

The Horizon Plan

The residents of East Baton Rouge Parish can look toward the Horizon for a bright future.

The Horizon Plan, the 20-year “Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan” for the City-Parish, is at work as our “blueprint for the future.” The plan was created with substantial citizen involvement and adopted by the Metropolitan Council in accord with the Plan of Government, as passed by referendum. The plan guides the community into the 21st century with sound growth management and development. Economic vitality, a high quality of living and an efficient use of community resources are important goals of the Horizon Plan. Since 1992, the Horizon Plan has moved to the forefront of activities at the City-Parish Planning Commission, the Lead Agency for many of the plan’s “Action Items”, and other City-Parish agencies and offices. The Planning Commission is responsible for coordination of the entire plan, as well as implementing, creating and updating plans for Horizon’s Growth Center.

Creation of the Horizon Plan

Countless hours of work and discussion by citizens, public officials and professional planners have brought us to the current implementation stages of the plan. Following is a brief history of the Horizon Plan’s creation and evolution:

- On December 9, 1987, the Metropolitan Council approved a resolution to prepare and adopt a Plan of Government change to specifically require a comprehensive master land use and development plan for the Parish. A previous 20-year old comprehensive plan had become outdated.
- Residents of East Baton Rouge Parish and the City of Baton Rouge voted on April 16, 1988 to amend the Plan of Government to require comprehensive planning. The passage of the referendum on the issue directed the City-Parish Planning Commission, the Mayor/President and Metropolitan Council to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan.
- On April 25, 1989, consultants were hired to prepare the plan under the direction of the Mayor/President, the Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council.

1988 to amend the Plan of Government to require comprehensive planning in the City-Parish. To date, Baton Rouge has the only legally • The Horizon Plan Steering Committee was organized as the oversight policy advisory committee in June 1989. The committee represented many community interests and organizations, and met in monthly sessions for 1 1/2 years. In July

1989, seven Resource Committees, including technical experts, agency representatives and interested citizens, were formed to examine specific elements of the plan.

- After a series of well-attended public meetings from 1989-1990 the draft Final Plan was submitted for review and approval by the Steering Committee in December 1990. Modifications were approved by March 1991.
- Following three public hearings by the Planning Commission in 1991 and special public hearings by the Metropolitan Council, the Horizon Plan was adopted by the Metro Council as the comprehensive plan for the Parish on January 7, 1992. It became effective April 1, 1992.

Horizon Plan Elements

Recognized as the comprehensive master plan for East Baton Rouge Parish, the Horizon Plan focuses on seven major planning elements: land use; transportation; wastewater, solid waste, and drainage; conservation and environmental resources; recreation and open space; housing; and public services, public buildings, and health and human services. Existing conditions, issues, goals, objectives and implementation actions are established for each of the plan’s elements and are reported individually.

The separate reports on the plan elements are summarized in the “Final Plan Report: Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan.” The Horizon Plan is further summarized in the “Horizon Plan Summary,” which is widely distributed to the public. A complete set of the Horizon Plan documents is on reserve at every East Baton Rouge Parish Library. Three additional reports describe implementation aspects of the Horizon Plan: “Capital Finance and Capital Improvements Program,” which looks at project priority and funding sources; “Plan Amendment Process,” which examines ways of amending and updating the plan; and “Transition Rules,” which includes recommendations for revisions and enactment of ordinances to meet the plan’s objectives. The Horizon Plan is an evolving and dynamic document that can be amended to reflect the changing needs and desires of the Parish.



A constant that appears in all of the various reports and summaries is a vision for Baton Rouge and the Parish: "First and foremost, the citizens and leaders of Baton Rouge want a city that is livable for all its people." It is a collective vision for realizing the potential of the community to become a great city in the 21st century. A vision for a thriving economy, comfortable neighborhoods, and quality of life. A vision that includes environmental quality, historic character, cultural heritage, efficient government service, and well-managed infrastructure. The Horizon Plan depends on the continuous and future commitment of our citizens and leaders.

The Horizon Plan's Current Status

The Planning Commission and many other City-Parish agencies and offices serve as the Lead Agencies for implementing the plan's numerous strategies, called "Action Items." The Lead Agencies have been assigned a total of 363 Action Items. As a result of the second Five-year update of the Horizon Plan, five Action Items were deleted as a result of the most recent plan evaluation. The most recent Plan Update added 88 Action Items and deleted 13.

The Horizon Plan calls upon the Planning Commission to discuss issues related to aesthetics of land use and development within a subarea and neighborhood context. The Planning Commission initiated this process in 1998 with a five-year series of neighborhood/subarea public meetings. The Planning Commission then initiated and completed a five-year *Neighborhood Planning Process*. Public meetings gave residents, landowners, and businesses an opportunity to participate in the community planning process for their neighborhood. Topics for discussion at the meetings included Horizon Plan land use, bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities, landscape improvements, and urban design guidelines for future development.

Accomplishments under the Horizon Plan include the development of a Parish-wide Geographic Information System (GIS) for automated mapping and database management, the reorganization of the Planning Commission staff, a revision of the Major Street Plan and transportation plans, the adoption of tree and landscape ordinances, the reaccreditation of the Baton Rouge Police Department, Plan Baton Rouge, the initiation of an extensive drainage improvement program, the adoption of new, more precise zoning districts, and amending the stormwater management chapter of the Unified Development Code.

A major objective of the Horizon Plan is being achieved with the development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) by the Planning Commission. GIS involves computer and automated mapping of the entire Parish, and the establishment of a companion computerized information management system, or "database."

The database can store information, zoning districts, subdivision plats, floodplain boundaries, public utility locations and Census information. Technology allows the database to be analyzed and applied, or overlaid, directly onto the maps. Planning staff members are busy creating files and entering information for the database, which serves as a valuable, state-of-the-art resource in implementing the Horizon Plan.

Comprehensive Involvement with the Plan

The Horizon Plan is now fully integrated into all Parish government planning and activities. "Lead Agencies," or agencies involved in implementing Horizon Plan Action Items, include the Mayor/President's Office, Planning Commission, Department of Public Works, the Baton Rouge Recreation and Park Commission, the Downtown Development District, Community Development, the Office of Landscape and Forestry, the Greater Baton Rouge Airport District, and others.

Among the many Action Items included in the plan are such tasks as: the establishment of urban design guidelines and a landscape ordinance for the Parish; the implementation of a computerized traffic signal system for Baton Rouge; the development of a long-range plan for mitigating, acquiring, or relocating flood-prone structures; the consideration of significant plant and wildlife habitats; recruitment and training of volunteers to supplement public services; and public safety educational programs in the community.

The Future within the Horizon

The plan sets an ambitious, yet reasonable course for the Parish's development in the future, manages growth patterns, and protects our citizens and valuable natural resources. The Horizon Plan, as adopted, recognized that it is a guide for development within the Parish. Processes for amendment to the plan and updates to the plan are being developed so that the dynamics of growth can be accommodated.

It is a plan, however, that will require vigilance and commitment from residents and government officials alike. The goals of the Horizon Plan cannot be achieved by any one individual or even one agency. As was the case in Horizon's creation, it will take the efforts of many people and commitment of financial resources to bring about the plan's improvements for East Baton Rouge Parish. It is a plan worthy of our support.

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