



## SMART GROWTH TOOLS

### Smart Growth and the Horizon Plan

The Horizon Plan is the Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan for the City of Baton Rouge and the Parish of East Baton Rouge. The Horizon Plan is a guide for officials making decisions about land use and development.

The Horizon Plan is made up of seven elements: Land Use; Transportation; Wastewater, Solid Waste and Drainage; Conservation and Environmental Resources; Recreation and Open Space; Housing; and Public Services, Public Buildings, Health and Human Services. Several of the Horizon Plan implementation strategies, known as Action Items, reflect the principles of Smart Growth.

These Action Items focus on a wide variety of issues including street connections, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, green infrastructure, drainage and sewer improvements, and design guidelines. Examples include:

*Action LU8.A* Establish development and redevelopment incentives to encourage retail and service establishments to locate in the downtown area to serve employees, residents, and tourists.

*Action LU9.F* Develop procedures for the consideration of traffic, infrastructure, and public service impacts for development, and establish fair and equitable fees and assessments based on these impacts.

*Action LU5.M* Guide growth and development to encourage infill development in established urban areas and coordinate with '2010 Land Use Plan'. Provide training and education to the Planning Commission, Metropolitan Council, and the public on the benefits of infill development.

*Action LU5.G* Improve the image and environmental and aesthetic quality of targeted neighborhoods and subareas through the repair and improvement of public streets, sidewalks, sanitary sewers, storm drainage facilities, parks, street tree planting projects, and construction of Greenlinks systems for pedestrians, joggers, and cyclists. This process should be coordinated through the CIP process in establishing priority locations and projects for implementation in targeted neighborhoods.

### The Planning Task Force

In 2001, a Planning Task Force to review planning efforts throughout the City-Parish was established. This task force included two subcommittees: The Application Process and Smart Growth. The Application Process Subcommittee completed its task through amendments to the Unified Development Code. The Smart Growth Subcommittee continues to study what Smart Growth means for Baton Rouge. The Subcommittee has reviewed several definitions provided by the American Planning Association, The Environmental Protection Agency, and the Homebuilders Association to develop a definition and strategies for Baton Rouge. Their proposed aspects of Smart Growth include:

**Promote a greater mix of land uses and housing choices in communities focused around pedestrian friendly, mixed-use centers utilizing multiple transportation modes** by promoting a mix of diverse housing; recognizing distinct/diverse neighborhoods; promoting mixed-use land developments; promoting brownfield developments; and protecting investment in existing neighborhoods.

**Integrate land use and transportation** by promoting efficient use of infrastructure; providing efficient city operations; and providing alternative modes of transportation.

**Encourage efficient use of land and infrastructure** by promoting mixed-use land developments; promoting brownfield developments; and providing inducements for quality growth.

**Protect environmental and cultural resources** by encouraging innovative stormwater management practices; encouraging construction techniques that protect open space and water quality/quantity; promoting sustainable developments; and preserving historic sites.

**Encourage working relationships between public/private/community-based organizations that promote diversity, equity and good growth principles** by promoting collaboration, providing efficient city operations; utilizing intellectual resource centers; and enhancing the sense of community.

**Integrate state and federal policy structure that supports compact development and land conservation** by informing leaders of successful strategies used in other states; and promoting planning in a regional context.

## Smart Growth Tools

The role of the Planning Commission is to support comprehensive planning and land use controls in a way that promotes principles of Smart Growth.

The City-Parish Planning Commission currently has several tools which reflect the elements of Smart Growth in active use by residents, landowners, and developers. These include:

**Planned Unit Development-** The Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a technique which allows a developer to masterplan an entire community and receive all zoning and subdivision approvals in one process. Advantages include flexibility of design regulations, mixture of uses, increased open and green space and complete design control.

**Greenlink System-** Greenlinks preserve natural areas, conserve plant and wildlife habitats, increase the aesthetic and property value of the area they serve, and reduce automobile use by providing a commuting alternative, thereby reducing traffic and air pollution.

**Cluster Subdivisions-** Application of the Cluster Subdivision concept means that the number of lots remains the same as in a conventional development, however, the community benefits by retaining open space and reducing maintenance costs by having shorter streets and utility lines. Developers also benefit by reduced cost of development that is often passed directly to the homeowners.

**Infill Development-** Infill and redevelopment in the core area neighborhoods are encouraged by developing vacant land, under-utilized or substandard areas in order to attract new residents, promote efficient use of existing infrastructure and preserve existing neighborhoods.

**Wetlands Program-** Wetlands provide many benefits, including food and habitat for fish and wildlife; flood protection; shoreline erosion control; natural products for human use; water quality improvement; and opportunities for recreation, education and research. The City-Parish Planning Commission's wetlands program uses demonstration projects, wetland identification, and education programs to ensure wetland protection.

**Brownfield Redevelopment-** The Baton Rouge Brownfields Program (BRBP) promotes recycling of urban properties by eliminating the uncertainties caused by pollution and quantifying the costs of remediation. The BRBP offers various incentives to assist in the redevelopment of qualified brownfields.

Contact the Planning Commission for more information about these tools, or visit the website [www.brgov.com/dept/planning](http://www.brgov.com/dept/planning).



## Growth Centers

In 2003, the Planning Commission began a planning process to study 29 designated Growth Centers in East Baton Rouge Parish. These Growth Centers are specified in the Horizon Plan and are areas where infrastructure exists to accommodate future development. The Horizon Plan focuses activities into regional and community growth centers which include a mix of activities for people to live, work, and play.

Regional Growth Centers include regional shopping centers, institutions, high density office and residential complexes, medical centers, and other major activities serving both the City-Parish and adjacent parishes. These mixed use centers will support retail, service and employment needs.

Community Growth Centers include community shopping centers, medium density office and residential complexes, recreational facilities and similar activities serving the immediate community.

The Growth Centers Community Planning Process provided the opportunity for the Planning Commission to implement strategies for a healthier community as part of the overall smart growth initiative of the Horizon Plan. These strategies include; public education meetings in each growth center, establishing urban design guidelines; working with residents to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, schools, bus stops, recreational facilities, and other public spaces.

## Benefits of Smart Growth:

- Improved quality of life for residents
- Cleaner air and water
- More affordable housing
- Walkable neighborhoods
- Reduced commute times
- Reduced infrastructure costs for developers
- Reduced service delivery costs for local governments
- Increased tax revenue
- Greater economic development potential

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