

## **SECTION 12 - LAND USE POLICY**

### **SECTION 12.01 SUMMARY STATEMENT**

St. Tammany Parish is a place of exceptional natural beauty with outstanding recreational and residential opportunities. Local, regional and national publications continually stress the high quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of the Parish. In the metropolitan New Orleans area, no other community possesses the desirability and attractiveness which makes St. Tammany so popular among area residents. The forests and rivers, the rolling land and the Lake are irreplaceable resources enjoyed by all.

However, these qualities of attractiveness and desirability are today creating a threat to the very land and resources which have made St. Tammany so popular. Rapid population growth and accompanying problems are changing the area's character. Realizing this, the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury has initiated a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Land Use Policy contained within this report is the recommended set of guidelines to promote more organized and beneficial growth for the future. This policy will serve as the "constitution" and a revised zoning ordinance will function as the "codified law" so that future zoning and land use decisions can be made with clear intent and effect.

Land use problems within the Parish are difficult to address because of the frequency of occurrence rather than because of the unmanageability of individual problems. The greatest resource in the Parish, the citizens, exhibit a great level of interest and concern within the community. The goals which these citizens have expressed and seek to achieve through their elected officials can be summarized as follows:

To protect and promote the high quality of life and the natural beauty of St. Tammany Parish while planning for future growth through land use controls which will maintain the balance between the need for jobs and services and the desires of residents for a clean and attractive living environment.

To achieve this goal and the objectives it implies, a Land Use Policy has been developed to provide Parish-wide guiding policies as well as more specific directiveness for those areas experiencing the most rapid level of growth.

### **SECTION 12.02 OBJECTIVES**

As clearly as goals can be outlined, their achievement depends on realistic objectives which can direct the day-to-day operation of St. Tammany Parish. These objectives include:

1. To provide all residents with an understanding of the forces and trends affecting the resources and character of St. Tammany Parish so that the Parish can better manage its future.
2. To have a Comprehensive Plan which is accepted as the primary development guide of the Parish's Growth Management Area.
3. To provide separate, suitable regulations for urban areas by delineating an overlay district, the growth management area (GMA), as well as a rural or less restricted division.
4. To provide for the long-term environmental integrity of terrestrial, aquatic and ecologic systems which are the basic units of the Parish's natural environment.
5. To promote the general health, safety and welfare of people and their protection from the hazardous and detrimental effects of development.
6. To promote sound land use and fiscal planning efforts which enhance the efficient and effective use of the Parish's economic resources.
7. To encourage the compatible development of commercial and employment centers designed and located to expand the Parish's tax-base and provide employment opportunities for local residents.
8. To encourage a variety of housing types to meet current needs and future growth, while recognizing fiscal impact of land development.
9. To coordinate planning efforts with the Parish's incorporated communities for effective transportation, public facility and utility systems.
10. To coordinate Capital and Operating Budgets with the preferred land use management system to realize an effective use of Parish resources.

### **SECTION 12.03     GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

#### **A.     Introduction and Context**

A growth management program (GMP) represents a concerted effort by local government to focus its resources into specific geographic areas in a coordinated manner. The primary result of such an approach to land use management is a degree of protection regarding how development will occur. Specifically, the GMP focuses on the pace, location and type of development that will occur in a community. The growth management

program also sets forth the basic parameters for "diplomacy planning". This represents the legitimate function of local government to negotiate with developers in order to achieve an optimal and financially feasible pattern of land use for both public and private interests.

This section of the Land Use Policy details the salient points for an effective growth management program that St. Tammany Parish may follow in its efforts to achieve a balanced rate of urban growth. The elements of the GMP include the following parameters:

- o The Growth Management Area
- o Capital Facilities Programming
- o Site Development Review

Each of these elements is discussed in terms of the roles they play in the overall planning and zoning process. Specifically, the program illustrates how these non-zoning techniques can effectively guide growth and development.

