

## **2024 Annual Report**

PlanLafayette is now 10 years old and has seen significant momentum and implementation of key action items. A major plan amendment was undertaken in 2021.

To ensure the plan remains relevant and useful to the community, the City and Parish Planning Commissions and the Community Development and Planning Department, on behalf of the City and Parish Councils and Mayor-President, will monitor plan implementation progress annually. The preparation of annual reports was recommended in the PlanLafayette comprehensive plan document.

The following is the 2024 Annual Report prepared by the Community Development and Planning Department with assistance from staff across Lafayette Consolidated Government.

PlanLafayette has 463 action items. In addition to the number of items, all LCG departments and dozens of external agencies are involved with the implementation. At the time of this report, 322 action items have either been completed or work has begun. The major amendment removed 10 completed action items for PlanLafayette. Staff has organized this report by summarizing ongoing activities by projects and/or themes.

Each theme is generally described with the following information:

- Initiative name and summary
- Plan challenges addressed
- Action item reference (from the plan)
- Current tasks

**Final Report Delivered to the City Planning Commission**

**January 27, 2025**

**Final Report Delivered to the Parish Planning Commission**

**February 10, 2025**

### **Projects:**

The 2024 Annual Report structure focuses on six themes. This year's six highlights are:

- Lafayette Development Code/Housing Choice and Infill Initiative
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Corridor Planning
- Bike and Pedestrian Planning
- Arts and Culture Initiatives
- LCG Departmental Initiatives

### **Amendments:**

There are no proposed amendments in this year's annual report.

**Lafayette Development Code (LDC)**

Adopted by the then City-Parish Council on May 5, 2015 the UDC, now LDC, consolidated land development regulations, integrated standards and procedures, and streamlined the review process needed for new development. PlanLafayette served as the guidebook for creating regulations and making decisions for the city and parish. To effectuate plan implementation, the LDC was prepared immediately following the adoption of PlanLafayette. The LDC has been amended numerous times since adoption—with each batch of amendments focusing on the smooth administration of the code in a way that protects property while also creating a development-friendly environment.

**Challenges addressed in the plan:**

- Major roadway corridors are flanked by segregated, single-use commercial development creating unappealing edges to residential neighborhoods without offering substantive choices for amenities or services.
- Housing inventory that consists primarily of single-family homes. Greater diversity of housing choices is desirable to meet the needs of all types of households, especially those with very low incomes, single-person households, retirees, and young adults and families.

**Action items addressed:**

- 1.1.1 Review zoning classifications for consistency with the FLUM (Future Land Use Map).
- 1.1.3 Revise the zoning ordinance to allow and encourage mixed land uses and incentivize pedestrian and transit friendly development.
- 1.1.4 Revise the zoning ordinance to include design standards for new development that address quality, street frontage, building entrances, utility placement, and scale.
- 3.13.1 Establish regulatory and design guidelines for infill/redevelopment housing developments that ensure compatibility with surrounding properties.
- 10.1.6 Create incentives and develop Low Impact Development criteria for residential and commercial developments.

Planning staff has continued administrative rezonings. An upwards of 76 parcels have been administratively rezoned in 2024 that address areas where uses are not consistent with the current zoning due to the elimination of cumulative zoning, and/or hard edges exist between heavy commercial zoning and single-family residential, and/or employing more neighborhood friendly, mixed-use zoning districts, and/or providing for more housing choice, and/or reducing the amount of heavy commercial and industrial zoned land. As a result of this review, staff has continued a consistent administrative rezoning procedure in an effort to more closely align the zoning map with appropriate and likely future development in those areas.

