

REAL ESTATE

Neighborhood revival

One of the hottest areas for development is one of Baton Rouge's oldest districts: Goodwood. **BY APRIL CAPOCHINO MYERS**

IN THE CENTER of Baton Rouge, where the money is as old as the trees and ZIP codes 70806 and 70809 merge at Towne Center, young families are moving in and old families are staying put, creating the perfect storm for a development boom.

This desire for two generations—the millennials and the baby boomers—to live, work and play in the same metaphorical sandbox has created a surge of residential and commercial infill development. It's happening now in the Goodwood Boulevard, Jefferson Highway and Lobdell Avenue area, where there is a lot of money but limited land.

Developers, restaurateurs and realtors are reaping the benefits, pre-selling subdivisions that have yet to break ground, opening high-end eateries with long waiting lists and closing on homes quickly in neighborhoods with limited inventory.

“The main socioeconomic factor driving this development is that millennials and baby boomers, for the first time in a very long time, are aligned in their lifestyle choices,” says Michael Hogstrom, owner of Onsite Design + Development, an architecture and development firm in Baton Rouge. “They travel, they entertain, they're health conscious, they don't mind walking and they want a home easy to maintain.”

The millennial generation includes people born between 1981 and 1994 while the boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. The boomers and the millennials make up the largest number of people in the world, with 75 million and about 65 million, respectively.

While opposing political views and workplace etiquette have created tension between the two generations, their lifestyle choices are similar.

“We don't see a whole lot of difference in what these two generations want in a living space,” says



David Ellis, vice president of Birmingham, Alabama-based Arlington Properties, who is developing a 124-unit luxury apartment complex off Jefferson Highway behind Panera Bread. “They want amenities, location, mobility and lack of maintenance in a home. We do a tremendous amount of demographic research and have found that both generations are attracted to the same thing.”

This intergenerational harmony has expanded developers' customer base. Nearly all three of the high-end housing projects Hogstrom's firm has recently developed, slated to break ground in March, are pre-sold. They are Overton Walk on Old Hammond Highway, between Tara Boulevard and Brentwood Drive; Township at Old Goodwood at Lobdell and Lasalle avenues; and Adelia at Old Goodwood, 7307

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MICHAEL HOGSTROM, owner, Onsite Design + Development

Goodwood Blvd. The price tags attached to these homes range from \$230 per square foot to \$290 per square foot.

Hogstrom's first development project, E'tage Gardens on the corner of Government Street and Croydon Avenue, will be completely built out by the end of the year, with eight homes, each priced at \$200 per square feet.

While there are challenges developing in an area of town that has limited land continuity, he says the pros far outweigh the cons.

“It is literally and figuratively the epicenter of the city. People living in the middle of Baton Rouge are

making a conscious choice to stay in the city,” Hogstrom says. “They are sick of sitting in their cars in traffic for two hours per day. They want to be a part of their communities and live and work and send their kids to schools here. And this area has really strong community ties.”

It's a trend that Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School Principal Brian Moscona has also noticed.

“I've seen a tremendous amount of growth and development in this area that has resulted in a tremendous amount of growth in our school,” says Moscona, who lives in Old Goodwood within walking dis-



BRIAN BAIAMONTE

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BRIAN MOSCONA, principal, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School

tance of the school. “We have waiting lists on many levels, and we’re seeing a lot of young families moving back into the area.”

Student enrollment has increased 14% over the last three years, up from 787 students at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year to nearly 900 students this school year, he says.

“Once you start to see young families, that’s the tipping point for a community,” Moscona says. “And that’s where we are at now. The Old Goodwood and the Jefferson area are the hot places to be.”

THE CATALYST

Councilman Ryan Heck, whose District 11 covers the Old Goodwood and Jefferson area, says Towne Center was the catalyst for attracting more population and more infill development to the area.

“We have connectivity around here, which is nice,” says Heck, who lives in Old Goodwood. “We have traffic problems like everyone, but in general it’s pretty easy to move in and out of here and there are 20 restaurants within a three- or four-minute drive.”

