

Chapter Seven Summary

Since the adoption of the Horizon Plan fifteen years ago, the City-Parish has worked hard to help guide growth and development within Baton Rouge. The City-Parish is committed to providing the most effective and efficient services and opportunities to its citizens. Furthermore, the City-Parish remains committed to working with the citizens and community to make Baton Rouge an enjoyable place to work and reside.

The Horizon Plan, which serves as the “blueprint for the future,” is an effective tool for achieving this vision. The Horizon Plan identifies and addresses issues which affect both the citizens and the community alike. Because these issues may change over time and new issues may evolve, the Horizon Plan is scheduled to undergo an update every five years to ensure its Goals and Objectives remain as valid strategies for implementing the vision of the City-Parish.

Although much has been accomplished during the last fifteen years there still remain many issues to be addressed. Several goals and projects implemented during the fifteen years since the Plan’s adoption will continue to be executed. Some new projects and programs will be targeted for implementation over the coming five years. The Five-Year Update is an opportunity for the City-Parish to evaluate its progress towards carrying out the Goals and Objectives set forth in the Horizon Plan. Moreover, the Update offers an opportunity for the City-Parish to define future goals and their implementation actions. The next five years will see a commitment to both new and continuing projects such as:

Geographic Information System

Since the inception of the Geographic Information System (GIS) the City-Parish has developed it as a means for monitoring land use and development trends within the City-Parish. The GIS helps to predict future development trends and is an effective tool for monitoring current conditions within the City-Parish. It is also valuable in the development of cultural and historic land use data. Over the last five years, the GIS played a crucial role in Historic Preservation efforts. The City-Parish will continue to maintain and expand the GIS over the next five years.

Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The Planning Commission and other Lead Agencies will continue to work towards achieving the Goals and Objectives of the Horizon Plan. During the 2007 Five-Year Update Process, some of the Goals, Objectives and Action Items, have been deleted or reworded to reflect the changing conditions within the City-Parish. Goals, Objectives and Action Items have also been added to address new issues faced by the City-Parish.

Community Planning Process

Planning Commission Staff continues to facilitate public involvement in the planning process. This process allows citizens to give their input on important community planning and development issues. Public involvement is a crucial component of adequately meeting the needs of the community.

Beginning in 1998, and continuing through 2002, the Planning Commission Staff met with citizens, at the Subarea/Neighborhood level to discuss future growth and development trends within the City-Parish. From 2003 to 2007, the Planning Commission Staff continued the outreach process with Growth Center Meetings, to provide citizens with the necessary information and tools to guide growth in their community. During these meetings, citizens and planners have worked together to create guidelines and develop strategies for addressing growth and development throughout the parish.

The Community Planning Process that was begun with the Subarea Neighborhood Planning Process has continued over the past five years with the Growth Center Community Planning Process. Over the next five years, the Planning Commission will continue to engage the public in the planning process by focusing on sustainability and other Smart Growth principles.

Major Street Plan

Over the next five years, revisions to the Major Street Plan are anticipated to continue as growth and development within the City-Parish will place further demands on the area's road network. New funding alternatives, such as the re-dedicated Sales and Use Tax for Street and Road Improvements, as well as other sources, will help to provide the revenue for the implementation of many projects indicated on the Major Street Plan. In addition, alternative transportation systems are being researched and improvement opportunities in existing transit systems are being explored.

Environment

The City-Parish has continued to address identified issues and provide strategies for protecting and enhancing the environmental resources important to the quality of life in the City-

Parish. The Brownfields and Wetlands Programs have been implemented over the last five years and will continue to be crucial factors in the conservation of our environment over the next five years. Planners will continue to develop methods of environmental preservation and improvement, including development policies and incentives. In addition to conservation efforts, the City-Parish is also exploring the use of alternative fuels sources and other sustainable practices.

Implementation

City-Parish Lead Agencies will continue the implementation of the Horizon Plan by addressing assigned strategies, or Action Items. The 2007 Five-Year Update Process has led to the revision of a number of Action Items which will be implemented over the next five years. Progress on the implementation will be continually evaluated through the Mid-Year and Year-End Evaluation and Appraisal reports (EARs).

Capital Improvements Program

The provision of capital improvements is a major component of comprehensive planning. The original Horizon Plan identified several major capital projects from which specific capital improvements were identified. The City-Parish has addressed many of the capital projects during the past five years and will continue to identify future needs within the City-Parish. Many of the capital improvements rely upon adequate funding for their implementation. Financing capital improvements proves to be a difficult endeavor as there are always a greater number of capital improvements than there is funding. To address this issue, a significant change in the Horizon Plan requires that the Capital Improvements Program and the Horizon Plan be coordinated to maximize the success of the Goals and Objectives on the Horizon Plan. The City-Parish continually strives to investigate all possible funding sources to ensure that the citizens of Baton Rouge have adequate and efficient infrastructure and services.

