



INFORMATION BULLETIN

Number 12

Planning For Stable Neighborhoods Subarea/Neighborhood

Planning

The Horizon Plan – the 20-year comprehensive land use and development plan for East Baton Rouge Parish – recognizes the importance of the community’s neighborhoods and distinctive areas. One of the major issues addressed in the Horizon Plan is the “need for developing, promoting and maintaining a clean, healthy, and safe neighborhood environment with a positive community image for all parts of the Parish.” The Horizon Plan promotes protection and enhancement of existing, stable neighborhoods; redevelopment and revitalization of declining neighborhoods; the preservation of historically significant elements of the community; the provision of neighborhood support services, such as shopping, parks, schools and churches; and the involvement of neighborhood groups and residents in the planning processes.

To achieve neighborhood objectives in East Baton Rouge Parish, the Horizon Plan includes 10 strategies, or “Action Items,” that address “Subarea” and neighborhood planning. (The Horizon Plan divides East Baton Rouge Parish into 16 Planning Districts, and the Planning Districts have been subdivided into smaller units, called Subareas.) One of the major strategies within the comprehensive plan is the call for a Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process, which is to include more detailed planning at the Subarea and neighborhood level, and citizen input in the process. The process began in 1998 and was completed with the second Horizon 5-year update in 2002.

Purpose of Subarea/Neighborhood Planning

The Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process allowed the Staff of the Planning Commission to meet with residents and discuss issues and aesthetics of development within a Subarea and neighborhood context. Public Meetings, intended to improve communication channels with concerned residents as to the quality of life within their neighborhoods, were planned. Specifically, the intention was to improve communications with neighborhood and civic associations to: 1) redevelop declining neighborhoods; 2) evaluate land use for appropriateness and recommend changes where applicable; and 3) establish a

process that will assist in development of the ongoing Parish-wide Capital Improvements Program by helping to establish priorities to the neighborhood residents.

Updated 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 parcel-by-parcel 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, adopted by the Metropolitan Council on February 18, 1998, are as follows:

RESIDENTIAL

Low Density Residential

includes areas where single-family detached housing will be the predominant land use.

Medium Density Residential

includes areas where small single-family housing, two family and multi-family housing of a spacious character, and garden and townhomes will be predominant.

High Density Residential

includes areas where multi-family housing, high-rise housing structures, and very small, tightly spaced single-family housing will be predominant.

OFFICE

Neighborhood Office

includes areas of small offices, professional offices, and personal services to serve the needs of surrounding residential areas.

General Office

includes areas where large or multi-storied professional, general administrative or non-retail sales offices are located.

COMMERCIAL

Neighborhood Commercial

includes areas of small retail stores, such as corner groceries, cafes, and drugstores to serve the needs of surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Light Commercial

includes a variety of commercial and miscellaneous service activities generally serving a wide area and located primarily along existing major thoroughfares.

Heavy Commercial

includes a variety of commercial and miscellaneous service activities, such as hotels, shopping malls, and department stores which are relatively large in size, generate a large volume of traffic or impact large areas of land and existing development.

Commercial Warehousing

includes facilities characterized by extensive warehousing and frequent heavy trucking activity but not involved in manufacturing or production.

Under the previous land use categories, Medium and High Density Residential land uses were grouped together under the broad category, Medium/High Density Residential. Previously, Commercial/Office was also a single, broad land use category.

Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process

The process began on the Subarea level with an inventory, including research on factors such as existing land use, existing zoning, major streets, floodplain and environmental issues, and demographic information. Planners then conducted an extensive and detailed analysis of the inventory information and propose amendments to the land use plan based on the analysis. The land use plan guides growth and development in East Baton Rouge Parish, and all development must be consistent with the land use plan.

Proposed amendments will be based upon a set of policies and criteria. For example, a land use amendment may be proposed based upon factors such as “adjacent zoning,” “environmental limitations” or “existing land use.” Working at the Subarea level, planners are concerned with the quality, stability, and integrity of neighborhoods and growth areas, identified as “Growth Centers.”

Public Input

A major part of the Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process was input from Parish residents about their neighborhoods, and work and shopping areas. A public survey was distributed within the Subareas prior to and at the Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Meetings. Survey results were utilized in the analysis phase of the planning process and helped guide planners in making land use decisions.

The Subarea and neighborhood plans, including the proposed

land use amendments, were taken to Public Meetings within each of the Subareas. Residents of the areas had the opportunity to view the plans and make comments and suggestions to planners. The input received at the Public Meetings was considered in the final analysis of Subarea/Neighborhood Plans before the plans entered the adoption process.

Plan Adoption and Public Hearings

The Subarea plans were presented for review at Public Meetings held in each Planning District. Comments received at the Public Meetings were incorporated in the final review of Subarea plans. Revisions to the plans often result from the Staff review following the Public Meetings.

The Planning Commission conducted a Public Hearing on the Subarea/Neighborhood Plan at its monthly meeting, normally held on the third Monday of each month at 5:00 P.M. in the Metropolitan Council Chambers on the third floor of the Governmental Building in downtown Baton Rouge. Residents had the opportunity to comment on the plan at the Public Hearing. The Planning Commission made a recommendation on the Subarea plans, and forwards the recommendation to the Metropolitan Council for final adoption.

The Metropolitan Council conducts a Public Hearing at its regular monthly zoning meeting, normally held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers. Following public comment, the Council votes to adopt the Subarea Plans.

The Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process began in Planning District 16, in the southeastern portion of East Baton Rouge Parish where a large amount of development has taken place. The process moved north through the Parish over several years, providing residents with the opportunity to become involved in planning their own neighborhoods and areas. Planning and Public Meetings for Subareas in Planning Districts 16, 15 and 14 were scheduled for 1998. The meetings were publicized in area newspapers and media outlets, through neighborhood associations and community groups, and by Metropolitan Council Members.

With public input and support, the Subarea/Neighborhood Planning Process will help to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods and special areas of East Baton Rouge Parish.

For more information contact:

City-Parish Planning Commission
1755 Florida Street, Third Floor
P.O. Box 1471
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Telephone: (225) 389-3144 Fax: (225) 389-5342
Office Hours: 8 a.m.—5 p.m. M-F
Email: planning@brgov.com
Web page: <http://www.brgov.com/dept/planning>