



**2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF BATON ROUGE  
PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE**



# **CITY-PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **MAYOR-PRESIDENT**

Melvin L. “Kip” Holden

## **METROPOLITAN COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Trae Welch  
Chauna Banks-Daniel  
Chandler Loupe  
Scott Wilson  
Ronnie Edwards  
Donna Collins-Lewis  
C. Denise Marcelle  
Buddy Amoroso  
Joel Boé  
Tara Wicker  
Ryan Heck  
John Delgado

## **PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Tara Wicker  
W. T. Winfield  
Darius Bonton  
Gregory DuCote  
James Gilmore, Jr.  
Sarah Holliday-James  
Laurie Marien  
Steven Perret  
John J. Price

# Mission and Goals

The mission of the East Baton Rouge Parish Planning Commission is to be a driving force supporting the development and implementation of the comprehensive plan, providing guidance for growth, development, and restoration, while recognizing the importance of maintaining healthy, diversified neighborhoods, encouraging increased access to economic opportunity, and enhancing the quality of life for all residents of East Baton Rouge Parish.

## 2015 Goals

- Apply policies consistently through decision making and actions.
- Treat all applications and individuals fairly and objectively.
- Provide planning services that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Promote the education, awareness and involvement of the citizens in the planning process.
- Guide growth and development to encourage economic vitality and employment opportunities throughout the community without negatively impacting infrastructure, the environment or public services.
- Provide professional development and training for Planning Commission members and staff.

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# Planning



## Office of the Planning Commission

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Frank M. Duke, FAICP  
Planning Director

January 19, 2016

Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden, members of the Metropolitan Council, and residents of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish:

It is with great pleasure that I provide you with this report on the accomplishments of your Planning Commission over the first full year of my tenure in Baton Rouge. Looking back, 2015 has been a busy year for the Planning Commission. We had some significant accomplishments in implementing *FUTUREBR*. We enhanced our public outreach efforts, trying to ensure that the public is more aware of what we do. We said good-bye to several long term staff members and welcomed some new people to the staff of the Planning Commission. All things considered, 2015 can only be considered a year of change.

With regard to the implementation of *FUTUREBR*, we participated in several small area planning efforts, including most notably the development of the Master Plan for the Baton Rouge Health District. Led by the firm of Perkins+Will on behalf of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF), this is one of the small area plans expressly called for in *FUTUREBR*. Planning Commission staff participated on the planning team throughout the plan's development. The plan, which incorporates recommendations for physical changes in the area as well as development of a formal body to better coordinate the efforts of health care providers, was completed and released in late 2015 and is already being viewed as a model both nationally and internationally. I anticipate its formal approval as part of *FUTUREBR* in early 2016.

Staff also participated in other significant planning efforts. These included the development of the Baton Rouge Lakes Master Plan that was developed by the SWA Group on behalf of BRAAF to recommend ways to restore the health of these critical waterbodies in our community. We also provided input and assistance on the plan commissioned by the Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority to look at redevelopment of the former Entergy site on Government Street. Finally, we participated in the visioning process led by Senator Sharon Weston Broome looking at the future of the Earl K. Long Hospital site.

In addition to these planning efforts, several amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC) were completed over the past year. The most significant was a complete rewrite of the Parish's Flood Protection Ordinance for consistency with the requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency that was undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Development. Other revisions included complete rewrites of the Nonconformities chapter to better organize it and the Definitions chapter to eliminate inconsistencies and archaic terms, and to ensure the requirements for Group Homes were consistent with federal law, and to describe pre-schools as educational facilities. Smaller changes were made to other chapters, including the Spanish Town Historic Overlay (to ensure the ability to develop single family and two family homes throughout the Spanish Town Historic District) and consolidate all fee references throughout the UDC into one location.

Staff also worked to ensure citizens have better access to information about the Planning Commission. We expanded our notification distance for hearing items from 150 feet to 300 feet. We began posting applications and agendas on line and began updating our webpage for easier access. We have also participated in numerous meetings with civic associations to ensure that residents are informed of changes proposed in their neighborhood.

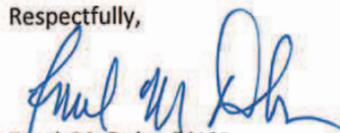
We received a brownfields assessment grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, enabling us to support the economic development and redevelopment of the Parish. This grant will be used to fund environmental site assessments of vacant and underutilized properties in an effort to bring them back into commerce.

We have also had to say good-bye to several long term staff members this year. Long Range Planning Manager Lael Holton, Senior Planners Sabine Lebailleur and Collin Magee, and Planner II Judy Morice all left for other opportunities while GIS Coordinator Justin Priola and GIS Analyst Indah Kusuma were transferred to the Parish Information Services Department. We wish our former teammates success in their new endeavors.

We have also welcomed a number of new staff to the Planning Commission team. These include Senior Planners Carrie Broussard and Bernadette Fisher, Planner IIs Rexter Chambers and Eboni Hall, and Administrative Specialist MaShanka Taylor.

The past year has been busy – and productive – but it only sets the stage for the work to come in 2016, when we expect to complete work on several projects that were begun this year, including implementation of the Complete Streets Policy and the Design Levels, both of which were approved in 2015. We also anticipate formal adoption of the Health District Plan and final approval of revised ordinances for Historic Preservation, Parking, Landscaping, Uses, Zoning Districts, and Dimensional Requirements.

Respectfully,



Frank M. Duke, FAICP  
Planning Director

# Planning

## Planning Commissioners



Councilwoman Tara Wicker  
Chairman



Steven Peret



Gregory DuCote

Baton Rouge created its City Planning Commission in 1941 under the provisions of State Act No. 204, written in 1926, and Section 33 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes. In 1949, the City of Baton Rouge combined with the Parish of East Baton Rouge to become one of the United States' first consolidated city and parish governing units; hence the name City-Parish Planning Commission.

The legislated role of the Planning Commission is "to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality and promote public interest in and understanding of a plan." Charged by State Law and Metropolitan Charter to support comprehensive planning and land use controls, the Commission coordinates the implementation and update of the Comprehensive Plan and also develops zoning and subdivision regulations. The Planning Commission and the Staff make recommendations to the Metropolitan Council regarding ordinances, regulations and land use requirements. The Planning Commission applies its knowledge and experience to the planning and zoning matters they consider at monthly public hearings.