Key initiatives in 2024, included the continuation of rezoning Congress St. as it passes Downtown, to plan for more walkable uses, more housing choice and density, and to plan for the Congress St. Streetscape Project. The other notable administrative rezoning was in Freetown Port-Rico where staff recommended rezoning to a mixed residential zoning in order to address an area of industrial zoning, common in older parts of town near the railroad tracks. The existing land use was residential and continuing the existing land use was impossible in an industrial zoning district. The recommended zoning also plans for more density and housing choice. Finally, staff successfully downzoned a part of Simcoe St. as an effort to plan for appropriate uses and protect existing uses near the federally historic designated neighborhood of Sterling Grove.

Staff has continued its work to increase housing choice by implementing more Residential Mixed zoning. Through the continued facilitation of the Infill/Housing Choice Subcommittee, an initiative to address obstacles to infill development and different housing types, the committee's first step was the recommendation of some LDC amendments. The amendments included increasing the size of allowable accessory dwelling units, increased density in the Mixed Neighborhood (MN) zoning district, and expanded the housing types allowed in Residential Single Family 2 (RS-2). This created another transitional zoning that

allows single family, duplexes, townhomes by right but not multi-family. This zoning option is particularly needed for older parts of town where lot sizes are small and where the zoning is currently Single Family 1 (RS-1).

### **Neighborhood Revitalization**

PlanLafayette recognizes the importance of protecting and revitalizing our urban core neighborhoods. The neighborhood planning program has connected with key communities that are vulnerable or have been identified as a growth area to implement necessary action items that preserve identity and character while strengthening quality of life. Through the planning staff and the coterie, many community meetings occur monthly that generate actions to identify and implement strategies for infrastructure upgrades within neighborhoods. Staff has many one-on-one, community, and coterie meetings to facilitate partnerships and mobilize resources on strategic long-range planning action items such as improving community appearance, promoting awareness of a neighborhood's history, redeveloping vacant lots, improving pedestrian safety, and attracting new businesses to serve residents in neighborhoods. Through the neighborhood planning effort, planning staff has consistently facilitated charrette-style meetings to ensure adequate neighborhood input. Staff has continued the facilitation of coterie budgets and administration and the annual award of neighborhood grants.

The coterie O&M funds are dedicated, non-competitive funds for coterie cohort members to tackle maintenance and resident activation in their respective communities. There is great momentum across our urban core neighborhoods to enhance engagement and development efforts. Coterie O&M funds were used to improve and empower the community in many ways, including public realm clean-ups, beautification events, resident engagement, neighborhood identity elements, and culturally significant visuals that reinforce history and a sense of place.

LCG's planning staff continues to process adjudicated properties through the disposition process. Given the staff allocation, this process has been reactive not proactive. In 2023, LCG, McComb-Veazey, and Lafayette Habitat for Humanity created a partnership to develop the Bulk Adjudicated Property Disposition Pilot in the McComb-Veazey Neighborhood. Through a collaborative and strategic process, with McComb-Veazey residents and stakeholders and Habitat for Humanity, 20 properties have been packaged to be positioned for redevelopment for various uses throughout the neighborhood's most visible and meaningful corridors. In 2024, a majority of the pilot properties are now in the hands of the McComb Veazey non-profit. LCG allocated funds for legal fees to assist with this effort.

Challenges addressed in the plan:

- Preserving the character of older, historic neighborhoods while new development occurs – and maintaining older housing in existing neighborhoods.
- Lack of a streamlined process for reducing the number of adjudicated properties in the parish and bringing them into productive use.
- Deteriorating infrastructure, vacant and blighted properties, and poorly maintained streetscape and housing in some older and historic neighborhoods.
- Obsolescence and disinvestment in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Action items addressed:

- 1.2.5 Address vacant lots with a streamlined adjudicated property policy and procedures to protect the historic character of older neighborhoods.
- 1.13.1 Create an expedited process and streamline notice procedure for returning adjudicated properties, which represent a challenge in bringing a community's abandoned and dilapidated structures, to commerce.
- 1.13.4 Utilize neighborhood planning to help identify, prioritize, and implement redevelopment within neighborhoods.
- 3.8.4 Promote the preservation of existing housing stock, particularly of historical and cultural value, by seeking funds and developing new programs to assist qualified families to rehabilitate existing housing units.

