

# 100 DAYS

LCG 100 Days Report



# BONJOUR,

The people of Lafayette Parish want a government that reflects **our values**. We deserve an ethical, honest, smart, efficient, and effective government that respects our taxpayer dollars as much as our families, our culture and our way of life.

As our team looks back on the first 100 days of this new term of leadership, I reflect on the courage it takes to fix what is broken. I reflect on the courage it takes to build a government as good as the people who call Lafayette Parish home. My husband David and I began the transition with prayer, hope and a true love for our community. We are thankful for our citizens, our businesses, our non-profits, our community leaders, our youth and our elders. All of us make up a community that is rich in love and passion. I am honored to serve as Lafayette's Mayor-President.

My first priority after taking office was to assemble a team with experience, a strong moral compass, proven capacity and demonstrated credibility. I wanted to send a strong message that our people could trust their government. I am proud of our team and I am proud of the enormous support we have received from across Lafayette Parish and across political lines.

My next goal was to develop data-driven processes to guide our decisions, especially the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG) is a government that has a long tradition of bold decision making, such as our investments in Lafayette Utilities System (LUS) and LUS Fiber. This is a tradition my team plans to continue, which will be defined by bold action with intentional, informed and strategic decisions, moral responsibility and an understanding of how to effectively work in government.

In the pages of this 100 Day Report, you will find an overview of our team's work since we took office. Starting with what I consider the most important accomplishment of the first 100 days: a strong leadership team. We look at restoring LCG to the government that our citizens want: a government of leadership, honesty, transparency and collaboration. We also outline some early successes and some challenges that my administration encountered during the first 100 days in office. This report provides a look at how we have stabilized our government over my first 100 days in office. We are excited to write a new story for LCG over the next four years.

Lafayette Parish embodies a rich tapestry of experiences, from the highs of prosperity to the lows of adversity but its spirit remains unwavering. Because its one true purpose – to serve as our home – always remains clear and consistent. Together, let us embark on this journey of revitalization and renovation knowing that the best days of Lafayette Parish are yet to come.

**Allons, mes amis,**



Lafayette Mayor-President



*“If we want a community as good as the people who call it home, we have to have the courage to stand up and fix what’s broken.”*  
*-Mayor-President Monique B. Boulet*



## THE FIRST 100 DAYS

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Immediately after assuming office on January 1, 2024, Lafayette Mayor-President Monique B. Boulet and her team began assessing the current state of Lafayette Consolidated Government (LCG).

The purpose of this report is to provide transparency and honesty about what LCG is facing and what we must do to produce accountable government, economic growth, and prosperity in the near future. It’s a report that will illuminate the challenges ahead so the public can have input in facing those challenges. This report takes insights gathered from the Boulet administration’s first 100 days in office and sets a tone and a path forward for the future of Lafayette.

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# RESTORING LCG ACCOUNTABILITY

## *Building a Leadership Team for the Future*

It is said that in business and in sports, having great players at every position can make the difference between success and mediocrity—and even failure. It is that philosophy that has driven the Boulet administration to be intentional in bringing strong leadership to each position of the LCG executive leadership team. The ability to draw strong leaders together to stabilize and build our government will define not only the first 100 days, but all that we do as we serve Lafayette Parish.

### *Our Team:*

#### **Mayor-President Monique B. Boulet, MBA**

Boulet has a master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and nine years of public service as Acadiana Planning Commission CEO. She has a history of leading on complex issues across political lines for effective solutions. Growing up in a political family, Boulet learned the value of working hard, being smart, and sharing credit all while taking bold risks. She also learned: yes, these things can exist in government, even in Louisiana.

#### **Chief Administrative Officer Rachel Godeaux, MPA**

Godeaux holds a master's degree in Public Administration and has 15 years of experience in a variety of public service positions, including at LCG and, most recently, at the Acadiana Planning Commission. Rachel brings firm leadership with a smile that often catches people off guard. A wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter, a friend and now a Chief Administrative Officer, she is loyal and mission driven in every way that is good for Lafayette.

