



1.0 Introduction

A comprehensive plan is more than a collection of land use regulations, policies and goals; it is a document that reflects the values and needs of the community. The underlying goal of any comprehensive plan is to identify policies that improve the quality of life for all residents within that community. As such, it takes collaboration and coordination between everyone who is concerned about the future of his or her community. A comprehensive plan is a useful tool to review, discuss and document important community opportunities and constraints.

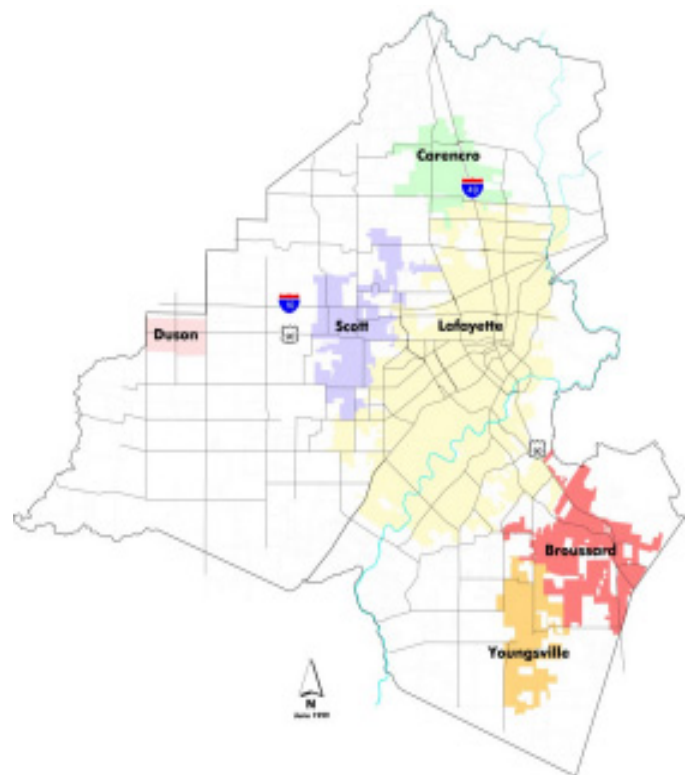
Today, Lafayette Parish comprises six municipalities and a large unincorporated area that is facing significant growth pressures. This document should serve as a resource and guide for responsible growth and development in the parish for government officials, parish residents, builders, developers and business owners.

1.1 Master Plan Development Process

At the onset, parish leaders decided that this plan would serve as a guide for the entire parish. The Land Use Master Plan and Policy Plan for Lafayette Parish combines land use conditions, social and demographic information, long-range growth forecasts and community input to develop a set of goals, objectives and policies unique to the parish.

Today, the parish is at a critical turning point in its growth and development. Although the community has experienced rapid change in the last 20 years, almost half of the parish remains undeveloped or in agricultural uses. Although new development areas prosper in the parish, parts of the original town cores, older neighborhoods and commercial centers have experienced decline. Aggressive, progressive and proactive measures are needed today if Lafayette is to continue to attract new residents, businesses and employment while maintaining a desirable quality of life.

Transportation plays an important role in the growth and development of the parish. Historically, the city's commerce and vitality was built around the oil and gas industries. As Lafayette heads into the 21st Century, it has the potential, with careful planning, to capitalize on several key transportation projects, including improvements to the Interstate 49 and Interstate 10 corridors, as



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well as future improvements to major arterial roadways such as Johnston Street, Ambassador Caffery Parkway, University Avenue and Kaliste Saloom Road. Current planning efforts and enormous growth pressures require the Lafayette Consolidated Government staff to link transportation and land use objectives. Transportation and land use share a symbiotic relationship because one impacts the other. Unfortunately, the past lack of parishwide planning has put enormous pressures on the transportation system and improvements have not kept speed with recent growth.

This comprehensive plan offers a guide for the physical, social and fiscal health and well being of the parish. Lafayette in a Century is the official comprehensive plan for Lafayette Parish. Its policies, standards and recommendations are to be used to guide the future growth and change of the community as a whole. Therefore, the plan recommendations need to reflect the needs of current and future parish residents, builders, developers, business owners, investors and institutions. It is important to note that this comprehensive plan is intended to serve the needs of the entire parish both demographically and geographically. This means inclusion of all six municipalities as well as the unincorporated parish.

1.2 Importance of the LINC Comprehensive Plan

As permitted by law, local governments will use the comprehensive plan to review proposed development initiatives within the parish and its municipalities. It is the responsibility of each municipality to use the policies, standards and recommendations set forth in the plan to assess proposed developments, which will be one of the most important factors governing the decision making process. Although LCG legally can enforce these policies and recommendations within the city limits and unincorporated areas of the parish, it is the responsibility of each municipality to use these standards. Therefore, these policies are flexible in order to meet the needs of the individual municipalities and the parish as a whole.

