



## Entergy Opens Door to Old Capitol Green

Economic development efforts in capitol city benefit entire state

Entergy Mississippi has long been a part of Jackson's downtown skyline, and now its involvement in a unique public-private partnership aims to raise the capitol city's profile even more.

"We think that creating a new face for our largest city can have benefits for the entire state," said John Turner, director of economic development for Entergy Mississippi. "Because Jackson generally serves as the first impression visitors have of Mississippi, efforts to improve the capitol city impact all Mississippians.

"Cities like Richmond, Little Rock and Memphis have been very successful with downtown revitalization efforts, and there's a tremendous amount of support in Jackson for something like this."

The goal of the Old Capitol Green project is to develop 16 blocks of the downtown area into a vibrant district offering cultural and recreational attractions that complement the city's historic and

natural landmarks. The area has been re-designated as a Warehouse/Commerce Street Overlay District.

Phase I of the project will initially target an eight-block area south of the Old Capitol and the Pearl Street bridge, including the perimeter streets of State, South, Jefferson and Pearl.

The Downtown Jackson Partnership is spearheading the effort, with Entergy Mississippi acting as the private-sector

facilitator to market and promote the area to potential developers.

The intent is to find a master developer to transform the property into a mixed-use district offering space for businesses, residential apartments, parks, retail stores and entertainment.

A strong advantage is the teamwork between public and private sectors, Turner noted. The Old Capitol Green Advisory Committee is overseeing the project and has representation by the city, county and state governments, as well as a diverse cross-section of the Jackson business community.

"We looked for solutions to work with

the public sector to turn Jackson around and they have responded," he said. "We all recognize the fact that tax revenues are declining in Jackson, and unless we take action to reverse that trend, the future of Jackson remains very uncertain."

In November 2005, an advisory

committee completed a feasibility study of the area to identify opportunities for growth and investment. The study considered land control, environmental issues, infrastructure, parking and transportation.

The committee also conducted a preliminary survey of property developers to gain a better understanding of needs and interests.

Turner said the feasibility study concluded that the project was viable from a financial

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## Task Force Ferrets Out Power Thieves

Entergy Mississippi cracks down on meter tampering

Meter tampering is serious business, and Entergy Mississippi is serious about putting an end to it.

Six field investigators were brought on board in Mississippi last year in response to increased reports of tampering and the actions of one intrepid thief who convinced residents to pay him to rig their meters and avoid monthly fees.

Though that thief managed to elude prosecution, others have not been as successful. Entergy has billed more than \$400,000 in 2005 and \$365,000 so far in 2006 to Mississippi customers targeted as tamperers. But the price to pay for stealing power may be far greater.

"Customers who divert electricity run the risks of fire, shock, and even death," said Durham. "Electricity is a very powerful, and, if handled improperly, dangerous tool. We encourage customers to help us identify anyone running these unnecessary risks."

The team receives tips of suspected cases of stealing electricity from several sources including customers. Meter-tampering can be reported by calling 1-800-ENTERGY.

Since 2003 Entergy has seen a 22 percent increase in the practice. Service diversion investigators are currently focusing on

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## Local Agency Workers Gather at Entergy's Low-Income Summit

Speakers offer information, inspiration to low-income champions

Approximately 300 Mississippians who work with the state's most vulnerable citizens recently gathered at Entergy Mississippi's annual Partnership Conference and Low-Income Customer Assistance Summit to look for new ways to help their clients in the post-Katrina era of tight budgets.

"More than 20 percent of the people in our service territory live at or below the poverty level," said Portia Ballard Espy, external affairs manager for Entergy Mississippi.

"In the wake of Katrina, elevated costs for everything from gasoline to food impact our customers. We felt that it was important to get people from key service agencies together and work on ways to help."

Conference attendees received information on various topics including Individual

Development Accounts and on-going programs at Entergy like the new Simple Steps energy awareness initiative and billing options. Participants also were charged with raising awareness of Entergy's senior assistance fund, Energy Concern. The company will match all new donations in an effort to double the value of the

fund, which helps low-income elderly and disabled Mississippians with their electric bills.

"Our studies show that some families spend almost half their disposable income on utilities — water, gas and electric service," said

Espy. "If we can find ways to make these costs more affordable, then we can truly make a difference in the lives of our low-income customers."

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## "Old Capitol Green" CONTINUED

and constructability perspective. He added that tax and construction incentives offered through the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act further enhance the project's attractiveness to potential developers.

The area's position on a bluff overlooking the Pearl River allows enough elevation to locate two to three floors of parking space under buildings, Turner said, and provide opportunities for good site lines to proposed projects such as Festival Park and the Twin Lakes development.

The state legislature recently approved a bill that would allow state property to be sold in accordance with state laws. Combining this land with several sites owned by Entergy Mississippi would allow 65 percent of the land to be made available to a master developer. Turner said that the only financial gain for Entergy Mississippi would be the increased revenue from electrical sales.

## "Power Thieves" CONTINUED

more populated areas, especially Jackson, Southaven and Vicksburg, to eradicate the practice.

"Entergy is working to put an end to theft in the interest of all our customers," said Frank Durham, service diversion supervisor. "Unpaid service by some customers is eventually absorbed by those customers who pay for service."

Steps the team is taking to curb meter tampering include development of an investigative process that identifies tampering "heavy hitters" through comparisons of metered usage and drops in consumption. The team also monitors suspicious accounts and conducts visual investigations of neighborhoods.

In addition, Entergy is escalating the prosecution process and working to increase the consequences of stealing electricity with additional fines.

Consequences of meter tampering include disconnection of service and in some cases — when a suspected tamperer threatens an investigator or when stolen electricity is supporting other offenses — criminal charges.

"Rather than disconnect service, Entergy prefers to help customers manage their energy costs through a variety of assistance programs and bill pay options," said Durham.

"We encourage customers to talk to us about these options instead of diverting electrical service."

## Entergy **Currents**

News for our Mississippi Customers

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