

Baker Main Street Economic Development District Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, March 2, 2026

Time: 4:10 PM

Location: Baker Fire Department
3701 Groom Rd.
Baker, LA 70714

1. Call to Order, Prayer, and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Board President Cedric Murphy who led the prayer and Willie Williams led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Board Member	Role	Present
Cedric Murphy	President	Yes
Willie Williams	Treasurer	Yes
Michel Woods	Member	Yes
Myra Victor-Harris	Member	Yes
Shaelisa Bradley-Hunt	Vice President	No
Kermit Johnson IV	Secretary	Yes
Adrienne Conrad	Member	No

Quorum confirmed.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- **Motion to Adopt:** Willie Williams
- **Seconded By:** Cedric Murphy
- **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.

4. Presentation by Retail Strategies

(Item was moved up on agenda after unanimous approval by the Board – Motion by Williams, Second by Murphy)

Retail Strategies, represented by Jonathan Ross and Adam Shackelford, presented a year-one update on the partnership with Baker, explaining that they've moved from a discovery phase into active retail recruitment. They reported outreach to over 105 national brands, with about 7–8 “active prospects” currently reviewing Baker and another 7–8 brands interested but lacking local franchisees. They highlighted Baker’s strengths—young population, above-average household

incomes, high homeownership, and new rooftops—while outlining key hurdles: no local franchise operators for some brands, daytime population leakage (commuters leaving Baker), national economic uncertainty, and site-specific constraints (pre-existing site size, traffic signals, and second-generation space). They stressed the need for better property visibility on national listing platforms by local brokers, deeper coordination with planning and zoning, and integrating local insights (weekend church traffic, Walmart draw, underutilized sites) with their data as they continue recruiting retailers and preparing a follow-up site visit in spring/summer.

5. Report on Board Introductory Event

The meet-and-greet was widely viewed as a positive, constructive first step that introduced the Economic Development District, shared what’s happening, and started building community buy-in. Feedback highlighted the need to hold events more frequently, ideally 3+ annually, to maintain momentum and capitalize on growing interest, while also giving ourselves a longer 60–90 day planning runway so invitations, advertising, and logistics are more organized. Communication gaps were a recurring theme: some business owners, especially on Main Street, either didn’t receive or didn’t clearly notice the invite, and city email and text systems feel cluttered or inconsistent, so tightening those channels is important.

Structurally, we need to form a small, 2–3 person, planning committee to own details like invitations, check-in, name tags, sponsorship outreach, and door prizes such as gift cards, both to avoid things falling through the cracks and to increase engagement. A major substantive takeaway was the need to more clearly show small local businesses how this effort and the dedicated revenue will benefit them—through façade improvements and support that help them sustain their operations—while also being thoughtful about not placing under-prepared entrepreneurs into spaces they can’t maintain. Looking ahead, there’s interest in using an eventual web presence and, sooner, a free Facebook page to advertise local commercial spaces, connect property owners with both major prospects and local entrepreneurs, and build a more visible, accessible platform for ongoing communication.

6. Introduction of Banking Options

The board compared Chase and Hancock Whitney as potential banking partners, noting that while Chase offers standard big-bank technology, it doesn’t provide anything uniquely beneficial or particularly strong customer service. Hancock Whitney, by contrast, is more regionally focused, already has a banking relationship with the City of Baker and the Chamber of Commerce, and is seen as more relationship-driven and flexible. Based on those factors, a formal recommendation will come through the Finance Committee at a later meeting.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5pm.

- **Motion By:** Willie Williams
- **Seconded By:** Myra Victor Harris
- **Result:** Motion carried unanimously