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Forums held for Lafayette's comprehensive plan



Forums held to discuss city's comprehensive plan

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LAFAYETTE — A plan that aims to shape the future of Lafayette in the coming decades will be unveiled at community forums this week.

Lafayette's "comprehensive plan" has been in the works since early 2012 — a guidebook of sorts addressing everything from traffic, the economy and public safety to arts, recreation and bicycle paths.

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The plan has hundreds of recommendations that grew out of a series of community forums over the past two years.

One common thread running throughout is the identification of sprawling residential developments in rural areas, and the plan calls for a renewed focus on developing and revitalizing the city's urban core.

The plan also recommends more parks, green space, sidewalks and bikeways, speaks to the need to capitalize on the region's rich culture and lays out strategies for diversifying and strengthening the local economy.

Residents can see how all that might happen at community forums set for Tuesday at the LITE Center in the University Research Park and Wednesday at the Acadiana Center for the Arts downtown.

The comprehensive plan is just that — a plan — and it carries no weight unless the Lafayette City-Parish Council approves the various policies and regulations that would be needed to implement the recommendations.

Some council members have already questioned some aspects of the plan, particularly recommendations that call for re-thinking how much the government spends on roads and water lines in rural areas, where infrastructure costs are high but tax collections are weak.

"My message to the council is this is the vision your constituents have come up with for where we should be 25 to 30 years from now," Durel said.

Durel said his hope is that the council will not try to pick apart the comprehensive plan and will instead worry about the details later, when they begin debating specific measures that would be needed to implement the plan.

"Adopting the vision doesn't mean it's going to happen," Durel said.

The community forum on the comprehensive plan at the LITE Center is scheduled for 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, and the forum at the Acadiana Center for the Arts is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday.

Previous forums were heavy on community input, but the forums this week are designed more to showcase the plan that emerged from that input.

The forums will be in an open-house style and residents may come and go as they please, said Lafayette City-Parish Chief Development Officer Kevin Blanchard.

At the LITE Center, residents can view presentations of the facility's high-end video system that will show how certain areas of the city might evolve over time with the addition of sidewalks, trees and other improvements.

Generally, such changes are illustrated by planners with two images — one before and one after all the improvements.

Blanchard said sometimes the difference in those images can be so drastic that it is difficult for people to conceive the change is even possible, but generally street scenes change slowly as different improvements are made over several years.

East Baton Rouge Parish Homicide Map
A map listing homicides or suspected homicides in EBR Parish.

Gas Prices in BR
Current gas prices in BR area.



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“You can see how areas can transform over time,” Blanchard said.

The development of the plan has been overseen by the firm of Wallace, Roberts & Todd, which was awarded a \$1.2 million contract by city-parish government to manage the process.

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