Jason Engen



Sarah Holliday-James



Laurie Marien



John Price



Todd Sterling



Rossie Washington

# Committees

## Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission, established by the Metropolitan Council in 2004, is considered a part of the planning functions of City-Parish Government, and is administered by the staff of the Office of the Planning Commission.

The goals of the East Baton Rouge Parish Historic Preservation Commission are:

- Protect, enhance, and perpetuate resources that represent distinctive and significant elements of the city’s historical, cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, and architectural identity;
- Insure the harmonious, orderly, and efficient growth and development of the City-Parish;
- Strengthen civic pride and cultural stability through neighborhood conservation;
- Stabilize the economy of the City-Parish through the continued use, preservation, and revitalization of its resources;
- Protect and enhance the city’s attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business and industry thereby provided;
- Promote the use of resources for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the City of Baton Rouge and Parish of East Baton Rouge;
- Provide a review process for the preservation and appropriate development of the City-Parish resources.

### Members

John Sykes, Chairman  
Susannah Bing, Vice Chairman  
Genny Prosser Burr  
Whitney Cooper  
Uyuh Eduok  
William “Willie” Fontenot  
Ana Forbes  
Bill Huey

## Zoning Advisory Committee

The Zoning Advisory Committee is composed of individuals, representing many facets of the community, who have an interest in the planning and development process. The Committee provides advice and comment to the Planning Commission Chairperson regarding amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC).

In 2015, the Zoning Advisory Committee reviewed and advised the Planning Commission on proposed revisions to Chapter 17 (Parking). The existing parking requirements apply one suburban standard for the entire parish. The proposed changes would use standards that are appropriate to the context of the area. For example, parking requirements would be different in the Rural Area compared to the Urban Character Area. The Committee unanimously recommended the proposed changes on April 28, 2015.

Chapter 18 (Landscape, Clearing and Trees) was also reviewed to create different standards and again consider context. For example, many smaller lots that were created prior to the 1950s are small, creating issues for prescribed bufferyards. This can discourage redevelopment in older areas and make it easier to develop green fields. The revised draft will be considered by the Committee in the beginning of 2016.

### Members

Larry Bankston, Baton Rouge Growth Coalition  
Scott Bardwell, Baton Rouge Growth Coalition  
Mike Bruce, Engineer  
Rex Cabaniss, Architect  
Nancy Curry, Federation of Greater BR Civic Associations  
Gregory DuCote, Planning Commission  
Henry Grace, Citizen  
Herb Gomez, Board of Realtors, Vice-Chairman  
George Kurz, Commercial Real Estate Broker  
Charles Landry, Attorney, Chairman  
Jason Lockhart, AICP, Urban Planner  
Russell Mosely, Baton Rouge Growth Coalition  
John Price, Office of the Mayor-President  
Trula Remson, Architect  
Samuel Sanders, Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance  
Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, Center for Planning Excellence  
Tara Wicker, Planning Commission

# Planning

## Awards, Conferences, and Recognition

### Planning Director's Award

This award is presented to an individual whose outstanding efforts have most contributed to the success of the City-Parish planning program. In 2015, **Vance Baldwin**, Senior Planner, was the recipient of the Planning Director's Award.



### Conferences

Staff participated in the following conferences during 2015.

- **Local Government Commission New Partners for Smart Growth Conference (Baltimore, MD)**
- **American Planning Association -- Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference (Baton Rouge, LA)**
- **American Planning Association National Planning Conference (Seattle, WA)**
- **Louisiana Remote Sensing and GIS Workshop (Baton Rouge, LA)**
- **URISA Leadership Academy (Denver, CO)**
- **Brownfields 2015 (Chicago, IL)**
- **URISA GIS-Pro & NWGIS 2015 Conference (Spokane, WA)**
- **Louisiana Smart Growth Summit (Baton Rouge, LA)**
- **Society of American Foresters National Convention (Baton Rouge, LA)**
- **American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting and EXPO (Chicago, IL)**

Lael Holton presented at the American Planning Association -- Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference on the topic of monitoring the implementation of comprehensive plans. Frank Duke delivered a presentation during the Louisiana Smart Growth Summit on accommodations for group homes.

### Employee of the Month

January -- Barrett Chaix  
February -- Lael Holton  
March -- Marie Hopkins  
April -- Indah Kusuma  
May -- Glenn Hannah  
June -- Gilles Morin  
July -- Kenneth Moye  
August -- Vance Baldwin  
September -- Carrie Broussard  
October -- Annette Haggemacher  
November -- Mashanka Taylor  
December -- Justin Priola

# Professional Development and Public Engagement

## Professional Certifications and Education

Gilles Morin, Planning Project Coordinator, and Lael Holton, Long Range Planning Manager earned credentials from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) in 2015. AICP is the American Planning Association's professional institute and the recognized leader in certifying professional planners and promoting ethical planning, professional development, planning education, and standards of practice.

Gilles and Lael bring the total number of staff members holding professional accreditation to five. Planning Director Frank Duke is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners; Vance Baldwin, Senior Planner, holds a Professional Landscape Architect license from the American Society of Landscape Architects; and Justin Pirola, GIS Coordinator, is certified as a GIS Professional by the GIS Certification Institute.

Staff members were able to take advantage of several opportunities for professional development and education during regular webinars screened during lunch hours. Topics for these webinars included "A sign regulation apocalypse? Understanding the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert" and "Planning for religious uses under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act".

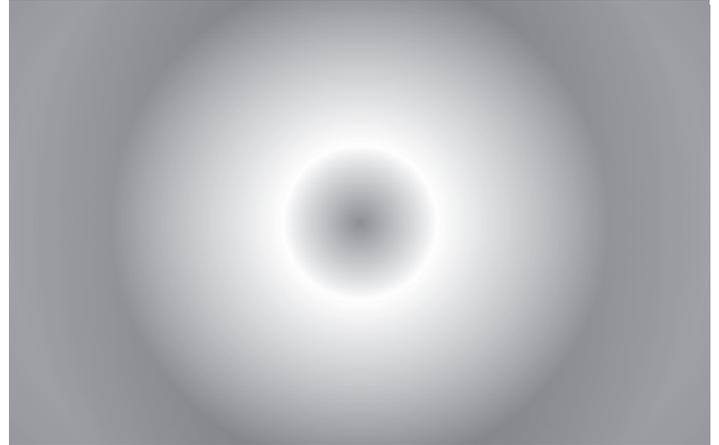
## Boards and Organizations

Several members of the staff are involved with planning-related public and non-profit organizations as board members or officers. Assistant Director Ryan Holcomb is on the board of the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance and the Downtown Maintenance Committee. Barrett Chaix, Senior Planner, serves as the President of the Louisiana Brownfields Association.

