

ADVERTISEMENT



THURSDAY EDITION
February 13, 2014
Updated continually

THE ADVOCATE

Baton Rouge, LA
Overcast — 32°
Full forecast

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

OBITUARIES CLASSIFIEDS JOBS HOMES CELEBRATIONS WHEELS SHOP PETS NIE

Home NEWS NEW ORLEANS ACADIANA ASCENSION COLUMNISTS SPORTS EATPLAYLIVE ENTERTAINMENT PHOTOS BLOGS HELP

New Orleans Edition Today's News EatPlayLive Calendar AP Saints Pelicans New Orleans Facebook New Orleans Obituaries Weather

HOME SEARCH

Lafayette comprehensive plan expected in a few months

Document addresses sprawl, public safety

BY RICHARD BURGESS
rburgess@theadvocate.com
January 13, 2014

0 COMMENTS

Tweet 0

Share

0

0

Print article

- RESOURCES
- Letter to the editor
Send a letter to the editor to voice your opinion.
 - 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.

LAFAYETTE — What should Lafayette do about sprawl? How can the city be more friendly for bicyclists and pedestrians? What's the best strategy for improving public safety?

A group of city-parish officials, consultants and community members have been working since early 2012 to identity the critical issues facing Lafayette and to lay out a strategy to address them.

The resulting "**comprehensive plan**" has emerged in draft form and is expected to be finalized in the coming months — a thick document that will serve as a manual of sorts for the city's growth and development in the coming decades.

The plan touches on nearly every aspect of public life in Lafayette, from where to build new parks and roads to how to improve public safety, how to make the city more walkable, and how to make the culture more vibrant and the economy more robust.

In general, the plan is about creating the kind of place that keeps younger residents from searching for greener pastures while also attracting fresh minds to the city, said City-Parish **Chief Development Officer Kevin Blanchard**, who is helping oversee the planning process.

"We are attracting that next generation because we are building a place they want to live," he said.

The plan includes hundreds of recommendations that have grown out of community forums that began in 2012.

The rubber meets the road later this year when the comprehensive plan

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

SUBJECTS MATTER. CHECK OUT OUR

Blogs

BY ADVOCATE JOURNALISTS

SIGN UP FOR FREE

Text Alerts

AND GET THE NEWS WHILE IT HAPPENS.



makes its way to the **City-Parish Council**, the governing body that will have the ultimate say on whether to take action on those recommendations.

The decisions will not always be easy.

The most obvious impact could be on commercial and residential development, because the plan calls for reversing a trend of sprawl characterized by strong growth outside city limits while some areas within the city have declined.

Councilman William Theriot represents rural areas in southern Lafayette Parish that have seen some of the strongest growth and said he is wary of putting up any road blocks to new developments beyond the city limits.

“They build out here because, number one, they can afford to do it,” Theriot said. “We need to look at what restrictions or regulations may or may not be applied to developments in the unincorporated areas as opposed to within the city limits.”

The plan, in its current draft form, does not call for any outright bans or restrictions on rural development.

The plan does recommend yet-to-be-determined incentives to encourage redevelopment of blighted segments of the city and to encourage new development in some areas of the city to create denser, walkable areas that mix homes, apartments and businesses.

A few other recommendations, if acted upon, could work to discourage large-scale residential developments in the rural areas.

The plan recommends city-parish government consider policies that encourage the preservation of farm land in rural areas, such as tax breaks for working farms, an incentive that could work against economic forces that lead a farmer to sell to a residential developer.

The plan also recommends limiting new extensions of the city-owned water and sewer system beyond the city limits and focusing transportation dollars on areas the comprehensive plan targets for growth, as opposed to building roads that stretch out to isolated rural subdivisions far removed from the city’s core.

“The developers, they are watching this closely,” said Jay Castille, a developer who serves on the City-Parish Council.

Castille, when wearing his government hat, said he can see that city-parish government does not have the money to continue providing good roads, water lines and other infrastructure for new rural subdivisions.

But he said developers are simply gravitating toward the cheap land and that rural residents should know that when they buy a lot in the country, they might not receive the same level of service as city dwellers.

Castille said most developers recognize the potential problems of sprawl.

“They know something needs to be done, but they want to be careful,” Castille said.

Blanchard envisions a focus less on regulations and more on incentives



and a government more willing to work with developers who want to do quality projects in city areas targeted for growth.

“It’s to make it easier to do the type of development and redevelopment that fits the community’s priorities,” he said.

Councilman Kenneth Boudreaux, whose district takes in a big chunk of north Lafayette, said he welcomes an interest in new development in his district and in redevelopment of blighted areas.

But Boudreaux also said he would like to proceed slowly and ensure that any push for denser, mixed-used developments doesn’t upset the character of what’s already in place.

Boudreaux said he is more interested in the parts of the comprehensive plan that address public safety, arguing that improving street safety and enhancing law enforcement could go a long way toward brightening the prospects for areas of the city that have been passed over for quality new developments.

“How do we make people comfortable?” he said.

Still uncertain is a timeline for turning the comprehensive plan into action, assuming council buy-in.

Most of the critical elements would require changes in the way city-parish government does business — some minor, some major.

“What we have to do is identify, in the next couple of months, the low-hanging fruit,” Blanchard said.

MORE FROM THE ADVOCATE

MORE FROM OUR PARTNERS

- Beatles item rumored to have hung in Baton Rouge bar
- Llorens out as SUBR chancellor
- Sen. Rand Paul sues Obama over NSA surveillance
- James Gill: Crooks sometimes sell out for very little
- Tony’s Seafood legal dispute boiling over
- Senator’s Son, 26, Arrested in Colorado on Drug Charge
- Celebrity house for sale: Tim McGraw and Faith Hill
- U.S. Businessman Accused of Being Crime Boss Stands Trial in China
- Pippa’s Little Black Dress Upstages Kate
- Slavery hidden in our products

Recommended by 



Also post on Facebook

 Facebook social plugin

Contact Us



