

What is a Comprehensive Plan?



A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan for the growth and development of a community. It's a vision for the future, driven by public input at every step. One of the most important goals of a Comprehensive Plan is to formally identify the elements that create a community, and define choices regarding where and how people want to live, work and play. It is 'comprehensive' because it is based on community conversation, research and trends, addressing all aspects of building a community such as:

- Land Use / Development Patterns
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Economy
- Utilities
- Recreation & Open Space
- Resource Conservation
- Community Character
- Historic / Cultural Resources
- Transportation / Mobility
- Community Facilities & Services
- Governance
- Hazard Mitigation

What are the benefits of a Plan?

The three most important benefits of a Comprehensive Plan relevant to Lafayette are:

1 Helping government operate more efficiently. The Plan, as a community guidebook, highlights for citizens and elected officials the cost of operating government and providing services. Short term and long term growth can be measured against the cost of alternative decisions. The Plan identifies the community's priorities in order to align the actions and policies of the government with the community's intentions. The Comprehensive Plan will work to ensure that community goals and objectives are realized.

2 A Comprehensive Plan provides vision and direction for the future. By doing so, it details and illustrates information about the actions local government and the private sector may or should take to inform and attract prospective businesses and residents.

3 A Comprehensive Plan helps balance community goals with private interests. The community guide book addresses land use, community character, housing and neighborhoods, historic and cultural resources, economic development, transportation and mobility, utilities, community facilities, recreation and open space, resource conservation and hazard mitigation so that they complement each other in an efficient manner.

What will the Plan include?

- Background data about the community
- The community's vision for future development including roads, utilities, parks, and community facilities
- Goals and objectives for future development and reinvestment
- Strategies for growth of the local economy
- Maps and graphics to help the community visualize future growth and development
- An action plan (or implementation plan) to guide the realization of the plan
- Ways to monitor and evaluate the progress of the plan

Is the Plan a legal document?

No. However, it has legal implications because of references to comprehensive plans (or master plans) in State Law. The Plan is a planning and policy document that will guide the decision-making process of the City-Parish Planning Commission, City-Parish Administration and the City-Parish Council. The Plan can be implemented in many ways. It can provide a set of tools (e.g. ordinances); should be used during the local government budgeting process; and leveraged and coordinated with other government organizations as well as private entities as a guide for their decision-making. These tools and others will be considered during the development of the Plan.

What is the state law that indicates communities have a comprehensive or master plan?

The Master Plan is referenced in state law as follows:

Louisiana Revised Statutes, Title 33 Municipalities and Parishes, Part IV. Physical Development of Parishes and Municipalities, Subpart A. Planning Commissions, § 106. General Powers and Duties A.(1) and (2), B.(1) and (2). §106. General Powers and Duties A.(1) A parish planning commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of a parish.

§106. General Powers and Duties A.(2) A municipal planning commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the incorporated territory of the municipality.

§ 106. General Powers and Duties B.(1) Any such plan shall provide a general description or depiction of existing roads, streets, highways, and publicly controlled corridors, along with a general description or depiction of other public property within the jurisdiction that is subject to the authority of the commission.

§ 106. General Powers and Duties B.(2) Any such plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter may include a commission's recommendations for the development of the parish or municipality, as the case may be, including, among other things, the general location, character, and extent of railroads, highways, streets, viaducts, subways, bus, streetcar and other transportation routes, bridges, waterways, lakes, water fronts, boulevards, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields, and other public ways, grounds, and open spaces; the general location of public buildings, schools, and other public property; the general character, extent and layout of public housing and of the replanning of blighted districts and slum areas; the general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, communication, power, transportation, and other purposes; and the removal, relocation, widening narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use, or extension of any of the foregoing ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property, utilities, or terminals.

A Plan sounds great, but how is it really implemented?

Once a Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the City-Parish Planning Commission and endorsed by the Council, it is formally recorded with the Parish Clerk of Court for reference. Implementation of the Plan is primarily the responsibility of the City-Parish Administration and the City-Parish Council, but will require building partnerships with organizations across Lafayette. The City-Parish Planning Commission retains selected authority over implementation. The City-Parish Council is the legislative body that adopts the ordinances to implement the Plan. Implementation of the Plan is vested in both public and private tools needed to institutionalize resources, actions to achieve Plan goals and objectives identified by the community. Many tools will be recommended in the Plan itself. In the case of Lafayette, the Plan includes a component called a UDC (Unified Development Code). The UDC will be an additional step in implementation that, once adopted, will codify some of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

How can I participate?

Alternate scenarios (including one that addresses how Lafayette has been developing, without a plan), will be presented at Forum #3. Your coming out and casting a vote for a specific scenario will have a direct impact on the direction of Lafayette's future. The scenario chosen at this next Forum will be the foundation and basis for the development of a Comprehensive Plan for Lafayette. Get more information on our website and follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Please call the Project Manager, Cathie Gilbert, 291-8454, if you have any questions. In addition, you can join the email list to get updates on meetings, news and documents for your review. Our website page is www.PlanLafayette.com. A Take Action pdf file also provides ways in which to help the Comprehensive Plan initiative.