## B. Growth Districts

### 1. Definition and Elements

The main task of a growth management program is to define where current growth is occurring as well as its pattern and type. This serves as a basis for projecting where and how growth is to occur in the future. To accomplish this, social and economic patterns must be studied for the entire Parish and its sub-areas (Wards). Consequently, the portions of the Parish most likely to receive the majority of future development can be identified; and policies formulated and implemented that are capable of addressing the major problems the community is likely to face in the future.

The major criteria for identifying a growth district include the following:

- o Population Growth Rate
- o Density Per Square Mile
- o Major Arterial Average Daily Traffic Volume

Where a geographic area exhibits a rate of increase or a concentration of growth that is greater than the Parish average, that geographic area is defined as growth management area (GMA). Particular attention is focused on the distribution of population growth

and traffic volumes. These elements represent the major indicators and constraints which development produces. Because the number of housing units and commercial square footage constructed are direct results of population growth and traffic, they provide guidance for developing public policies that can address the ability of a local government to provide public services. An example of the policy applications that GMA provides includes analyzing those capital facilities that require a large lead time in implementing. Specifically, the elements employed to define the GMA provide a direct measure for identifying those public services which are currently deficient. By having this information, it is possible to formulate options that are available to the Parish in managing and providing for future growth. Thus, the GMA's are an integral part of a plan to establish regional sewerage districts that have the ability to float bonds to provide for this most important public service.

After a careful review of existing growth parameters and land settlement trends, it is suggested that a Growth Management Area include the urbanized and sub-urbanized areas of the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Wards.

This area was determined as of 1980 to consist of a population of 52,032 persons within the boundary versus a total of 13,559 outside of it. The associated population growth rate for this area is 101.2% versus 62.5% for the rural areas. Which in real growth terms means the urbanized area has developed between 1970 and 1980 at a much faster rate.

Population density figures indicate that during this same period the GMA experienced an average net change from 74 persons per square mile in 1970 to 167 persons per square mile in 1980. The rural area density is averaged to be 39 persons per square mile with the middle 5th Ward area having the lowest ratio of less than 20 persons per square mile. This existing rural density is only 52% of the 1970 density of the proposed urbanized area. Accordingly, the existing rural density is only 16 persons per square mile more than it was in 1970 which is significantly less than the urbanized concentration. Traffic volumes within the proposed GMA have in many cases increased by sizeable amounts within a definitive period.

Noticeable examples include Airport Road in the 9th Ward and Highway 22 in the 4th Ward. The thoroughfare study recently conducted by the Regional Planning Commission showed marked increases in volume over capacity roadway, especially within the GMA limits resulting in many of these systems being graded a failure for adequacy.

The three criteria of population growth, density and traffic generation are integral components in the proposal to delineate an area as suitable for urbanized development standards. The characteristics of an urbanizing area warrant more coordination of use conditions that reflect the character of an emerging metropolitan area.

The rural area on the other hand, does not immediately exhibit the concentration of population nor the diversity of use extremes reflective of this degree of growth management.

## C. Capital Facilities Programming

### 1. Capital Budgeting

An integral part of any planning effort is the ability to find and use funds that can provide the services deemed necessary. Since most land services require significant expenditures of money, a financial plan is required to allow for their orderly delivery. A key element of this plan is its orientation towards the future and the manner in which the debt is managed. Most communities generally float bonds that are paid out over a period of years. These bonds represent a commitment by the local jurisdiction to construct and pay for public facilities that are capable of addressing public needs.

The Capital Facilities Plan is such a mechanism in that it stresses those public projects that are in the most need. Furthermore, the Capital Facilities Plan illustrates the source of funds and the annual amount of funds needed to amortize the bonds. In the context of a GMA, capital facilities planning is a central key in determining where future growth and development should and should not occur. It can become as powerful a tool as zoning in directing future land use changes within the constraints of public resources.

A capital facilities plan is usually drawn up for five or ten year periods and illustrates the type of long-term public facilities needed to achieve an acceptable level of service. The Capital Budget a distinct part of the Capital Facilities Plan, lists the financial resources needed to fund the identified improvements for the next five years. Consequently, a jurisdiction can constantly evaluate its priorities. When this process is not carried out in conjunction with land use planning, an uncoordinated land use pattern results.