- 4.4.3 Celebrate the cultural history of Lafayette by increasing community awareness through the design of public projects and facilities such as parks, plazas, and community buildings.

#### Current key neighborhood initiatives:

- The community grant project fund is an annual competitive grant cycle that accepts applications from community focused groups for small-scale project implementation that provides neighborhood benefit. Staff has completed our third call for projects. Twelve projects have been awarded to this date.
- To date 159 properties have gone to the City and Parish Councils and have successfully been disposed of and are back into commerce as part of LCG's adjudication property process.
- Planning staff assisted Freetown Port-Rico Coterie with a charrette style public meeting in 2024. LCG will work with FPR in 2025 to update their neighborhood plan based on this public feedback.

#### **Corridor Planning**

Like many communities, Lafayette has a transportation system that remains highly automobile dependent, with low rates of transit ridership, and inadequate facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. In 2018, LCG's then City-Parish Council adopted a Complete Streets Policy to set the course for all future roadways to be designed to be multi-modal. Planning staff has worked the last few years on some notable corridor plans which focus on both land use, safety, beautification, stormwater detention, and road design. Corridor planning initiatives attempt to more effectively pair land use, urban, suburban, or rural with appropriate land uses and site layout.

The corridor studies that are part of this report are generally the result of the Evangeline Corridor Initiative (ECI). The Evangeline Corridor Initiative examined the neighborhoods impacted by the I-49 Connector project, and through public input, the resulting plan offers recommendations for neighborhoods as well as how the neighborhoods will interface with the interstate project, e.g. The Grand Boulevard. The Evangeline Corridor Initiative concluded its planning work with more than 40 catalyst projects recommended, approximately 23 of which have some work that has already begun.

The City and Parish Councils previously funded design/construction dollars for Congress St. and 12<sup>th</sup> St. Design continues for Congress St. and 12<sup>th</sup> St./Surrey St. has been awarded to a contractor and construction is to commence in 2025. Planning staff facilitated the consultant's work to develop the University Plan which was completed in late summer of 2018. LCG applied for, and was awarded, a BUILD grant under the Trump Administration. Ten million dollars were awarded and combined with local and state funding of \$6 million. The first phase of the University Corridor project construction commenced in 2023.

#### Challenges addressed in the plan:

- Lack of tree canopy and functional landscaping along corridors to provide physical buffers and visual screening detracts from the overall experience and character of the community.
- Major roadway corridors are designed nearly exclusively for automobiles – decreasing walkability – and for the provision of public utilities which results in unappealing visual clutter that detracts from the community's overall sense of place.

With the low cost of re-striping, the Department of Traffic, Roads, and Bridges continues to actively look to transform roads that have been overbuilt for urban environments and over-capacity for the current traffic volumes, e.g. wide lanes, too many lanes, unnecessary turn lanes, etc., into roads that slow traffic down by using narrower lanes, on-street parking, and/or accommodate bike lanes.

Finally, in 2023, the Administration formed a committee to oversee the work of developing a Gateway Plan for our interchange entrances off I-10. Subsequently, funding was allocated, to begin implementing Phase 1. A landscape architect was hired in

2024 to begin designing for the construction of the landscaping along the interstate. PlanLafayette identifies the importance of gateways to the city, districts, neighborhoods, etc. Gateways create a sense of place and quality, pride of ownership, conveys community image, and helps elevate a community's identity.

