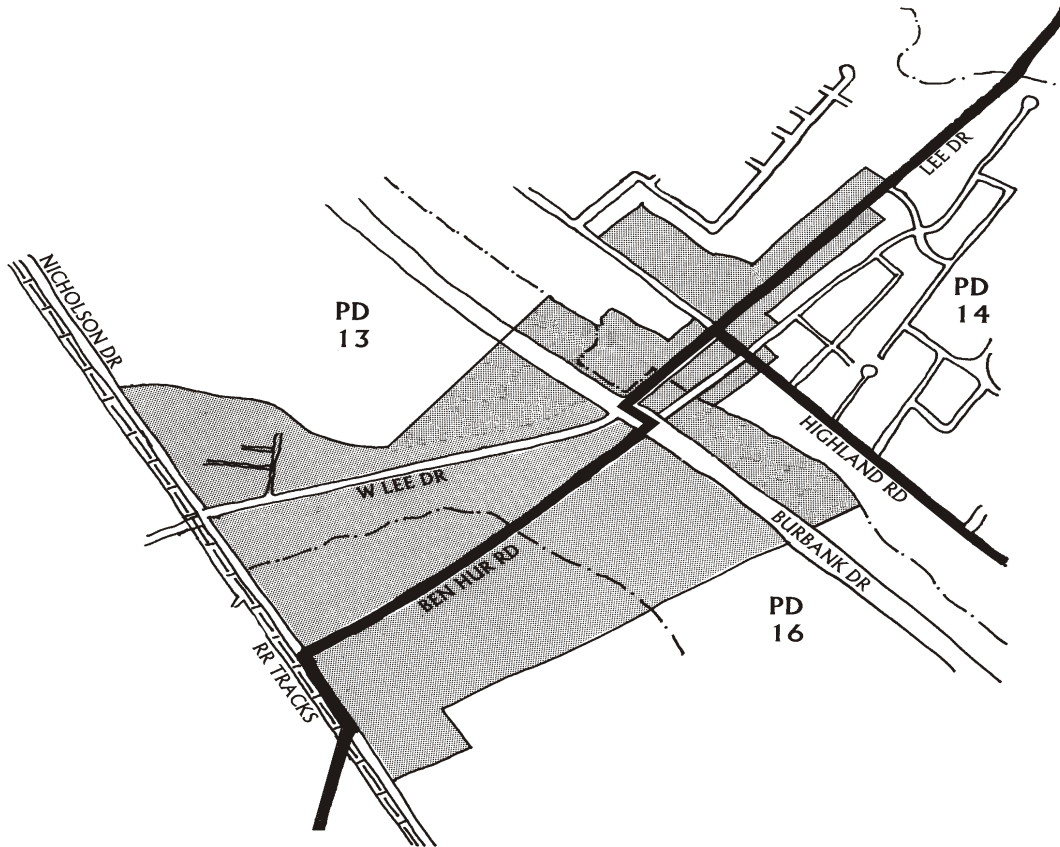


GROWTH CENTER COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS REPORT



GROWTH CENTER 1

PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

CITY OF BATON ROUGE/ PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

April 29, 2003
Robert E. Lee High School
1105 Lee Drive

The Horizon Plan, with the support of the Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council, advocates the implementation of community planning in the designated Growth Centers of the Parish. This community planning initiative began in 2003 and will continue through 2007.

It is important that the Horizon Plan continues to reflect the vision that City-Parish residents have for their Parish while responding to current development conditions in the City-Parish. The Horizon Plan identifies a comprehensive plan for the orderly growth of the Parish by identifying where particular land use categories are appropriate. This community planning process in the designated Growth Centers involves a study of Horizon Plan land use categories and elements of community design, with the intention of increasing citizen participation in identifying the issues of concerns about growth and design in the Parish. This Community Planning in the Growth Centers involves no change or recommendations for change of zoning districts or the allowable uses within them.

WHAT IS A GROWTH CENTER?

Growth Centers are 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. Potential methods for guiding growth and development in Growth Centers include performance standards, urban design guidelines and growth management techniques.