He says while land is limited, developers love the area because the infrastructure is already in place.

“We have sewer, water and a traffic grid,” he says. “We have the ca-

capacity for development, and we already have resources and infrastructure here.”

Residential and commercial realtors say the demographics of the area attract high-end businesses, which in turn attracts more population and a surge in development.

The homes surrounding Towne Center are some of the most expensive in the city, with nearby upscale neighborhoods such as Jefferson Place-Bocage, Bocage Lake and Old Goodwood. Barbara Anne Eaton, a broker with Coldwell Banker One, says the average price of a home in the area is \$500,000. However, in the area of town that includes parts of Perkins Road, Stanford Avenue, Staring Lane and Kenilworth and Southdowns neighborhoods, the average home price is \$280,000.

“Retail is following population,” says Eaton. “All you have to do is go through Towne Center and see what’s there—Whole Foods, Adler’s, Lee Michaels. That is what is driving new development.”

Joey Canella and Steve Legendre, commercial brokers with Sperry Van Ness-Graham Langlois and Legendre, say the business community is also moving out toward the Towne Center area because business owners want to relocate their offices closer to where they live and now have the money to do it.

“We didn’t see a whole lot of

growth in 2007 and 2008,” Legendre says. “Until the last 12 months, we were just hanging on. But now you’re starting to see people piggy backing off the success of Towne Center because financially, they’re able to.”

Stephen Hightower says he opened City Pork Brasserie and Bar on Jefferson Highway in the old Dempsey’s site about a year ago because he knew the potential a local restaurant would have in that area.

“I knew there were lots of new office sites that were on the horizon,” he says. “And in the Towne Center area, there was a huge platform that had already been set—it had been the center of commerce.”

While he says business is better than he had imagined, the biggest challenge of opening in an infill space was the other four restaurants that opened within nine months of City Pork.

“I knew we had to be good at what we did,” he says. “We are doing really well, and I realize at some point you can’t cut the pie into that many pieces, but if this becomes an area where local restaurants are located and we become part of that local culinary scene, I welcome it. We want people to know that this is the best part of the city to eat the best food in.”

HOMESPUN BUSINESS

Ann and Paul Connelly are developing Studio Park—which will

include an art gallery, Sherwin-Williams Paint store, fitness studio, farm-to-table café and additional retail design businesses—at the corner of Jefferson Highway and Lobdell Avenue. Ann Connelly says she hopes to bring more culture and creativity to the area.

“This is the center of town where we work, live and play, and we are very much in the mindset of having a homespun business in the center of community,” she says.

Location, multigenerational interest and connectivity are all driving forces for the development boom in the heart of Baton Rouge. Now it’s time for the city to keep it all moving in the right direction with its 20-year FuturEBR plan, says Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, president and CEO of the Center for Planning Excellence.

The plan outlines a framework for accomplishing its goals through housing, economic development, transportation, land use and urban design.

“Millennials and boomers both want to simplify their lives and save themselves car trips,” Thomas says. “When you make a neighborhood more walkable with crosswalks and sidewalks, you take away blind spots and reduce crime by 70 percent. When you put good restaurants and businesses in those walkable areas near homes, it becomes the most popular area in town.” ■

“Retail is following population.”

