

1. What is a LINC Neighborhood?

The term, LINC, is taken from the Lafayette Consolidated Government's Comprehensive Plan for the next 100 years. The letters stand for **L**afayette **I**n a **C**entury. Some LINC goals are achieved on a parishwide basis and other LINC goals are achieved on a neighborhood level.

Funding for the plan preparation and implementation on a neighborhood level is derived from two sources: public funds and private funding of neighborhood specific projects by a non-profit neighborhood foundation fund.

This plan seeks to organize neighborhoods to develop plans to expend these funds.

2. What is a LINC Neighborhood Meeting?¹

All of the neighborhood residents and property owners (known as "the Neighbors")² over the age of 18 may attend an annual meeting, vote and select a committee called a "Coterie".

The Coterie is a committee which votes on who serves on the smaller five member LINC Neighborhood Board. The Board votes on the expenditures of LINC neighborhood funds. The Coterie also receives advice from neighborhood institutions. The Coterie may also create other groups to aid its work such as Youth Peoples Board and Neighborhood Watches.

3. Who serves on the Coterie?

The Coterie's members are property owners and residents from the Linc Neighborhood elected by their neighbors.

4. How many Coterie members are there and how are they elected?

There can be as few as 6 or as many as 21 Coterie members. The actual number of the members is determined by the residents in the neighborhood. Each neighborhood has many different groups which include home owners, business owners, large property

¹ Much of this draft is modified from the rules to hold a New England style town meeting. See State Citizen's Guide to Town Meetings, An Important Message for all Massachusetts Town Residents at the website as existing on June 2, 2004: <http://www.state.ma.us/sec/cis/cistwn/twnidx.htm>

² Determination of the status of Neighbor is by presentation of a parish tax assessment or by a utility receipt, both of which shows a person's name and an address within the neighborhood. If one of these methods is not possible, then a voter's registration card is required showing a name and a neighborhood address.

owners, geographic sub-areas, and special groups. Each member of the Coterie represents one of these local neighborhood groups.

To be elected, a Coterie member must represent 5% of the Neighbors. The 5% rule could apply in two ways. One way is an actual vote of 5% of the people in attendance. A second way is one or more property owners forming a block of voters who own at least 5% or more of the acreage in the LINC Neighborhood.

At certain meetings, time is set aside for a caucus when people can freely assemble and discuss their common and competing interests. During the caucus, Coterie Candidates may declare their candidacy for the Coterie and acknowledge which group they represent. A candidate requests votes from the neighborhood residents.

All Coterie members have full voting rights. Any one person can be elected to only one Coterie even though they might own property in many different LINC Designated Neighborhoods.

5. Who are LINC Neighborhood Advisors and how are they elected?

LINC Neighborhood Advisors represent neighborhood institutions³.

Although there may be many institutions, LINC neighbors select which institutions are to be represented. Each institution selects its Advisor. The individual serving as the Advisor may be changed by the sponsoring institution annually. Together, they sit on the Advisory Panel.

LINC Advisors have significant interests in how the neighborhood develops because their institutional services are delivered to residents and property owners in the neighborhood. LINC Advisors are representatives of voluntary associations,⁴ schools,⁵ churches,⁶ government,⁷ politically active groups,⁸ special districts,⁹ and medical facilities¹⁰. Each

³ An institution is defined as a group of individuals who provide services for their community. The group has established patterns of behavior that have outlived its original founders and continues with new members being added over the lifetimes of its members as members join and then leave the group.

⁴ Membership is voluntary as stated in each organization's bylaws. In particular public service organizations where voluntary memberships are included, such as the Veterans of Foreign War, the American Legion, the Boy Scouts, the Knights of Peter Claver, the Free Masons, the Seratoma Club, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, and Knights of Columbus. A voluntary association must serve or have a membership greater than 20 persons residing in the LINC Designated Neighborhood.

⁵ A school is required to be licensed by the state of Louisiana and must have more than 30 students.

⁶ A church must have a tax IRS exempt status.

