

East Bank still has room to grow

BY JONATHAN MENARD

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Despite what people are saying, the East Bank still has room to grow. In fact, every community has land that could meet future needs, according to parish planner Marny Stein.

However, much of the developable land is currently zoned

for commercial use, owned by estates, or used for agriculture.

If certain tracts were re-zoned for residential development, the East Bank could see more neighborhoods spring up in the future - though not on the massive scale of Ormond.

Ormond is approximately 1,150 acres. Undeveloped land of that size left on the East Bank

includes wetlands and/or numerous owners, according to Stein.

Most tracts of dry land with single owners are zoned for commercial development rather than residential.

"There are quite a few pieces of high and dry land, such as the 60 acre landfill and the former BP site near I-310 at River Road, but it is zoned for commercial

development," Stein said. "Every community in the East Bank has land that can be developed, but again, it's not all zoned for residential development, and we don't know if it should be zoned for residential development."

Stein said that planning and zoning is currently analyzing

GROWTH on page 6A

Growth... continues from 1A

data from the entire parish to answer the question of how the land should be used.

"We have to take several different factors into account, such as wetlands, whether the land is flood prone and if it's a good place for commercial or residential development," she said.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan will also analyze what types of things currently exist in each community and what the transportation, water, drainage, and sewage needs will be in the future. That will help the parish determine whether or not

zoning changes should be made in certain communities.

"People often say that the parish is 'exploding,'" Stein said. "That doesn't seem to mean the same thing for us today that it meant to Jefferson Parish in the '60s and '70s. But this analysis will tell us how much growth the parish can accommodate."

Though the parish may not be experiencing the amount of growth that some residents believe, there is still plenty of interest on the East Bank for additional housing, according to **Wendy Benedetto of ERA**

Stirling Properties.

"We have some single-family lots available now, but nothing is under \$100,000," she said. "I think there is a big need for affordable housing here, and if land did become available, new subdivisions would work here as long as they were done right."

Mary Bergeron, of Prudential Gardner, agrees.

"Currently, there is room to grow on the East Bank, though it may not be as much room as is available on the West Bank," she said. "If more land did become avail-

able in the future, and the economy was better than it is today, the demand would be there, absolutely."

Bergeron also pointed to the success of several new developments underway on the East Bank, including Country Cottage in Montz, Highland Oaks in St. Rose, and a pair of other developments - one in Ormond and another behind Stanton Hall Drive.

"If a tract of land did become available, it would be a good investment," Bergeron said.