#### **City-Parish Attorney Patrick S. Ottinger, J.D.**

With more than 50 years of experience, Ottinger brings invaluable knowledge. As a former Lafayette City-Parish Attorney, and as a former President of the Louisiana State Bar Association, he hit the ground running on day one. Pat is known for his unwavering commitment to honest, ethical and fair government practices. And he can always tell a great joke with a twinkle in his eye!

#### **Chief Financial Officer Karen Fontenot, CPA**

A licensed Certified Public Accountant, Fontenot has audited local governments, including LCG, for more than 13 years and most recently served as the CFO for the City of Broussard for five years. Karen brings credibility and tenacity to managing and protecting our tax dollars. As our CFO, she makes sure her team is smiling, even on the hard days.

**Chief of Staff Christina Dayries**

Dayries is an accomplished executive administrator with more than 27 years of experience in state and local government focusing on policy development, budget management, and grant program administration. Most recently, she held the position of Deputy Director/Chief of Staff in the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). Christina comes out of Baton Rouge with tremendous credibility and capacity. She is known as a spark plug for “getting things done”!

**The Executive Support Staff**

The executive staff was built to bring expertise in policy, in process, in communications and just simply an ability to help people. It is this staff that does the research, makes the contacts, follows up with constituents, solves problems for our citizens and brings ideas together. You will see them in the community with and sometimes for the Mayor President. There is a genuine love of community amongst all of the staff members.

**The Department Heads**

LCG is structured by departments, each with its own purpose and process, all working collaboratively towards common goals. Leading these departments are a group of Directors that are known professionals who bring education, professional experience and life experiences. The common thread running through each of the LCG Directors is a love and passion for Lafayette Parish. Together this group of directors work closely to bring the best processes, the appropriate resources and a bit of common sense to all that they do.

*“I’m excited about the team we’re assembling at LCG. The variety and depth of experience each appointee brings to the table is crucial for effective governance that will benefit every resident we serve.”*  
*-Mayor-President Boulet*

Upon assuming office, Mayor-President Boulet and her executive leadership team began conducting site visits with each of the LCG departments, meeting employees, receiving feedback, and assessing and touring facilities. LCG has amazing professionals working together in public service for the betterment of Lafayette Parish. They are the magic behind the curtains!

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**LCG Team Goals**

**Restoring Legal Credibility**

The Boulet administration entered office with a **commitment to restoring credibility** to our legal environment. The cost of management by litigation was threatening the foundation of LCG. In the first week of this administration, the City-Parish Attorney also reaffirmed a commitment to represent LCG as a whole without bias toward either branch of government, bridging the critical partnership between the administration and the councils. Prioritizing a respect and understanding of the Lafayette Charter in decision making is fundamental to LCG’s success as a government.

## Building Financial Stability

Understanding that checks and balances of government are in place to protect our taxpayer dollars is fundamental to having stable public finances. The Boulet administration knows how to work effectively on the front end of projects and purchases, preventing expensive and drawn-out legal action. **Building financial projections and identifying potential impacts** of all major decisions are a priority. A core belief of the administration is that it is more cost effective to do things right the first time.

The Boulet administration prides itself on being honest and transparent with taxpayers who entrust us with their hard-earned money. We are restoring public trust by being judicious in our spending, and we welcome accountability in all aspects of our work.

## Delivering Public Transparency

The Boulet administration is working to **improve public trust in LCG** through a comprehensive review of procedures for responding to public records requests. Our administration is exploring potential improvements to procedures to ensure we handle our business in an expeditious and transparent manner ensuring public awareness and trust in all that we do.

## Efficiencies in Public Safety

Effective partnerships between law enforcement and community stakeholders are essential to public safety, and it is important that government agencies, community groups, nonprofits, businesses, and private citizens all **embrace public safety as a shared responsibility**. Law enforcement and community members must develop positive working relationships in order to build enduring solutions and increase trust between the police and the public. The Boulet administration is working with the Lafayette Police Department to bring more transparency in public safety. We are also working to provide innovative and creative resources that help law enforcement engage community leaders, build lasting partnerships, and improve the health of our communities. Mayor-President Boulet and Sheriff Garber are working to **bridge all of our agencies** involved in the criminal justice process with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee Meeting. Working together as a community, public safety is a priority for all.



