

PARISH OF ASCENSION

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING DEPARTMENT



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MASTER PLAN SUMMARY

This document is intended as a reference for those already familiar with the subdivision requirements and is not a comprehensive summary of the Subdivision Regulations. The Subdivision Regulations document shall prevail in all inquiries regarding these procedures.

As mandated by State Law, Ascension Parish's adopted Master Plan guides development with broad goals and recommendations. These goals and recommendations are reflected to the most possible extent in the Land Development Code. However, the goals of the Plan should be kept in mind for all development, regardless of size.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles outline what the parish residents want the Master Plan to do. They reflect the broader concerns of the parish residents regarding how they want Ascension Parish to develop in the years ahead. The Master Plan focuses on seven guiding principles. These principles reflect community priorities for growth in Ascension Parish for the next five years.

Principle 1

Protect the public safety and property values by providing adequate separation of industrial, commercial, and residential uses. Public safety issues arise in four areas.

- a) The first involves providing adequate buffer zones around industrial development. The petrochemical complex in the parish needs an adequate buffer with high density residential development. Without this separation, no amount of emergency preparation will protect the public safety from potential industrial accidents. In addition, industrial development in other parts of the parish threatens to encroach on residential areas and schools.
- b) The second major public safety issue involves increasing traffic volumes on the parish roads. Ascension Parish operates with a largely rural road system. Roads and road beds are narrow. Higher traffic volumes on these roads increases the likelihood of serious accidents.
- c) The third major public health and safety issue involves sewage disposal. Inadequate waste water treatment systems create a serious public health risk in the parish. This risk increases with development.
- d) The fourth major public health issue involves the risks posed by residential development near toxic waste sites.
- e) 36 LRS 106 reads in part: "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 municipality, as the case may be, or one or more of the aforesaid or other functional matters to be included in the plan."
- f) Incompatible development reduces adjacent property values. For example, a small lot, high density subdivision can depreciate a neighboring large lot residence. An auto junk yard or a nearby strip mall reduces the value of neighboring residential property. These conflicts appear frequently in the parish, and they threaten to become more serious with additional growth. Comprehensive land use management reduces the risks to property owners.



PLAT REVIEW SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST (CONT.)

Principle 2

Manage growth. Encourage growth only in areas of the parish which can support it with adequate soils, drainage, and physical infrastructure.

- a) Residential and commercial growth requires the infrastructure to support it. In many respects, Ascension Parish is not prepared for the growth which is occurring. Roads are clogged. The drainage systems can easily overload. Inadequate sewage disposal creates public health hazards. To help the Parish Council plan basic infrastructure investments, the Planning Commission will manage growth in the parish through land use regulation.
- b) Managed growth encourages public and private development investment to follow the guiding principles of this Master Plan. Managed growth means that the decisions of the Planning Commission and the Parish Council will be made in concert with the land's natural carrying capacity, the parish's ability to financially support development through the provision of infrastructure and related community services and facilities, and the desire of parish residents for additional growth and development.
- c) New infrastructure and new public services will be planned in direct relationship to the ability of Ascension Parish to support this growth. Any new infrastructure or new public services deemed necessary during the Master Plan's projected time frame will be analyzed, studied and considered for the Parish's Infrastructure Capital Improvements Program.
- d) Managing growth involves balancing individual property interests with the interests of neighbors and the other residents of the parish. Often there are several approaches to consider. In implementing the Master Plan and related plans, the Parish Council and the Planning Commission will minimize the adverse impacts on individual property owners

Principle 3

Preserve the rural character of the parish. Preserve rural, conservation, and recreation areas from high intensity residential and commercial development. In portions of the parish, residents feel strongly about preserving the rural character of the countryside. This principle means:

- a) Prevent development on sensitive environmental and natural hazard areas which would endanger the environment.
- b) Protect productive agricultural land and other rural undeveloped areas of the parish for their economic and open space value, while encouraging the sensitive development of parcels more easily served by water and sewer.
- c) Preserve significant natural features such as scenic vistas and open spaces.
- d) Discouraging linear, "strip" commercial developments with frequent access points to the main street, large, unrelieved expanses of parking, and numerous detached, small buildings unrelated in architecture.

Principle 4

Encourage compact commercial centers. Encourage the development of compact commercial centers throughout the parish and discourage "strip" commercial development along highways. Strip commercial development creates additional traffic congestion, especially on two lane highways. By concentrating commercial development at intersections of two lane roads, traffic congestion will be minimized.



PLAT REVIEW SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST (CONT.)

Principle 5

Keep the process simple and open. Streamline the process of land use management and encourage continuous public comment on development practices. Developing a zoning system that is "fundamentally fair" represents an important goal of the Master Plan. Based on public meetings, citizens worry deeply that any effort to manage land use and public infrastructure investments in the parish will be unfair. In order to guide the Master Plan and its implementation, the Master Plan sets forth the following fairness principles. A fair process:

- Is timely;
- Relies on open meetings for public information and comment;
- Respects individual property rights;
- Considers the cumulative impacts of development projects;
- Applies due process in all administrative deliberations; and
- Has an appeal process.

Principle 6

Use flexible performance zones that focus on controlling the intensity of development. Instead of having a lot more single use zones, the parish should expand the allowable uses of the existing zones and add a few more flexible use zones. The Commission should focus on managing the intensity and impact of development and not so much on the use. This approach meets the needs of a rural parish and reduces the cost of administration. Ascension parish has a small planning staff. A complex set of single use zones will burden the staff and lead to more uneven results.

Principle 7

Discourage subdivision development within the 100 year flood plain. Subdivision development is occurring in large areas of the parish that cannot support the intensity of this development. The allowable subdivision development should be largely restricted to the northern part of the parish outside the 100 year flood plain.

Principle 8

Support subdivision development where water and sewer lines are likely to run. Clustering subdivision development near water and sewer lines will reduce the overall cost of water and sewer to the taxpayers of the parish.

Principle 9

Within a zone allowing subdivision development, use a flood plain overlay zone to restrict development within the 100 year flood plain. This overlay zone will reduce drainage problems from development by restricting the amount of fill that can be added within the flood plain.

Principle 10

Reduce the amount of commercial development to discourage strip commercial development along rural roads. The 1998 parish zoning map encouraged commercial zones all along the highways. With the exception of Airline Highway, most roads in the parish cannot support major new commercial development. The Commission should encourage commercial development around intersections, where traffic flow can be more easily managed.

Principle 11

Establish a truck route between the industrial plants and the interstate. Currently trucks are mixing with residential traffic on parish roads. This problem will only worsen as the parish grows. A truck route, with



PLAT REVIEW SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST (CONT.)

limited commercial and residential development, will separate industrial from residential traffic. This step will protect the public safety and provide an efficient corridor from the industrial plants to the Interstate.

Principle 12

Create an additional business development zone in the parish. The 1998 Zoning Map did not provide a site for locating high end office, research and technology development. This district should be located near the current industrial zones and should be compatible with surrounding residential development. The district should encourage high quality business development with minimal environmental impacts. The Parish needs additional business development to diversify the economy. In addition, expanding business development will strengthen the tax base to handle the continued growth of residential development.