

**PRIORITY SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES
IN
THE LAFAYETTE PARISH COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN**

General Advisory Panel (GAP) Recommendations

1st Smart Growth Priority –

Strengthen and Direct Development towards Existing Communities

- a. Incentive programs should target priority funding areas to direct development toward existing communities.
- b. New development should be served by existing municipal sewer and water systems. Capital Improvement Programs should be focused on improving and enhancing only soft and hard infrastructure in existing urban areas and the areas of influence adjacent to municipal boundaries.
- c. New development must pay for 100% of the infrastructure costs associated with that development. Costs include construction of new infrastructure extended to the development and the upgrade of the existing infrastructure impacted by new development. Infrastructure costs include sewer, water, roads and drainage.
- d. New development, within Lafayette Parish, should be served by existing municipal sewer systems. New developments that do not connect with municipal sewer systems should be restricted to a minimum size of three (3) acres per lot.
- e. Emphasis should be placed on building renovation and rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods. GAP is recommending that the BESThousing non-profit corporation, in cooperation with the Community Development Department's program, be actively involved in the rehabilitation and renovation of the existing housing stock.
- f. GAP is recommending employment of a "Vacant Properties Coordinator" to provide incentives and minimize and abate vacant properties within urban boundaries which would be funded by a Land Bank.
- g. Encourage infill by adopting innovative stormwater regulations and practices that incorporate Best Management Practices.

2nd Smart Growth Priority –

Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective

- a. GAP is recommending the adoption of a SmartCode to expedite plan and permit approval for smart growth projects.
- b. GAP is recommending an 'as of right' component to the SmartCode to ensure a certainty for developers. The SmartCode overlay application would be in conjunction with the goals of a Comprehensive Plan.

- c. GAP is recommending a checklist of requirements of the developer when he/she comes in with a subdivision application. This includes reports and studies and mitigation measures, if required.
- d. GAP is recommending the LINC Steering Committee's recommendation that municipalities should develop a number of typical site plan designs which will guide developers, owners, contractors and consultants in their planning of sites within designated commercial nodes. These design options may include but not be limited to:
 1. The internal circulation of pedestrian, transit, bike and auto traffic;
 2. parking;
 3. landscaping;
 4. setbacks;
 5. scale and bulk of commercial establishments that are integrated with the surrounding area.

3rd Smart Growth Priority –

Mix Land Uses

- a. GAP recommends the adoption of the SmartCode as an overlay to parallel existing conventional development codes. SmartCode distinguishes land use by built form and not use (some uses can be prohibited).
- b. GAP recommends designating target areas in the Comprehensive Plan in order to reinforce land use goals. For example, nodal developments, special districts, LINC neighborhoods, etc.
- c. GAP recommends developing mixed-use university districts. Increase collaboration between LCG and the University to encourage the development of mixed use centers. Further, to work together on how the University campus edge is integrated with the surrounding neighborhoods.
- d. GAP recommends, in conjunction with the development of the SmartCode, developing examples of mixed-use development at scales that are appropriate to the communities and their neighborhoods. These examples should be used to help communities envision how a mixed use community may work and what it would look like and further will assist developers to design what the community desires.
- e. GAP recommends the conversion and reuse of existing building sites into walkable, mixed use communities. One option is the addition of a complimentary use into the site. This could be accomplished by overlay zones, civic building location policies and incentives.
- f. GAP recommends adoption of the Nodal Development Plan that encourages mixed land uses, higher densities, maximum use of public infrastructure and walkability.
- g. GAP recommends the inclusion as part of any incentive package the opportunity to encourage residents to live near their place of work.
- h. Target areas of the Parish for a SmartCode or flex zoning. This would allow a developer more flexibility to respond to market demand.

- i. To encourage mixed use development, LCG should simplify the existing zoning ordinances by combining designations into a series of mixed use designations targeting the urban core.

