



COMMUNITY PLANNING

Just Imagine...collaborative community planning that focuses on implementing a better quality of life.

The Community Planning topic broadly encompasses quality of life, public-private coordination and partnership, city and parish approval processes, and the quality and outcomes of development in the region.

The Community Planning recommendations are based on:

1. Assessment of existing development approval processes, policies, and outcomes
2. Community Planning Guiding Group meetings and input
3. Public input throughout the process
4. Technical meetings with the cities' and parishes' planning and zoning departments

The tables list the full set of recommendations with estimated costs and time frames, and key recommendations are described in more detail below.

Fringe Development Codes

Calcasieu Parish and the City of Lake Charles are working collaboratively on development codes for the areas where the parish-city line creates inconsistencies. A joint fringe development ordinance would address consistent sidewalks, access management, setbacks, drainage, and other development requirements. Additional funding would need to be dedicated to support staffing capacity at the Parish and City to move this recommendation forward quickly.

Corridor Overlay Standards

Corridor overlay districts are an important tool to continue discussing and using. Some past overlay districts have become controversial and political in Southwest Louisiana. However, the aesthetics of commercial corridors can negatively impact the region's ability to attract investment and residents. Corridor overlay standards must be thoughtfully



COMMUNITY PLANNING

PLAN RECOMMENDATION	COST	TIMEFRAME
Zoning and Regulatory Updates		
① Adopt zoning and approval changes to make the 10 catalytic projects implementable	TBD	1-2 years
② Utilize local knowledge and expertise through developer stakeholder groups to review zoning and draining ordinances as they are being drafted	TBD	1-5 years
③ Consider adopting the Design Flood Elevation and resiliency standards above the minimum requirements: conduct a cost-benefit analysis first to demonstrate the reasons for building to a Design Flood Elevation above BFE	TBD	2-5 years
④ Adopt mixed-use zoning for key areas to encourage active uses and housing	TBD	2-5 years
⑤ Adopt enhanced standards for new development (underground utilities, sidewalks, etc.)	TBD	2-5 years
⑥ Adopt consistent Fringe Development codes between the cities and parishes	TBD	2-5 years
⑦ Adopt corridor overlay standards in areas where the cities or parishes are also transforming streets to be more walkable	TBD	2-5 years
⑧ Establish requirements for outparcel design along corridors where larger commercial properties may subdivide	TBD	2-5 years
⑨ Update sign and landscape ordinance	TBD	2-5 years
Walkability and Bikeability		
⑩ Develop the public edge of the Lake Charles and Calcasieu River waterfront to connect over 4 miles of walking and biking paths	TBD	2-10 years
⑪ Reconnect Old Highway 171 N. as a bike path and greenway over English Bayou and Calcasieu River to connect to Moss Bluff	TBD	2-10 years
⑫ Implement the Bayou Greenbelt with an early phase project, extending McNeese's Contraband Bayou project to the east of Common Street.	TBD	2-5 years
⑬ Develop walking and biking paths in Entergy's utility rights-of-way, working in partnership with existing land owners, especially where connections to the Bayou Greenbelt are possible	TBD	2-5 years

Community Planning

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- People desire quality of life improvements in the region — places to shop, dine, recreate, and enjoy themselves.
- Sidewalks, bike trails, and pedestrian paths in both developed and natural areas are high priorities for the residents of SWLA.
- Some policies and regulations will need to change to help implement the 10 catalytic projects.

designed and there must be political support for staff to enforce them consistently. One benefit to adopting higher standards is that insurance will cover upgrades after a future disaster if they are required by code. In the Nelson Overlay District, development being built back after Laura and Delta is higher in quality than what was there previously. The City of Lake Charles recently adopted the Nellie Lutchter Overlay district for Enterprise between I-10 and Broad Street. This overlay district will require elevated materials for new buildings in the Nellie Lutchter District. In addition to materials, overlay standards can also regulate site plan and building orientation. Corridor overlays should be pursued in locations where the city and/or parish is also making improvements to walkability in the public right-of-way.

Outparcel Design Standards

Outparcel design standards can function as an important component of corridor overlay standards or an independent set of standards. Lake Charles and Calcasieu Parish have a number of retail corridors with strip centers (Ryan Street, Prien Lake Road, Sam Houston Jones Parkway). As property owners of strip centers redevelop, the national trend is to maximize the built square footage by subdividing high value outparcels. Standards for frontages, openings, transparency, building elements, and publicly accessible space drastically improve the appearance of the area.



8

Outparcel Design Standards

Outparcel standards improve building frontages, scale, and publicly accessible space along key regional corridors

Recommended Zoning & Approval Changes CITY OF LAKE CHARLES

- Improved standards for infill development in existing neighborhoods to prevent inconsistent setbacks, street frontages, and poor site plan utilization of parcels.
- Recalibrate the Downtown Smart Code to account for the Waterfront Development and Strong Downtowns projects.
- Update the Planned Unit Development standards to require minimum usable and total open space per unit and other community amenities (such as play structures, gardens, bicycle facilities, etc.).
- Reduce the minimum lot sizes in neighborhoods to allow for townhouses and narrow lot development.
- Require garages to be set back from the primary facade of the house at least 20 feet.

