

## **2021-2022 Annual Report**

PlanLafayette is now eight years old and has seen significant momentum and implementation of key action items. A major plan amendment was undertaken in 2021. Review of the action items was completed at this time so as a result of this work annual reports were suspended.

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-Parish Council and Mayor-President, will monitor plan implementation progress annually.

The following is the 2021-2022 Annual Report prepared by the Community Development and Planning Department with assistance from staff across Lafayette Consolidated Government.

PlanLafayette has more than 450 action items. In addition to the number of items, all LCG departments and dozens of external agencies are involved with the implementation. As of the time of this report, 299 action items have either been completed or work has begun. The major amendment removed 10 completed action items for PlanLafayette. The staff has organized this report by summarizing ongoing activities by projects and/or themes. This report is accompanied by a spreadsheet with activity comments on all 464 action items.

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**

**Sept 19, 2022**

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

**Oct 10, 2022**

### **Projects:**

The Annual Report structure focuses on five themes. The matrix of action items for PlanLafayette has been reviewed for the purposes of this annual report and is submitted as part of this report. This year's five highlights are:

- Lafayette Development Code/Administrative Adjudication Bureau
- Refining Government
- Neighborhood Revitalization/ECI Efforts
- Corridor Planning
- Bike and Pedestrian Planning

### **Amendments:**

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

### **Lafayette Development Code (LDC)**

Adopted by the City-Parish Council on May 5, 2015 with an effective date of December 7, 2015, the UDC 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 UDC was prepared immediately following the adoption of PlanLafayette. The UDC has been amended numerous times since adoption—with each batch of amendments focused on the smooth administration of the code in a way that protects property while also creating a development-friendly environment. A major amendment, creating the Lafayette Development Code (LDC), was completed under the Guillory Administration in December of 2020. Staff met with key stakeholders, interest groups and held public meetings to address outstanding issues in the former UDC.

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.

Over the last several years, the staff has utilized the tools in the LDC to address the following action items in PlanLafayette:

- 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 (860 parcels have been administratively rezoned since the beginning of 2019) 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.

### **Administrative Adjudication Bureau (AAB)**

Enforcing property standards and building codes has been difficult in the past. LCG had few tools to compel compliance. Letters would be sent out to property owners but compliance was tough because often it was hard to prosecute through civil court. In addition, there were no fines in place or ability to collect fines. The Administrative Adjudication Bureau was established in June of 2021 to adjudicate cases brought forward by LCG with a quasi-judicial process that requires that LCG make a sound case for prosecution. At the time of this publication, the AAB has heard 67 cases regarding code/zoning compliance, 20 cases regarding property standards, and 13 junk vehicle cases. One challenge acknowledged in PlanLafayette is the deteriorating infrastructure, vacant and blighted properties, and poorly maintained streetscape and housing in some older and historic neighborhoods.

Action items addressed:

- P 1.13 Improve code enforcement of blighted or deteriorated properties that degrade the character of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- 3.3.2 Implement stricter code enforcement.
- P 3.3 Improve housing in blighted conditions and encourage residents to maintain and improve their homes.

At this point, cases are prompted by a complaint-driven process. It is intended after the process is well established and staffed sufficiently that the AAB would be more strategic, working with planning and our neighborhood partners, in its application.

### **Refining Government**

PlanLafayette consists of many goals, policies, and actions, most can be traced back to a handful of overarching themes originating from the Lafayette 2035 Vision, and “Refine Government” was one of the four big ideas that framed the plan to the public. In implementation, it provides a useful framework for those initiatives which recognize the community’s need to do more with less and leverage public resources whenever possible.

In 2021-22, the largest initiatives relevant to “refining government” were related to the departmental reorganization that took place with the new budget year. This is the second reorganization that has occurred in the department since the adoption of PlanLafayette.

The current reorganization was focused on streamlining departmental operations by merging former Community Development and former Development and Planning Department for the benefit of the department’s customers—both neighborhoods and low-income constituents. This reorganization of the department met several goals simultaneously:

- Alignment of LCG planning and grant efforts.
- Improved collaboration among staff who work on similar projects like grant funding, project planning and development, neighborhood revitalization, home rehabilitation, and educational classes.
- Managing consultant effort to assist with completing grant applications and managing awarded grants related to the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

This reorganization also set the stage for stronger implementation of several key action items in the plan:

- 1.17.2 Seek out grants and technical assistance programs to help implement the recommendations of the comprehensive plan and the FLUM.
- 1.17.3 Coordinate departmental grant writing efforts and expand the current efforts of Community Development and Planning Department staff grant writers to include all areas of the plan, including community and economic development assistance and natural resource conservation.

