

2017-2018 Annual Report

PlanLafayette is now four years old and has seen significant momentum and implementation of key action items. To ensure the plan remains relevant and useful to the community, the Planning Commission and the Development and Planning Department, on behalf of the City-Parish Council and Mayor-President, will monitor plan implementation progress annually.

The staff will deliver an annual report to the Planning Commission and the community. In addition, every five years, the staff will lead a thorough review, revision, and update of the Comprehensive Plan that involves additional public input. This report begins to prepare for the first five year update, scheduled for the summer of 2019.

The following is the 2017-2018 Annual Report prepared by the 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, 288 action items have either been completed or work has begun. The staff has organized this report by summarizing ongoing activities by projects and/or themes. In addition to those initiatives that span departments and include various activities, the annual report includes a matrix with updates on each action. Please note, the matrix is cumulative so it includes previous years progress. Each theme is generally described with the following information:

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

Draft Report Delivered to the City-Parish Planning Commission

June 18, 2018

Final Report Delivered to the City-Parish Planning Commission

July 9, 2018

Projects:

In previous years, there were more projects detailed in the annual report. This year's report focuses on five themes and should be read alongside the updated matrix attached which provides a more comprehensive overview of community activities related to the plan. This year's five highlights are:

- Unified Development Code
- Refining Government
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Transportation/Land Use Planning
- Resiliency Planning

Amendments:

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

2018-2019 Goals:

The integration of infrastructure planning across LCG is critical for the future growth and success of Lafayette. The five year PlanLafayette update will focus on expanding and integrating the Lafayette Transportation Plan and the Future Land Use Map/Plan. In addition, the timing of these updates coincides with LUS' sewer plan update opening up the opportunity for further collaboration. The alignment of these three documents presents a major opportunity for Lafayette to strategically plan for the growth and redevelopment of the parish into the future.

The continued coordination of economic and community development initiatives, ongoing within the Development and Planning Department’s activities, is an additional opportunity to leverage resources for joint successes.

Unified Development Code (UDC)

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 approximately six 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.

Many challenges with land use regulations and practices were identified by PlanLafayette. Arguably, the most important and encompassing challenge was the “uncertainty of future land uses, weak regulations, and lack of predictability for developers and property owners, especially in unincorporated areas of the parish despite the recently adopted land use ordinance.”

Over the last several years, the staff has utilized the tools in the UDC to address this challenge. In June, the seventh batch of amendments was adopted by the City-Parish Council. In particular, this batch of amendments addresses several key action items in the Plan:

- 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.
- 2.12.1 Create land use regulations that provide for appropriate transitions in building mass and scale and provide for adequate buffers to existing neighborhoods.
- 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.

In addition, this year, the so-called “moratorium” on bars was removed from the Downtown zoning district, and the conditional use permit (a new tool since the adoption of the UDC) was utilized to allay community concerns regarding a potential influx of new bars.

Planning staff has continued their neighborhood work and in 2017 zoned over 250 properties in the Freetown- Port Rico neighborhood. The Freetown-Port Rico Coterie and their plan were pivotal to this effort. Extensive public meetings occurred to both explain zoning and map refinements to address the majority of land owner concerns.

Staff has taken on the challenge of reviewing the zoning map using various criteria; areas where uses are not consistent with the current zoning due to the elimination of cumulative zoning, hard edges between heavy commercial zoning and single-family residential, employing more neighborhood friendly, mixed-use zoning districts, and reducing the amount of heavy commercial and industrial zoned land. As a result of this review, staff has begun a more consistent administrative rezoning procedure in an effort to more closely align the zoning map with appropriate and likely future development in those areas. Finally, the amendments in June ushered in a more flexible CH, CM and MN zoning districts that allow an urban and suburban zoning district option based on certain criteria. The urban option has performance measures that create a more walkable development in exchange for incentives that reduce setbacks, parking and open space requirements.

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 to those initiatives which recognize the community’s need to do more with less and leverage public resources whenever possible.

In 2017-2018, the largest initiatives relevant to “refining government” were related to the departmental reorganization that took place with the new budget year.

