



# CITY OF KENNER

## News Release

**E. "BEN" ZAHN III**  
MAYOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 28, 2017**

### THE FIRST 100 DAYS

**Kenner, LA.** – When we took office 100 days ago, this administration promised to streamline government wherever possible, improve productivity, accessibility and eliminate waste, all without incurring any additional cost to residents and continue to pursue opportunities for economic development, attracting new residents and families. That has been this administration's focus, while operating with transparency and always keeping the trust of the public in mind.

In our first 100 days, among our accomplishments are:

#### Leadership

- **Staffing:** We added dedicated and talented public administrators with experience working at the parish, state and federal levels. With regional cooperation so crucial, the expertise of Chief Administrative Officer Deborah Foshee and Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Kriss Fortunato will be vital for the city to flourish. Recognizing the importance of institutional knowledge, we have been fortunate to maintain experienced employees and place them in positions that will maximize efficiency within city departments.
- **Council member briefings:** Transparency in city government and regular communication with City Council members both have been a priority since we took office. We instituted bi-weekly meetings with individual council members to address upcoming legislation, answer questions and discuss any other areas of common concern.
- **Quarterly director's meetings:** The first of these sessions was held in March. They are designed to provide leadership, training and information for our department directors. We will focus on leadership seminars and education on a variety of topics so that Kenner city employees will continue to provide exceptional public service to residents, businesses and visitors.

#### Cultural Diversity Coordinator

- We utilized an open executive assistant position within the administration to create a cultural diversity coordinator. Longtime Kenner resident Rafael Saddy works closely with businesses and individuals whose first language is not English so they have access to and clearly understand available services for families and businesses. While Rafael speaks Spanish and about one out of every four Kenner residents is Hispanic, this effort is much broader. Nearly one-third of Kenner's population is Hispanic, Asian or a combination of ethnicities. Rafael is working with departments such as Code

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Enforcement, for example, to reach out to business owners and individuals in our city to assist in overcoming any language or cultural barrier.

### Citywide Audit

- Using existing administrators experienced in internal auditing, compliance and fraud examination, we have begun inventory and compliance audits of all city departments. We will adjust best practices, as necessary, or add new policies and procedures based on the results of these ongoing audits.

### Capital Outlay

- We have been participating in weekly meetings in Baton Rouge with the Jefferson Parish legislative delegation and urging our representatives to promote 15 new capital outlay requests that would benefit the city of Kenner. We are working with regional partners, both public and private, to address the impact that the expansion of the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport will have on city infrastructure well before the work is completed in late 2018.

### Fleet Review

- An analysis of the city's fleet has determined that 45 percent of the city's 219 vehicles (not including trailers, generators and other specialty equipment) is more than 15 years old. Only 16 percent of that number is 5 years old or newer. That leads to high repair costs and vital department vehicles that spend more time in the shop than servicing the public. Relying on the strong connections we have with Jefferson Parish, we have received the donations of 12 mostly heavy-duty vehicles from the parish. These include a dump truck, crew van and flatbed truck. Three are set to go to the Fire Department, which is experiencing a serious vehicle shortage. The bulk of these vehicles has been in service since 2013. In addition, we are evaluating a cost-effective leasing program to modernize the city's fleet while controlling costs as much as possible.

### Infrastructure Improvements

We are working closely with contractors on important existing projects to ensure they are completed on time and at or under budget. At the same time, we are planning future enhancements, while also seeking state and federal grants wherever possible to mitigate costs or to make additional improvements possible. The projects target all areas of the city, particularly Williams Boulevard, and also focus on the continued overhaul of the aging sewer system and other vital improvements on major thoroughfares and in local neighborhoods.

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- **Sidewalk improvements.** We are now focusing on Phase III of the Williams Boulevard Pedestrian Improvements. Phase II, completed last year, focused on the area from West Napoleon Avenue to Veterans Boulevard. We have advanced Phase III to the design phase and will extend improvements from West Napoleon south to West Metairie. The work is part of a Regional Transit Authority program to improve bus routes and requires only a 20 percent contribution from the city on Phase III, estimated to cost about \$200,000.
- **Sewer system work.** The project to upgrade the city's main Wastewater Treatment Plant near Interstate 10 and the Parish Canal continues and is on target for completion. This will move the city closer to total compliance with the order from the state Department of Environmental Quality to overhaul Kenner's aging sewer system.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plant No. 2.** The city sewer rehabilitation work includes removing old facilities that will not be needed in the future. The demolition of Treatment Plant No. 2, located behind the Chateau Estates Golf & Country Club and an eyesore and concern for many in the neighborhood, has been put out for bid and is moving forward.
- **Vintage-Williams Boulevard improvements.** The improvements on the west side of Williams at this busy intersection include landscaping, lighting, drainage and a widened U-turn lane and are part of the 2030 Plan to improve and beautify major corridors in the city. This was an area of focus from the moment we took office, and the project was completed in February.
- **Chateau Boulevard Resurfacing.** This is an important, ongoing project that was put out for bid recently, with work that could begin sometime this summer. It is a nearly \$1 million project that is part of the Urban System Federal Aid Project that will resurface Chateau from West Esplanade Avenue to Vintage Drive, adding some curb and gutter replacement, in addition to the asphalt concrete overlay.