Action items addressed:

- 1.4.2 Improve the appearance of gateways to the city of Lafayette from I-10/I-49 intersection.
- 2.5.1 Prioritize the mixed-use corridors illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (e.g., Johnston Street, University Avenue) for complete streets improvements and coordinated streetscape improvements.
- 2.6.3 Prioritize the identification of University/I-10 Gateway and corridor as the entrance to the University Corridor, UL, and the heart of the city, downtown.
- 4.9.1 Improve gateways into the city of Lafayette and downtown, including the I-10/I-49 North Gateway and Johnston Street, with coordinated streetscape improvements, signage, and amenities.
- 6.2.3 Develop detailed corridor plans for specific/identified roadways in targeted areas.
- 6.4.2 Develop a streetscape classification system and associated design standards that emphasize multimodal facilities, landscape design criteria (with emphasis on native plant materials), and amenities (street furniture, pedestrian scaled lighting, wayfinding signage, and bus stops) that enhance the safety and comfort of roadways for all users.
- 8.14.1 Improve physical streetscape connections from UL along Johnston Street, University Avenue, Bertrand Drive, and St. Landry Street to create a stronger visual relationship with the campus, improve gateways, and create more walkable connections between campus and the surrounding community.

Current key initiatives:

- Contract awarded for the construction of 12<sup>th</sup> and Surrey Sts. This included separately funded projects including intersection and spot improvements.
- Johnston St. continues to be a challenge, particularly through Downtown and UL's campus. The Administration released a RFQ in 2024 for planning for Johnston St. A preliminary study of Johnston St. as it passes by downtown was previously completed using ECI funding for Johnston St. improvements.

**Bike and Pedestrian Planning**

Traffic congestion cannot be solved by simply building more road capacity because of limited funding and what is called induced demand. Induced demand means that improved roadway capacity inevitably attracts additional traffic because if the capacity of a roadway is increased, motorists will change their routes to take advantage of the improved roadways. Bike and pedestrian planning attempts look at residential density, land use, safety, etc. to develop facilities to give the community an option other than driving. Lower income census tracts tell us that up to 20% of households in our community do not own cars. Transit, walking and biking then become the only way to get goods and services and access places of employment.

The Bicycle Lafayette Plan's goals include safety, interconnectedness, comfortability, equity, high standards, and recreation. The new Administration seeks to accommodate an urban core connected network with off road urban trails, that includes a 12 ft. shared use path to achieve the most comfortable, safe, and connected trail. As part of the design of these facilities, consideration is made to include recommended amenities, techniques and safety precautions such as wayfinding signage, street furniture, curb bulb outs, rapid flash beacons, mid-block crossings, protected intersection design for bikeways, hybrid pedestrian signals, ADA Ramps, etc.

Bertrand Dr., long a desired connection between Cajun Field and Moncus Park, is a priority for the new Administration. The success of Moncus Park, with limited parking, is an additional reason to increase bike and pedestrian options to access the park. Bertrand Dr. was reimagining ten years ago with a Better Block event that culminated in a road diet from four lanes to three

lanes. Previous design has been revisited and public meetings with the business/property owners and the Holden Heights neighborhood began in 2024. The current concept anticipates two lanes with an off road urban shared use path on the west side and reconstruction of the sidewalk on the east side. LUS is working to revamp the electrical grid along the street which includes burying some feeder lines.

Planning staff and Public Works continue to manage federal transportation funding and apply for funding, including Urban Systems, Recreational Trails, and Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funding.

**Action items addressed:**

- 2.2.3 Establish a stronger pedestrian and transit connection between UL, downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- 6.8.1 Plan, develop and maintain a comprehensive pedestrian, bicycle, and trail system network, with emphasis on growth areas, as an integral part of the regional transportation network.
- 6.8.2 Expand pedestrian and bicycle connectivity with new designated routes, enhanced or new signage, and connectivity.
- 6.8.5 Provide sidewalks, trails, and/or bicycle routes that link residential concentrations with transit stations, mixed-use activity centers, shopping districts, recreational facilities, employment centers, and major public facilities, and provide for pedestrian and bicycle circulation within mixed-use centers.
- 9.2.2 Create a network of trails and bikeways that link parks and recreation centers throughout Lafayette.
- 9.2.3 Create an integrated greenway network, connecting with the Park at the Horse Farm property as a key location.
- 9.2.5 Improve safety on off-street trails using lighting, directional signage, and ongoing maintenance of trails and surrounding landscape.

