

**GROWTH CENTER
COMMUNITY PLANNING**

The Growth Center Community Planning Process is a planning education program which the Planning Commission undertook from 2003 to 2007 with a series of public meetings throughout the Parish to focus on urban design guidelines in Growth Centers.

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

Growth Centers are areas of concentrated activity such as retail, office, public facilities, a range of residential development, cultural and recreational activities linked with a variety of transportation choices such as vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian. There are two types of Growth Centers.

Regional Growth Centers

Include regional shopping centers, institutions, higher density office and residential complexes, medical centers, and other major activities serving both the City-Parish and adjacent parishes.

Community Growth Centers

Include community shopping centers, office and residential complexes, public and recreational facilities and similar activities serving community areas.

Growth Centers were adopted with the Horizon Plan in 1992. Specific boundaries for the Growth Centers were delineated in 1997 after a series of public meetings around the parish. There are 29 Growth Centers designated throughout the Parish, 19 Community and 10 Regional. The Growth Center Community Planning Process began with Growth Center 1 and moved through the parish addressing each Growth Center in numerical order.

“Growth Center Community Planning” is based primarily on active community participation. At the conclusion of each public meeting, citizens had the option to form their own committee and begin a community-based planning effort with the assistance of the Planning Commission and other design and planning professionals.

This community-based planning effort involved residents, business owners, landowners, and patrons working together as a committee to identify specific design assets and challenges within their community. The Growth Center Community Design Committee then worked with the Planning Commission to identify the proper tools available to address those assets and challenges. Using this framework and professional assistance, the committee then created a set of urban design guidelines used by the Planning Commission when reviewing future development and redevelopment.



Above: Simulations show what can be accomplished with application of urban design guidelines developed through the Growth Center Community Planning Process.

Growth Center Community Planning and the Horizon Plan

The Horizon Plan is the Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan for the City of Baton Rouge and the Parish of East Baton Rouge. The Horizon Plan is a guide for officials making decisions about land use and development.

The Horizon Plan is made up of seven elements: Land Use; Transportation; Wastewater, Solid Waste and Drainage; Conservation and Environmental Resources; Recreation and Open Space; Housing; and Public Services, Public Buildings, Health and Human Services. Several of the Horizon Plan implementation strategies, known as Action Items, reflect the strategies of the Growth Center Community Planning Process.

Specific goals and objectives in the Horizon Plan provide for protection and enhancement of the character of existing business, commercial and residential areas, as well as the visual and aesthetic character of the Parish. Action Items or strategies in the Horizon Plan call for citizen participation in order to maintain or establish neighborhood identity through Urban Design Guidelines. Examples include:

LU4.A Designate Urban Design Districts/Corridors. Establish procedures for designation of urban design districts or corridors including participation by affected property owners within the identified areas.

LU4.B Urban Design Guidelines. Prepare urban design guidelines for development, renovations and revitalizations within urban design districts to ensure compatibility of new development and redevelopment with adjacent structures and land uses, and to enhance visual attractiveness of the districts and corridors.

LU5.E Neighborhood & Subarea Process. Establish a Neighborhood and Subarea Process to identify specific needs and opportunities and develop detailed improvement plans for neighborhoods and commercial areas, including input and participation by neighborhood groups, property owners, businesses and residents.

LU5.F Implement Neighborhood Plans. Work with neighborhood groups to implement neighborhood plans through zoning modifications, public improvements, and incentives for development, redevelopment, and private improvements that are consistent with neighborhood and subarea goals and plans.

LU6.B Linear Subarea Design. Prepare design guidelines to improve the appearance of linear commercial areas and to make them more attractive to pedestrians.



Role of the Planning Commission Staff in the Growth Center Community Design Committees

The Planning Commission worked with Metropolitan Council Members on committee composition and serve as a resource after the committee was established.

Coordinate with the committee chairman regarding meetings, agendas, and correspondence.

Provide meeting space for full Growth Center Committee meetings. Subcommittees and study groups may choose to meet between full committee meetings.

Provide staff to work with committees to produce an Urban Design District ordinance for review by the Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council

Provide a web site for posting information related to Growth Center Community Planning and the committee process.

The Growth Center Community Design Committee

Urban design elements to be considered by the Growth Center Community Design Committee may include:

- transportation design elements
- landscape buffers
- building articulation and orientation
- parking lot improvements
- lighting
- signage

Deliverables from the Growth Center Community Design Committee include a written description and map of the area to be covered by the Urban Design District; a statement of the purpose for the Urban Design District; Urban Design features, requirements, and incentives for the area; and a community education program.

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