



## **CPPC Seeks Public Participation**

Successful urban and regional planning requires active citizen participation during both the planning processes and the development and implementation of comprehensive plans. This holds true for East Baton Rouge Parish, where the Horizon Plan – the 20-year comprehensive land use and development plan – was created with much public support and input.

The City-Parish Planning Commission encourages public participation at all levels of the planning process in an effort to work towards a better and brighter Baton Rouge. Without citizen input, the job of the Planning Commission and its staff is much more difficult. Thus both the Current Planning and Advance Planning Divisions of the Planning Commission make every effort to inform citizens and support public participation.

During planning efforts, the Planning Commission frequently calls upon East Baton Rouge Parish residents for their views and comments on new ideas and concepts, or to notify them of proposed changes or amendments. Public input and comments are vital to the planning processes, just as they were during the creation of the Horizon Plan.

In order to establish and encourage active citizen participation, it is incumbent upon the Planning Commission to notify and inform the citizens about future public meetings, events and planning issues. There are several methods employed by the Planning Commission to achieve the goal of public participation.

### **General Public Notification**

Primary notification for any type of Planning Commission meeting or action is achieved through newspaper advertising. No less than 10 days prior to a public meeting, Planning Commission meeting or Metropolitan Council meeting addressing planning and zoning issues, an advertisement is placed in *The Advocate* newspaper, which is considered the “official journal” of the City-Parish. All Planning Commission meeting issues and agenda items appear in the “legal ads,” which run in small print in “Public Notices” within the newspaper’s “Classified” section. Large Scale Land Use Amendments must appear in “display ads,” which are larger, separate ads enclosed in a border and usually including a graphic image or map. Residents with interest in planning issues or particular planning and zoning cases should regularly review the legal ads of the newspaper.

### **Public Hearings**

Citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish have two opportunities to comment on planning and zoning issues in public hearings. The first is at the regular monthly Planning Commission meeting, normally held on the third Monday of each month in room 348 of the Governmental Building, 222 St. Louis Street, in downtown Baton Rouge. Residents are allowed to speak for or against various planning items on the agenda. A second opportunity comes at the Metropolitan Council meeting on the third Wednesday of each month, when planning and zoning issues are considered. Again, citizens have the opportunity to publicly voice their views on planning matters.

### **Growth Center Community Planning Process**

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. With this process completed, the Planning Commission initiated a five-year *Growth Center Community Planning Process*. This process encompassed a series of public meeting in the 29 Growth Centers. Growth Centers are specified in the Horizon Plan as areas of concentrated higher intensity uses such as shopping, services, offices, public facilities, medium and high density residential development, cultural, entertainment and recreational activities. Growth Centers have existing or planned infrastructure to accommodate future growth. This process was completed in 2007.

The Growth Center public meetings gave residents, landowners, and businesses an opportunity to participate in the community planning process for their growth center. 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.

Prior to a Growth Center Meeting, an advertisement was placed in *The Advocate*. Generally, a centralized meeting location was chosen within close proximity to each of the 29 Growth Centers. On the day of the meeting, the time and location were listed in *The Advocate*’s “Around Baton Rouge” calendar. In addition, directional signs were posted around the major access points of the public meeting location on the night of the meeting. These meetings most often were held in the early evening.

## Horizon Plan Amendments

East Baton Rouge Parish residents have the opportunity to comment on proposed amendments to the Horizon Plan. The amendments are typically changes to the "2010 Land Use Plan" or Major Street Plan, and are often differentiated as "Small Scale" or "Large Scale" amendments.

A Small Scale Land Use Amendment involves changing a land use designation on a parcel of land that is five acres or less in size. Small Scale Horizon Plan Amendments are advertised by the Planning Commission three times, the first of which begins not less than 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing. Each advertisement contains a complete legal description of the property to be amended with its location and the date, time, address, case number and the purpose of the public hearing. Each amendment is advertised within the legal format of *The Advocate* newspaper.

Large Scale Horizon Plan Amendments (more than five acres) are advertised by the Planning Commission three times, the first of which begins not less than 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing. Each advertisement contains a complete legal description of the property to be amended with its location and the date, time, address, case number and the purpose for the public hearing. Each amendment is advertised within the legal format of *The Advocate* newspaper. In addition, each Large Scale Land Use Plan Amendment applicant must publish a display ad at least 10 days prior to the date of the Planning Commission public hearing. This ad must be no less than one-quarter page in *The Advocate*.

## Rezoning of Property

The Planning Commission Staff conducts a formal process to notify residents about proposed rezoning cases in their area.

The Planning Commission Staff is responsible for posting signs on the parcel being considered for rezoning. The signs are posted 15 days prior to the public hearing for the rezoning case. The signs are posted on each street which fronts on the property, and they display the date, time, location, case number and the purpose for the public hearing.

Additionally, the Planning Commission Staff places a legal and a display ad in *The Advocate* newspaper. These advertisements appear three times, the first of which begins not less than 10 days prior to the date of the public hearing. Each advertisement contains a complete legal description of the property to be rezoned with its location and the date, time, address, case number and purpose of the public hearing.

## Subdivision of Property

As with rezoning cases, residents are notified and have the opportunity to comment concerning the subdivision of land. Subdivisions of land that create more than five parcels require a public hearing and are advertised one time in *The Advocate*. The advertisement contains the name, location and case number of the subdivision and the date, time and location of the public hearing. The Unified Development Code also requires the Planning Commission Staff to send notice of the time and place of the public hearing by certified mail to each property owner which abuts the proposed subdivision.

Resubdivision of land with waivers requires a public meeting (not a public hearing) before the Planning Commission and notification of all abutting property owners by certified mail indicating the time and place of the public meeting.

## Site Plans

Site plans are divided into two categories: plans which may be approved by the Planning Commission Staff without a public meeting, and plans which are approved by the Planning Commission with a public meeting (see Section 4.101 of the Unified Development Code, or "Information Bulletin 13," for criteria).

For site plans requiring only Planning Commission Staff review, all abutting property owners are notified by regular mail at least 15 days prior to approval and given the opportunity to submit written comments.

Site plans that require Planning Commission approval are advertised once at least 15 days prior to the public meeting with a public notice in *The Advocate* that states the name, location and case number, and the date, time and location of the public meeting. In addition, all abutting property owners are notified by regular mail at least 15 days prior to the public meeting and given the opportunity to submit written comments.

## Wireless Transmitting and Receiving Facilities

The applicant for a Wireless Tower Site Plan is required to notify all residential land owners within 500 feet of the proposed site and the Federation of Civic Associations, of the date, time and purpose of the public hearing. Notification requires certified mail. The Planning Commission Staff is required to post signs on each street frontage of the site indicating the time, place, date and purpose of the public hearing at least 15 days prior to the public hearing and to place a public notice in a legal and display advertisement three times, not less than 10 days prior to the public hearing, indicating the date, time, place and purpose of the public meeting.

## Horizon Plan Public Awareness Program

Besides all of the legally required public hearings and notification, the Planning Commission Staff actively promotes citizen involvement and public education on planning issues through the Horizon Plan Public Awareness Program. The program includes a series of "Information Bulletins," the "Planning News" quarterly newsletter, "Planning, What Is It?" and press releases about public meetings and Planning Commission activities.

### For more information contact:

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