**Current key initiatives:**

- Congress St., as it passes downtown, is being designed to make permanent the restriping through a streetscape improvement project.
- The rails-to-trails project that connects downtown to Pont Des Mouton has come the Phase 1 (Gilman Rd. to I-10) environmental and land appraisal. The railroad company is being notified of LCG's interest in purchasing this property. Ongoing legal work regarding acquisitions is required.
- LCG is working with UL to undertake a shared use path and ADA improvements along St. Mary between Johnston St. and St. Landry.
- MLK sidewalks and drainage improvement design was completed in 2024 and is being packaged to bid out in 2025.
- TAP funding was awarded for a project on Eraste Landry Rd., along UL's solar facility, that connects UL's shared use path on Cajundome Blvd. to W. St. Louis St. into the Audubon Oaks and Oaklawn Subdivisions.
- The locally funded Phase 1 of the Northside High sidewalk network was completed in 2024 and included an off road connection between Dunand St. and Louisiana Ave. and the completion of the network on Alexander and Buick Sts. Phase 2 and 3 are in design and are funded through federal grants with a local twenty percent match.
- The Public Works Department continues with the design of sidewalks for targeted projects including Carmel sidewalks, S. College sidewalks, and 6th St. adjacent to Rosa Parks Transportation Center.

**Arts and Culture**

Many communities have public art programs that incorporate publicly accessible art as a place making tool but also incorporated into their capital projects. Public art directly influences how people see and connect with a place, providing access to aesthetics that support its identity and making residents feel appreciated and valued. Lafayette is rich with a vibrant arts community and providing a public art ecosystem supports artists and other creatives by validating them as important

contributors to the community. Public art is also used as a tool for slowing traffic, eg. intersection art, and slowing pedestrians down to enjoy their space and providing a positive cultural experience.

City and Parish councils funded, through the ECI effort, an additional \$100,000, to implement public art in the community. Previous funding was used for art on traffic boxes facilitated by a cooperative endeavor agreement between the Acadiana Center for the Arts (AcA) and LCG. The agreement allows for the AcA to select the artists, prepare the template, pay the artist, and install the art. This additional funding is being used to implement a public art program through the formation of a public art network that would serve to select public art in the future. This network includes both stakeholders in the field but also council appointments and coterie/neighborhood representatives. LCG will continue to work with the AcA to develop public art as part of this program.

**Action items addressed:**

- 2.04 Incorporate an aesthetic into the built environment that exemplifies Lafayette’s regional character, history, and culture.
- 2.06 Integrate architectural and landscape features and/or public art such that they serve as gateways to important districts and enhance the overall community aesthetic.
- 2.2.2 Develop an activity plan for resident and visitors downtown in order to take full advantage of downtown culture and amenities.
- 4.09 Strengthen gateways and placemaking within Lafayette commercial centers and neighborhoods with public art and coordinated streetscape elements.
- 4.9.4 Encourage the use of local history themes in public art projects, when appropriate.
- 4.11 Communicate the value of arts and culture to the Lafayette community.
- 4.5.3 Design and install outdoor interpretive and wayfinding signage highlighting historical resources and supporting self-guided tours.
- 4.8.3 Consider funding mechanisms for a coordinated public art program downtown.

**Current Key Initiatives:**

- Planning staff work to amend the cooperative endeavor agreement to further solidify the public art initiative.
- Artists were selected for additional traffic art boxes to be installed in 2025.
- The Administration contracted with Basin Arts to work with the community to develop targeted public art in the new University Corridor.
- LCG announced the public art installation by Marc “Fresh” Verret in the new Thomas Skate Park skate board facility and invited community input.