Planning Commission staff became more closely involved with the local section of the American Planning Association (APA) during 2015. Staff were recognized for their vital role in organizing the state planning conference, held January in Baton Rouge. Two staff members, Lael Holton and Carrie Broussard, were elected as officers of the Capital Region section.

## Public Outreach

Staff members participated in the 'Planners in the Classroom' initiative of the APA by describing the urban planning profession in local high school and university classes. The Administration frequently addressed local civic groups in 2015 including the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge, Government Street Civic Association Roundtable, the Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, the Old Goodwood Property Owners, the Baton Rouge chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Park Vista Homeowners Association, an Istrouma community meeting, and the Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations. This year the staff also began preparing for greater use of social media to engage the public in nontraditional ways.



*Gilles Morin and Lael Holton, Long Range Planning Manager earned American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification in 2015.*



*Staff attend Mid City Redevelopment Alliance's Coffee on the Porch*

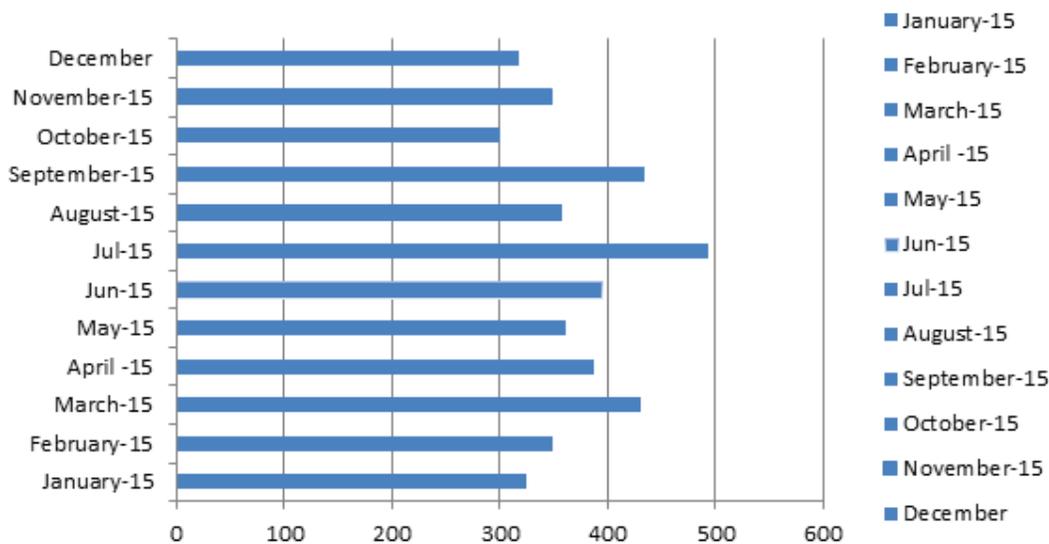


*Gilles Morin, Ryan Holcomb, Nancy Curry (President of the Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations), and Frank Duke*

# Planning

## Resource Center

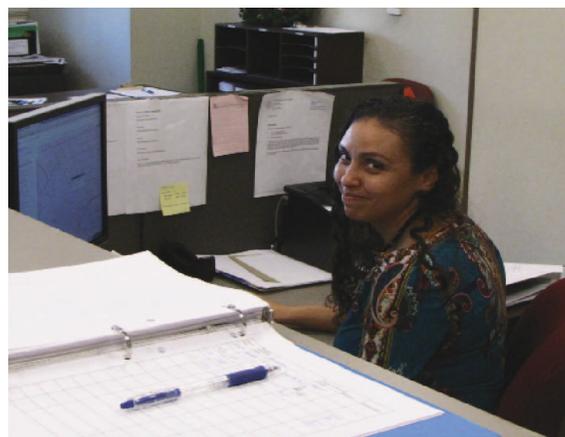
### Customers Served



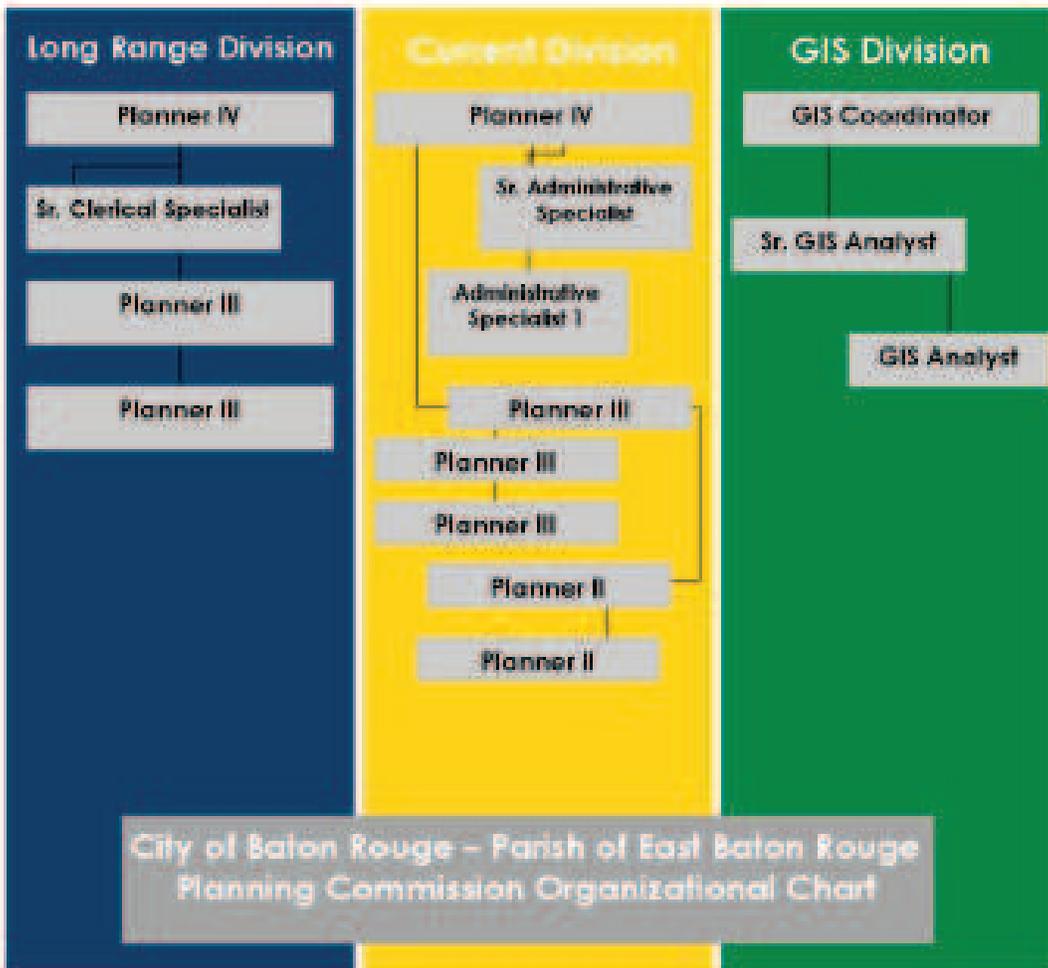
The Planning Commission recognizes that the planning process can be complex. The Planning Commission provides a planning professional who is available to assist the public and to answer general questions about planning regulations and procedures in the Resource Center. This customer service effort improves accessibility of the planning staff, expedites the application process, and disseminates information. It also fosters improved communication between the multiple parties affected by land development decisions such as landowners, applicants, developers, other concerned citizens, and elected officials.

