

LAFAYETTE IN A CENTURY **HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT** **Infill Development Policies**

1.0 Introduction

The process outlined in this Infill Development Policy is intended to provide the Planning Commission guidance in evaluating infill development from three perspectives. By evaluating infill development, fair and equitable reviews are produced for applicants and the general public. Smart growth principles are overarching planning goals being considered in this policy. Smart growth principles include the consideration of housing choice, mixed use, walkability, transportation options, and compact building design.

The three levels of policy evaluation are as follows:

- 1) The overall land use context of the City-Parish;
- 2) The compatibility of the development within the existing neighborhood; and
- 3) A site-specific review.

The intention of a three-level review is to look at a development proposal through many lenses. Development decisions impact the whole community and its vision for the future. The neighborhood and the adjacent properties are more directly impacted; therefore, the Planning Commission needs to consider that impact and balance possible conflicts between the levels of evaluation.

Deploying a three-level review requires taking discrete, incremental steps that can be gradually implemented over time. These steps would include: adoption of a Land Use Plan that will serve as the guiding document for development decisions; approval of this Infill Development Policy; the requirement of additional information from applicants for development applications; expanded staff circulation and review, the amendment of zoning and subdivision regulations, and, if desired by the community, an overhaul of development regulations that would conform with the adopted Land Use Plan.

The Infill Incentive Policy, a deliverable that will be considered separately, will address methods to encourage infill development and will identify target areas for certain types of infill development. The policy will include a toolkit of incentives that could be used to attract this infill development. It will be necessary to target areas to receive focused attention. The Land Use Plan indicates an Urban Core that should be targeted for smart growth initiatives and improved infrastructure.

2.0 Background

As the city grows and changes, development regulations need to adapt. The intention of the Land Use Plan is to guide and manage this growth. The development regulations need to conform to the Land Use Plan.

The current situation in Lafayette is far from this important comprehensive review. For example, there is zoning only in the city of Lafayette. Areas in the Parish and outside city limits have minimal land use restrictions. This has led to development that requires extraneous expenditures by local governments to provide adequate infrastructure.

The Lafayette Consolidated Government's Zoning Ordinance was implemented without the benefit of a Comprehensive Master Plan and continues to be amended on a case-by-case basis. This piecemeal approach to zoning makes it difficult to determine if the proposed use is consistent with the overall plan of Lafayette Consolidated Government. Development applications do consider whether the hard infrastructure, i.e. water, sewer, roads, is adequate, but again the decision making does not review based on the overall framework of a Land Use Plan. Currently, the review relies on determining conformity with the zoning and land uses of the adjacent properties. While this site specific review is important it should be made in the context of the community and neighborhood as a whole.

3.0 Three-Level Evaluation

3.1 Level 1 Review: City/Parish Wide

The type and location of infill development impacts the community as a whole. By using the Land Classification Plan in the Land Use Element (Section 4.2), it can be determined if the type of development is appropriate for the specific area. The Land Use Plan identifies areas in the City of Lafayette based on their density and built form. The plan also identifies targeted areas on arterial road corridors and nodal areas. Nodal areas are at the intersections of major and minor arterials based on the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Consolidated Thoroughfare Plan (CTP).

Development and rezoning cases should consider the Land Classification Map as a policy directive. The zoning ordinance should be amended to reflect the policies of the Land Classification Plan.

3.2 Level 2 Review: Neighborhood Scale Review

A review of the neighborhood should reflect the planning goal of "using existing municipal infrastructure and city services efficiently." Efficient use of existing infrastructure is financially beneficial to local governments. The neighborhood scale review also considers the functional classification of the street on which the development is located.

This review also considers neighborhood needs and whether the land use is transitional. The location and type of infill may improve the neighborhood's economic vitality and contribute to the redevelopment of an area.

The following information outlines the three criteria of the neighborhood review. These criteria include the appropriate use of hard and soft infrastructure, the surrounding area, the functional classification of the roadway, and the location and orientation of the proposed development.

