

1. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

What is the Comprehensive Master Plan?

Our parish is increasingly changing from a rural to suburban, and even in some cases semi-urban, environment. As growth occurs infrastructure (roads and utilities) is needed. Infrastructure is very expensive. Anticipating where growth is going to occur, and what kind it is likely to be, can help us put infrastructure, and the other “big things” (such as schools, sewer plants, etc.), in the right locations, and developed at the right size. This can help avoid costly mistakes such as building roads too small for projected traffic volumes, not having wide-enough servitudes to widen roads in the future, under-sizing water or sewer lines, etc. And, since infrastructure maintenance is also very expensive, extending roads and utilities before there are enough homes and businesses to pay for them can increase parish costs, and increase taxes on everyone.

The discussion above focused on the relationship of only three issues: roads, utilities and land use. There are many other issues that are also related to growth and development in Livingston Parish.

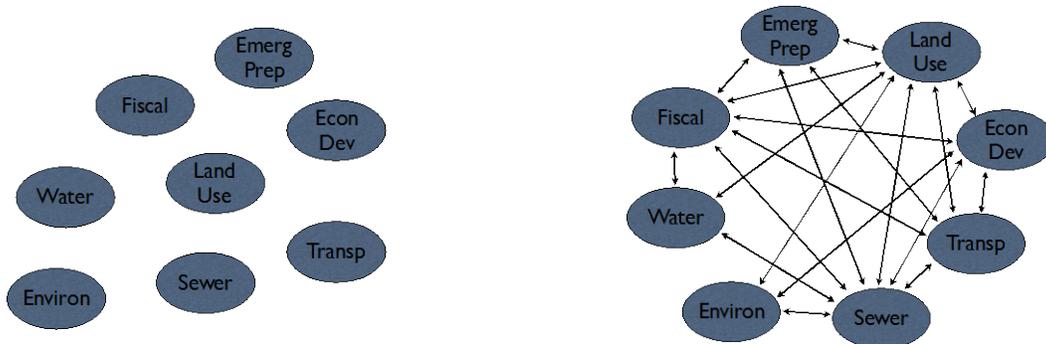


Figure 1: Interrelated issues

In order to plan effectively for the future it is important to keep in mind that *all* of these issues are interrelated (see Figure 1). For example, decisions about the size and location of roads (transportation) affect the parish’s budget (fiscal), where homes and stores should be developed (land use), where businesses will be attracted to (economic development), and how evacuations can be handled (emergency preparation). Similarly, decisions about where to extend public sewer affects where roads can be built, where and how many homes and businesses land will accommodate, the parish budget, the quality of our rivers and lakes, etc.

The purpose of planning ahead is to “get the big stuff right”, that is, to anticipate where growth is likely to occur (and what kind of growth it is likely to be), so that we can plan for the right size of servitudes, roads, schools, power lines, drainage channels, etc.— in approximately the right locations. It is much less expensive to put them in “right” in the first place, than it is to impact existing development to install them, or to replace them.

The decisions of many businesses, stores, employers, and even homeowners about where to locate are influenced by whether they feel that the parish is in fact “planning ahead”, that there is predictability about what will happen where, so that they can be confident their investments will be secure as development continues.

The Livingston Comprehensive Master Plan is a tool for planning ahead, for trying to anticipate where growth will occur, and be cost-effective in where we invest in infrastructure.

The Comprehensive Plan also helps us accommodate growth in a way that preserves our quality of life. It can help us steer or encourage future development so that it is compatible with existing neighborhoods, and that parks, trails and schools are planned for. This gives existing and future residents, who are also “investors”, confidence in making their own decisions with a more secure vision of the future.

For these reasons this Comprehensive Master Plan has been titled “a comprehensive master plan for investing in our future.” If followed it will help everyone make better choices, reduce conflicts, and bring about a parish that remains an attractive, functional place to live and work.

Key concepts of the Plan (“Plan on a page”)

1. The parish is projected, and has the capacity, to double in population over the next 30 years. As development pressure increases, if we want to preserve our quality of life we have to plan ahead.
2. Growth pressure is following a “barbell” pattern from the west and east sides of the parish. Large areas of the parish will not experience development pressure, and don’t need extensive planning or regulation.
3. Attracting good businesses is important to our sustainability.
 - i. The loss of sales tax revenue hinders our ability to provide amenities as well as necessities.
 - ii. Predictability and appearance is important to those we want to move here.
4. Future economic success in the parish will be dependent on:
 - i. An interconnected system of major roads
 - ii. Regional sewer
 - iii. Added capacity for domestic water service

We’ve been talking about these needs for years; it’s time to get organized to bring them about.

5. Development follows sewer / roads, and vice-versa.

Where we invest in infrastructure (roads, water and sewer will influence where development occurs. Where development occurs will influence where infrastructure is needed. To get the “big stuff” right we need to coordinate where we invest in our resources.
6. Growing our infrastructure incrementally is less expensive than scattered growth (“leap frog” development).