Lafayette Police Dept. speaks with children at a community event.



Mayor-President Boulet and Sheriff Garber at a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee Meeting.

## *Making Smart & Transformative Infrastructure Investments*

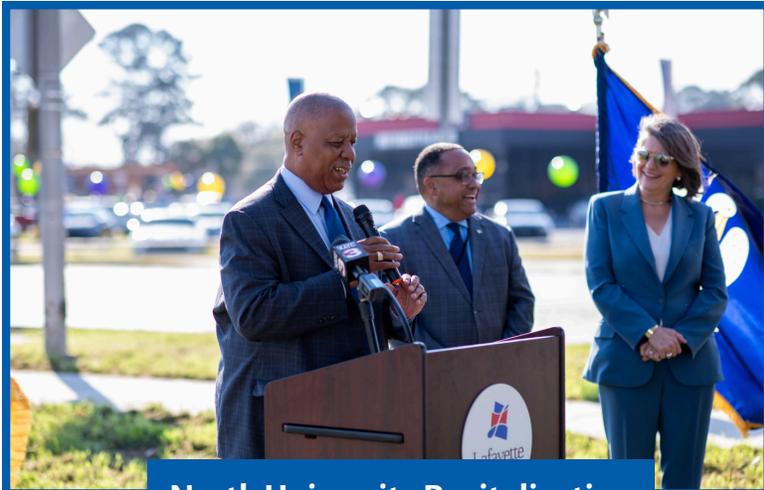
Infrastructure projects are our largest investments. When we spend taxpayer money, we have an **obligation to invest in projects that drive community related results**. It is our responsibility to ensure that proper technical vetting and legal processes for all major investments have been followed. The Boulet administration will prioritize transformative infrastructure investments that achieve these goals, similar to recent successes on the University Corridor and the Louisiana extension.

We will be asking for community input and engagement as we look to set long term goals. What are the critical investments we can make that improve property values and assure healthy growth for today and for the generations to come.

## *First 100 Days Ground Breakings*



Louisiana Avenue Extension



North University Revitalization



# ACHIEVEMENTS AND INHERITED CHALLENGES

In our first 100 days we confronted hard truths about the challenges that, although not created by our team, continue to impact basic services to residents and taxpayers. We also made great strides in addressing those challenges and securing gains for our people. This section outlines some early successes and challenges the Boulet administration has experienced during the first 100 days in office. Mayor-President Boulet identified several areas of concern, including fiscal, legal and operational challenges, and began to address those as detailed below.

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## *New Leadership. More Accountability.*

### *City Sales Tax Ballot Initiative*

In January 2024, the Boulet administration cancelled then-existing plans to ask City voters to change how sales tax revenues may be spent. Currently, one-time capital projects are funded through a 1961 and a 1985 sales tax totaling 2%. Under previous administrations, the 1961 and 1985 sales tax were managed in one fund having to follow the more restrictive rules of the 1961 tax, limiting LCG from using these funds to lease software. The Boulet administration will **manage each sales tax revenue fund separately** and according to its own original intent, removing the need to change the intended purpose of either tax and saving the taxpayers the cost of an election.

### *Bond Rating Upgrade*

Through the efforts of the Boulet administration, the City of Lafayette obtained an upgrade from Moody's Investors Service to the special tax rating from Aa3 to Aa2, reflecting the city's strengthened financial profile and fiscal management since Mayor-President Boulet took office. Additionally, Moody's has assigned an Aa2 rating to the new sales tax bonds. The rating assigned by Moody's is equivalent to a personal credit score: people with higher credit scores get better borrowing opportunities and better interest rates because the borrower is considered more credit-worthy. The rating increase will have a **direct impact on taxpayer dollars** as it will allow us to **issue debt at lower interest rates**, and send more tax dollars directly to critical projects. The Boulet administration remains dedicated to fiscal responsibility and prudent stewardship of public resources, ensuring a bright and prosperous future for residents, businesses, and investors.

