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News

Monday,
October
30,
2006

Project of partnerships

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Published: Saturday, October 28, 2006 1:02 PM CDT

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U.S. Representative Rodney Alexander presents a ceremonial check to Friends of Main Street treasurer Louis Warner and program director Marc Vereen during a ceremony in front of the old Scott's Gulf building, soon to become the Bastrop Tourism and Economic Development Center.

Bastrop Main Street manager Marc Vereen painted an accurate picture.

"Two years ago, the roof of this building was on the floor. There were four walls and no windows," Vereen said.

Later this year, work will be complete on what Vereen and other community leaders hope will be a gateway into the city for motorists traveling through Morehouse Parish.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provided the revenue necessary to complete the Bastrop Tourism and Economic Development Center. A ceremony was held Friday at the site -- the Scott's Gulf Station at the corner of North Washington and Pine.

Fifth District Congressman Rodney Alexander presented a ceremonial check for \$64,874 to Vereen and the Friends of Main Street, which will manage the building. The funds came from the USDA's Office of Rural Development.

"Why is the Office of Rural Development part of the Department of Agriculture?" Alexander said in brief remarks to a crowd of three dozen. "I don't know, but I'm sure glad they're where they are and do what they do."

Former Congressman Clyde Holloway, appointed earlier this month to oversee the USDA's rural development efforts in Louisiana, said Morehouse Parish has received over \$25 million in aid through the program.

"Rural areas don't have the tax base like municipalities in larger, urban areas to provide funding for projects such as this," Holloway said. "That's what rural development funds are for."

There was plenty of praise passed among the various groups which were part of the project. State Rep. Charles McDonald recognized the Morehouse Parish Police Jury for acquiring the building and the partnership the jury had with the city of Bastrop, which sponsors the Main Street program with the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism Division of Historic Preservation.

"You can see what can be accomplished through the efforts of many volunteers who partner with local, state and federal governments," McDonald said.