### 2. Fiscal Impact Review

The most efficient manner for the Parish to monitor growth is to evaluate development proposals for their impact on the ability of local government to provide public services. This is accomplished by

conducting a cost revenue analysis. A cost revenue analysis looks at specific elements that the Parish would have to provide in order for a development to be constructed. It then analyzes the potential public revenues that the development creates and compares them to the costs the Parish must incur. For example, a new industrial park may be proposed that requires a variety of improvements such as sewerage and highway construction. After an analysis of the job creating potential, sales property tax revenue, and improvements the developer will pay for, the Parish may decide that the development generates a net positive revenue. This allows the Parish to then make an objective decision regarding the approval of the project.

A fiscal impact review that requires net positive revenue is more difficult to identify with regard to residential development as long as the existing homestead exemption limits prevail. It is not equitable that all costs for a residential tax exempt occupant use be directed to the developer.

To carry out this procedure, it is necessary for close cooperation between developers and the Parish to be established. For example, the Parish has to have ready access to cost estimates for infrastructure that the developer's engineer prepares. However, the developer has to be assured that his proposal will not be lost in a maze of bureaucratic red tape. Furthermore, the developer also needs assurances that the time it takes for the Parish to review his plans is not inordinate.

#### D. Site Development Review

##### 1. Administrative Process

The site development review process is perhaps the most important task the Parish can employ to insure that quality development is constructed in accordance with the goals and objectives set down by the citizens. The process begins with the developer submitting a preliminary plan with cost estimates and design parameters. These developments allow the Parish Planning staff to conduct an analysis of the impacts of a particular development. The key features that come into play during the site review include:

- o Gross Density
- o Land Use Allocation
- o Net Density
- o Traffic Impact

- o Site Capacity
- o Sewerage Capacity

All of these elements will be reviewed in terms of their conformance with development policies, the zoning ordinance, and subdivision regulations. Deficiencies will be noted to the developer. It is incumbent upon the developer to finalize his site plan to conform with the regulatory performance standards outlined in the ordinance and subdivision regulations. Furthermore, upon completion of a fiscal impact review, an assessment is to be made regarding the cost revenue position the Parish faces given the completion of the project. This forms the basis for the use of incentives and bonuses regarding the approval of the project. Thus, one of the major criteria employed for determining whether or not a particular development is to be built outside a growth management area is the net benefits accruing to the Parish.

## 2. Urban Design

Another critical element of the site development review process is the use of performance and design standards for evaluating development proposals. This stage of the process focuses upon such elements as:

- o Open Space Ratios
- o Buffer Areas
- o Clustering
- o Landscaping Plans

Each of these elements allows for an assessment of how a particular development fits within the existing urban fabric and rural atmosphere. Furthermore, it encourages developers to formulate plans and designs that are beneficial to the physical environment.

The above system of development review entails a great deal of time for the Parish and developer to commit before a project is undertaken. It is, therefore, imperative that a time frame be set forth so that a developer can have an idea of the time required for site development review.

No development will be approved until the developer has a long-term sewerage management program approved by the Parish. Furthermore, the Parish will standardize design requirements for private package treatment systems. By so doing, maintenance

routines can be established and, when applicable, the plants can be tied into a parish-maintained regional system within the GMA.

## **SECTION 12.04    REVISED POLICIES**

These policies are developed with the following belief:

St. Tammany Parish, through the democratic process, will determine when and where development should occur and will phase growth at a pace that its citizens and government are able and willing to support with infrastructure, schools and other services.

### **A.     Residential**

The following policies are to guide the Parish in the creation of a comprehensive zoning ordinance and delineation of land use designations for residential development.