3.2.1 Adequate Infrastructure

The type and location of infill development impacts the neighborhood and impacts city services. The evaluation of city services should include adequate provision of both hard and soft infrastructure.

Hard infrastructure includes services that directly serve a property including sewer, water, drainage, electricity, and roads. Soft infrastructure includes localized government services that serve neighborhoods like transit (can be hard or soft), schools, police, fire, libraries, parks, etc.

The consideration of soft services when deciding on infill development creates part of the overall picture of the desirability of the development. Higher densities support transit and the location of multi-family development is supported by the proximity of soft services like schools, libraries, health facilities, parks, and recreation areas.

Infill development in built up areas already accesses public services thereby limiting the need for new local revenue to be used for the provision of services. Depending on the type of use and density not all infill development will have adequate infrastructure. The evaluation considers where the infrastructure is underutilized and therefore a development with greater intensity would be encouraged.

3.2.2 Street Functional Classification Appropriateness

The location of a business or a housing type must be appropriate to the street on which it is located. The Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Consolidated Thoroughfare Plan (CTP) and its designation of road types should inform this decision. The Land Use Plan designates urban corridors with a quarter mile area of influence. If a use is not consistent with adjacent land uses the decision is informed by whether it is a local road or not. Another consideration is the capability of the street type to manage on-street parking for a higher density use. For example, many streets in Lafayette lack sidewalks have open ditches, and no curbing that makes street side parking difficult. This is an issue that needs to be addressed and results in uses that generate more traffic difficult to deal with on local streets.

3.2.3 Location

The location of the development within the context of a neighborhood is important in terms of servicing needs. For example, a neighborhood may need walkable retail or development close to an employment center. Redevelopment of "disinvested neighborhoods" may be a planning goal in a neighborhood plan. For example, new development could be targeted in areas where there are many vacant or blighted properties.

Location may determine whether the development is acting as a buffer or transition between two uses. For example, a multi-family development could provide a transition from a single-family land use to a commercial land use. In addition, the development may provide access to commercial areas opportunities by residents of a multi-family development. Commercial development may act as a transition between residential and light industrial uses.

3.3 Level 3 Review: Site Specific Review

The type and location of infill development impacts the adjacent land uses. This review can expand current zoning and the landscape ordinance to address issues of density, setbacks, height, and buffering options. A more extensive review would require performance-based tools that would include architectural control, pedestrian orientation, scale/density, and conformity with adjacent building styles.

The compatibility with the neighborhood at the site specific level considers many issues with possible mitigation in terms of building and site design, buffering, density, etc. all may be used to encourage integration with the streetscape, parking, and walkability.

3.3.1 Expand Current Zoning Requirements

These requirements may include height, density and buffering requirements between conflicting uses. The following guidelines might be applied:

- The overall height of building(s) should be no more than twice that of the adjacent buildings.
- The proposed development has density that fits the character of the area and softens the impact to surrounding properties.
- Berms, buffers, landscaping used to mitigate differing uses.
- The adjacent and proposed buildings have sufficient setbacks to mitigate differing land uses.

3.3.2 Performance Based Zoning

In the long term, it is recommended that a site-specific review would be a performance-based evaluation. The evaluation focuses on the building form and placement, architecture, and the architectural style of the adjacent properties. This would involve extensive changes in the application process that would require an approval based on the submission of a detailed site plan and architectural plans. The following considerations could be in this type of review:

- Porches, patios, storefronts, etc. along the street edge engage the pedestrian and make streets more attractive.
- The building(s) provide as many private, ground level entries as possible.
- Appropriate design treatment to each property line so no property line is treated as the rear.
- Parking lots are placed at the rear or the side of building(s).
- If the proposed building is more than twice the height, the developer has mitigated the transition by stepping back buildings or has built transitional buildings.
- The multi-family or commercial building looks like a single family detached house.