⁷ A government institution must be an operating division of incorporated municipality, state or federal agency. The government institution must own significant real property within the neighborhood excluding roadways and utilities. Examples are city hall, recreation center, as well as a fire or police station, a bus terminal, and an administrative office building with more than 10 full time workers.

of these organizations must serve a population of greater than 20 people in the LINC Neighborhood. LINC Advisors do not have voting rights in Coterie decisions. Their job is to provide advice on which policies are best for the LINC Designated Neighborhood as a whole or their sponsoring organization.

6. How many LINC Designated Neighborhood Advisors are there?

The LINC Neighborhood Advisory Panel may have a maximum of 12 and a minimum number of 2.

The LINC Neighborhood's City-Parish Council member(s) always serves directly or through an appointed representative to serve as an Advisor.¹¹

There is always one City Planner who acts as an advisor on each Advisory Panel.

There may potentially be no other advisors for three reasons. First, there may be no other institutional presence in the neighborhood. Second, LINC Neighbors may decide not to select institutional representation. Third, institutions may not wish to participate.

There may be cases where all 12 LINC Neighborhood Advisory seats are filled either because the Neighbors want many different points of view or because the Neighborhood is served by many institutions.

Over time, the number of represented institutions may change as institutions are created (and perhaps disbanded) in a neighborhood. The inclusion of an institution is determined by the Neighbors annually at the Annual LINC Designated Neighborhood Meeting.

7. What voting methods are used to elect Coterie Members, Board Members and Advisors?

At the Annual LINC Designated Neighborhood Meeting, there is a caucus when people exchange ideas. After the caucus, Coterie Candidates and their supporters are physically

⁸ These are formal incorporated groups with a political agenda such as Rebuild Lafayette North and Citizens for Direct Action (CODA), and Action Cadienne who seek to elect certain candidates to further their non-partisan goals and objectives.

⁹ A special district is one created by act of the Louisiana Legislature for the collection of special local taxes. Examples of a special district are Bayou Vermilion Special District and The Downtown Development Authority.

¹⁰ Examples of these are state licensed hospitals, nursing homes, laboratories, and groups of medical professionals.

¹¹ If the LINC Designated Neighborhood straddles two council districts, then each respective member may serve or appoint a representative to serve as an Advisor for a total of two advisors.

seated or stand together so that their votes can be publicly counted. Each Neighbor receives only one vote signed by a show of hands.

The selection of which institutions are to be recognized as LINC Advisors is by majority vote of LINC Neighbors. After the meeting, the Board formally requests the participation of a sponsoring institution.

Board members are elected by secret written ballot. Nominations are required by any Coterie member. Each Coterie member has one vote. Coterie members with the five highest vote tallies are Board members. Ties are decided by subsequent secret ballots by all Coterie members.

The show of hands and the secret ballot are tallied and certified at the time of the election by a moderator. The moderator is not a member of the Coterie, but may be a LINC Advisor¹² or other notable Neighbor. In all cases, the moderators should be known for fairness in their community conduct.

8. How often are Coterie and Board Members elected?

Board members are elected each year by the Coterie at the Annual LINC Designated Neighborhood Meeting. Every other year at this annual meeting, Coterie members are elected by LINC Neighbors.

The LINC Advisors are non-voting members and may be changed by their sponsoring institution each year. LINC Neighbors vote each year to continue or discontinue the presence of the sponsoring institution on the Advisory Panel.

9. Are Coterie members elected by political party?

No, LINC Designated Neighborhood members can not be elected by party. Elections are nonpartisan. The party affiliation of a candidate for the Board does not appear on the printed ballots or other printed materials. Political groups who seek the election of certain people may be involved, but these groups represent particular points of view concerning issues and are not directly associated with a political candidate.

10. How do I seek office for a Coterie or Board seat?

You are encouraged to start at any time seeking votes for membership in the Coterie after the formation of your LINC Designated Neighborhood. The more active the Coterie in seeking to develop consensus on neighborhood issues, the more representative is the Coterie. The more representative is the Coterie, then the more likely the Coterie and the Board will make good decisions.

