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City's vision statement released

Lafayette will become "one of the nation's most exceptional communities" if the vision detailed in the comprehensive plan, which will guide the community's growth for the next 20 years, comes to fruition.

"We celebrate what makes us great, and we acknowledge where we fall short," said John Fernsler, a project manager with Wallace Roberts and Todd, the firm hired to create Lafayette's comprehensive plan.

Fernsler presented the draft vision statement to the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Committee during its meeting Wednesday. Creating the vision statement is a major milestone for the comprehensive planning process, as it will ultimately shape the goals and projects outlined in the overall plan.

"The vision statement is an expression of the community's collective values and aspirations expressed by citizens," Fernsler said. "The purpose of the vision statement is to contrast where we want to be with the actual reality on the ground."

Fernsler said his firm used input from more than 1,065 Lafayette residents to create the draft vision statement. About 615 of those people attended one of the six public forums hosted in April, and another 450 people participated in more than 30 "meetings in a box" events, which allowed

people to host small-group meetings comparable to the larger public forums.

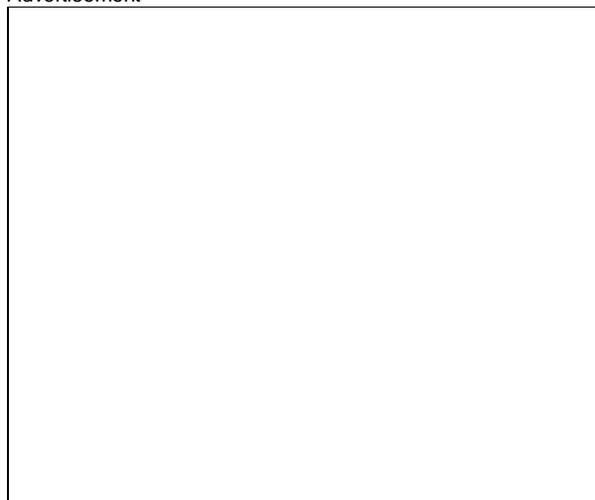
Fernsler said his firm will ultimately create an "action agenda" detailing what steps must be taken to achieve each part of the vision statement. He said specific projects and costs will be outlined in the final report, and politicians will ultimately decide what endeavors to pursue.

To ensure politicians try to achieve the community's collective goals outlined in the plan, Fernsler suggested an annual report card that voters can use to hold elected officials accountable on the plan's progress.

CPCAC members will amend the vision statement, and officials will unveil the final version of the vision statement during an open-house forum June 30.

According to input collected during stakeholder meetings, public forums and meetings in a box, Lafayette's primary strength is its cultural attributes, like the

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big-city amenities with a small-town feel, festivals, food, arts, Cajun influence, heritage, joie de vivre and tourism.

Lafayette's biggest weakness, according to the collected input, is its transportation infrastructure, like poor road conditions, lacking public transit options, bike lanes, pedestrian access and an interstate loop around the city.

The collected input also identified Lafayette's lack of a diverse economic base as its primary threat to the future and building off the community's existing cultural attributes as a primary opportunity for the future.

The draft vision statement begins with a preamble, which is intended to be read from the perspective of a Lafayette resident in 2035 who looks back at how the community grew.

"In 2035, Lafayette is one of the nation's most exceptional communities, renowned for its rich Cajun and Creole heritage, its creative scene and culture of **innovation**, and its authentic joie de vivre," the draft preamble reads.

"Fueled by its desirable quality of life, its highly educated work force and the community's entrepreneurial spirit, Lafayette has attracted substantial **investment** and growth. This growth has been managed and absorbed in a manner that allowed Lafayette to retain its small town neighborliness and unique way of life."

The comprehensive plan, sometimes called a master plan, will take 18 months to develop and is designed to handle all aspects of future growth, from police and fire departments to schools, traffic improvements and other infrastructure issues.

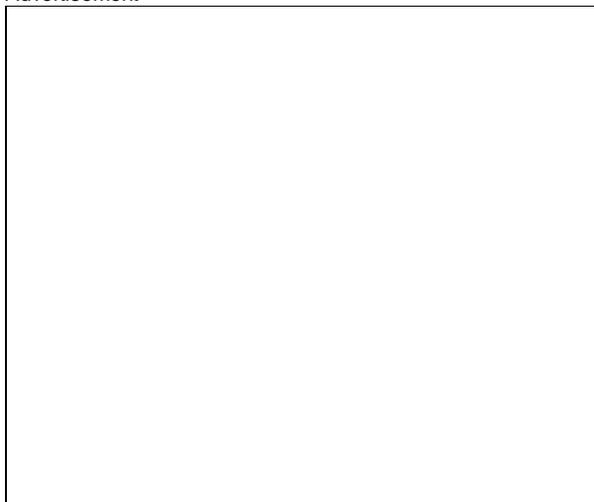
In December, Durel signed a \$1.2 million contract with the Philadelphia-based consulting firm to make the comprehensive plan. That cost will pay only to have the plan created.

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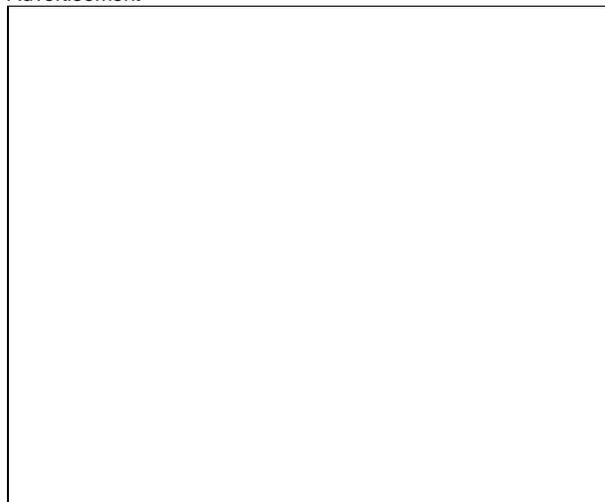
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