Regional Growth Centers include regional shopping centers, institutions, high density office and residential complexes, medical centers and other major activities serving the entire parish.

Community Growth Centers include community shopping centers, medium to high density office and residential complexes, public and recreational facilities and similar activities serving community areas.

WHEN WERE GROWTH CENTERS DESIGNATED?

Growth Centers were originally designated in the 1992 Horizon Plan. The Planning Commission studied these areas in more detail for the first update of the Horizon Plan 1992-1997, and exact boundaries were delineated for each Growth Center. For the second update of the Horizon Plan, 1997-2002, these boundaries were studied and amended or re-affirmed with input from the community during the Neighborhood/Subarea Planning Process.

GROWTH CENTER PUBLIC MEETINGS

The purpose of the public meetings is to give residents, patrons, and business owners an opportunity to participate in planning for their Community or Regional Growth Center. Elements to be studied in each growth center include **transportation, land use, environmental features, and design**. Topics for discussion at the meetings include Horizon Plan land use, bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities, landscape improvements, and possible design guidelines for future construction in growth centers.

Growth Center Elements

A variety of elements work together to create the daily experience of living, working, eating, and shopping within the growth center. The elements have been identified for the purpose of this report as transportation, land use, environment, and design. Details contained within these elements include roads, sidewalks, shopping, services, architectural features, and natural resources. Following is a brief inventory of elements in Growth Center 1.

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

The Capital Transportation Corporation (CTC) operates public bus routes throughout areas of the City/Parish. A CTC bus route does run through Growth Center 1. Effective October 27, 2002, the Route 47- Highland serves the Growth Center.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Amenities

The transportation corridors in the Growth Center are busy main roads with no pedestrian amenities. A bike path connection to LSU is available on the south side of Nicholson Drive. The City-Parish Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan features prioritized bike routes on Nicholson Drive west of the intersection of Lee Drive, and along Lee Drive north and south through the Growth Center.

Major Street Plan

The Major Street Plan for Growth Center 1 specifies roadway lanes, pavement width and right-of-way standards for all Major Streets in the Growth Center. According to the Major Street Plan, Growth Center 1 contains streets which are included in the Major Street Plan- Lee Drive, West Lee Drive, Highland Road and Burbank Drive. Roads that have been completed or programmed are Highland Road and West Lee Drive. Roads that require additional pavement and/or right-of-way are Burbank Drive and Lee Drive.

Capital Improvement Program

The City-Parish Capital Improvements Program contains Capital Improvement Programs, Transportation Improvement Programs, Community Development Projects and Federal Aid Projects that are either currently under construction, under design or

complete. **Growth Center 1 Current Capital Improvement Projects**

Program	Year	Improvement Type	Status
Burbank Dr. (LA 42)	2003-2007	Bluebonnet Boulevard to Lee Drive- Widening	Programmed
Nicholson Dr. (LA 30)	2003-2007	At Brightside Dr. and West Lee Dr.- Intersection/ Interchange	Under Design
Lee Drive	1997-2002	Perkins Road (LA 427) to Highland Road (LA 42)- Widening to 4-lanes	Priority 3- Not Programmed

LAND USE

Horizon Plan Land Use Categories

Residential Estate/ Agriculture

Includes areas of rural character, agricultural lands, significant natural areas and single family residential uses.

Low Density Residential (LDR)

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

Medium Density Residential (MDR)

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

High Density Residential (HDR)

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

Neighborhood Office (NO)

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

General Office (GO)

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

Neighborhood Commercial (NC)

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

Light Commercial (LC)

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

Heavy Commercial (HC)

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 (CW)

includes facilities characterized by extensive warehousing, frequent heavy trucking activity, open storage of material, or nuisances such as dust, noise and odors, but not involved in manufacturing or production.

Industrial

includes areas where manufacturing, chemicals, refining, warehousing, open storage and similar industrial facilities will be the predominate uses.

Public/Semi-Public

includes areas where government, educational, religious, and charitable uses will be the primary land use activities.

Transportation, Communication and Utilities

includes areas where railroad, trucking, aviation, ports, automobile parking, communication and utility facilities will be dominant.