1.     The primary goal for residential development is to create livable, enjoyable and ecologically sound neighborhoods with a balanced mix of housing types and densities to serve present and future community needs.
2.     The encouraged location of residential development is in areas close to employment, recreation, shopping facilities, and infrastructure availability.
3.     The character and density of new developments shall minimize or shall not create negative impacts with existing or proposed parish land use patterns in regard to noise, odor, glare, safety traffic, or by causing a nuisance.
4.     Residential development is encouraged in urbanized areas designated as Growth Management Areas (GMA).
5.     GMA's will be designated on the adopted Land Use Map and will be based upon historical and projected population growth, density and traffic patterns and infrastructure availability.
6.     Average residential density in the GMA's shall be established by Ordinance.
7.     Maximum residential density for developments in a GMA shall be calculated based on both usable residential area and areas unusable because of ecological reasons or set aside for common open space.
8.     In all cases, average allowable density of residential developments in

a GMA shall be judged based upon access to major thoroughfares and the individual merits of the particular site - its shape, size, location, natural features and design concept applied to the designated set of performance standards for the area.

9. Residential development in rural areas should avoid sprawl over isolated forest and agricultural areas unless adequate roadway conditions exist that are suitable to accommodate it.
10. The natural character of the Parish should be protected and promoted both for the health, safety and enjoyment of residents, as well as for the protection of land values through the development of compatible uses of land.
11. Residential development of any site which is partly or totally within a designated flood zone declared to be the limit of a 100-year flood by the Federal Emergency Management Agency must meet performance standards set-up to protect the natural environment and recreational areas of the Parish. Additionally, any such development shall be subject to the review procedures established for a Planned Unit Development (PUD).
12. When the impact of a new development extends beyond the bounds of the site and creates additional capital facility requirements, the Parish will address those requirements through a joint effort with the developer.
13. The Parish encourages the development of a wide-range of housing types and costs in order to provide affordable housing for the present and future population.
14. In plans for a proposed development, the parish will require the identification of future contingencies for waste and potable water tie-ins with regional or community systems including the identification of internal roadway classifications.
15. To meet policy objectives and to preserve and promote the natural characteristics of the parish, residential land use shall reflect the natural and locational characteristics of the site.

#### B. Planned Unit Development

The flexibility inherent in a Planned Unit Development (PUD) provides many opportunities not commonly found in traditional developments. The PUD concept promotes better coordination of public and private investment; innovation in land use arrangements and service systems without the constraints of existing patterns; and incorporation of design features which

are difficult to obtain on a piecemeal basis. The following policies will guide the Parish in the creation of a zoning ordinance for planned unit developments.

16. In order to give certain developments flexibility because they cannot be readily accommodated by the established zoning classifications due to the increase of density, variation of setback, the addition of amenities or greenspace, or the variation of other criteria not provided for in this ordinance; these developments shall be developed as PUD's.
17. The individual uses and portions of the PUD committed to each use are to be developed with adherence to the policy guidelines set forth in this document.
18. All regulations specified for the district in which the PUD is located shall prevail. Uses not commonly permitted in the district will be allowed provided additional conditions or performances are established by the Zoning Commission as part of the approval.
19. Any multi-family residential development of 100 units or more shall come under the regulations for a PUD.
20. Development for any use that may be seriously affected by inundation that falls within a 100-year flood zone as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall come under the regulations for a PUD.

#### C. Commercial

Commercial land uses can impact the structure, character and quality of adjacent land uses, particularly residential. The following policies will guide commercial development and the creation of an effective zoning ordinance.

21. A series of commercial zoning district designations shall be established to provide a great degree of resolution by specifically identifying allowable uses and by eliminating allowable use pyramiding for all commercial uses from neighborhood shop to high-rise office developments.
22. All commercial uses which may create noise, odors, hazards, unsightliness, or which may generate excessive traffic shall be placed in proper areas within the appropriate districts so that they do not adversely affect other uses.
23. Any commercial or office use or uses in individual structures less than 3,000 square feet each, and together occupying less than 10,000

square feet, may be located in close proximity to the local residents which those uses are intended to serve.