**African American Heritage Trail**

As recommended by the Lafayette Preservation Commission planning staff secured \$100,000 in local funds and was awarded a grant from the State to develop an African-American Heritage Trail. This included the installation of six totem signs with a small building history in both English and Kouri Vini, a GIS story map with more site and historic information, pictures and recorded narrative. Phase 1, installed in 2024, highlights the rich African American heritage of Lafayette through thoughtfully-designed signage and interactive elements at seven local sites. The project was made possible by the dedicated efforts of community members who participated in workshops, meetings, and brainstorming sessions, providing invaluable input throughout the design process.

**Wayfinding**

LCG continues to follow the wayfinding family standards as completed through the ECI effort. Wayfinding signage is at the pedestrian scale and is important for community identity, branding, and for directions for tourists. The Downtown area was

the first roll out of the totem (directional) and identification signs. Gradually, signs have been added for urban core neighborhoods and a couple parks. Funding was allocated for the next round of signs which has been contracted in late 2024. The majority of these signs are for park identification.

Action items addressed:

- 4.5.3 Design and install outdoor interpretive and wayfinding signage highlighting historical resources and supporting self-guided tours.
- 5.6.2 Improve support services for a better visitor experience, including wayfinding signage, self-guided tours, lodging, parking, dining, packaged visitor guide videos for local hotels, increase quality taxi availability, and transit shuttles for major events.

#### **Other notable LCG Departmental Initiatives:**

##### **Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture (PARC)**

Construction was completed in 2024 of the Brown Park Baseball and Softball Super Complex. This project was much-anticipated and will bring about major improvements and benefits to the community. The complex features first-class fields for youth baseball and softball, with four improved tournament-quality fields. In 2024, the Administration hosted a public meeting to get input on the park and any desired additional features. The complex will offer expanded and ample parking, larger spectator areas with added shade, plentiful and modern restrooms, pavilions, an inner park connector walkway, walking/jogging trails, and playgrounds.

Construction was completed in 2024 of the Thomas Skate Park. This project, a \$670,000 investment, demonstrates LCG's commitment to enhancing recreational spaces. The park features components of the skate park that includes 11,000 sq. ft. of concrete, an elevated street course, a 6-9 ft. bowl, mini ramp, and street plaza. The park also includes sustainability in design demonstrated in swales, retention ponds, and LED lighting.

##### **The Playground at Parc Sans Souci**

The Playground at Parc Sans Souci was constructed in 2024 and was privately funded, in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Lafayette Unlimited, LCG, and the Community Foundation of Acadiana. This project was originally planned for the corner at Congress St. at the Main Library. With the additional residential units built and planned for Downtown a children's park was desired for potential young families. The park turned eight parking spaces into a 5,000 sq. ft. playground that caters to all ages and abilities.

Action items addressed:

- 8.7.3 Promote participation in recreational programs for all ages through specials events and outreach through the media, President's Office, Parks and Recreation Department, health organizations, and LPSS.
- 9.1.6 Develop new parks and expand existing parks to address service gaps and recommended growth areas, and plan for long term population growth and demographic that may impact service needs.
- 9.3.1 Partner with health providers and advocacy organizations to develop opportunities for passive and active recreation that is consistent with the needs of different user groups including – children, special needs communities, and seniors.

##### **Emergency Preparedness Office**

The Administration named Chad Sonnier as the new Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (OHSEP) in 2024. The office is tasked with leading Lafayette Parish's emergency preparedness efforts, coordination among federal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector during times of crisis. The office

will work on enhancing collaboration before, during and after critical emergency events to ensure the safety and resilience of the community.

Action items addressed:

- 6.12.1 Maintain a parishwide designated evacuation plan in concert with statewide evacuation plan.
- 6.12.3 Develop a parishwide designated evacuation routes and shelter locations map.
- 6.12.4 Continuously educate all residents about designated evacuation routes and install evacuation routes and install evacuation route signs along the designated evacuation routes were missing.