Recreation

includes parks, recreational activities, amusements, group camps, cultural activities, and public assembly facilities.

Planned Unit Development

including areas where development under the Planned Unit Development (PUD) provisions of the Unified Development Code have been approved by the Planning Commission. Development in these areas will follow a unified site design plan for a mix of compatible land uses, clustering of buildings, increased densities and common open space.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

Existing Land Use

The existing land use in Growth Center 1 is a mixture of High Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Commercial, and Vacant. Commercial, Medium Density Residential and High Density Residential are concentrated at the intersection of West Lee Drive and Nicholson Drive. Vacant land is located on the north and south of West Lee Drive between Burbank Drive and Nicholson Drive. Commercial is present again at the intersections of Burbank Drive and Highland Road with Lee Drive. One large area of Low Density Residential is located on the south side of Ben Hur Road. Other existing land uses in the Growth Center are Office, Vacant Commercial, Industrial, Public/Semi-Public and Transportation, Communication and Utilities.

The current (2003) approximate percentages of existing land use in Growth Center 1, are as follows:

Existing Land Use Category	Estimated percentage of Existing Land Use
Vacant	55
Medium Density Residential	9
Low Density Residential	9
Commercial	9
High Density Residential	7
Industrial	5
Office	3
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	2
Public/ Semi-Public	>1
Vacant Commercial	>1
Total	100%

Zoning

The existing zoning in the Growth Center is a mix of C1 (Light Commercial), C2 (Heavy Commercial), PUD (Planned Unit Development), and CAB2 (Commercial Alcoholic Beverage 2). Other zoning districts present in the Growth Center are CAB1 (Commercial Alcoholic Beverage 1), A1 (Low Density Residential), B (Off Street Parking), and B1(Transition). Since 1998, Growth Center 1 has received one (1) request for rezoning. This case was approved. The zoning change was from Rural, A3.3, C1 and C2 to Planned Unit Development (PUD).

The current (2003) approximate percentages of Zoning in Growth Center 1, are as follows:

Zoning Classification	Estimated percentage of Zoning
PUD (Planned Unit Development)	70
C1 (Light Commercial)	13
C2 (Heavy Commercial)	13
CAB2 (Commercial Alcoholic Beverage 2)	3
CAB1 (Commercial Alcoholic Beverage 1)	1
A1 (Low Density Residential)	1
B (Off Street Parking)	>1
B1 (Transition)	>1
Total	100%

Horizon Plan

The Horizon land use in Growth Center 1 includes Planned Unit Development (PUD), Light Commercial, and High Density Residential. A large PUD is located north and south of West Lee Drive between Burbank Drive and Nicholson Drive. Light Commercial and High Density Residential is concentrated at the intersection of West Lee Drive and Nicholson Drive in Planning District 13. Light Commercial is also present at the intersections of Burbank Drive and Highland Road with Lee Drive. Other Horizon Land Uses present in the Growth Center are Transportation, Communication and Utilities and Medium Density Residential.

The current (2003) Horizon Plan land use in Growth Center 1, is as follows:

Horizon Plan Land Use Category	Estimated percentage of Horizon Plan Land Use
Planned Unit Development	70
Light Commercial	17
High Density Residential	10
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	2
Medium Density Residential	1
Total	100%

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Areas

The Horizon Plan identifies potential “Conservation Areas” for the Parish as areas generally associated with bottomland hardwood forests, upland or flatland forests and areas of frequent flooding within the 100 year flood plain. There are no Conservation Areas located in Growth Center 1.

Water and Natural Area Associations

The northern boundary of the Growth Center is Bayou Duplantier, the eastern and western boundaries are single family residential and bottomland hardwood forest. The southern boundary is Nicholson Drive. There are currently large sections of open pastures and wooded acreage. Bayou Fountain and Elbow Bayou are located in the Growth Center.

DESIGN

Landscape Character

There are medians and available right-of-way areas for landscape improvements. Parking lots are treeless and unshaded. There are sunny, open segments of Highland Road and ample nighttime lighting.