The Resource Center guides applicants through the more than 26 different land development application processes and informs applicants of Unified Development Code (UDC) requirements and important dates such as the date of Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council public hearings. The most common contacts with the resource center involve clarifications of the Unified Development Code and other requirements of development. The Resource Center also answers inquiries about mapping, census and economic data, and jurisdiction.

The Resource Center assisted with more than 4500 inquiries and submittals in 2015.



*Bernadette Fisher is one of several planners that staff the Resource Center.*



# Administration

## Administration Division

The Administration Division of the Planning Commission oversees the duties of the Planning Commission including the day-to-day management of the department and all personnel. This Division is responsible for developing the department budget, developing and coordinating work programs, processing all Unified Development Code amendments and processing payroll. This division also works closely with other City-Parish department heads, agencies, and organizations to develop and monitor projects and represents the Planning Commission before the public at various meetings including Metropolitan Council. Additionally, the administration regularly provides informational updates on multiple projects to various groups, including the Federation of Civic Associations, neighborhood groups, the Board of Realtors and the Growth Coalition.

## FUTUREBR Implementation

### Amendments to the Unified Development Code

With the adoption of FUTUREBR, a thorough review of the Unified Development Code was necessary to ensure that the City-Parish's development regulations serve to implement the vision and goals of the plan. Our UDC was last completely revised in 1994, and has been amended multiple times over the subsequent 21 years.

#### January

Amended Section 10.105 to add Design Standards and create five new design standards (Downtown, Urban, Walkable, Suburban and Rural to better regulate design for new developments across the City-Parish.



From left to right: Frank Duke, Gilles Morin, Donna Bennett, Annette Chambliss, and Ryan Holcomb

## **March**

Amended Chapter 7 [Nonconformities] to improve its clarity and remove inconsistencies.

Amended Chapter 2 (Definitions) and Chapter 8 (Zoning Districts), revising the definition of educational facility to ensure that preschools are considered in the same manner as other school facilities.

Amended Chapter 19 (Amendments) to increase the distance for public notification by mail of Planning Commission hearings from properties within 150 feet to those within 300 feet of the subject property.

## **April**

Amended Chapter 10 (Supplementary Uses) to reflect a common format for all overlay districts consistent with that used in the Design Levels, remove non-regulatory language, and permit additional uses within the Old Hammond Highway Overlay.

Amended Chapter 10 (Supplementary Uses), to allow single-family and two-family dwellings are permitted by right throughout the Spanish Town Local Historic District and clarify the provisions governing building setbacks for all structures within the district.

Amended Chapter 2 (Definitions), to add definitions for “Group

Homes” and “Reasonable Accommodations” to ensure consistency of local regulations with State and federal requirements.

## **August**

Amended Chapter 15 (Floodways, Floodplains, Drainage, and Water Quality), to reflect additional National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) standards. The Department of Development, in its role in floodplain management and ensuring the City-Parish not only meets, but exceeds, the minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) standards, recommended the regulations be updated to eliminate inconsistencies and ensure the UDC serves as a more accurate reference for the development community and the public.

Repealed Chapter 2 (Definitions), and created Chapter 20 (Definitions). Definitions used in other chapters of the Unified Development Code are incorporated into the new Chapter 20, consistent with the recommendations of the American Planning Association that all definitions in the code be in a single chapter.

## **October**

Amended multiple chapters to remove reference to specific fee dollar amounts, establish clear regulatory authority for implementation of the code, establish the relationship between the code and the currently adopted comprehensive plan, and to provide a severability clause applicable to the entire code.



*Revisions to the UDC help to realize the urban form called for in FUTUREBR, such as this rendition of a town center future land use designation.*

# Administration

## Complete Streets

Complete Streets are designed with consideration for users of all ages and physical ability, and they allow for multiple modes of transportation. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transportation users are able to safely move along and across a complete street. The adoption of Complete Streets by the Metropolitan Council was a formal declaration of the government's intent to plan, design, improve, and maintain streets so they are safe for all users.

The Complete Streets Ordinance was drafted and sent to the Office of the Mayor-President for adoption in 2015. The ordinance established a Complete Streets Advisory Committee consisting of 17 members including the Planning Director. This committee is charged with recommending policy and code changes to implement complete streets policies, recommend geographic areas to be prioritized for improvements, and to develop metrics for evaluating and reporting on progress made towards policy implementation. Staff toured Council Districts 3, 8, and 10 with elected officials so that they could identify areas where improvements were desired.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian initiatives

Baton Rouge was one of 22 cities nationwide to be awarded a Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities technical assistance grant from EPA. EPA describes the basis of their technical assistance as "help[ing] communities lay the groundwork to estab-

lish a bikeshare system, discussing feasibility, system planning, business plans, system operations, and health, safety, and social equity." EPA provided a team of experts to participate in a public workshop and meetings and wrote a memo outlining specific steps to advance a bike share system.