Urban Design Program

An Urban Design Program is a way of providing a “sense of place,” or purpose, by promoting aesthetically appealing images for streets, corridors, districts, gateways and neighborhoods. The primary goal of the program is the preservation of special districts, historic sites, views and unique landscape features. Development of an Urban Design Program, as called for in the Horizon Plan, began in 1998. The first Urban Design District was adopted in 2002 along Bluebonnet Boulevard from Gail Drive to Claycut Bayou. This was followed by the Highland Road Urban Design District, east of Lee Drive. A Historic Preservation Commission was established in 2004. Two local Historic landmarks (St. Joseph’s Academy and the Pastime Restaurant) and a local Historic District (Drehr Place) have been designated.

The Urban Design Program addresses such issues as landscaping, access, cover, street furniture, lighting, signage, and sidewalks. While Urban Design Districts regulate land use as well

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as design components, Urban Design Overlay Districts do not affect land use or the underlying zoning.

Urban Design Overlay Districts were developed for Oak Villa Boulevard from South Choctaw Drive to Cortana Place, along Bluebonnet Boulevard from Airline Highway to south of Jefferson Highway and for Government Street from I-110 to Jefferson Highway. Also established were the Old Town Redevelopment Design and Overlay Districts intended to encourage infill development within the confines of the district and to address problems of redevelopment in an older neighborhood.

Land Use Categories

For the purpose of Subarea and Neighborhood Planning, the Planning Staff redefined and updated the Residential and “Commercial/Office” land use categories from the Horizon Plan’s “2010 Land Use Plan,” which proposes land uses for the entire Parish on a lot-by-lot basis. The revised land use categories provide planners with more flexibility and additional options for the more detailed planning involved at the Subarea and neighborhood level. The redefined land use categories were adopted by the Metropolitan Council on February 18, 1998. The City-Parish will continue to evaluate and consider the land use categories in the next five years.

Unified Development Code

The Unified Development Code (UDC) consolidates various development ordinances and regulations into a single reference manual to ease the preparation of plans and applications for residents and developers. The UDC was adopted in 1996, and has since been revised as needed to address new issues.

Revisions made in 1999 modified the Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations and created regulations for a Small Planned Unit Development (SPUD). These developments provide for flexibility in development and require a percentage of common open space. The PUD regulations encourage the protection of environmentally sensitive areas while allowing development to occur.

Revisions made from 2003 to 2007 include the development of minimum standards for street cross sections, specifically residential streets. A Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Zoning District, which encourages mixed-use, compact development and more efficient use of infrastructure and services, was created in 2006. The Old Town Redevelopment Overlay District was created in 2005 and encourages infill development in the Old south Baton Rouge area by relaxing setback requirements. This district will also preserve the unique architectural character of the area. In 2007 a Paving Waiver that allows developers to save significant trees located on a site was added to the UDC. In 2003 a Cluster Subdivision Ordinance was adopted, which permits lots of less than conventional size to promote the preservation of historical features, environmentally sensitive areas and natural features of the land while encouraging walkable neighborhoods with diverse housing choices.

Continued Citizen Involvement and Coordination

The Horizon Plan was created with substantial citizen input and involvement. Throughout the Plan's implementation, citizen involvement has been an important component to the planning process. In 1998, the Neighborhood Survey was initiated in an effort to allow additional citizen participation in the Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process. In 2003, the Neighborhood Survey was continued through the Growth Center Community Planning Process. During the next five years, planners will continue to engage the public and provide opportunities for public input in the planning process.

2007 Five-Year Update Summary

As the City-Parish continues to grow and evolve, it is certain that new programs and projects will be developed that will affect the Horizon Plan. The unprecedented growth experienced in our region over the last several years has been a catalyst for the many changes that were made to ensure that the Horizon Plan adequately addresses the community's needs. The Horizon Plan's strength lies in its flexibility and its ability to adapt to changing conditions. The Five-Year Update Process provides the City-Parish with the means to redefine its Goals and Objectives, identify new issues and adopt the best strategy to ensure that the needs of the citizens are met.

Although much work has been completed since the Horizon Plan's adoption, changing conditions will continue to dictate the necessity for the Plan's revision. Moreover, it is essential that the City-Parish monitor its progress and address the issues which affect the lives of City-Parish citizens. The Planning Commission will continue to act as the steward of the Horizon Plan and to ensure that itself and other Lead Agencies maintain and update the Plan in order to provide essential services to the citizens of Baton Rouge.

Summary

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