The reorganization was primarily focused on streamlining departmental operations for the benefit of the department’s customers—both neighborhoods and the development community. This reorganization of department met several goals simultaneously:

- Alignment of neighborhood and historic preservation efforts
- Streamlined UDC regulatory authority to one division
- Better enforcement of regulations
- Improved land use planning by linking with long term planning

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

- 1.10.3 Create a clear application process and outcomes for site plan approval and rezoning applications to reduce uncertainties for property owners and the development community.
- 3.3.2 Implement stricter code enforcement.
- 4.1.6 Apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status with the Louisiana Historic Preservation Office to be eligible for grant funds for historical and cultural preservation through the National Parks Service, in addition to location within the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area.

The 2018 plan describes how Development and Planning’s mission, vision, and strategic priorities fit together to drive the department and community forward.

Our vision:
 A well-planned community that provides for its citizens well being through excellent development

Our mission:
 To build efficient, fair, and inclusive planning and development processes that provide reliable and positive outcomes for both community members and the development community.

The image above is an excerpt from the department’s 2018 plan.

Lack of trust from customers and stakeholders both in government generally and in the department specifically

Limited staff capacity, both in number and in some cases, training

Poor coordination between departments and agencies that impact the development of the city and parish

Our priorities to address challenges

Provide excellent
Customer Service

Improve
Access to Information

Facilitate
Better Planning

Since the reorganization, the Planning Staff have overhauled the zoning reports to allow for stronger analysis in rezoning cases and have increased access on LCG’s website to those reports. In addition, the reorganization created a Compliance Division which is responsible for coordination of violations across divisions and departments at LCG. Finally, neighborhood and historic preservation planning are better integrated now that the two efforts are within the same division.

In 2017, the Planning Commission approved a minor amendment regarding Smart Cities. Smart City approaches aim to enhance local government’s ability to operate effectively and efficiently by leveraging Lafayette’s talent and infrastructure for the betterment of the community. There are been several gains toward this initiative:

- Named as a 2017 Gigabit Community by the Mozilla Foundation, Lafayette was awarded \$150,000 in innovation grants to fund gigabit applications which improve education, address workforce development issues and keep citizens connected.
- Efforts such as the annual Cajun Codefest, the LEARN Collaborative (launched through the awarding of an EPA Smart City Air Challenge), and LUS Fiber's Smart City Challenge, continue to position Lafayette as a trailblazer in the Smart City space, drawing interest from technology firms and thought leaders from around the country.
- The Administration continues to pursue efficiencies in data collection and work toward open data for the public including signing a contract with Socrata to provide information to members of the public regarding progress on the Mayor-President's drainage rededication.

Neighborhood Revitalization

In a well-functioning housing market, the principal housing strategies need to focus on strengthening and stabilizing older neighborhoods through reinvestment and infill development. A second focus is the location of housing, with respect to employment and commuting distances, that helps to determine overall affordability (housing and transportation costs) of neighborhoods. A third strategy relates to demographic shifts underway and is associated with changing housing preferences.

The Community Development Department, Project Front Yard, and the Development and Planning Department are all actively involved in various strategies and efforts to revitalize Lafayette's neighborhoods.

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.

Sample action items addressed:

- 1.13.1 Create an expedited process and streamline notice procedure for returning adjudicated properties, which represent a challenge in bringing 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 include:

- Community Development and Development and Planning departments coordinated to produce a Fair Housing Assessment.
- Community Development is working on the update to the Consolidated Plan, the document that helps guide the expenditure of federal funds.
- Development and Planning has prepared a draft that updates the process by which a neighborhood is officially designated and eligible for neighborhood planning activities.
- Drafted contract for a parking study for Freetown-Port Rico.
- Working with Nickerson Parkerson for consideration as first local historic neighborhoods.
- Continued work on the Lean Urbanism grant to reduce barriers to redevelopment in the McComb-Veazey neighborhood, focusing on the E. Simcoe St. corridor.
- New LED street lights were installed all along Jefferson downtown to increase visibility and security.