BARBARA ANNE EATON, broker, Coldwell Banker One



BRIAN BAIAMONTE

Infill projects in the Goodwood area

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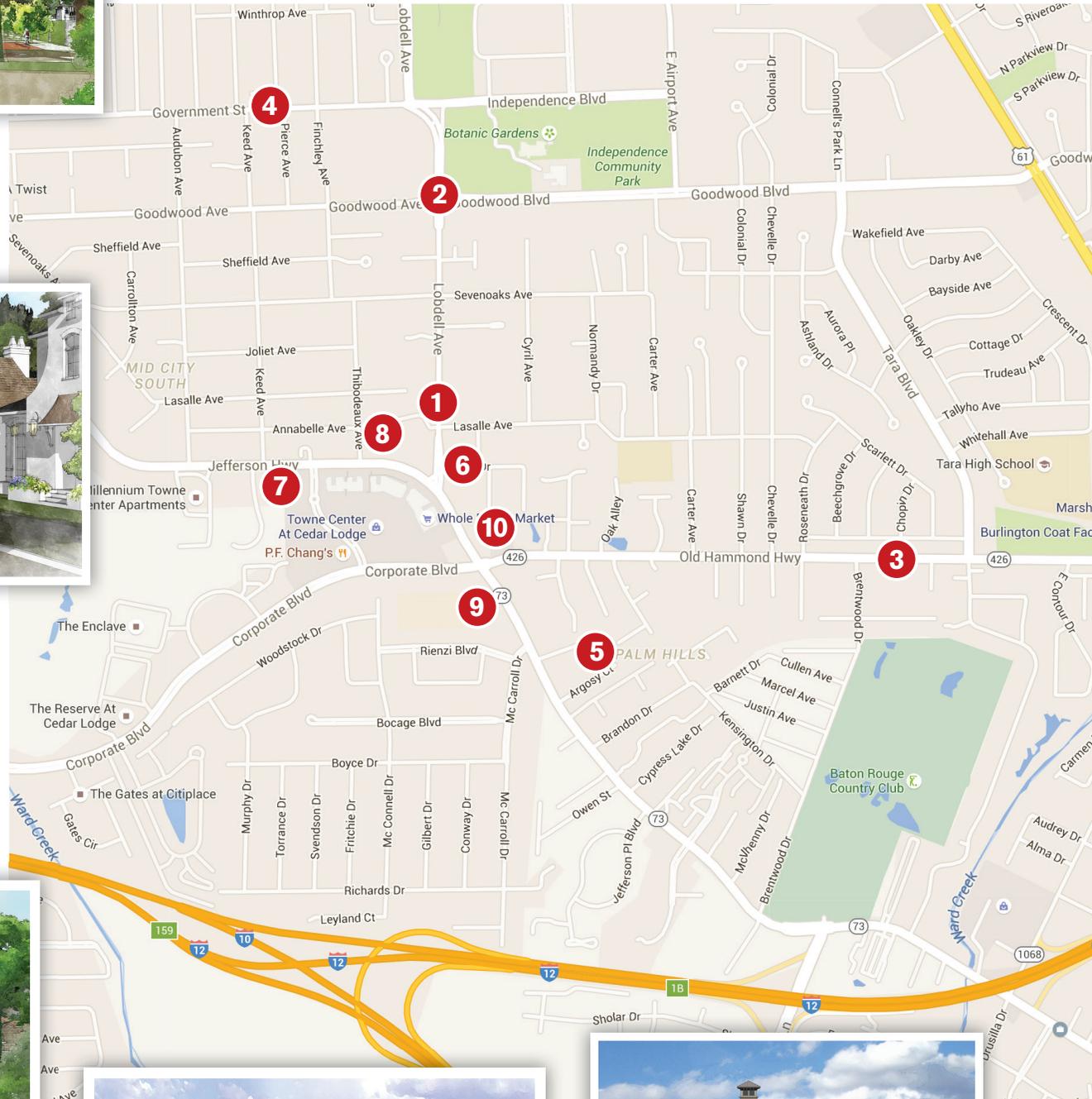
1. Township at Old Goodwood, Lobdell and LaSalle avenues. Onsite Design + Development will break ground on eight single-family luxury homes in March 2016.



2. Adelia at Old Goodwood, 7307 Goodwood Blvd. Forty-three homes in a gated subdivision will surround the site's original home, Goodwood Plantation. Built in the 1850s by Ohio doctor Samuel Laycock as a wedding gift for his wife, Adelia, the plantation home will receive a \$1 million facelift and serve as the focal point for the neighborhood as its clubhouse. Slated to break ground in March 2016, this property is being developed by Onsite Design + Development.