24. Minimum set-backs and lots sizes will be utilized to encourage a desirable level of commercial developments and to discourage continuous strip-type development along major roads.
25. New commercial and office centers locating close to existing centers shall be designed to function together as a single commercial area to encourage pedestrian circulation and discourage multi-stop trips of automobiles onto streets whose main function is to carry through-traffic.
26. Major commercial and office centers shall be located in areas where adequate infrastructure exists and where traffic and noise will not adversely affect surrounding residential uses.
27. Commercial uses shall locate only in less hazardous flood zone areas. A detailed statement and plan as to the method of mitigation of flood danger will be required.
28. Signage, parking lot design and lighting, entryways, exits, plantings and building design shall be created to blend with the surrounding environment to promote the environmental character of the Parish.
29. Detailed plans for any proposed commercial development are to show on-site traffic patterns, pedestrian ways, drainage run-off systems, landscaping and signage as well as a description of these factor's impacts on surrounding areas and land uses.

#### D. Industrial

In evaluating the potential for industrial land uses, each type of process should be judged independently in regard to its compatibility with surrounding uses. The following policies set the general guidelines for all industrial development within the Parish.

30. Industrial development land uses will be promoted to encourage a broad and diverse employment base, and all types of environmentally acceptable industry will be encouraged to become viable members of the community.
31. Industrial development shall be located within areas which will maximize safety and have associated uses, while minimizing infrastructure improvements and services costs to local governments.
32. The Parish will promote development of Planned Industrial

Developments and discourage proliferation of industrial uses along highways without adequate landscape buffering and safe vehicular access.

33. Industrial developments should be encouraged to located in park-like settings and in all instances have substantial setbacks and buffers from roadways and surrounding non-industrial uses.
34. Performance standards shall be created to promote clean and safe industrial development.
35. Industrial uses may be located in less severe flood zone areas provided an impact statement is prepared delineating potential impacts of flood and effects on down-stream properties.
36. Waste water and site runoff control systems shall be developed and presented for Parish review for any proposed new industrial development.

E. Open Space/Recreational

Public, private and common open spaces are all essential parts of a successful community. The following policies outline general methods of open space and recreational usage.

37. The Parish will promote the establishment of public and common open space.
38. Open spaces are to be used in all types of development to improve a site's attractiveness, to preserve natural features and vegetation, and/or to provide recreational space at an economical cost.
39. Open space areas involving either passive or active recreational uses are to be an integral part of all residential developments. Dedicated common or public open space shall, at a minimum equal the amount of impermeable surface created by the construction of street systems in developments.
40. Open space for commercial development shall be established based on the type of use and the intensity of the developmental impact on the site. Based on the commercial classification, a range from 20 to 40 percent of open space shall be used for storm run-off control, landscaping planting, greenways and buffers.
41. Open space for industrial development shall be established based on the type of use and the intensity of the developmental impact on the site. Based on the industrial classification, a range from 30 to 50

percent of open space shall be used for storm run-off control, landscape planting, greenways, buffers and parking.

42. Open areas and recreational spaces are to be used to protect the natural characteristics of the Parish, as well as providing adequate buffer and recreational spaces for different land uses.
43. A Parish-wide parks system will be promoted along with the concept of a "recreation network" to identify bicycle routes, hiking trails, river uses and other recreational opportunities.
44. Creation of park areas and management techniques for the development and maintenance of parks is to be a part of the planned Capital Facilities Program.

G. General

In recognition of the great diversity among citizens and the variety of natural features within St. Tammany Parish, several general policies will guide land planning for the benefit of all. The GMA boundaries may be reviewed and modified periodically as growth dictates based upon petitioning to the Police Jury within the affected area.

The Zoning Commission will not amend the GMA boundary into another ward without a resolution from the Police Jury.

45. Where differing land uses are in close proximity to one another, a gradation from the more to less intense will be used to make the transition less severe.
46. A classification for scenic roads will be established to protect and promote the beauty and natural characteristics of certain road which serve mainly residential areas.
47. Realizing that water bodies in the Parish are to be used for the benefit of property owners, the Parish will support standards to protect these valuable resources and will work to allow fishing and port-related industries, recreational and residential uses to co-exist.
48. The Parish will deal equally and fairly, but not the detriment of the policies in this document and of future citizens, with the problems created by "paper subdivisions", sub-standard lots-of-record, and non-conforming uses previously established in rural districts.
49. At all times, the Parish will strive to work closely with the incorporated communities within its borders and to plan for an economically and environmentally sound future for all citizens.