4th Smart Growth Priority -

Walkable Communities

- a. Develop a pedestrian shed (1/4 mile) master plan. This plan would provide a consistent approach by adopting policies, prioritizing current and future funding mechanisms and establishing design standards and implementation guidelines. The MPO has adopted 8ft. minimum, 10ft desired, sidewalk width with a boulevard into its arterial design standard; a MPO standard for local streets should be incorporated in the local Subdivision Regulations.
- b. Typical roads designs should be comprehensive, ie. consideration given to green space areas, sidewalks, bike paths, lighting and benches. New major arterials should be constructed with raised green medians and combined bikeway/sidewalks on one side of the roadway separated from the curb to accommodate tree plantings wherever possible. Electrical facilities should be placed underground along major arterials.
- c. Establish defined criteria to determine whether waivers of standards like sidewalks are approved.
- d. Require building design that makes commercial areas more walkable by connecting walkways, parking lots, greenways and adjacent developments. Incorporate awnings or covered walkways into developments.
- e. Situate parking to enhance the pedestrian environment and facilitate access between destinations. Make walkability a high priority in the nodal development plan.
- f. Planning should work closely with Lafayette Transit to target areas to increase walkability. Using transit-oriented development allows an opportunity to accommodate new growth that is centered on transit.
- g. Implementing a SmartCode includes provision of on-street parking in a developer's parking requirements. On-street parking reduces vehicle speeds and provides a barrier from pedestrians.
- h. Access federal grants for street trees from the Urban and Community Forestry Program. This program is designed to plan for, establish, manage and protect trees, forests, green spaces and related resources in and adjacent to cities and towns to improve urban livability.
- i. Develop design standards for all street types to increase walkability. This design should include:
 1. Subdivision regulations should be amended to reduce the maximum block length or setting a block perimeter maximum.
 2. Prohibit the use of rolled curbs on all streets to increase the separation of cars and pedestrians and to increase pedestrian safety.
 3. Require street lighting in all residential and commercial districts to increase pedestrian activity and safety.

- j. GAP recommends residential porches for any SmartCode or Pattern Book. Porches promote good urban design; aesthetics, safety and a connection with the street.
- k. Target areas for more prohibitive sign ordinances. Build on the Johnston St. draft signage requirements. Monument signs add to the walking environment and are identifiable for pedestrians and automobiles.

5th Smart Growth Priority

Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

- a. Allowing various housing styles to be built within the same area can result in highly attractive neighborhoods. The mix of housing options is needed to accommodate the varied needs and changing preferences of residents in all stages of life.
- b. GAP recommends the LINC Steering Committee's recommendation for a four pronged parking strategy:
 - 1. Encourage street parking facilities.
 - 2. Off-street parking should be located behind buildings and screened from the street.
 - 3. Parking courts should be organized in the middle of the block and screened from the street.
 - 4. Downtown Lafayette and the Oil Center should have adequate parking garages to meet increasing density over time.
 - 5. There should be urban design guidelines so parking garages look like buildings and not garages.
- c. Include in the typical site plans alternatives for large commercial developments parking design that enables pedestrians walking between stores and from the adjacent neighborhoods. This can be achieved by the following:
 - 1. Parking behind the commercial development.
 - 2. Walkways between a maximum length plaza blocks for ease in shopping and access to parking.
 - 3. Walkway linkages with surrounding neighborhoods and reduce obstructions to neighborhoods like adding a gate to a perimeter fence.
 - 4. Provide direct connection from building entrance to public sidewalk.
 - 5. Provide for pedestrian connection between buildings on adjacent parcels.
 - 6. Buffer landscaping to be located so as not to preclude interparcel connections.
 - 7. Building façades should be broken at intervals by material or a change of dimension to reduce the big-box appearance.
 - 8. Use covered walkways, display windows, entry areas or awnings as part of the façade design.
 - 9. Entrances should be defined by gables, parapets and other distinguishing features.

10. Landscaped walkways should be provided to make walking through parking areas safer and more pleasant. Changes in surface texture, such as concrete or interlocking stone/brick, should be used to distinguish these walkways from the asphalt of the parking lot.
 11. Native shade trees should be planted throughout parking areas, providing one tree per ten parking spaces.
 12. Parking should be distributed in equal proportions around commercial development.
- d. Off-street parking is required for all new development. In certain commercial and manufacturing zones, parking may be provided off-site.
 - e. GAP is recommending reducing or eliminating parking from development projects through public-private partnerships to build parking facilities.