3. Overton Walk, Old Hammond Highway between Tara Boulevard and Brentwood Drive. Onsite Design + Development will break ground on 17 homes in March 2016.



4. E'tage Gardens, Government Street and Croydon Avenue. This eight-home neighborhood that means "floor" in French was Onsite Design + Development's flagship project in 2013.



5. Tapestry Park. This 124-unit boutique style apartment complex off Jefferson Highway behind Panera Bread will feature one-, two- and three-bedroom luxury apartments with high-end amenities. Community features include a fitness center, pool, clubhouse and outdoor community space. Slated to break ground in December, it is being developed by Birmingham, Alabama-based Arlington Properties.



10. The Velvet Cactus, 7655 Old Hammond Highway. The eatery was built and opened in the razed site of LaLou restaurant last December.



9. Stab's Steak and Seafood Restaurant, 7666 Jefferson Highway. Wayne Stabler bought the former Bank One building last March and secured adjacent land to build more parking spots. An opening date has not been released.



8. City Pork Brasserie and Bar, 7327 Jefferson Highway, opened November 2014 in the former Dempsey's site.



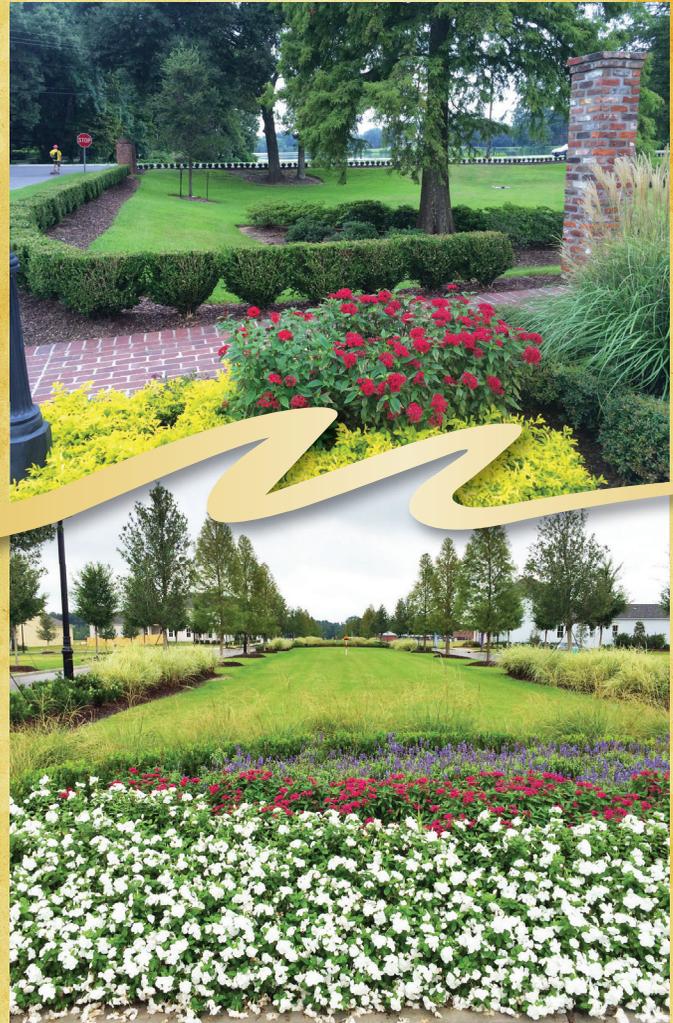
7. City Farm, 7030 Jefferson Highway, next to Towne Center at Cedar Lodge. This 18,500-square-foot office park will house NAI/Latter & Blum and has additional room for office and retail space. It was developed by Dantin Bruce Development and broke ground in November.

6. Studio Park, Jefferson Highway and Lobdell Avenue. This development will feature an art gallery, a fitness studio, a farm-to-table café, retail design businesses and a Sherwin-Williams paint store. Developed by Baton Rouge residents Paul and Ann Connelly, the project is expected to be completed next summer.



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