Planning Commission staff were named as a partner participating in the development of a bike share program in consultation with the Downtown Development District, the city agency leading the initiative.

While Downtown was the focus of the EPA program, other areas of the parish also received attention. In April, staff joined a team of transportation experts in conducting a US DOT Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Assessment hosted by the Federal Highway Administration Louisiana Division. One roadway was selected in each of the 50 states to be the subject of an on-the-ground examination conducted by a multidisciplinary team focused on improving this corridor for non-motorized users. The subject of the assessment was Siegen Lane from Perkins Road to Airline Highway.

## My Permit Now

The Planning Commission is preparing to join the Department of Development in using the MyPermitNow system at the beginning of 2016. This online system is intended to improve workflow for land development projects that are reviewed by multiple departments. The MyPermitNow system, developed by the South Central Planning & Development Commission in Houma, allows for greater transparency and information sharing between city-parish departments and to the public during the review process.



*The Administration Division works closely with the Chairman in conducting the business of the Planning Commission.*

## *Long Range Planning Division*

The Long Range Planning Division is responsible for the coordination and implementation of FUTUREBR, the 20-year comprehensive land use and development plan for the City and Parish. The primary function of this Division is to focus on long-range, comprehensive planning for the City-Parish. The Advance Planning Division includes the following sections:

### **Plan Implementation and Special Studies**

The special studies section coordinates, implements and updates the City-Parish 20-year comprehensive plan in relation to land use and conducts studies regarding planning and zoning issues. This section also provides staff support for the Historic Preservation Commission.

### **Economic and Environmental Research**

The Economic and Environmental Research Section administers the Enterprise Zone Program, Restoration Tax Abatement Program, and Brownfields Program. This section coordinates any grants the Planning Commission receives.

## *FUTUREBR Implementation*

### **Small Area Plans**

FUTUREBR calls for the utilization of small area plans to assist areas of the City-Parish to further refine the overall FUTUREBR Vision and make it applicable to them. In 2015 the Long Range Planning Division worked on two small area plans.



*From left to right: Marie Hopkins, Carrie Broussard, Lael Holton, Barrett Chaix.*

# Long Range

## Baton Rouge Health District

The “Health District” is a several square mile area south of the I-12 and I-10 split in Baton Rouge that contains many of the city’s leading health care industry sites including Baton Rouge General Hospital, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Pennington Biomedical Research Center as well as clinics, doctor’s offices, and teaching centers. As this medical district has grown in density and importance, it has struggled with traffic congestion. With \$500 million of new facilities proposed for the area and recognizing the importance of the medical industry to the regional economy, FUTUREBR called for a plan that would not only address the traffic concerns, but also work to build a district identity and leverage the advantages of multiple industry leaders working in close proximity for both collaboration and innovation. The staff of the Planning Commission worked closely with the consultant team to develop appropriate goals for the overall development area, as well as provide recommendations related to the appropriate land use and zoning changes which would facilitate the desired growth.

## Mid City Predevelopment Plan

Spurred by their acquisition of the former Entergy site on Government Street, the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (RDA) embarked on a planning process for the 100-acre neighborhood bounded by Government Street to the south, I-110 to the west, North Boulevard to the north and South 19th Street to the east.

After FUTUREBR identified the Mid City area as having perhaps the most redevelopment potential anywhere in Baton Rouge outside of downtown, the focused small area planning of this district has been a priority. The Plan envisioned the 6 acre Enter-

gy site owned by the RDA as a catalyst for the area. The Planning Commission partnered in this project, providing the consultant with information to ensure consistency with FUTUREBR as well as providing data and technical assistance to the team. This initiative serves to strengthen the collaboration between the Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Authority.

## Brownfields Program

The Planning Commission was awarded a \$400,000 EPA Communitywide Brownfield Assessment Grant in 2015. These funds will be used to provide Environmental Site Assessments and Remediation Planning to facilitate redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties in Baton Rouge, and to provide area-wide brownfield inventories of corridors targeted for reinvestment. The grant will provide funding for the Baton Rouge Brownfield Program through 2018.

The City-Parish is also a member of South Louisiana Brownfields Coalition Revolving Loan Fund. This fund provides access to remediation loans and grants for brownfield redevelopment projects in Baton Rouge and three other local governments in the region.

## Enterprise Zone Program

The Baton Rouge Enterprise Zone (EZ) Program is an incentive program to encourage the creation of permanent new jobs in geographically targeted areas of the parish. The EZ Program offers local sales tax rebates to new and expanding businesses that are located in Enterprise Zones or in specially designated Economic Development Zones. The local program offers a 1.9% sales tax refund on construction materials and equipment purchased by eligible non-retail businesses located within a designated Enterprise or Economic Development Zone.



*Reuse of the former Entergy site is the heart of the Mid City Predevelopment Plan. The acquisition of this 6-acre site was assisted by brownfield assessments provided by the City-Parish’s EPA communitywide brownfield assessment grants.*



*Officials from U.S. EPA Region 6 presented the Planning Commission with a plaque in recognition of their brownfields grant award at the Brownfields 2015 national conference in Chicago.*

In 2015, the Planning Commission received 26 Advance Notifications from the State, from which eight new Enterprise Zone applications were processed for eligible projects in East Baton Rouge Parish. Currently, there are 12 active applications in various stages of the approval process.

## Restoration Tax Abatement

The Restoration Tax Abatement, or RTA, is a state program that provides an up to ten-year abatement of ad valorem local property taxes on the renovations and improvements of existing commercial structures and owner-occupied residences. This incentive is open to all businesses and homeowners with existing structures to be expanded, restored, improved or developed in qualifying locations, and as approved by Metropolitan Council. Qualifying locations for properties include those in the Downtown Development District, Economic Development Districts, Historic Districts, or those listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Planning Commission processes applications submitted to Louisiana Economic Development, preparing a summary of the project and an estimate of the amount of property taxes that would be abated for each project that is provided to the affected taxing authorities and to the Metropolitan Council for their evaluation and approval. The Long Range Planning Division reviewed eight RTA applications in 2015.

