

# Ardendale, formerly Smiley Heights, unveiled Thursday



Rendering provided by the EBR Redevelopment Authority -- A rendering shows the Campus Green area of the Ardendale development to be constructed north of Florida Boulevard, between Ardenwood and Lobdell. The development will include 850 residential unit; retail space; recreational facilities; walking and biking paths; community common green areas; a community garden and a wetlands nature preserve area. It will be anchored by a Baton Rouge Community College automotive training center and Allied Health Center as well as an East Baton Rouge public school, Career Academy High School.

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## Mid City development was formerly Smiley Heights

**By Timothy Boone**

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The master plan and designs for what Mayor-President Kip Holden said is the first new neighborhood built in Mid City in more than 50 years were unveiled Thursday evening.

Ardendale, formerly known as Smiley Heights, will consist of 850 residential units, 35,000 square feet of retail space, Baton Rouge Community College's Center for Excellence in Auto Technology and the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board's Career Academy.

“Revitalization is all about providing for a fresh start without turning your back on your heritage,” said Walter Monsour, East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority CEO.

Monsour said because Smiley Heights is getting a new look, it needed a new name that reflected the best of the surrounding neighborhoods: Ardenwood and Lobdell.

The 200-acre tract is northeast of BRCC near Florida Boulevard, in a neighborhood bounded by Greenwell Springs Road and roughly between North Ardenwood Drive and North Lobdell Boulevard.

The first phase of Ardendale involves developing a 40-acre tract in the northeast quadrant that will be home for the two schools and 168 multi-family housing units, said Steve Oubre of Architects Southwest in Lafayette, who served as the town planner.

Oubre based his plans on a week long series of meetings that he held with about 150 stakeholders and community members.

Oubre said Ardendale is one of the first large-scale developments, if not the first large-scale development, to come out of the FutureBR master plan for Baton Rouge.

“We view this presentation not as a new project, but a new pattern or tool we can reuse throughout the community,” he said.

Plans are for the development to provide affordable housing to families earning at least 80 percent of the area median income, which is equal to \$36,200 a year for a single adult household and \$46,500 for a three person household.

Rental properties in Ardendale will go for under \$1,000 to \$1,500 per month.

“This will have a major positive impact in the fight against blight and crime,” said Holden, who also said he hopes people who work at the IBM Services Center downtown end up moving into Ardendale.

The Ardendale planned unit development is set to go before the East Baton Rouge Parish Planning Commission on Dec. 16 and before the Metro Council on Jan. 15.

If approved, the first phase of infrastructure work should begin in August 2014.

That will involve removing concrete from a drainage lateral and turning it into an environmentally friendly bayou and turning North Ardenwood Drive, which bisects the neighborhood, into a tree-lined street.

By late fall 2016, the automotive school and career academy should be open and the first phase of residential construction should be underway.

Future plans for the development include building a Boys and Girls Club, adding baseball and soccer fields for Baton Rouge Community College on the site and building a 50-room hotel on Lobdell.

“Mid City will be better off because of this development,” Oubre said.

He noted that Ardendale will lead to infrastructure improvements in the area and add amenities and retailers to the neighborhood.

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