## Re-Establishing Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee

In the first 100 days, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC) was re-established by Mayor-President Boulet and Sheriff Mark Garber. The core membership of the CJCC includes LCG, the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney, the Clerk of Court, the Public Defender's office, Lafayette Parish School System, and a representative of the District Judges. Many of the community groups involved in the process participate as key stakeholders. It is a **collaborative platform** aimed at enhancing communication, coordination, and efficiency across all facets of the criminal justice system in the parish. Development of short and long term solutions to resolve jail overcrowding, increased communications, and leveraged and targeted efforts among all of our partners has the potential for crime reduction.

*"The Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee will serve as a vital platform for collaboration, enabling us to identify challenges, implement evidence-based solutions, and ultimately enhance public safety and trust."  
-Mayor-President Boulet*

## Regional Collaboration

Building relationships with our neighbors and developing collaborative partnerships will be a cornerstone of the Boulet administration to **leverage regional resources, assets and funding** on projects such as participating in the Acadiana Watershed District, the Acadiana Metropolitan Organization, and the Acadiana Planning Commission. The Acadiana region is a geographic area tied together through our economy, our culture and our families in unique and vibrant way of life. Coming together to leverage our assets helps all of us!

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## Continuing Challenges for Our Government

### Building New Legal Environment for a Healthy Government

In the first few days after being approved by the Councils, the City-Parish Attorney directed that several suits filed by LCG be immediately dismissed, deeming such suits to be insubstantial or unnecessary. One hold-over case involved an LCG suit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over the St. Martin Parish spoil bank removal. This suit was on appeal before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. After careful consideration, the City-Parish Attorney dismissed that pending appeal. The City-Parish Attorney has also communicated to all Assistant City-Parish Attorneys to evaluate the case load to identify cases that might be appropriate for settlement discussions, perhaps through negotiation or mediation. These steps are being taken in an effort to **reduce the cost of legal fees and litigation** for Lafayette taxpayers.

## ***Establishing Proper Process and Corrective Action for Financial Stability***

The fiscal year 2022 audit resulted in **29 audit findings, including 8 internal control findings and 11 instances of noncompliance**. The Boulet administration initiated an immediate review of policies and procedures, and it was discovered that the policies were effective but circumvented by management in many cases. The Boulet administration took corrective measures to address some of these findings, and others are being developed for immediate implementation.

The previous legal department had assumed several responsibilities such as project management and purchasing and procurement compliance. The primary role of the purchasing department is to ensure budgeted funds are available, all aspects of bid laws are followed, and contracted parties comply with terms of their contracts. Re-establishing the relationship between the purchasing and legal departments was an important first step in returning checks and balances to transactions such as land purchases and procurement. In an effort to ensure compliance with applicable laws, the City-Parish Attorney has presented legal seminars to LCG employees, including a seminar on real estate law and the public bid law.

Another issue to be addressed was the **use of restricted funding** for expenditures that were not within the parameters of legal dedications. This includes spending dedicated city funds on projects that were outside of the city, as well as the spending of sales and property taxes on expenditures that were not compliant with voter-approved purposes. We are now looking at each funding source critically and are evaluating each project carefully to ensure that dedicated funds are used according to tax payer intent.

In LCG's annual audit released on April 30, it appears nine issues from the 2022 audit remained primarily unresolved by the close of LCG's fiscal year ending October 31, 2023. The audit report disclosed 18 findings, including 9 internal control finds and 7 instances of material noncompliance. This has strengthened our commitment to restoring **sound legal and financial practices** in all areas of LCG. For the Boulet administration, this begins with adopting a realistic and balanced budget that respects the legal boundaries of funding restrictions and ends with an audit report that depicts a financially sound government that honors the taxpayers who fund its budget.

## ***Staff Shortages and Low Wages Impact on Basic Services***

Currently, there are approximately **250 vacant positions** and LCG employees who earn **less than \$9 per hour**. This staffing shortage not only impacts the delivery of essential services but also raises concerns about efficiency. Addressing these vacancies is a crucial step in fostering a robust workforce that can support basic governmental services and economic development initiatives across Lafayette. In addition to filling positions that impact critical services, LCG will look to reduce unnecessary positions, creating a more honest budget process.