- Lafayette was selected for an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Advisory Services Panel in June of 2017 to focus on Downtown Residential Housing. Many of the recommendations from that panel have been instituted, including hosting the inaugural neighborhood summit, repealing the bar “moratorium,” and revising the outdoor dining ordinance.
- Also recommended by ULI, the administration released the Request for Qualifications for the Federal Courthouse downtown and selected a developer with whom to begin negotiations.
- Addressing parking downtown by adding spaces, reviewing fees for peak time pricing and modernizing parking meters.
- Passed an Adjudicated Property disposition ordinance in November 2015. In June of 2018, staff took the first four properties through the beginning stages of a pilot program.
- Project Front Yard teamed with real estate agents from Keller Williams to make home improvements in homes near Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
- Lafayette Parish voters approved \$500,000 in annual funding to establish CREATE (Culture, Recreation, Entertainment, Arts, Tourism and Economy) which strategically supports and further develops local cultural and recreational resources.

Transportation/Land Use Planning

As mentioned, the 2019 comprehensive plan update will look to provide a more detailed future land use plan with a context-sensitive transportation plan. 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 City-Parish Council adopted a Complete Streets Policy in June 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 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 Evangeline Corridor Initiative examined the neighborhoods impacted by the I-49 Connector project, and through public input, the resulting plan offer 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 10 of which have some work that has already begun.

LCG was awarded planning funds from the MPO for four corridor plans: University, Congress, Simcoe and Moss. Staff facilitated the consultant work to develop the University Plan which will be completed in late summer 2018. LCG requested inclusion of the University Corridor in the Trump Administration’s Opportunity Zone program and was successful in achieving that designation as well as six other census tracts all in the core of the city. The Public Works Department has begun designing sidewalks from Cameron St. to MLK, landscape/sidewalks and cleaning/painting the underpass area just north of Cameron St., and designing a roundabout at University Ave. and Renaud Dr. Planning of the other corridors will begin this year.

With the low cost of re-striping, the traffic division of the Public Works Department has been actively looking to transform roads that have been overbuilt for urban environments and over-capacity for the current traffic volumes, i.e. 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. Examples include St. Landry St., Congress St., St. Mary Boulevard, West Bayou Parkway, Taft St., Garfield St., etc.

Sample 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:

- Completion of environmental studies of twenty roundabouts in the parish through MPO funding.
- 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 Commission 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 defend road diets as seen on Congress St. through downtown.
- Developing sources of funding for covered bus shelters in addition to annual capital outlays.
- Continued design development of the Johnston St. pilot project working with the LaDOTD and the MPO.
- Public Works Department's design of Jefferson St. and Bertrand Dr. streetscapes.

Resiliency Planning

A resilient city is one that has developed capacities to help absorb future shocks and stresses to its social, economic, and technical systems and infrastructures so as to still be able to maintain essentially the same functions, structures, systems, and identity.

The flood of August 2016 made Lafayette's residents keenly aware of the necessity to look at managing water in a comprehensive way which includes building capacity in our infrastructure projects and having the private sector do its part in new development.

Over the last year, several activities have been undertaken which specifically seek to make Lafayette a more resilient city.

- Lafayette was named one of 35 finalists in the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge, a national competition among mayors. Lafayette's idea was to increase citizen engagement in stormwater management.
- In October of 2017, Lafayette improved its drainage regulations on new developments to ensure even stronger water management and land in the city and parish gets developed. The UDC amendment increased pond storage, decreased peak flow rate and other capacity-related modifications for new developments.
- In June of 2017, Lafayette was host to an Urban Land Institute Advisory Services Panel led by former Mayor of Pittsburgh Tom Murphy. The panel focused on increasing Lafayette's resiliency by looking at obstacles to downtown residential development.
- In preparation for the new FEMA flood map adoption in 2018, staff is working to ensure strong communications to reduce resident confusion.
- Rededication of a portion of an existing millage to fund \$9M in drainage projects and enhance the parish-wide drainage millage by an additional \$2.5M annually. The rededicated funds were appropriated to 27 priority projects at an estimated \$9.6M cost.
- LCG is working with the Acadiana Planning Commission and the Acadiana region to implement regionally significant stormwater detention facilities.
- Public Works is developing a dashboard by which the public can monitor drainage project implementation.

The policy and action items addressed by these activities include:

- 1.05 Protect water resources and improve stormwater management. (Related to Resources Conservation Policy 1)

- 7.7.5 Coordinate with FEMA as it adopts the final Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and ensure that the new maps are effectively and accurately communicated to the public, so as to decrease uncertainty.
- 10.4.4 Explore funding opportunities and innovative programs to implement stormwater capacity in new developments and in public infrastructure projects.