### Streets millage

- Educating residents about the scope and importance of the streets millage renewal on the March ballot was one of the most important tasks for this new administration. We met with all civic and business groups available to us, provided informational videos on KTV and the city's website, mobile app and social media, and disseminated both a detailed slide show explaining the millage and answered frequently asked questions in English and Spanish. The millage renewal was universally supported by the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce and the Kenner Business Association. The successful passage of the millage ensures an important part of services we offer to residents will not be affected.

### Citywide Cleanup

- Both residents and visitors are noticing the results of an ongoing citywide cleanup that began as soon as this administration took office. This ambitious work has included landscaping, painting and erecting banners in Rivertown, curb painting and repairs throughout the city and regular trash cleanup so that litter does not take over our beautiful city. We received many compliments during the recent Lundi Gras and Italian Heritage Festival celebrations in

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Rivertown. All the work, which will continue indefinitely, has been done in-house by a crew of experienced and dedicated city workers.

### Street sweeper

- We quickly determined the citywide cleanup was hampered by the occasional lack of availability of Kenner's only street sweeper, an older model that is often undergoing repairs. Thanks to our excellent working relationship with the City Council, a new street sweeper was acquired. Now, we are able to double-up on dirt and trash cleanup regularly throughout the city. esplanade

### Economic development

- **Rivertown additions**

Two new businesses have committed to open in Rivertown – Fleur de Lily Rivertown Cafe and Porch & Patio Wine & Beer Garden. Both are expected to be open and operating before the end of the year. These additions represent our commitment to investment and continued development in Rivertown and confirm the confidence that outside entrepreneurs have in the future of this growing district.

- **Laketown Additions**

Planet Fitness has been well received in the Laketown Center, the new commercial development at Williams and Joe Yenni boulevards. There was a large turnout for a ribbon cutting held in February and developers plan more additions to this upscale shopping area that's located on a tract of land that had been vacant for generations.

- **Multi-Purpose Stage**

Our vision for the growth of the Laketown area on the shores of beautiful Lake Pontchartrain includes a stage that can host a variety of events from small plays and performances to larger concerts. The ultimate goal is a world-class amphitheater and additional development in Laketown to take advantage of the incredible potential this untapped area has to offer.

- **Esplanade Mall Plans**

We have already had several productive meetings with Pacific Retail Capital Partners, the new operators of The Esplanade mall. At our urging, they have begun a cleanup of their property, and we have done the same on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, the main entrance from Williams to the mall. This excellent relationship is something new for the city, and combined with some of the plans for bringing in new businesses and improving access and walkability, we are excited about the future for The Esplanade.

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### Quality of Life

- **Commercial Code Sweep**

As part of our goal to create an even greater pro-business climate in Kenner, we have embarked on a business education plan. Inspectors will conduct a commercial code sweep to include every business in the city. However, the goal is not to issue violation notices. Instead, we want to make sure all of our business owners are familiar with Code Enforcement rules and can get any of their questions or concerns addressed. Violations that exist will not be ignored; instead, the steps necessary to correct any violation will be fully explained and businesses will be given adequate time to correct any problems without fear of going to court or facing fines.

- **City Park Enhancements**

We have worked diligently to make sure projects to enhance Kenner City Park move along as quickly and efficiently as possible. We are adding a beautiful garden terrace area just behind the Pavilion that is designed as a focal point for outdoor gatherings and events, such as weddings and receptions. The small walking track is being enlarged and improved to accommodate the growing number of people who use the park for daily exercise or simply to relax and enjoy the beauty of the area.