By implementing competitive compensation policies, LCG can attract the workforce we need to assure much needed services are provided in a timely manner. The Boulet administration has prioritized filling vacant positions through targeted recruitment efforts, hiring events, and competitive compensation packages. Additionally, collaborations with educational institutions and workforce development agencies can help cultivate a pipeline of qualified candidates to meet current and future staffing needs.

## Fire Protection in Rural Areas

The current structure and funding model used for fire protection services in the unincorporated areas of Lafayette Parish is managed through a cooperative endeavor agreement among the City-Parish of Lafayette, each municipality within the Parish, and the Lafayette Fire Protection Association (LFPA). LCG provides funding for this protection from a parish-wide property tax dedicated to fire protection, which collects an estimated \$969,000 in annual revenue. According to the 2020 Census, Lafayette Parish unincorporated areas are growing significantly, resulting in significant infrastructure challenges. As growth continues, rural fire response calls have also increased.

To provide for immediate fire protection solutions LCG, through one-time Parish ARPA funding totaling \$5,067,000, purchased seven water tanker fire apparatus, upgraded radio communications, and added new fire hydrants. Through a separate state allocation, the Milton Fire Station will also see facility improvements.

The Boulet administration is working to bring together the right community partners, parish council members, and administration staff to develop viable, sustainable and fiscally sound solutions and agreements to **provide adequate fire protection services** in the unincorporated areas of Lafayette Parish.

## Identifying Recurring Revenue for Police and Fire Pay Raises

LCG Policemen and Firemen were given 9.9% raises with one-time funds in the 2023-24 budget. The Police and Fire Resiliency Fund, created with **one-time funding that will run out in 2025**, was utilized to cover the cost of additional raises rather than recurring revenue. The Boulet administration is working to identify sustainable funding of approximately \$3.5 million annually to assure our first responders get the much needed raises they have been promised.

## Bayou Vermilion Flood Control

In 2021, LCG undertook a massive drainage project titled “Bayou Vermilion Flood Control”, utilizing State capital outlay funds, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and local funds. The projects planned under the Bayou Vermilion Flood Control include Homewood and Coulee Ile de Cannes Detention Ponds.

After spending more than \$75.8 million, including \$8.8 million of city funds, LCG has failed to meet certain compliance and benchmark requirements for **reimbursement of \$27.6 million** of the state capital outlay funds. LCG has incurred and paid the full costs of the project. The state is withholding the reimbursements totaling \$27.6 million from the Parish, pending resolution of those benchmarks by LCG. There is a potential to require an **additional \$10 to \$20 million investment** of LCG funds, according to the engineer of record. The Boulet administration is working to address the significant project deficiencies and non-compliance issues to assure the reimbursement of these state funds.



CAO Rachel Godeaux shares updates with residents near the Homewood Regional Detention Pond project. Photo: The Current

## Understanding the Fine Print

The details make a difference when making large financial commitments in government decisions and projects. Many of the commitments made by LCG needed to be reevaluated keeping the “fine print” in mind. Difficulties may result from the unforeseen nature of unexamined details, and before our citizens are obligated by legally binding agreements, they deserve the very best negotiation and analysis to fully understand what complying with those obligations will require.

### Municipal Employee Retirement System

State legislation passed in 2020 puts LCG’s new hires into the Parochial Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) as opposed to the Municipal Employees’ Retirement System (MERS). While this decision seemed prudent when looking at the sticker price, the details told a very different story. LCG has accrued over \$20 million in unfunded accrued liability (UAL) costs being paid over a 10 year period, as part of the legislation. This total will continue to grow by the millions for years to come. This monthly payment is creating a financial strain on the city-parish budget. The Boulet administration is working with our legislative delegation to enact a bill in the current legislative session to refinance the repayment period from 10 years to 20, reducing the amount of the monthly payment by 30%.