¹² The moderator may not be a City Council member, his representative or a City Planner.

11. What's the difference between the jobs of a Board member, an Advisor member, and the Coterie members who do not serve on the Board?

LINC Designated Neighborhood Board members act as the neighborhood's executive officers. Board members are elected by the Coterie.

Those Coterie members not serving on the Board are the point of contact for the group that they represent. They also serve on committees that provide recommendations to the Board.

Advisors do not vote on board membership, but provide advice on matters relating to their institutional sponsor or relating to parishwide institutional policies that might affect the LINC Designated Neighborhood.

The Board is authorized to call one Annual LINC Designated Neighborhood Meeting provided that they have posted a warrant at designated places in the neighborhood ¹³ and signed an affidavit that they have personally presented a written or verbal notice to at least 20 different Neighbors on the date and time of the meeting.

The Board may also establish an annual schedule of Board and Neighborhood meetings. In this case, Board members should post warrant and sign affidavits as described above every six months as to the schedule and meeting place. Any citizen or resident of the United States may attend a Board meeting.

Coterie members keep their constituents informed on meeting dates and agendas as well as actions of the Board.

At the Board meeting, the Board members shall consider public comments and vote on LINC Designated Neighborhood Plans.

These plans decide important quality of life issues which may affect public and private expenditures. Some of the issues considered are land use, drainage, traffic, recreation, public services, as well as environment and conservation.

12. What happens to the recommendations of the Board?

Decision making by the LINC Designate Neighborhood Board will be formally considered as advisory by the Lafayette City-Parish Planning Commission. The Commission may issue resolutions calling for plan changes specific to the LINC Designated Neighborhood or the parish as a whole or for implementation of plans recommended by the Board. Implementation is generally through the approval and

¹³ These designated places are at neighborhood institutions, and food stores and other commercial establishments. See FAQ #5.

support of the local government having jurisdiction or multiple governments as appropriate and necessary.

If the Board recommendations sent to and approved by the Planning Commission are not implemented by local governments, then the Board may formally appeal to the City-Parish or municipal Council.

In some cases, recommendations from the LINC Designated Neighborhood are forwarded by the Planning Commission to the local government. The respective Council then approves the recommendation by resolution. A resolution does not carry the force of law, but rather calls for the implementation given certain conditions. In this case, the LINC Designated Neighborhood Board may appeal to the local Council for implementation of a recommendation. The Council may or may not respond to this appeal. The Board may then appeal decisions of the LCG Council to any other government agency or elected official, but no formal status is given to such an appeal.

However, a recommendation by the LINC Designated Neighborhood may have been sent to the Planning Commission and then to the Council which approved an ordinance for implementation. If the recommendation and the ordinance are not implemented, the Board may appeal to the local Council for action on their Neighborhood initiative. If the Council does not respond to this appeal, then the Board may seek redress in the courts for relief.

This appeal process is established by state law for the operation of planning commissions and the implementation of their comprehensive plan.

The important point to remember is that Board recommendations may be implemented by resolution or ordinance. If an ordinance is approved, but not carried out, then the Board can appeal to the local Council and then to the courts.

13. What's a Select Committee?

A select committee is a temporary committee. It is assigned to investigate and report back to the Board. The Board appoints the committee chairperson and members from the Coterie and the Advisory Panel.

14. What's a Standing Committee?

A standing committee is a permanent committee. A LINC Designated Neighborhood may optionally elect to have standing committees for the following areas: (1) traffic and public works, (2) planning and zoning, (3) recreation, and (4) public safety.

In all cases, a finance committee is found in each LINC Designated Neighborhood.

As is the case with special committees, standing committee members are members of the Coterie or the Neighborhood Advisors.

15. What is a Special Committee?

The Board may create a temporary or permanent committee for special purposes unique to their neighborhood. The members of the committee need not be members of the Coterie or the Neighborhood Advisor, but must be Neighbors. Examples are a Young Peoples Council, one or more Neighborhood Watch Programs, or other body to collect information and implement its decisions.