1.3 Plan Development Process

A comprehensive plan is never the work of one individual, group or agency. It takes a collaboration and partnership among all those interested in the future safety, health and welfare of the parish. Therefore, the LINC Steering Committee and Land Use Subcommittee were formed to work with LCG staff and the consultant team to devise the best possible plan for the parish. The Land Use Subcommittee was comprised of parish residents from diverse backgrounds. Together, this team identified several goals and objectives that provided the framework from which the Land Use Master Plan and Policy Plan for Lafayette Parish were created.

1.3.1 Defining Goals, Objectives and Policies

The planning process begins with defining goals and objectives. What do municipal and parish residents value? The project team facilitated a discussion with the LINC Steering Committee, LCG staff and parish residents to address this basic question. The collection of responses was formulated into a common goal that helped to define the parish's future vision:



Goal:

To promote quality development that enhances the current built environment and has minimal impact upon the natural environment through incorporation of “smart growth” strategies.

Once the goal is defined, the next step is to develop objectives, which collectively help to meet the stated goal. These objectives are general statements that help set the framework for future parish development. At the onset, the subcommittee, LCG staff and residents provided a list of issues and concerns about the future of the parish. The objectives formulated by the project team and amended by the subcommittee are provided below:

Objectives:

- * Protect property values
- * Protect “quality of life” for parish citizens
- * Promote land use compatibility
- * Promote aesthetic standards for the built environment
- * Protect natural resources/pristine areas
- * Maximize land use potential
- * Establish development policies

The defined vision (goal) and framework (objectives) help to set the stage for the formulation of the Land Use Master Plan and Policy Plan for Lafayette Parish. However, the best-laid plans will sit on the shelf without a set of clear and realistic policies that can be implemented. The collective set of policies should address the objectives and meet the stated goal.

The preferred policies were developed by the project team and presented to the subcommittee. These policies were far ranging and reflected the scope of possible land use regulations and policies that were being tried and tested throughout the country. After careful review by the subcommittee, these policies were narrowed based upon a preferred development pattern. After careful consideration, the subcommittee selected a clustered development pattern over the existing linear development pattern.

*** Preferred Development Pattern: Cluster Development**

The cluster development concept is based upon concentrating more intensive land uses around major intersections. The clustered development concept preserves open space and makes the most efficient use of utilities and transportation infrastructure. This preferred development pattern is a departure from the linear development that has traditionally occurred.

See Chapter 5: Issues, Analysis and Alternatives for an explanation of the preferred development pattern.

Policy Guidelines:

The preferred policies should reflect the stated goal and objectives, which are reflected in the preferred development pattern. Additionally, they need to be flexible enough to meet the needs of the entire parish. At this time, only the city of Lafayette has zoning. In fact, the primary land use tool utilized in the unincorporated areas of the parish and the other five municipalities are subdivision



regulations. More importantly, the other municipalities, including Broussard, Carencro, Duson, Scott and Youngsville, have their own subdivision standards. Public comments from all five municipalities and the unincorporated area indicated that zoning would not be a viable option for areas of the parish outside of the city of Lafayette.

Since the 1930's, land use controls across the country have revolved around zoning and the subdivision process. Many local governments have sought alternative ways to guide "smart growth" through flexible policies, strategies and tools, better known as performance guidelines. These policies do not regulate individual uses like traditional zoning; rather, these tools are based upon guiding future growth through flexible policies that are intended to mitigate the impacts of incompatible land uses.

See Chapter 8: Plan Recommendations for a complete listing of the preferred policies.

1.4 Public Input

In order to be successful, a comprehensive plan must reflect the community's values. Therefore, public participation is essential. The study's direction, focus of the analysis and final recommendations are all created as a result of the community's needs.

It is difficult for people to become excited about land use issues, unless they are directly impacted. As a result, the Land Use Subcommittee and LCG staff provided workshops in each public school district or planning area on consecutive nights to reach the maximum number of public participants. These workshops were held to educate the public about the comprehensive planning process and to solicit comments concerning existing conditions within the parish.

These workshops were held to develop a proposed master plan. The project team collected public comments and the drafted plan and adjoining policies were amended for presentation to the Land Use Committee.

Public Workshops, Series 1 (March 1999)

The first workshops identified key concerns within each planning area. The project team collected and compiled the comments and incorporated them into the Land Use Master Plan and Policy Plan for Lafayette Parish.

Public Workshops, Series 2 (June 1999)

During the two months, the project team worked with the Land Use Committee and LCG staff to formulate the plan goals, objectives and preferred policies. After the subcommittee reviewed the information, a draft master plan was developed and prepared for public presentation.

1.5 Plan Adoption

The Lafayette Planning Commission and City-Parish Council will review the master plan and have authority to adopt the policies, tools and potential strategies laid out in the policy plan.

Each independent municipality including Broussard, Carencro, Duson, Scott and Youngsville has



legal authority inside its city limits and is under no legal obligation to conform to LCG standards and policies. Each will review the master plan and may adopt the policies, tools and potential strategies that meet its needs.

1.6 Implementation

Adoption of the Land Use Master Plan and Policy Plan for Lafayette Parish is only one step in the comprehensive planning process. Even if LCG and the surrounding municipalities agree on common tools, policies and standards, it will be difficult to achieve the plan's goals and objectives without an open and continuing dialogue. This means that goals and objectives should evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of the parish.