouzan will be divided into three areas including the *Village Center*, the *Mixed Residential Area* and the *Neighborhood's Residential Edge*.

The *village center* is a mix of homes, condominiums and offices located over neighborhood services to create an intimate and lively activity center. The village center will be situated on the south side of Perkins Road, flanked by the library and village green to the east and the church block to the west. All will be buffered from the residential area by Coldwater Creek to the south. The village center, along with its adjacent residential components, will gradually be built responsive to market demands.

The Library and The Village Green will be a major feature of the village center. Last year JTS Realty Services, LLC entered into an agreement to donate certain land and professional service (under terms and conditions) to the East Baton Rouge Parish Library. The agreement is a non-binding expression of intent. The Library will be part of the center piece of Rouzan's front door with the Village Green in front. The Architectural style of the Library will give the impression of an older building around which the community has been built. Sharing the Village Green with the library will be Cafés and Delis with side walk seating and service. This will possibly be the only library in East Baton Rouge Parish that will be walking distance to this many households.

The Church will be located on the West side of the Village Center, facing the Library, each providing a visual bookend to the main thoroughfare. The Church will be built for a congregation of 350 with space for Sunday school classes. As with the library, the

architectural style of the church will give the impression of a community center around which the development sprang.

The ***Mixed Residential Area*** is the second section of the TND, combining both single family homes and townhomes on varying lot sizes. These are intertwined with open spaces including small squares, pocket parks, community parks and greenbelts. This area will also feature picturesque alleys or lanes.

The residential area in the ***neighborhood's edge*** is the least dense portion of a TND District, with larger lots and greater setbacks than the rest of the neighborhood. Only single family dwellings are permitted.

Architectural standards for every area of Rouzan will be subject for review and approval by the Architectural Control Committee.