## Historic Preservation Commission

In 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission received 11 applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. Of these 11 applications, 5 were submitted for review at staff level and 6 were submitted for review at public hearings. In total, 10 Certificates of Appropriateness were granted.

The Historic Preservation Commission continued working on a revision of Section 3.5 of the Unified Development Code that began in 2014 to simplify the existing ordinance language. The revisions were reviewed by the locally designated historic districts, the Foundation for Historical Louisiana and the State Historic Preservation Office in 2015. The proposed ordinance will begin the public hearing process for adoption in 2016.

## FUTUREBR Annual Progress Report

The 2015 FUTUREBR Progress Report was the third report since the adoption of the comprehensive plan. The scope of this report differed in that it established metrics and indicators that can begin to measure and track progress made towards achieving the Vision and Goals outlined in FUTUREBR. The document also served to inform the public and policy makers regarding the implementation activities carried out by the 27 Lead Agencies identified in FUTUREBR.



*Before and After: The Dupree Apartments in Spanish Town were redeveloped through participation in the Restoration Tax Abatement Program and review by the Historic Preservation Commission.*



*Before and After: The Commerce Building in downtown Baton Rouge is being redeveloped through participation in the Brownfields and Restoration Tax Abatement programs.*

# Current

## Current Planning Division

The Current Planning Division provides professional assistance and advice to the public for the development of land throughout East Baton Rouge Parish. This assistance may take the form of answering inquiries as to how parcels of land are zoned and what land uses are permitted in the different zoning districts, or answering questions from the public concerning the dividing or development of property as it relates to the Unified Development Code and the Comprehensive Plan. However, the primary function of this division is to focus on the rezoning and subdivision of land. Administration of subdivision and zoning regulations requires processing applications and presenting the applications at public hearings before the Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council. Approved changes are recorded in the official City-Parish GIS Database. The Current Planning Division includes:

### Land Development

The Development Section coordinates review and processing of day-to-day Land Development applications. The section is responsible for Small Planned Unit Developments (SPUD), Infill/Mixed Use Small Planned Unit Developments (ISPUD), Planned Unit Developments (PUD), Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND), Subdivision Review, Site Plan Review, Conditional Use Permits (CUP), Revocations, Wireless Towers, and Sign Waivers.

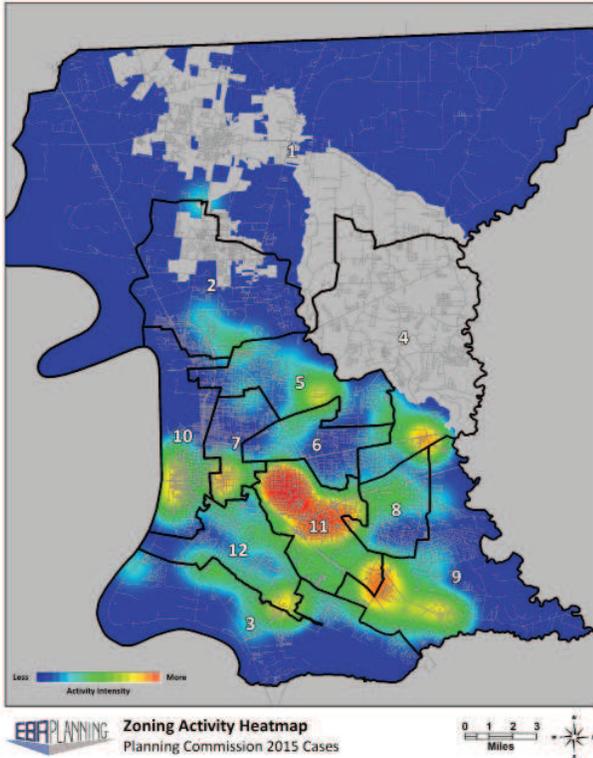
### Land Use and Zoning Review

The Land Use and Zoning Section coordinates review and processing of day-to-day zoning applications, conducts special studies and processes the following applications: Rezoning Applications/Land Use amendments, Paving and Parking Waivers, and Street Name Changes.



*From left to right: Rexter Chambers, Eboni Hall, Glenn Hanna, Jonique Marcelin, MaShanka Taylor, Kenneth Moye, Vance Baldwin, Bernadette M. Fisher*

## 2015 Planning and Zoning Activity



The maps on this page indicate the areas where development concentrated within the City-Parish during 2015.

The Zoning Activity map (top left) shows the geographic concentration of rezoning and conditional use permit cases submitted to the Planning Commission in 2015.

The Planning Activity map (bottom left) shows the geographic concentration of other cases submitted to the Planning commission in 2015.

### Site Plan Review

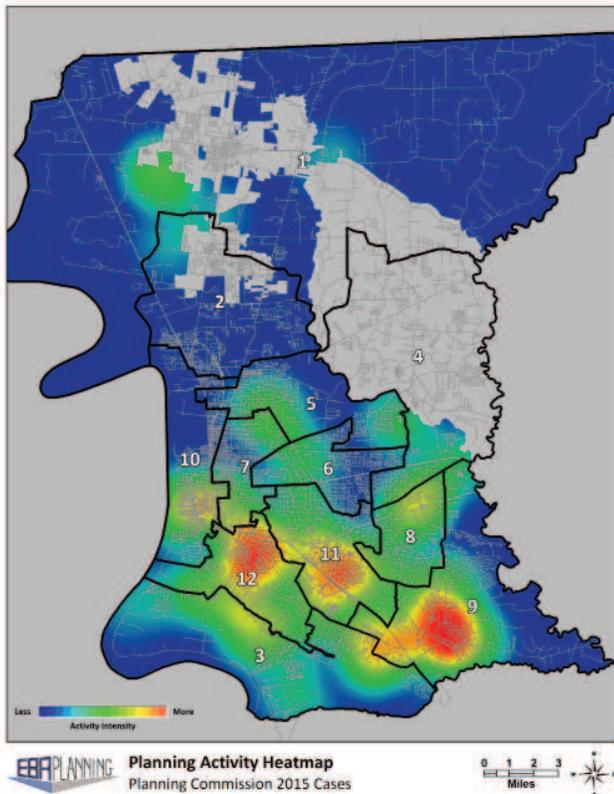
The Site Plan Review process assures that all new major multi-family, commercial and industrial developments within the City-Parish have adequate drainage, parking facilities and space for vehicular circulation, as well as proper zoning. Site Plan Review applies to all high density units such as:

- Multi-family projects of more than 75 units or offices, shops, stores
- Other commercial or industrial uses with a building(s) of more than 30,000 square feet, an addition to an existing structure in which the increase in aggregate floor area is greater than twenty percent
- Any building that falls within an Urban Design Overlay District

Different procedures apply for projects with more than 100 multi-family units or offices, shops, stores or other commercial uses with a building or buildings containing more than 50,000 square feet. Projects of this magnitude are subject to Planning Commission approval.

