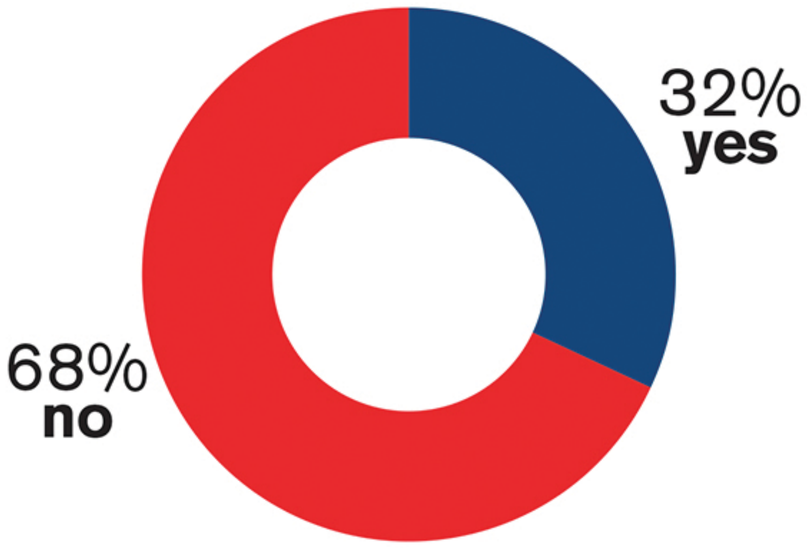
New direction needed

EXECUTIVES IN CHARGE of Baton Rouge's Top 100 Private Companies overwhelmingly believe Baton Rouge needs a course correction. They have better things to say about the health of the local economy. That's according to the c-level leaders who responded to this year's executive survey. As is the case every year, *Business Report* surveys leaders of the Top 100 companies to gauge their views on a variety of subjects. This year, however, we asked just two questions: 1) Is Baton Rouge headed in the right direction? and 2) Rate the health of the Baton Rouge economy, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the healthiest. Of the 100 surveys sent, 37 executives chose to share their views.

Is Baton Rouge headed in the right direction?



Like many other Baton Rouge-related surveys, concerns over traffic, crime, education and planning topped the list of concerns. Even those happy with the area's direction touched on those areas—even if was to celebrate the start of a particular road construction project. Here's the most forceful response:

"We lack an identity. What do we want Baton Rouge to be known for? What's going to attract industry here and be the main stimulus to create jobs for the graduates of the universities? **Are we ever going to have a plan that prioritizes improvement of things like education, roads, race relations, and public safety?** We need a dynamic vision and comprehensive plan for the future of the city, and a mayor and council that are capable of working together. Until this changes, we will continue to muddle along as a mediocre city with a ton of unrealized potential."

MIKE DILEO, president and CEO, Stonetrust Commercial Insurance Company

Executives are more optimistic about the health of the local economy. . .

3.5/5

Average ranking of the local economy by Top 100 executives

While no one gave the economy a 5, no one rated it lower than a 2.5 in our survey. Generally, Top 100 executives are optimistic about business in Baton Rouge, thanks to the health of the industrial sector—though most used their responses to suggest needed improvements. And the biggest factor holding the economy back? The continued recovery from the August 2016 flood.

"The flood recovery is why I rank us a 3 out of 5 ranking. We will recover by 2019, so I look forward to a great rest of 2018 and beyond for our economy to improve."

ERIC LANE, CEO, Gerry Lane Enterprises

*"The area is seeing growth and expansion from existing and local sources and companies, but **I haven't seen significant investment from outside the area** that would warrant the ranking of a 5."*

JEFF BIRCH, president and CEO, Setpoint Integrated Solutions, who rated the economy a 4

"The Baton Rouge area economy is very diverse and doesn't rely solely on any one market sector for survival. Presently with the rebound in the oil and gas market we are seeing an uptick in activity across the board."

TODD BERTHELOT, president, WHPacific Inc., who rated the economy a 4