16. What does the Finance Committee do?

The Finance Committee prepares the cost of implementing a neighborhood plan in the months before the Annual LINC Designated Neighborhood Meeting and reports on the expenditure of funds in the prior 12 months at the neighborhood level. It also prepares financial articles (which are agenda items). Its recommendations are advisory to the Board.

The Finance Committee's annual report is publicly distributed at the LINC Designated Neighborhood Annual Meeting. The report describes the expenditure of funds. It describes which part of the plan is complete and which part is not complete.

17. Does anyone receive pay for their LINC Neighborhood work?

There is no paid position with public funds for the Coterie or Board members.

The LINC Designated Neighborhoods may develop private funding sources to pay for any lawful purpose connected with a LINC Neighborhood Plan. Examples are funding an executive director for the Board, paying for a neighborhood festival, hiring consultants, or building improvement projects.

LCG Planning staff serving as Advisors receive pay for their participation in the course of providing planning and organization services. Other Advisors may receive pay from the sponsoring institutions.

The Council member serving on the LINC Designated Neighborhood Advisor Panel is paid as a part of his salary for serving on the Council.

18. Why do we need a Coterie?

Most decisions made by the LINC Designated Neighborhood organization will directly affect the lives of the respective Neighbors.

The organizational structure of the LINC Designated Neighborhoods seeks to engage property owners in their local neighborhood. Because everyone can have their say, there may be conflicting viewpoints. Additionally each neighborhood has particular interests which are separate from other neighborhoods. Hence, the Coterie is composed of persons who, in many cases, represent only 5% of a neighborhood and come from only a very small part of the parish.

However at the same time, the organization seeks to make final decisions by consensus within the neighborhood and the parish. The Coterie elects from their members a Board to make final decisions after hearing from their neighbors. Additionally, they receive input from LINC Advisors. Thus, the Board makes decisions that hopefully reflect these competing interests after everyone has expressed how their neighborhood should be governed.

19. Is there a quick explanation so that I can understand how it works?

Yes!!!

There is a diagram named "LINC Neighborhood Organization, LINC Coterie and Board".

20. Who recognizes the LINC Neighborhood Coterie and Board?

LINC Designated Neighborhood Plans are part of the LINC Comprehensive Plan. The Lafayette City-Parish Planning Commission officially adopts the LINC Comprehensive Plan. The five municipalities (Broussard, Carencro, Duson, Scott and Youngsville) and the Lafayette City-Parish Government (LCG) have provided representatives in the LINC Comprehensive Planning process. These local governments municipalities may voluntarily implement portions of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Coterie system is based on the New England style Town Meetings and the Iowa State Presidential Caucus. A system was proposed then reviewed and modified by the Planning Commission.

Each LINC Designated Neighborhood may or may not develop formal bylaws specific to their Neighborhood beyond those in this document.

A Neighborhood may also create a non-profit entity recognized by the IRS. These IRS sanctioned organizations may enable collection and expenditure of private funds within the Neighborhood.

Additionally, a Neighborhood may seek to establish a Fund in the Community Acadiana Foundation of Acadiana itself and IRS-sanctioned 501 C3 trust.

21. Is there an official organization which represents the collective interest of the LINC Neighborhoods throughout the parish?

Yes and No!!

We are slowly creating LINC Designated Neighborhoods. Not all areas have a LINC Neighborhood as of the date of this printing.

Moreover, there has been no development of an organization that represents all the LINC neighborhoods.

However, there is no formal prohibition against creation of such an entity if membership is voluntary.

The creation of such an organization would need to seek approval by the City-Parish Planning Commission and the LCG City-Parish Council. Its bylaws would necessarily not violate this plan which you are now reading.

22. Are there any last words?

All issues are local.

Participate in your democracy.

It is easy to complain and much harder to build consensus and achieve results.

We quote Theodore Roosevelt:

“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.”

"Citizenship in a Republic"
Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910

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