Site Plan Review by Use:

Assisted Living Facilities	1
Commercial Development	9
Hotel/Inn	3
Medical	1
Mixed Use Development	0
Mobile Home Park	2
Multi-Family Apartments	2
Natural Resource Overlay District	1
Office Development	3
Religious	0
Warehouse	2
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Total	24



## Subdivisions

Subdivision activity includes the following:

- Division of a lot, tract, or parcel of land into two or more lots, plots, sites, or other units of land
- Dedication, granting, or construction of a road, highway, street, alley, or servitude through a tract of land regardless of area
- Exchange of property in which property lines are reconfigured, but no new lots are created
- Combination of smaller lots of record into larger tracts
- Development of a tract or site of five acres on which two or more multi-family buildings, office buildings, shops or store buildings, warehouses or other commercial or industrial buildings are to be developed

Exchange of property applications and subdivision applications that create five or less lots that have the required frontage and no waivers of the Subdivision Ordinance are reviewed by the Planning Commission Staff. All other subdivision applications are reviewed by the Planning Commission Staff and the Department of Development's Development Review Committee prior to consideration of the proposed development by the Planning Commission.

Application Type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Large Subdivisions	9	10	9	8	13
Small Subdivisions	74	62	84	52	
Exchanges of Property	68	73	60	68	66
Mobile Home Park	0	0	0	0	2
Revocations	8	5	19	2	9
Site Plans	14	17	25	13	22
Conditional Use Permits	4	8	9	14	5
Rezoning	85	45	47	40	53
Planned Unit Developments	14	36	32	30	31
ISPUDs	6	8	6	7	6
SPUDs	3	9	8	9	11
TNDs	3	5	3	3	4
Land Use Plan Amendments*	2	6	9	5	10
Parking Waivers	11	12	4	5	2
Paving Waivers	1	0	0	0	0
Sign Waivers	8	1	1	1	0
Street Name Changes	1	3	2	1	1
Demolitions	2	1	0	2	1
HPC COA	6	5	12	6	5
Staff COA	0	5	2	9	5
Local Historic Districts established	0	0	0	0	0
UDC Amendments	8	9	6	8	11
ZAC Meetings	4	2	2	2	5
<b>Customers Served</b>	<b>3563</b>	<b>4731</b>	<b>4511</b>	<b>3135</b>	<b>3354</b>

\*Land Use Plan Amendments refer to FUTUREBR Map changes made since adoption in October, 2011

## Geographic Information System Division

GIS is recognized as a valuable resource and tool for both decision makers and the public. The investment in this technology is realized each time a question such as “Is this property in the city limits?” is asked. Answers can be derived very quickly using the GIS Web site or one of the desktop software solutions. GIS provides the tools and capabilities necessary to assist complex planning decisions.

October 2015 marked twenty-two years since commencing the Parishwide Geographic Information System (GIS) Program in East Baton Rouge Parish. With the adoption of the Horizon Plan in 1992, the Planning Commission was charged with developing a Planning Management Information System. Today, GIS Division staff at the Planning Commission continue to lead an effort delivering accurate geospatial data and services to City-Parish government and the public.

There are three full time staff members in the Planning Commission GIS Division working to ensure data accuracy, currency, and to provide the best tools to access the data. GIS Analysts work with other City-Parish departments such as Information Services, 911 Communications District, Public Works, Downtown Development District, and Finance to coordinate activities. Staff members also work to maintain a dialogue with representatives of the cities of Baker, Central, Zachary, and the two universities, LSU and Southern University.

The Division also researches and recommends new hardware and software to the Administration.

In 2015, GIS Analysts attended several conferences and workshops. These sessions provide a forum to receive constructive feedback from other GIS peers, and an opportunity to tell others about the GIS projects that are taking place in Baton Rouge.

The East Baton Rouge Parishwide GIS Program has made leaps and bounds from its inception twenty-two years ago. More than ever, GIS is used by City-Parish departments and the public. Integration with other systems has also begun to take hold as users realize that the GIS database is a reliable source of information. As the data has become more precise after years of development and editing, there are more users that leverage this information on a daily basis. Inherently, this confidence puts GIS in a position to tie other systems and databases together, thus creating a true City-Parish enterprise.

### Mapping and Analysis

The GIS Division is responsible for the acquisition, development, update, maintenance, recording, and dissemination of planning-related geospatial data stored in the City-Parish enterprise GIS data warehouse.



*From left to right: Indah Kusuma, Justin Priola, and Annette Haggemacher*

As of November 2015, the division processed 146 subdivision cases comprising an addition of 1,066 lots to the database. There were also 49 zoning district amendments, 5 Comprehensive Land Use Plan amendments and three revocations. Data-sets including lots, street centerlines, existing land use, zoning, businesses, and subdivisions were subject to ongoing updates, geometry clean-up and validation.

Monthly tasks include updating business names utilizing occupational license data; land use updates based on DPW building permits; production of vicinity maps for Planning Commission meetings; and updating and producing reference maps. GIS Analysts routinely respond to public inquiries and fulfilled over 69 GIS data requests during the year.

## ArcGIS Online

In 2015, the City-Parish greatly expanded the use of the ArcGIS Online web mapping portal. The web portal was formally opened to the public in the summer of 2015. ArcGIS Online facilitates better communication of GIS maps and assets to internal and external users. With the service, GIS analysts can create interactive web maps and applications for use by the public. These web map applications display Enterprise GIS data directly to users through the use of web feature services.

A series of web map applications have been created displaying various geographical aspects of the Parish. This includes Planning and Land Development, Historic Places, Public Safety, Public

Facilities Finder, Health Care, Governmental Boundaries, Census 2010 Data, Recreation, and Transportation.