In addition, MyGovernmentOnline (MGO) is the new software that the CDP department has implemented in 2021 for contractors and residents seeking permits and requesting inspections to now easily submit applications and plans online. The new Lafayette Consolidated Government MGO platform is more convenient, efficient, and time-saving. The new online service is a one-stop shop for residents and contractors. It saves time from traveling to the office to fill out a paper application. Shortly after the MGO platform was implemented, LCG launched the Permit and Planning Guide which is a one-of-a-kind online tool to help residents, commercial developers and residential builders to navigate required permits and get estimates for LCG permitting costs. At this time, Lafayette is the first and only municipality in the state to offer this type of amenity to its citizens.

### **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, nearly a dozen community meetings occur monthly that generate actions to identify and implement strategies for infrastructure upgrades within neighborhoods. Fifteen one-on-one's occur monthly via teleconferences and/or in-person 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. Two key accomplishments of our neighborhood planning program are the coterie cohort and community project grant fund.

- The coterie cohort adopts neighborhoods who have exhibited a need for dedicated government fiscal and staff resources. Five neighborhoods are currently in our cohort and benefit from capacity building, capital project development and support, dedicated planning liaison, and annual meeting facilitation.
- 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. Our inaugural grant recipients were La Place Coterie and McComb-Veazey Community Development Corporation. They were awarded funds to construct an accessibility ramp to increase access to a neighborhood park and neighborhood main street signage for neighborhood identity, respectively.

The neighborhood planning program continues to make great strides with several initiatives on the horizon including our recently allocated Coterie Operations and Maintenance Fund. These 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.

The Louisiana Cultural Districts Program was created by Act 298 of the 2007 Regular Session of the legislature. In addition to the Downtown Development District, Lafayette has submitted and approved four other cultural districts: McComb-Veazey, approved in 2018, and three approved in 2019: The Oil Center, Greater Freetown, and University Gateway Cultural Districts. The primary purpose of the Cultural Districts program is to spark community revitalization based on cultural activity through two primary tax incentives, 1) a sales tax exemption on the sale of certain original works of art, and 2) income and corporate franchise tax credits for eligible expenses incurred during the rehabilitation of certain historic structures. In addition, planning staff worked with a consultant to designate two districts for the national historic register: Oil Center and Le Centre (Downtown) in 2020.

The Community Development and Planning Department staff are all actively involved in various strategies and efforts to revitalize Lafayette's neighborhoods. The Planning Division has continued to support the neighborhood planning effort through continued project implementation and the aforementioned neighborhood grant program and operations funding.

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.

- While downtown captures Lafayette’s unique history and culture, it lacks an established residential population and attractive and functional connections to surrounding areas.
- Obsolescence and disinvestment in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Action items addressed:

- 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.
- 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.

Current key initiatives:

- Working with Sterling Grove historic district for consideration as the first local historic neighborhood.
- New LED street lights were installed all along Jefferson downtown to increase visibility and security.
- The completion of the Federal Courthouse as a new residential development preserving a historic structure.
- Renovation of the Buchanan parking garage downtown.
- Addressing parking downtown by adding spaces, reviewing fees for peak time pricing, and modernizing parking meters.
- 133 adjudicated properties have been disposed of and are back into commerce. The disposition ordinance was amended in 2020 to allow rental units in the renovation plan.

**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. 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 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 21 of which have some work that has already begun.

The City and Parish Councils funded design/construction dollars for Congress St., Jefferson St., and 12<sup>th</sup> St. Design has commenced for all three ECI projects. Construction dollars have been budgeted in the FY2022/23 budget. 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 is to begin construction 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.

The University Ave. streetscape and safety improvements address the following action items in PlanLafayette:

- 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.

The Public Works Department has begun designing sidewalks for targeted projects including Carmel sidewalks, ADA improvements for St. Mary Blvd., Northside High sidewalk network, S. College sidewalks, and 6<sup>th</sup> St. adjacent to Rosa Parks Transportation Center.

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.