- i. Road maintenance is paid by taxes. Roads are expensive to build and maintain (as much as \$15,000 per year for every mile of road). In the long run, the homes and businesses along the road help pay for the road with their property taxes. When roads are extended long before development occurs, the cost is born by all the residents and businesses of the parish. It is more economical to extend roads in balance with where development will help pay for them.
 - ii. Similarly, the cost of utilities and services (police, fire, school buses, etc.) are affected by the distances they serve vs. the number of homes and businesses.
7. Being considerate of neighbors will make the parish a better place to live and work

For those living here now, and those to come, we need to find ways to avoid locating incompatible uses next to each other

Key recommendations of the Plan

1. Use the Anticipated Land Use Map as an initial/interim guide for where and how development is likely to occur and to make land use and infrastructure decisions.
2. Adopt zoning, and basic design guidelines in the critical Hwy 190/I-12 “economic corridor” to encourage needed, quality economic development (employment and commercial uses).
3. Begin working with individual sub-areas (“self-determination” areas) of the parish to determine the degree to which they wish to increase predictability of land uses. Incorporate their plans into an update of the CMP.
4. Adopt the Major Street Plan of the CMP and use it to make sure that future development doesn’t preclude the ability to create an interconnected system of roads to reduce congestion in the parish. Update the Major Street Plan.
5. Convene “summit meetings” of water and sewer providers to begin the process of planning how to provide the necessary services that will enable sustainable growth of the parish.

How is the Plan used?

The CMP is advisory. It is not a regulation. It is intended to be a general guide for decisions about infrastructure and land use by the Parish Council, Planning Commission, and parish staff, as well as by property owners, businesses, and developers.

For example, a comprehensive plan may be used as:

- A guide for individual decisions, a “blue-print” for encouraging compatible future development.
- A guide for decision making by individuals, agencies, and businesses—and a tool for helping coordinate their decisions for the common good.

- A list of objectives that the community intends to accomplish over the coming years, (the implementation plan).
- A “file cabinet” of the other types of plans including small area and neighborhood plans, streetscapes, corridor preservation, parks, recreation, historic preservation, and community development.

Because the plan is general there are many details that need to be worked out. These can be addressed in several ways:

- During the parish process for reviewing/approving individual projects
- More detailed plans can be prepared by individual “self-determination” sub-areas (see Section 3, Land Use, Implementation Strategies)

And finally, if the CMP is to remain a useful tool, it must be kept current. That means that as developments are approved, the plan should be updated. As other conditions change, the plan should be updated. If the plan does not reflect how the parish is actually growing, and intends to grow, it will cease to be helpful in planning ahead, and decisions will revert to being made on a case-by-case basis with no overall sense of where the parish is going.

How to update the Plan

As conditions change (e.g., community opinions change, the economy adjusts) updates to the plan become necessary. Two types of updates are envisioned:

- A **major** update to the Plan is one that substantially changes the land uses, goals, or intent of the plan. Major updates should include substantial public outreach to help ‘check’ that the plan reflects current attitudes (for an example of substantial public outreach please see the appendices).
- **Minor** updates are less overarching. They do not change the focus of the plan. They may include clerical corrections, minor updates to data, and other changes that clarify the intent of the plan. An example may be a neighborhood that is willing to dedicate substantial open space rather than the residential land use designated in this plan. Minor updates should be made as often as necessary. They may be made administratively, with notification of the Council, Planning Commission, and public.

Authority for the Comprehensive Master Plan

The Plan was developed under the Louisiana Revised Statutes (LRS). LRS Section 33:101 defines what a master plan is:

“A “Master Plan” means a statement of public policy for the physical development of a parish or municipality adopted by a parish or municipality”

Section 33:106 identifies what a master plan can do, it states that:

“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”

Then it goes on further to identify other components:

“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, street car 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.”

This LRS section goes on further to identify how a plan can be updated:

“As the work of making the whole master plan progresses, a commission may from time to time adopt and publish a part or parts thereof, any such part to cover one or more major sections or divisions of the parish, or one or more of the aforesaid or other functional matters to be included in the plan. A commission may from time to time amend, extend, or add to the plan.”

How was the Plan developed?

The plan was developed with extensive input from residents, businesses, staff, and elected and appointed officials. Early in the process, individual meetings were held with a variety of interest groups throughout the parish (the Livingston Economic Development Council, Neighbors in Action, Citizen’s for Highways and Infrastructure, real estate professionals, community groups, mayors and city representatives, etc.).

In addition, two rounds of public meetings were held in locations throughout the parish. All of the meetings were extensively publicized and reported in news media, and a web site provided additional opportunities for the public to be informed and provide comments. Public outreach helped identify issues and concerns and refined the directions that emerged from the plan.

That feedback from the public was augmented by more detailed information provided by a Technical Advisory Committee representing departments of the parish as well as regional agencies (e.g. water, sanitation and drainage districts).

A Steering Committee comprised of individuals with backgrounds and interest reflecting the parish as a whole provided valuable feedback and effectively “steered” the emerging concepts — not only by critiquing the ideas, but also by generating many of the original concepts and priorities in the plan.

[And finally, both the Livingston Parish Planning Commission and Parish Council adopted the plan.]

For more information on the planning process, including feedback obtained at the public meetings, please see the Appendix.

Where do I find...? (How the Plan is organized)

Chapter 1 contains an overview of the purpose of the plan, how it was created, identifies methods for updating it and key concepts and recommendations

Chapter 2 reviews the history of growth in the Parish. It is intended to present a snapshot of where the Parish is today.

Chapters 3-9 address individual topics –land use, wastewater, transportation, drainage, and emergency management—that are important interrelated to growing cost-effectively and in a balanced way. Each section identifies “what we have today” (current conditions and issues), “what we need” (possible options for future decision-making), and several preliminary recommendations for how to proceed.

Chapter 10 summarizes the various steps and options for implementing the recommendations of the CMP.

Chapter 11 includes the major maps in the plan, the Existing Land Use Map, the Anticipated Land Use Map, and the Major Street Plan.

The Appendix contains includes a review of the public planning process and supporting and background information such as the existing wastewater systems, existing drainage districts.