A series of specialized story maps have been produced for various aspects of the Parish. Story maps merge text and imagery to provide information in a tour-like format. Story maps have been created for Landmarks, Scenic Views, Downtown Points of Interest, and Historic Land Development.

## GIS Web Portal

In 2015, the Information Services Department (IS) developed a new GIS Web Portal ([gis.brla.gov](http://gis.brla.gov)) that serves as the “front page” for all GIS activities in City-Parish Government. In collaboration with IS, much of the data dissemination activities of the GIS Division have proceeded through this new web portal.

## Data Development

The GIS Division assisted with several data development projects in 2015. Work was performed this year to develop a lot layer for the city of Baker, thus filling in a gap in the GIS database. Also, work was performed to develop resource and sub-resource types for various business categories in the city. This work was done to integrate the East Baton Rouge Parish Library’s Community Resource database with the CityKey website ([www.brcitykey.com](http://www.brcitykey.com)). Work is ongoing to integrate Central and Zachary lot data into the Enterprise GIS database.



*Planning and Land Development ARCGIS Web App*

## Website Development

The GIS Division is responsible for the design and implementation of web-based tools that utilize geospatial data, computer technology, and updates to the Planning Commission website. These applications are designed to serve the Planning Commission, the public, and other City-Parish departments. The website is in the process of a redesign. The new design is intended to be intuitive and more user friendly. The expected release of the redesigned site is during the first quarter of 2016.

### BikeBR

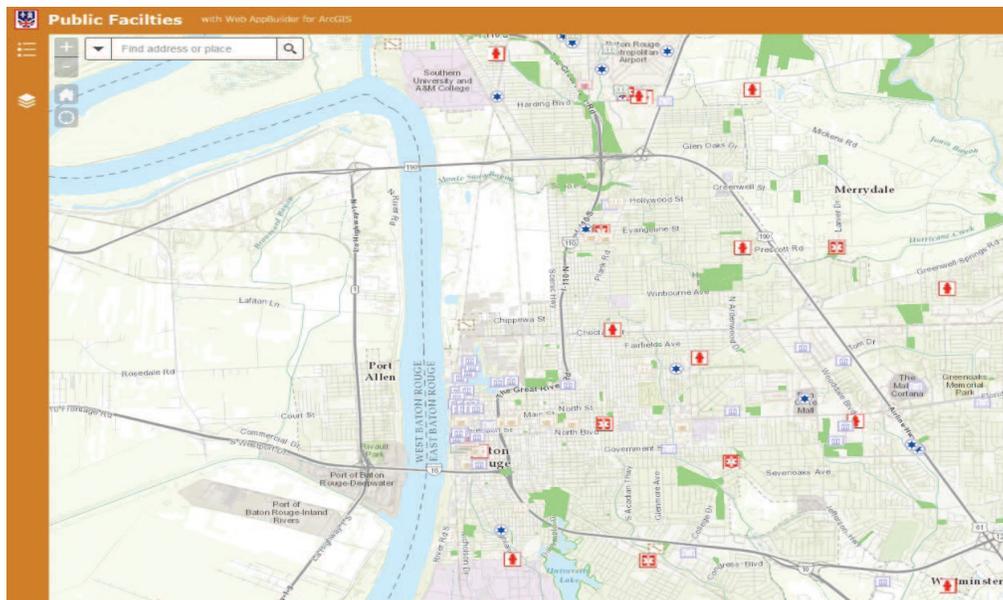
Initially launched in 2011, BikeBR has become a valuable tool for cyclists. Surpassing the expected layers of bike lanes, shared use paths, sharrows, wide shoulders, and bike racks, sites of community interest are also featured. These include BREC parks, bicycle shops, coffee shops, drug stores, golf courses, grocery stores, hospitals, libraries, police stations, schools, scenic views, tourist venues, retail centers, bus routes, and Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport. To stay current with area changes, data updates are processed on a quarterly basis.

Continuing website improvements are part of an ongoing effort by the Planning Commission to encourage bicycle use, address safety issues, and promote connectivity and fitness. As to such, the Homepage has been upgraded, and multiple pages have been added to the website that are accessible via navigational tabs. The new pages include resources for health and fitness, biking, and walking; graphics for “Walkability” and “Bikeability”; an events calendar; contact information; and information about the BikeBR application.

### Land Development Application Search Tool (LDAST)

LDAST has recently undergone several levels of revisions. The latest version of LDAST (4.4.0) employs an updated user interface and a modern design. The upgrade includes a tabbed option box, offering website users access to valuable information. Users are able to view monthly planning or zoning case documentation and site photographs by clicking a case icon. When clicked, a pop-up window populates to provide relevant information about the case, and links to staff recommendations and photographs. In addition to relevant case data, users have the option to toggle zoning layers. The ability to toggle Council Districts is also available to website users.

The new release also includes a navigational menu that provides links to maps of development trends, maps of case histories, information about LDAST, and Planning Commission contact information. Also located on the menu bar is a Resources tab which provides links to the Application Tracking System, Land Development Guide, Planning Commission meeting information, Unified Development Code, and the zoning district history.



*Public Facilities ARCGIS Web App*

## *Intern Program*

University students who are currently enrolled in programs related to spatial studies such as architecture, landscape architecture, geography or urban planning can be considered for the the City-Parish Planning Commission intern program. The Intern Program provides an opportunity for students to apply their studies and talents to advance the work plan of the Planning Commission and gain valuable experience.

Calesia Anderson is an undergraduate student at Southern University and A&M College. She is currently in her junior year, pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. Calesia assists with answering and directing phone calls and assisting staff with clerical functions such as data entry, file management, document scanning, and the preparation of documents that are to be presented at the Planning Commission meetings.

Antonio Carriere is a graduate student at Southern University and A&M College. He is working on his Master's degree in Public Administration, with a concentration in Public Policy, in the Mandela School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. Antonio works in the Long Range Division, providing support and assisting staff in collecting and preparing data for various planning research projects. Antonio assists with the preparation and the review of small area plans and conducts policy research.

Aspen Nero is a graduate student at the University of New Orleans. She is working on her Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning. Aspen has conducted field survey techniques and procedures, performed data collection and web design, and has been updating and maintaining the Parishwide Geographic Information System database.



*Left to Right: Calesia Anderson, Antonio Carriere, Aspen Nero*



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