6th Smart Growth Priority

Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

- a. Implement a program to identify and utilize vacant and abandoned buildings and adopt special rehabilitation building codes to regulate the renovation of existing structures. The Housing Advisory Committee (HAC) could investigate an alternative building code that allows rehabilitation and renovation of buildings that does not become cost prohibitive if the owner is forced to meet the present building code.
- b. Make smart growth a priority in housing programs that utilize federal housing and community development block grant monies and other funds. This would require coordination with LCG Community Development Department and other non-profit housing providers like the Lafayette Housing Authority.
- c. GAP recommends the Administration support the BESThousing non-profit corporation to develop low cost housing in the context of smart growth principles in the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods.
- d. GAP recommends working with LUS to offer electricity subsidies for developers of multi-family residential units targeting areas of the City.
- e. Promote housing options for empty nesters, the elderly and young professionals. Housing options could include townhouses, carriage homes, garden-style apartments, senior housing and a co-housing community.
- f. GAP recommends revising the residential zones so that a range of housing types may be built within a single zone. Use average densities rather than restrictions on lot size to allow a number of smaller lots, zero lot line homes and town houses in lower density residential zones to give older resident options to stay in their neighborhood. This could be an alternative to the SmartCode in specific areas.
- g. The quality of neighborhoods requires a collaborative effort. A Comprehensive Plan considers law enforcement, transportation, economic development, schools, drainage, etc. Planners should coordinate with various departments or agencies to achieve these goals.

- h. GAP recommends the LINC Subcommittee recommendation that the Parish should enact a lighting ordinance specifically with provisions for exterior private, public and commercial lighting.
- i. Flexible zoning allows the development of “granny flats” or accessory buildings for older parents to stay in a neighborhood and have assistance from family members.
- j. Enact an inclusionary zoning ordinance for new housing developments. Through incentives, some portion of every new housing development beyond a given threshold size is offered at a price that is affordable to low-income residents.
- k. LCG and other municipalities should work with associations representing the development community on a regular basis to coordinate and establish methods and procedures to encourage lower land development costs and the construction of affordable housing.

7th Smart Growth Priority

Provide a Variety of Transportation Options

- a. GAP recommends that the Planning Commission only approve those subdivisions that have a grid street pattern or a pattern that creates multiple connections to adjacent areas, except in those situations where connectivity is physically impossible. This interconnectivity and route choice accommodates various modes of transportation.
- b. The availability of bicycle parking facilities and sheltered bus stops increases the use of alternative transportation modes and reduce reliance on single occupant cars. Developers of commercial and industrial properties should be encouraged to provide these amenities.
- c. Encourage transit as an alternative. Use ¼ mile pedestrian sheds to target higher densities and infill development and to evaluate Lafayette’s transit system.
- d. Lafayette Transit should incorporate straight runs on selected major arterials with standardized schedules.

8th Smart Growth Priority

Preserve Open Space, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas

- a. Promote public-private partnerships for the maintenance of parks and open space. Pursue agreements with partnering properties to contribute funds for the upkeep of public parks.
- b. Educate community groups and encourage them to join the DOTD’s adopt a highway program to reduce the amount of litter and increase civic pride in Lafayette Parish.
- c. Design and implement an information gathering and education program. For example, have community contests through the University for best park designs.
- d. Implement LINC’s recommendation that neighborhood parks/squares/green spaces should be planned and developed for both existing and future neighborhoods in the Parish and as a general rule within a ten minute walk from every residence.