Action items addressed:

- 6.4.1 Adopt a “Complete Streets” policy with implementation strategies, to create and implement street improvement plans.
- 6.2.3 Develop detailed corridor plans for specific/identified roadways in targeted areas.
- 6.8.2 Expand pedestrian and bicycle connectivity with new designated routes, enhanced or new signage, and connectivity.

Current key initiatives:

- Deliberative action to revise the enterprise GIS sidewalk layer so it is more current and can continue to be used for support to the Planning Commissions to require sidewalks, and to prioritize sidewalk capital projects and grant applications.
- Ongoing monitoring of safety data to supplement grant applications, prioritize sidewalk and bike improvements, and study possible streets for road diets, like Johnston St. through the downtown area.
- Engineering and design for intersection and spot improvements: 12<sup>th</sup> and Simcoe Sts., 12<sup>th</sup> and Surrey Sts., Pierce and Simcoe Sts., spot improvements on Surrey St. and Pinhook Rd.
- Undergoing study of Pinhook Rd. east of the Thruway for complete street improvements to facilitate that leg of the Veelop and to improve access from the McComb-Veazey neighborhood to Heymann Park.

### **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. Two principals that have guided the development of PlanLafayette have been to increase road network connectivity as witnessed in the initiated projects of Frem Boustany, Cue Rd. and Lake Farm Rd. and Bluebird Extension and to expand the availability of alternative travel options.

The Administration has committed to providing 14.5 million dollars to develop a functional, connected, safe network of bike trails and sidewalks from FY2021/22 to FY2026/27. In late 2021, LCG staff proposed a series of “Landmark Trails” to be constructed throughout Lafayette’s core. During this effort, staff realized Lafayette has not created a bikeways or trails plan

since 1973. Bikeway plans are important when seeking state and federal funds to cover construction costs. As a result, staff worked with a consultant to complete a bike plan this year to guide and prioritize the expenditure for the next four years of funding. The goals for plan development included safety, interconnectedness, comfortability, equity, high standards, and enjoyment. The City Planning Commission endorsed the Bicycle Lafayette Plan in August 2022 that outlines and system of subway-like loops to connect neighborhoods, employment centers, parks and recreation centers, etc. The Veloop, or green line, is the urban core loop that is the first phase of plan implementation.

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.
- 6.8.5 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.

Current key initiatives:

- Congress St., as it passes downtown, is being designed to make permanent the restriping through a streetscape improvement project and will become part of the Veloop.
- Pinhook, east of the Evangeline Thruway, will be studied to determine the possibilities for a protected bike lane as part of the Veloop.
- Design/Engineering is underway for the first phase of the Veloop which is a trail that connects Moncus Park, through to West Bayou Parkway to Girard Park. Construction to begin in early 2023.
- Construction to begin in Fall of 2022, for a partnership between UL and LCG, to construct a multi-use path from Ira Nelson Horticulture Center to Girard Park.

**Other notable LCG Departmental Initiatives:**

**LUS/LUS Fiber**

Commission Boulevard Water Treatment Plant is expected to be complete by Winter 2022 and will be the fourth LUS water treatment facility in Lafayette, producing more than a million gallons a day with up to a four-million-gallon capacity. It will also be the first water treatment plant in the state that uses a new biological treatment process to remove naturally-occurring ammonia found in the aquifer.

To improve street light visibility and offer more environmentally friendly lighting, LUS is upgrading the current high-pressure sodium lights to LEDs. Once complete, more than 21,000 LED street lights will improve nighttime traffic visibility and public safety, reduce electricity consumption, decrease maintenance costs, and create possibilities for smart city functions. Cost savings for LUS and the city are expected to be \$500,000-\$800,000 a year.

LUS Fiber started expansion of services into apartments by partnering with Bottle Art Lofts, a new development housed in the historic Coca-Cola Bottling facility in La Place neighborhood. Accelerating apartment communities' access to its services marks a significant shift for LUS Fiber. Expansion to Bottle Art Lofts marks the start of a goal to reach 1,000 apartment units a year with fiber internet services.



In addition, LUS Fiber received a multimillion-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA). These funds are for the deployment of a major expansion into additional portions of Lafayette Parish, St. Martin Parish, and Iberia Parish. High-speed fiber broadband is a catalyst for economic development, education access, and innovation.

