

## Resource Center

In an effort to better serve the planning needs of the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish, the Planning Commission opened a Resource Center in its office in February 2003. The Resource Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1 p.m.-5 p.m. A Planning Commission staff member is available to answer important questions relating to the application process for rezoning requests, subdivisions, site plans, and land use amendments. The purpose of the Resource Center is to improve customer service through furthering the objectives of the Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan, commonly known as the Horizon Plan, and enabling the Planning Commission staff to provide professional services in an expeditious manner.

### Advance the Horizon Plan

The Horizon Plan was created with substantial citizen involvement and approved by the Metropolitan Council in 1992. The plan lays the foundation for local planning in the City-Parish and works to promote sound growth management and development (see Information Bulletin Number 2, "The Horizon Plan"). One of the goals of the Horizon Plan is to improve public awareness and understanding of the City-Parish's planning regulations, procedures and programs. The Resource Center furthers this goal through providing an accessible, centralized source of information, data, records, and reference materials relating to planning and development in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The Planning Commission recognizes that the planning process can be an overwhelming experience for members of the general public. It is a process that often requires cooperation between multiple parties such as landowners, applicants, developers, concerned citizens, and elected officials. Accordingly, the Horizon Plan seeks to improve communication with these groups regarding parish-wide and specific planning and development programs and requirements. The Resource Center ensures that a planning staff member is available at all times to assist members of the public with the planning process and to answer general questions about planning regulations and procedures. The staff at the Resource Center also facilitate the provision of one-on-one assistance to answer more specific questions. Furthermore, the Re-

source Center staff fosters communication between applicants, developers, and other City-Parish agencies.

### Improve the Horizon Plan

The Planning Commission constantly evaluates its methods of procedure to find ways to provide better, more efficient service to the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish.

The Resource Center improves customer service through improving accessibility of the planning staff, expediting the application process, disseminating information, and providing numerous professional services.



The Resource Center enables the Planning Commission staff to provide consistent, professional service to the public while making more efficient use of staff time. Prior to the opening of the Resource Center, members of the public were helped on a one-to-one basis as the appropriate planner from the Current Planning, Advance Planning or Geographic Information Systems Division staff became available. This increased the wait time for meetings with planners and the turnaround time for requests. The Resource Center ensures that a planner is available at all times to aid in answering general questions. As necessary, the planner assigned to the Resource Center also coordinates meetings with the appropriate division staff to provide the one-on-one assistance needed to handle more specific requests.



The Resource Center also improves customer service through facilitating cross-training for planners in all three divisions of the Planning Department. As a result, all planners on the Planning Commission staff will have a comprehensive understanding of planning issues in the community from individual property concerns to long-range planning. The Resource Center is a tool to better distribute the staff resources for the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission staff processes and reviews 21 applications related to planning and land development. These applications include applications for rezoning, subdividing land, and site plan review. The Resource Center staff guides applicants through the application process, ensures that applicants are given the appropriate application, and assists the applicant in completing the application. The Resource Center not only receives applications from walk-ins, but also by mail, e-mail, or fax. These applications are also reviewed for completeness.

The staff informs applicants of Unified Development Code requirements regarding the application process. When necessary, the Resource Center facilitates meetings between applicants and members of the Current Planning Division staff and refers applicants to other City-Parish agencies involved in the application process. Finally, the Resource Center staff informs applicants of important dates in the application process such as the date of Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council public hearings.

The Resource Center provides a centralized source of information concerning growth and development in the City-Parish. The following planning tools and information can be obtained from the Resource Center:

- **Horizon Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Reports** Provides an implementation program update and identifies Action Items for the current year
- **Unified Development Code** The comprehensive body of the regulations governing land development in the City-Parish
- **Land Development Guide** A brief, step-by-step guide on

application procedures

- **Planning Commission Annual Report** Details the activities, goals, and accomplishments of the Planning Commission
- **Planning Commission “Meet the Staff”** Provides the names, titles, and credentials of Planning Commission Staff members
- **“Planning News” Newsletter** Informs the public of the activities of the Planning Commission and its Staff
- **Information Bulletins** Informs the public about planning and planning issues
- **Planning District Profiles** Includes economic and demographic information, land use and zoning percentages and analyses of each of the 16 Planning Districts
- **Growth Center Profiles** Includes economic and demographic information, land use and zoning percentages and analyses of each of the 29 Growth Centers

In addition to assisting applicants with the application process and disseminating planning information, the Resource Center provides a number of other professional services. Computers linked to the parish-wide Geographic Information System are available in the Resource Center for planners and the public to research the existing land use, Horizon Plan land use designation, and zoning of particular parcels of land. Zoning verification letters can be obtained through the Resource Center. The Center’s staff also answers inquiries about mapping, Unified Development Code regulations, and whether or not parcels of land are located within the city limits.

The Resource Center allows the Planning Commission staff to better serve the planning needs of the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish. It improves planning in the City-Parish through contributing to the implementation of the Horizon Plan. Furthermore, it provides a wide variety of professional planning services in a centralized location while also providing citizens with personal, timely service.

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