- e. Use the planned construction of area wide retention/detention ponds as an opportunity to require open space for the residents.
- f. Preserve natural areas and agricultural lands by curbing suburban highway development, control of municipal services and other devices to eliminate leap frog development.
- g. In any incentive program for infill development within city boundaries consider parks, potential parks and environmentally sensitive areas.
- h. LCG should work with the School Board and other agencies to develop school grounds as community parks. This would involve fund raising by the kids, active neighborhood involvement and corporate support.
- i. Negotiate the purchase for an easement along the Vermilion River in new development applications for future bike and pedestrian walkways. The Bayou Vermilion has funds for the acquisition of land.
- j. Use of front-end planning and positive public relations to educate the developer/building community about building “green”. Green design has an number of advantages:
 1. Reduces construction costs, mainly by saving infrastructure and engineering expenses, site grading costs and by using passive heating and cooling techniques.
 2. Where initial costs are greater, long term costs are less usually within five years, offset by the savings in energy costs. Savings are seen through product durability, increased productivity and other long term benefits.
 3. Designing significant open space means that costly engineering structures for stormwater management can be replaced by much less expensive alternatives.
 4. Careful energy design enables downsizing of mechanical equipment.
 5. Environmentally sensitive developments have lower energy, water, maintenance and disposal costs. When operating costs decrease, the value of the development increases.
 6. Green rooftops absorb water and therefore can be used in the site stormwater strategy. Heating and cooling costs are reduced and a collection of green roof tops reduce urban heat on the ground.
- k. Promote Leadership in Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System in residential construction. LEED is a nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance buildings. This comprehensive approach of sustainability considers site development, water savings, energy efficiency, material selection and indoor environmental quality. LCG can lead by example with implementing LEED in civic building construction.
- l. GAP recommends the LINC Steering Committee’s recommendation that the City-Parish should raise funds to acquire, at a minimum, eight (8) twenty-five acre parcels for area parks in the following locations:
 1. North of Gloria Switch Rd., east of I-49 and west of Bayou Vermilion.
 2. West of N. University Ave., north of Ira St.
 3. West of Coulee Isle des Cannes, south of I-10 and north of Ridge Rd.
 4. South of E. Broussard Rd., east of Johnston St. and west of Bayou Vermilion.
 5. East of E. Broussard Rd., south of Vincent Rd. and west of Verot School Rd.
 6. South of Fortune Rd., west of LA Hwy 89 and east of Verot School Rd.

7. East of LA Hwy 89, south of Ambassador Caffrey South and west of Hwy 90.
8. The UL owned “horse farm” property on Johnston St.

9th Smart Growth Priority

Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

- a. Create community neighborhood squares and create active and secure open space. Build on the already existing public participation in festivals and outdoor concerts.
- b. Promote the Rosa Parks Transportation Center and incorporate public space in the Center’s site planning. An active multi-modal center may attract riders on the bus system.
- c. Promote the I-49 action plan in its development of public spaces.
- d. Encourage appealing galleries and courtyards for sitting, reading and socializing. In mixed-use developments encourage large display windows and walkways that attract pedestrians.
- e. Support the LNPCT’s efforts in the development of gateway alternatives to promote Lafayette at designated highway interchanges.
- f. Modify state funding processes and school site plan standards to preserve neighborhood schools and build new schools to a neighborhood/community standard.
- g. Simplify and expedite permitting regulations to allow vendors to offer sidewalk services and products considering that the vendors could not obstruct the sidewalks.
- h. Create an incentive package, including state tax credits, to encourage adaptive reuse of historic or architecturally significant buildings.
- i. Highlight cultural assets through public art and night events. Build on the existing success of Art Walk and the Festival Internationale de Louisiana.
- j. Prioritize public investment in the downtown area. The CIP should prioritize infrastructure improvement in the downtown area.
- k. Prioritize incentive packages on the downtown area. Encourage the restoration and/or conversion of downtown structures for residential use.
- l. All five municipalities outside the City of Lafayette should be encouraged to set goals and policies to designate their traditional town centers as unique asset of civic pride.

10th Smart Growth Priority

Encourage Community and Stake Holder Collaboration in Development Decisions

- a. Take advantage of the wealth of active citizenry built up through committee work.
- b. LCG and all local municipalities should work with the development community on a regular basis to coordinate and establish methods and procedures to increase the efficiency of development in the Parish.
- c. Work with the media to disseminate planning and development information on a consistent basis.

- d. Build on the Lincoln, Nebraska experience to visit other similar communities to educate elected officials, staff and committee members about planning initiatives elsewhere.
- e. Build on the relationship with UL's Community Design workshop to continue visioning exercises with neighborhoods through the use of charettes.
- f. Create and distribute free videos to illustrate the local planning process.
- g. Part of planning staff's duties should be to undertake fiscal impact studies to illustrate the benefits of smart growth.
- h. Increase collaboration between the Traffic and Transportation Department, its Planning Division, the PZC Department and the Public Works Department staff to achieve a smarter development pattern.