



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR  
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

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## NEW ORLEANS REGIONAL BUSINESS PARK ADVISORY LETTER

The 7,000-acre New Orleans Regional Business Park (NORBP) in eastern New Orleans has attracted just one business tenant in the last three years, and that company leased space in the agency's main office building for just three months, according to a letter issued Monday by Legislative Auditor Daryl Purpera.

The finding was contained in a letter to NORBP that summarized "problematic areas" Purpera's advisory services staff identified during its assessment and pointed out to officials in an Oct. 8 meeting. The report said that from 2011 to 2013 "management has attracted only one business" which leased space for three months.

The letter said that the Legislature, which begins its annual session in March, may want to study the "continued existence" of the NORBP. "By not attracting more business into the business park," the state auditor wrote, "it appears the NORBP is not effectively supporting and nurturing the development of new businesses and stimulating industrial and commercial development as intended" by the state law that created it.

The letter, addressed to Kimberly Burbank, the acting chairperson of the business park board, said a legislative study may also want to look into the number of businesses the park has attracted since its inception, whether the management structure of the park should be changed and if the continued existence of the park is "justified based on past performance and productivity."

Since the October meeting with Purpera's advisory staff, the park's executive director and administrative assistant are no longer with the business park, and its board chairman has resigned.

Purpera's letter said that NORBP staff was neither collecting nor maintaining performance data to "illustrate the accomplishments" of the NORBP. It called on board members to implement a system to record the performance data to better "report program activities and measure success" of the business park.

"Aggressive marketing strategies" for use of the main office building and other properties in the park should be developed, the letter said.



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Purpera’s staff also found that the park lacks a strategic mission and specific objectives; does not have a comprehensive policy and procedure covering “essential operations;” lacks control over the use of credit cards by not documenting the purpose for their use; does not have controls over the use of agency cell phones by reviewing usage and charges; lacks controls over preparation and approval of time sheets; and does not have proper oversight of employee leave time.

Furthermore, besides not having a system to ensure the business park receives accurate rent payments, the letter also pointed out that park officials lack the controls to “promote an ethical environment within the office of the NORBP; do not always prepare and maintain meeting minutes as state law requires; do not publish board minutes in the park’s official journal as required by law; do not have a state-approved records retention plan; do not review the payroll, prepared by an outside firm; and do not have “an adequate financial plan including marketing strategies to address and eliminate deficit-spending” nor procedures to ensure the board complies with the executive session requirements of the Open Meetings Law.

**For more information, contact:**

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**On Twitter:** Just one tenant has leased property in NORBP over the last three years, and for only three months.