- **Dog Park**

This is a dream the city has been trying to make a reality for many years. However, finding the money had put this dream out of reach. Now, with funds from my former Jefferson Parish council district office, a generous contribution from District 5 Councilman Dominick Impastato and funds raised from last year's Hot Diggity Dog Fest, we will soon open the first phase of a dedicated dog park in Kenner City Park. Ultimately, there are plans for watering stations, brightly decorated fire hydrants, benches and lush landscaping – along with about 1,200 linear feet of attractive fencing – to greet dog owners and their pets. Future phases will include three distinct sections of the park – a passive large dog area, an active large dog area and a small dog area. Other attractions could include a splash pad and agility play equipment, as well as a memorial wall and a memorial brick paw walkway.

### New Amenities and Attractions

- **Moving Christmas Village to City Park**

Promising changes are planned for Kenner's Christmas Village. We are adding a major new attraction this holiday season, a 2,400-square-foot ice skating rink. A large, portable synthetic ice arena will be one of the focal points of this Christmas event. And, because Christmas village continues to grow in popularity and attendance since it began, we are

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relocating the annual holiday event to Kenner City Park. The spacious grounds will allow us to expand to add more and larger exhibits, lighted displays and additional local entertainment and attractions.

- **Skate Park**

We are excited to open the new Wentwood Skate Plaza at Wentwood Playground. Although construction began before this administration arrived, our goal has been to shepherd this project to a quick completion, and we expect a grand opening soon. The park will include specially designed ramps and steps, along with other popular skating features with fencing, benches and signage to provide a safer area for skateboarders.

- **Rivertown Farmer's Market**

We identified the Farmer's Market as an important resource that can become even more attractive to residents and visitors to Rivertown. We have applied for a USDA Farmer's Market Promotion Grant. If we are successful, our plan is to partner with the Crescent City Farmer's Market in New Orleans to upgrade our market and to expand the number of vendors.

- **Updated Security**

Security is now improved in Building A where the Council Chambers is located and is also used for City Court and other meetings and events. New magnetometers were installed and re-located by the main door to the building. This update means that anyone attending council meetings, court or other events must be screened, as well as all visitors to the building. This security update is financed by court fees and, while not triggered by any concerns or security breaches, keeps the safety and well-being of our employees and visitors a top priority.

## Expand Public Outreach

- We improved and expanded our content on the city's government access channel, Kenner TV, to include the addition of new, informative programming such as news explaining an important, ongoing construction project. Additional stories highlighted special attractions, events and entertainment at the recent Black Heritage Festival, Lundi Gras and a visit with some of the volunteers who worked for months to put together the oldest St. Joseph Altar in the city at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Also, we expanded the list of recipients of our news releases so that we reach a broader audience, keeping them informed about the latest successes and developments in the city, including civic associations and business groups, along with Jefferson Parish elected officials and every city and Police Department employee.

## Public Art Review

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- The city of Kenner is grateful for the generosity of Mr. Henry Shane and Mrs. Pat Shane for their donations of one-of-a-kind sculptures, which beautify areas throughout the city. Power Boulevard is already a sculpture attraction, and we are in the process of forming a new citywide arts advisory board to work with members of the Rivertown Arts Council to provide insight and input into future sculptures that will add beautification to the city and invite conversation from locals and visitors to Kenner.

### Employee Insurance

- We immediately began a review of the insurance options for the upcoming fiscal year as soon as we took office with the goal of finding a way to keep costs as affordable as possible while also offering quality options to city employees. Despite an uncertain and volatile market, our insurance committee secured a three-tiered plan from Blue Cross with a base plan that offers quality coverage at virtually the same price levels as last year. In addition, two additional plan options offer lower deductibles or nationwide coverage for only modest premium increases.

### Quarterly Employee Orientation

- We have re-instituted this orientation program for civil servants and extended the program to include all employees of the city, except Police and Fire Department employees who are provided an orientation by their respective departments. The program includes a comprehensive review of personnel policies and procedures, safety and emergency procedures, and one-hour of mandatory training on the Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics. The goal is to better equip employees to provide the high level of public service citizens of Kenner expect and deserve

### Public Safety

We continue to support law enforcement and all emergency responders.

- **Kenner Police Department.** We are fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with Police Chief Michael Glaser whose leadership of an experienced and dedicated police department has led to a number of publications naming Kenner as one of the safest cities in the state.
- **Kenner Fire Department.** We are exploring every means possible to improve and upgrade equipment critical for our Fire Department with the safety of our hard-working firefighters and all first responders as one of our daily concerns.

We are excited and proud of the work that has been completed in these first 100 days.

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We are especially grateful to our city employees for their commitment to our city every day and have intentionally set the bar very high for the level of professionalism expected of our employees and pledge to deliver the exceptional public service Kenner residents have come to expect and deserve.

As we move forward, we will continue to work hard to improve the quality of life for all of our citizens.

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