Architectural Character

Acadian style commercial with columns and hipped roofs are present in the Growth Center along Highland Road and Lee Drive. Generic modern commercial buildings are present along Burbank and Lee Drive. There are varied building materials and setbacks along the streets.

Signage Character

Billboards and multiple signs are present in the Growth Center. Many signs are oversized for the traffic speed.

Unique Features

A unique feature of Growth Center 1 is Historic Highland Road that runs through the Growth Center. Plantation/Acadian style architecture and the whimsical style of Noah's pet store are present along Highland Road. A water tower is located in the Growth Center at the intersection of Highland Road and Ben Hur.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic characteristics of Growth Center 1 are unique because of its close proximity to Louisiana State University. The median age in the area is 23.9 years, 7.5 years younger than the median age for East Baton Rouge Parish. Racial composition in the area is approximately 86.2 percent white, 5.2 percent African American and 5.2 percent Asian. The average household income, \$23,414, is considerably lower than the parish-wide average of \$37,224. Nearly 94 percent of residents 25 years or older in and around this growth center have earned a high school diploma. At a rate of 66 percent, this area has over double the Parish-wide percentage of residents, age 25 or older, who have earned a bachelor's degree.

The total number of housing units in this area is 7,025 (5,538 in 1990). As a result of the transient population, nearly 65 percent (67 percent in 1990) of units are renter-occupied. Since 1990, the median value of houses in and around Growth Center 1 has increased significantly from \$124,000 to \$179,350. Mean travel time to work has remained nearly the same—approximately 16.5 minutes.

Growth Center 1 Demographic Information Census Tracts (Block Groups):		
	1990	2000
Population Population by Race: White Black Other	100% 89.5% 5.4% 3.8%	100% 86.2% 5.2% 5.2%
Median Family Income	\$18,071	\$23,414
Educational Attainment <i>Those 25 years and older</i> High School Bachelor's Degree	92% 65.1%	94% 66%
Housing Units Total Owner-Occupied Not Owner-Occupied	5,538 3,710 1,828	7,025 4,566 2,459
Median Value Owner Occupied Unit	\$124,000	\$179,350
Mean Travel Time to Work	16.5 minutes	16.5 minutes

Source: US Dept. of Commerce, 1990 Census of Population and Housing; 2000 Census of Population and Housing

Design Tools Available for Growth Centers

Driven by an interest in quality of life in their communities, the citizens of Baton Rouge called upon the City-Parish Government in the 1992 Horizon Plan to establish a system for designation of urban design districts or corridors within the parish.

The Planning Commission can provide additional information regarding tools and features available for those interested in a community design program for their Growth Center. Community design programs, including urban design overlays and guidelines, are an effective way for local citizens to create and maintain built environments that satisfy both individual and community needs.

Urban Design Overlay District

Urban Design Overlay District refers to a traditional overlay ordinance that does

NOT change the underlying zoning category, i.e. all permitted uses remain the same, but rather imposes additional requirements relating to concerns such as green space, landscape, and architectural features.

The purpose of an Urban Design Overlay District is to provide requirements or incentives intended both to protect a specific resource or area and encourage development to a desired standard of aesthetic quality.

Features of an Urban Design Overlay District may include:

landscape buffers
building articulation
parking
building materials
lighting
signage
bicycle/pedestrian design

Model Process to Establish an Urban Design Overlay

- ✓ Form a committee composed of Metro Council representatives from the area, residents, property owners, business owners, developers, architects, engineers, landscape architects, planners, and other interested parties.
- ✓ Define the purpose of the proposed Urban Design Overlay
- ✓ Identify the area to be covered by the proposed Urban Design Overlay
- ✓ Specify the boundaries of the proposed Urban Design Overlay
- ✓ Establish specific requirements of the proposed Urban Design Overlay
- ✓ Proposed Urban Design Overlay is presented to Planning Commission
- ✓ Proposed Urban Design Overlay is presented to the Metropolitan Council

Additional information regarding Growth Centers and Urban Design is available from the Planning Commission at 225-389-3144 or from the website www.brgov.com/dept/planning.