# Upcoming comprehensive plan forums 'put on hold' indefinitely

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Lafayette residents will not get help shape the community's future this month as local officials have canceled a round of public forums to collect citizen input for the comprehensive plan that were originally slated for the end of this month.

Kevin Blanchard, chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Committee, or CPCAC, said in an email Tuesday afternoon that the two open-house forums have been "put on hold" because "there was little to no funding left for public outreach efforts."

Blanchard said he requested the public forums "be delayed until this issue is settled" with funding in place to ensure officials can advertiser the events.

"This delay is a positive development," Blanchard said in the email. "Without effective public outreach to make sure that attendance for Round 3 events is strong, we will have wasted a good deal of time and effort."

The CPCAC will meet tomorrow night at 5:30 in the Rosa Parks Transportation Center to discuss the cancelation and how officials will handle the next round of public forums. Blanchard did not say when the forums will be reschedule.

"The city and consultant's willingness to delay Round 3 until we have an adequate and funded outreach effort in place signals their understanding and commitment to the idea that public participation has to be a priority," Blanchard said. "This is the public's plan."

The comprehensive plan, sometimes called a master plan, will address all aspects of Lafayette's future growth, from schools and fire stations to traffic problems and economic issues. About 1,500 residents shared ideas about Lafayette's future during the first two rounds of public forums.

Blanchard previously said the upcoming third round of public forums is "the most important of all the forums" and urged residents to participate in order to "make an impact on the future of Lafayette." The forums were initially scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 27 and Thursday, Feb. 28.

The consultants hired to create the plan will use input collected from those forums and online surveys to create several "alternate futures" of Lafayette that will be presented during the upcoming forums. Community members will learn about the costs of those visions and how they may be achieved before helping decide which portions should be included in the final plan's framework.

The third round of public forums will be open-house events where residents view a brief presentation about several visions of how Lafayette could look in 20 years and then cast votes to determine which ideas are most popular.

In the email, Blanchard said the subcontractor Sides and Associates is responsible for public outreach on the comprehensive plan project.

Lafayette Consolidated Government is paying Philadelphia-based consulting firm Wallace Roberts and Todd $1.2 million to create the plan. The Downtown Development Authority is paying LCG nearly $140,000 for a separate portion of the comprehensive plan that focuses on only the downtown area.

The consultants unveiled in November a community assessment, which shows problems created from a lack of zoning requirements in the unincorporated portions of the parish, shows the City of Lafayette's population isn't growing as quickly as other areas of the parish and illustrates the need for local governments to build new infrastructure, like roads and water supplies, as well as to beef up police and fire protection

and quality-of-life projects like parks.

The consultants will ultimately create not only the vision of how residents want Lafayette to be, but also will suggest policy proposals and possible paths to achieve those goals. Local government officials, primarily the City-Parish Council, will likely consider those proposals individually but may give the general plan its blessing to keep future politicians on its track.

Officials hope to release drafts of both the downtown and broader plans of next spring, and the finalized comprehensive plan will be unveiled before the end of 2013.

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