Action items addressed:

- 3.1.1 Provide improvements to public infrastructure – including water, sewer, and fiber availability – to service multifamily or attached housing units.
- 5.7.2 Expand LUS Fiber access to more customer locations in the city of Lafayette, including multifamily residential communities and office buildings, as it becomes financially feasible to do so.
- 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.

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

A public-private partnership with Acadiana Community Tennis Association allows the association to operate Beaver and Thomas Park Tennis Centers, enabling PARC to continue providing these facilities to the public and tennis leagues while improving quality and lowering operating costs to PARC. The Swimming Division had a successful year reopening the Martin Luther King Recreation Center pool a year after the pandemic forced it to closed, and also welcomed new partners. Of the four LCG-owned swimming pools, PARC runs three, and the fourth is operated through a public-private partnership with City of Lafayette Aquatics (COLA). In all, LCG-owned pools include the King Pool, OJ Mouton Pool at City Park, Girard Park Pool, and Earl J. Chris indoor pool at the Robicheaux Recreation Center (operated by COLA).

The Acadiana Park is home to 150 acres and five miles of trails, 47 acres on the south side where the Nature Station educational building is located and 103 acres north of a new pedestrian bridge which was installed in December 2021. A welcome addition and long-term goal for 15 years, the bridge gives visitors access to dozens more hiking trails that were previously only accessible at the trailhead on Shadow Bluff Drive. The bridge is an easy connection from the Nature Station (south of the coulee) to the north trails which are an extension of the hardwood forest with unique life in a more isolated natural woodland.

Action items addressed:

- P 8.17 Continue to expand community-based classes, events, and opportunities for neighborhood interaction at the parish’s libraries, recreation, and senior centers.
- 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.
- 9.5.2 Encourage outdoor educational programs and “classrooms” that may include special opportunities for science, writing, or environmental projects through partnerships with Lafayette schools similar to the Nature Station in Acadiana Park.

**Public Works**

Improving Downtown drainage infrastructure is being addressed. At least two phases of two drainage projects on Lee Avenue are anticipated to be completed in 2022, helping to detain at least two million gallons of water during heavy rainfall. More downtown locations for drainage improvements will detain four million gallons of water. This investment will improve current and future downtown drainage infrastructure, including areas that continually flood during heavy rains. These interventions have involved a review of drainage options that are not typical like a stormwater detention pond but instead



looking at integrating detention in an urban environment. The Environmental Quality division is collaborating with other departments to educate contractors on green infrastructure to help manage stormwater runoff, reduce flooding, and decrease the amount of pollutants flowing into waterways. Instead of solely relying on traditional networks of ditches, sewer pipes, gutters, and coulees to drain stormwater, using plants, soil, and landscaping to capture rainwater where it falls, reducing flooding and polluted runoff that travels to waterways. The goal is to use green infrastructure in-house and implement it in commercial parking lot designs.

Action items addressed:

- 1.5.6 Encourage the use of stormwater management tools including pervious pavers, rain gardens, bioswales, rain barrels, and other green infrastructure approaches to reduce the amount of runoff entering the region's waterways.
- 10.1.1 Prepare a comprehensive green infrastructure plan with Low Impact Development strategies for the parish to address stormwater management, modifications to the storm sewer system, and integration with the open space and trails system.
- 10.1.5 Increase public education on the benefits of integrated green infrastructure practices in reducing stormwater, improving water quality, and providing potential recreational benefits.

#### **Traffic, Roads, and Bridges (TRAB)**

TRAB worked with ParkMobile, a leading provider of smart parking and mobility solutions in the U.S., to launch the service of over 1,200 on-street and off-street parking spaces with contactless payment options in downtown Lafayette.

Implementing this action item:

- 2.8.2 Implement the actions of the Downtown plan, including: Improve parking infrastructure and management downtown through technology, and a parking management plan.

Geaux Mow and Neaux Throw are departmental initiatives intending to address this action item:

- P 2.7 Work to ensure that Lafayette is a community that is aesthetically beautiful, uncluttered by litter, illegal signage, unkempt landscaping, etc.

The Project Geaux Mow initiative, implemented in 2020, continues to improve the department's efforts and has allowed LCG crews to focus more on detail maintenance such as grooming, cleaning, edging, and weed control on sidewalks and rights-of-way. In 2021, the department implemented the "Neaux Throw" initiative, which allows for better coordination of reporting and pickup of litter throughout the community.