

MetroMorphosis

Transforming Communities from Within

Annual Report 2013

Let's own the change we seek.



MetroMorphosis *is about leveraging
the power of good people.*

MISSION

The mission of MetroMorphosis is to develop and mobilize a critical mass of citizens in inner-city neighborhoods to design and implement sustainable solutions to persistent community challenges.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Two concepts underpinning our programs.

1. Sustainable solutions to persistent community challenges must emerge from within the community in an organic and authentic manner. Residents of neighborhoods are the most critical resource driving social change where they live.
2. A critical mass of engaged residents must be developed and mobilized to enhance and sustain a meaningful quality of life in urban neighborhoods. To that end, all of the programs of MetroMorphosis are designed to increase capacity, grow the number of participants and develop leaders who are grounded in their communities.



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

There's no question about it. Change has come to our inner city. People living there are demanding more from their schools, planting community gardens and utilizing existing resources more effectively than ever to build better lives for themselves and their children.

We're proud to say that MetroMorphosis has played a part in this transformation. The work is inspiring. Even more inspiring, though, is what's yet to come from our young nonprofit.



In 2011, after completing a two-year Harvard University fellowship on advanced leadership in social development, I started Better Baton Rouge. The aim was simple: we wanted to enrich the quality of life in our city. To expand and accelerate the efforts of Better Baton Rouge, MetroMorphosis was formed soon afterward.

MetroMorphosis mobilizes residents in inner-city neighborhoods and enables them to solve persistent problems in their own communities. No one knows those problems better than the people who live with them every day, and so we believe no one is better qualified to design and implement sustainable solutions to fix them.

Now at the start of 2014, you can already see what MetroMorphosis has accomplished by fostering partnerships between highly motivated citizens of the inner city and willing leaders, in both government and nonprofits, who want to help them overcome the challenges in their community. Together, our surging collaboration has resulted in three big strides forward.

First, addressing the most basic human need for sustenance and good health, we've worked with the nonprofit that runs the Farmer's Market to start a mobile market that brings fresh local produce to the inner city. Too far from suburban grocers, neighborhoods that formerly offered only fast food and convenience store fare now have access to wholesome fruits and vegetables raised by local farmers.

Next, knowing that healthier bodies foster healthier minds, we worked to improve learning. Our dedicated volunteers have mentored children in struggling public schools and taught parents how to care for their babies and toddlers so they'll be ready when it's time to start school.

Finally, we worked with the local library system to create a computer storehouse of community assets that everyone can access. Inner-city residents know that there are resources to help them better their own lives. Now they have the means to search for them and put them to work.

From the beginning, our strategy has been based on evidence and our efforts have been driven by love for our neighborhoods and an unwavering belief in our ability to make a difference.

I am excited, optimistic and passionate about MetroMorphosis. My hope is that you too will be excited about the possibility of real change coming to our inner city; that you will find optimism in the transformation arising in places where there was only a glint of hope.

I am committed to making this happen, and I have been joined by a few hundred friends who believe in what has been done and will be done. My prayer is that you will join us in this effort to transform our communities from within.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Raymond A. Jetson

MetroMorphosis: THREE PIVOTAL PROJECTS

Unleashing the Untapped Potential in Urban Congregations

program connects congregations and communities to position them to identify and develop responses to critical issues in their neighborhoods. It is designed to effectively engage, organize and deploy a human resource pool to create positive change.

Results: Six congregations participating in the UUPUC are diverse in terms of size, geography and philosophy. Fifteen percent of 5,000 in the congregations have partnered with their neighbors to address issues they have identified as important—parenting skills, blight remediation, life skills for children, mentoring in schools. Simply put, they own the change they seek.

In 2014, our goal is to add three more congregations and lift participation to 25%.

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The Urban Leadership Development Initiative is a year-round program that will teach energetic people how to identify opportunities, develop innovative solutions and build coalitions to solve inner-city problems.

In 2014, the program begins with 12 believers, many of them from the inner city, all of them dedicated to making life better for those who are underserved.

MetroMorphosis *lets own the change we seek.*

Better Baton Rouge, with fervent partners, is committed to improving life for residents of our parish. Public agencies, businesses, nonprofits and educational institutions are collaborating with BBR to surmount complex issues affecting the growth and progress of urban communities. This collective is able to rapidly and clearly understand emerging need, mobilize stakeholders and respond with coordination and innovation. Each group has the ability to be intuitive, recognize patterns and construct ideas that have impactful meaning.

2013 was a banner year for Better Baton Rouge.

Red Stick Mobile Market, an idea born at our first BBR summit in 2012, rolled into underserved areas to provide fresh and local produce and other foods.

More than 500 of our neighbors signed up for **Our Schools...Our Excellence**, an initiative for reducing the number of low-performing schools in North Baton Rouge by creating an informed community that demands excellence in education.

This passionate group's Community Compact outlines four non-negotiable tenets of school

transformation. In 2014, the group will identify and train 100 Excellence in Education Advocates who will liaise with community and policymakers to move the agenda forward.

2013 was a banner year for Better Baton Rouge

City Key, a community building portal that began as a BBR project, was launched in January by the East Baton Rouge Library System. City Key catalogs assets in the community—health centers, tutors, schools, parks, social services—and makes them easy to search and use by all residents. City Key also lets civic groups and government agencies provide news and events to strengthen neighborhoods from within.

And finally, a richly diverse group of individuals have gathered around the idea of **reducing the impact of asthma on schoolchildren** by addressing social and environmental determinants that contribute to the problem. This group is using the evidence-based Medical-Legal Partnership to guide their efforts. Group members include representatives of Health Centers in Schools, Our Lady of the Lake, Baton Rouge Bar Association and Southeast Legal Services.

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1400 North Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806 | MetroMorphosis.net