***"We have been unable to locate any actuarial or other financial analysis prepared in connection with the 2020 (MERS) legislation."***  
*-City-Parish Attorney Pat Ottinger*

### City Court Relocation

Within two weeks of taking office, the Boulet administration reevaluated the prior administration’s proposal to move City Court to Jefferson Street and convert the City Court building into a housing development project with a private developer. With purchase and renovation costs for this part of the prior administration’s proposed deal estimated to be close to \$15 million, the new Mayor-President decided it was financially unfeasible and discontinued the plans to demolish the current City Court building. It is worth noting that the current City Court building, which has a new roof and new air-conditioning unit, meets the needs of the Judges and Marshal who occupy it. The Boulet administration will continue to work with the developer on new, critical housing opportunities in that part of downtown.

***"We believe that the current city court building is, and will for several decades more, remain perfectly suitable for the public purpose that it was constructed, a courthouse."***  
*-City Judges and Marshall, in a letter to LCG*



**New Parish Jail**

Lafayette’s current jail is over 40 years old and has become functionally inefficient and unsafe for today’s needs. We are facing unprecedented capacity issues, an increase of mental health complexities, and an increase in violence in our jail. Replacing the jail with a modern facility designed with modern technology will help maximize the effectiveness of manpower and operational efficiencies making it safer for the people who work in our jail and the people in our jail.

Under the prior administration, the Lafayette Parish Jail proposal included a new jail at an estimated cost of \$150 million, 30% paid for with state funds and LCG would be responsible for 70%. The \$105 million would be raised through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) by selling bonds using the jail and courthouse mileages currently funding the operations of the jail and the courthouse. This would take the majority of the operational funding away from the jail and the courthouse, leaving the parish with no money to operate those facilities. Under Mayor-President Boulet, building a modern jail will remain a priority. As advised by our bond attorneys, the Boulet administration has stepped away from the PPP structure while continuing to work closely with Sheriff Mark Garber and the state in pursuing the delivery of a modern jail for Lafayette Parish.

**Brown Park**

The renovations at Brown Park were pitched by the prior administration as changing a community park to a mega sports complex, to the tune of \$36 million. Roughly half of the funding for the prior administration’s plan and long-term operations were never actually budgeted, leading the Boulet administration to revisit the scope of the Brown Park renovations. A community meeting was held for input on additional amenities that neighbors and community stakeholders would like to see in the park. Having a voice in the project was greatly appreciated by community members and stakeholders alike. Brown Park will be the home of over \$17 million in tournament ready baseball fields, batting cages, a playground, a picnic pavilion, walking paths, stadium lighting and concessions.

**From the Headlines:**  
*“Lafayette’s Brown Park to be restored as community park with four quality baseball fields”*  
**The Acadiana Advocate**





# LOOKING FORWARD

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Throughout the past 100 days, our administration has embarked on a journey of transformation to restore faith in our government guided by integrity, accountability, and service to the people of Lafayette Parish. As we reflect on this period of change and progress, it is evident that our community's resilience and spirit have been the driving forces behind our endeavors.

From the start, we recognized the need to rebuild trust in our government and ensure that every decision made reflects the best interests of our citizens. We assembled a dedicated team of individuals with diverse expertise and unwavering commitment to these principles, laying the groundwork for a government that is both responsive and responsible. Central to our approach has been the implementation of data-driven decision-making, rooted in transparency and fiscal responsibility. By prioritizing informed and strategic investments, we have not only addressed immediate needs but also set the foundation for stability, sustainable growth and prosperity in Lafayette Parish.

As we look forward, we will address many issues including public safety, drainage, infrastructure, revitalization from the Acadiana Mall to the Northgate Mall, gateways, highways, housing, parks, culture, economy and our way of life to build a strong foundation for livability, growth and prosperity. As our foundation strengthens we will turn our effort to bringing every available resource to begin a new era of Economic Development for Lafayette Parish. We are filled with optimism and determination as we continue our journey of revitalization and renovation. With gratitude for the trust and support of the people of Lafayette Parish, we stand ready to embrace the future with hope and determination, united in our commitment to building a brighter tomorrow for all who call this special place home.

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