DEFINITIONS OF FEMA FLOOD ZONE DESIGNATIONS

Moderate to low risk areas

- X (shaded) — Areas of moderate flood hazard
- B (shaded) — Base floodplains of lesser hazards (such as areas protected by levees from 100-year flood)
- C (unshaded) — Areas of minimal flood hazard; may have ponding and local drainage programs that don't warrant designation as base floodplain
- X (unshaded) — Areas of minimal flood hazard; outside the 500-year flood and protected by levee from 100-year flood

High risk areas (mandatory flood insurance)

- A — Areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding and 26% chance of flooding over the course of a 30-year mortgage
- AE — Base floodplain where BFEs are provided
- A1-30 — Numbered A Zones (old format)
- AH — Areas with a 1% annual chance of shallow flooding, usually in the form of a pond (1-3 feet)
- AO — River or stream flood hazard areas, and areas with a 1% or greater chance of shallow flooding each year
- AR — Areas with a temporarily increased flood risk due to building or restoration of a flood control system
- A99 — Areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding that will be protected by a federal flood control system

High risk — coastal areas (Mandatory Flood Insurance)

- V — Coastal areas with a 1% or greater chance of flooding and an additional hazard due to storm waves (no BFEs shown)
- VE, V1-30 — Coastal areas with 1% annual chance of flooding and additional hazards due to storm waves, where BFEs are derived from detailed analysis

Undetermined Risk Areas

- D — Areas with possible but undetermined flood hazards

Design Flood Elevations

Freeboard refers to additional height above a minimum level of protection, typically expressed in feet above the base flood elevation (BFE). Flood zones are regulated through the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). As of 2022, the local requirements were as follows.

Calcasieu Parish requires equipment and finished floor elevations to be built to a minimum of the following (whichever is lowest):

- One-foot freeboard above FIRM BFE for FIRM zones A, AE, and VE;
- One-foot freeboard above the nearest BFE for FIRM zones XS and X;
- One-foot freeboard above the highest recorded or modeled 100-year inundation elevation;
- One-foot freeboard above the nearest Sanitary Sewer Manhole; or
- One-foot freeboard above the street centerline.

The City of Lake Charles has requirements in special flood hazard areas (SHFA) where base flood elevation data has been provided. In these areas, the top of a structure's lowest floor must be:

- Built to 10 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) in all areas with a BFE of nine feet or less MSL
- Built at or above BFE in all A Zones (A and AE)

Cameron Parish requires:

- All development to be built to BFE.

Continued changes in climate, sea levels, and the intensity and frequency of storms suggests that building to a standard above BFE could lead to less property damage during future disasters. A regional benefit-cost analysis should be conducted to demonstrate the safety and property repair cost benefits to optionally building above the standard or for approving municipalities and parishes to adopt higher standards.

What Does it Mean?

BASE FLOOD ELEVATION (BFE)

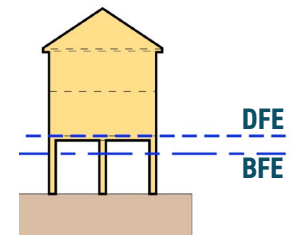
A height in feet on a community's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). A flood has a 1% chance of getting to that height each year. Sometimes, it happens more often.

DESIGN FLOOD ELEVATION (DFE)

A height in feet that communities choose for themselves based on past floods, or expecting more or higher floods in the future.

FREEBOARD

A buffer over a flood elevation, usually BFE. Communities can choose a buffer for additional flood safety.



Highway 171 Green Bypass

Creating a greenway along Old Highway 171 would be a transformational investment for North Lake Charles and Moss Bluff. The right-of-way currently dead ends at English Bayou and the Calcasieu River. If connected with bridges over the waterways, the greenway could provide 3.7 miles of walking and bike trails that would connect Riverside Park to River Bluff Park. The Green Bypass would directly connect Moss Bluff to the Bayou Greenbelt system.

Bayou Greenbelt Connections

Areas adjacent to the Bayou Greenbelt will have the opportunity to connect trails to the new greenway system. Access to Bayou Greenbelt will raise the value and the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods, making these neighborhoods highly desirable. A comprehensive planning effort should be launched to develop a plan for lateral connections of walking and bicycle infrastructure to access points to ensure people can safely get to the Greenbelt.



- 11** **Old Highway 171 Green Bypass** Portions of old Highway 171 exist on both sides of English Bayou, but the road no longer crosses over the water bodies. A portion of this right-of-way should be developed into a greenway, with pedestrian and bicycle bridges. The greenway would connect Riverside Park to River Bluff Park, and eventually connect to Sam Houston Jones State Park.

BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE TERMS

1 Bike Lanes

A bike lane is defined as a portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping, signage, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. A bike lane does not have physical barriers (bollards, medians, raised curbs, etc.) that restrict the encroachment of motorized traffic. Types of bike lanes include:

- Conventional Bike Lanes
- Buffered Bike Lanes
- Protected Bike Lanes
- Contra-Flow Bike Lanes
- Left-Side Bike Lanes

2 Cycle Tracks

A cycle track is bicycle infrastructure that is physically separated from motor traffic and distinct from the sidewalk. Cycle tracks may be one-way, two-way, at street level, sidewalk level, or at an intermediate level. Cycle tracks include:

- One-Way Protected Cycle Tracks
- Raised Cycle Tracks
- Two-Way Cycle Tracks

3 Multi-Use/Shared-Use Paths and Trails

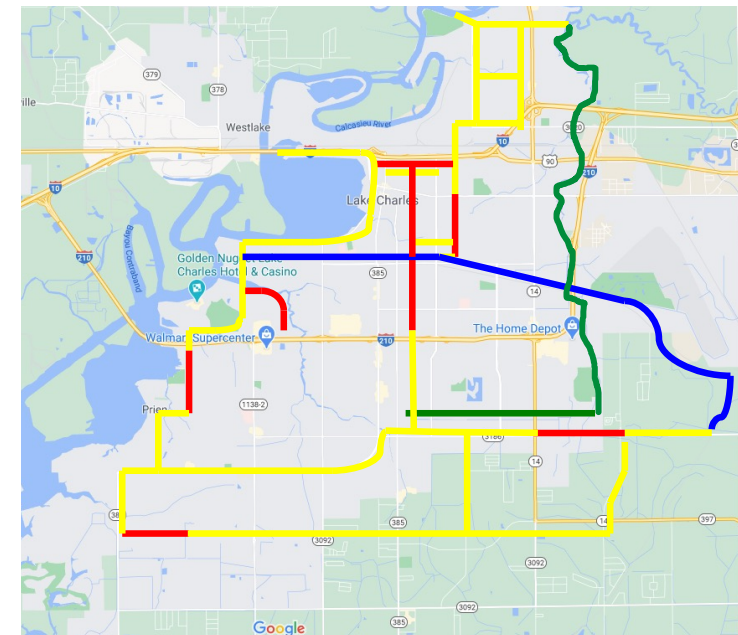
Multi-use or shared-use trails and paths provide continuous corridors for walkers, runners, and bicyclists, and they are an important part of an All Ages and Abilities network. Paths and trails are completely separated from road infrastructure. These paths are highly desired, but they work best when connected to an on-street network that meets the same high

Expanded Bicycle Infrastructure

Lake Charles has been advancing a proposed bicycle network and incorporating some initial bicycle infrastructure into recent roadway projects. The Proposed Bicycle Network to the right should be used as the foundation for a more robust and detailed bicycle infrastructure plan that takes into account the types of facilities and develops an All Ages and Abilities network. The Urban Bikeway Design Guide published by the National Association of City Transportation Associates (NACTO) should be used as the definitive guide.

Expanded Walking and Biking Paths

Many portions of Southwest Louisiana could benefit from increased trail connections and options for walking and bicycling. Entergy has expressed an interest in working with property owners to identify where interconnected walking paths could be created within their rights-of-way.



Lake Charles Proposed Bicycle Network

- EXISTING BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE
- RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY
- PROPOSED BAYOU GREENBELT TRAIL
- PROPOSED FUTURE BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE



- Protected Bike Lane** Bike lanes are on-road bicycle facilities, separated from moving lanes of traffic by planters, curbs, parked cars, or posts. Protected bike lanes are a more pleasant and practical way for many people (not just the bold or athletic) to commute or travel by bicycle.



- 2 Two-Way Protected Cycle Track** Cycle tracks are physically separated from motor traffic and often have two-way bicycle traffic on one side of a roadway. Cycle tracks often incorporate specific intersection treatments to improve safety and clear right-of-way for cyclists.



- 4 Bike Box Intersection Treatment** Intersection treatments make cyclists more visible and facilitate a clear right-of-way. The bike box in this photo allows the cyclist turning left to queue in front of the motor vehicles, allowing it the right-of-way.



- 3 Multi-Use Path** Multi-use and shared-use paths are one of the most accessible forms of bicycle infrastructure. In the top example, there are defined spaces for faster-moving bicycles and pedestrians. In the lower photograph, the path is shared.

benchmark of rider comfort so that people can get to the regional or local trail. Multi-use trails include:

- Paths/trails with separate space for pedestrians and designated space for faster-moving bicycles (and skateboards, roller bladers, etc.)
- Multi-use paths (where walking, running, and bicycling occur in the same space — use only where space is limited).

4 Intersection Treatments

Designing intersections properly reduces conflict between bicyclists (and other vulnerable road users) and vehicles by heightening the level of visibility, denoting a clear right-of-way, and facilitating eye contact and awareness with competing modes. Intersection treatments can include:

- Bike Boxes
- Intersection Crossing Markings
- Two-Stage Turn Queue Boxes
- Median Refuge Island
- Through Bike Lanes
- Combined Bike Lane/Turn Lane
- Cycle Track Intersection Approach