

Chapter 10 Implementation

10.1 Introduction

A quality comprehensive plan is entirely dependent upon an effective implementation structure if expectations, ideas, and respective concepts are to yield measurable results. The structure of the document provides guidance on what needs to be accomplished and implementation strategies to effectively achieve the desired results effectively. This Chapter establishes an accountability structure to identify who will be responsible and establishes basic time frames for when results are expected. By design, expectations provide latitude for respective groups to customize responses as individual efforts are better defined. Modifications adjusting to changing requirements and needs over time should also be anticipated.

As described in the next section, implementation of the planning initiatives included in this document is well underway. Immediate responses by City administration to expectations and needs identified by the planning process have yielded tangible results and have demonstrated an unequivocal resolve to lead planned improvements for our community. Equal and coordinated commitment from each of the groups tasked with implementing the vision outlined in this document will be required if Ruston is to exercise control over its destiny as recommended by Ruston 21. A brief summary of the proposed structure for implementation is noted below; performance metrics for respective groups is included in Article 10.4.

Four groups will bear primary responsibility for implementing the plan: The City Administration, the newly formed Economic Development Foundation, a Housing Redevelopment Trust who will function as a subcommittee of the Economic Development Foundation, and a Ruston Core Commission who will provide direct guidance for design, development, and promotion of the core district. The City will continue to provide primary leadership for coordinating respective activities and holding respective groups accountable to achieve results as outlined in the plan.

All City departments will be tasked to address plan elements specific to their mission and expertise. Of special interest will be the Public Works Department's focus on land use implementation and capital improvements, Ruston Parks and Recreation's (RPAR) attention to designated physical and operational improvements and respective public safety organizations' aggressive implementation of designated structural changes for increased community service and effectiveness. The Mayor's office will assume primary responsibility to develop vital partnerships and lead implementation of cultural initiatives included in Chapter 2 of the plan.

The newly formed Economic Development Foundation will be tasked with implementation of economic development goals outlined in Chapter 3 of the Plan. The breadth of this test will require a true public-private partnership to be effective. Although initial leadership for this group will be largely dependent upon City resources, a working partnership including the Chamber, Lincoln Parish, Louisiana Tech University, and private enterprise should develop over time for the community to speak with a unified voice. Pooling of available resources for consensus action will be critical to the ultimate implementation of the plan.

As noted in Chapter 5, housing development in Ruston deserves focused attention and special expertise to address current needs. A Housing Redevelopment Trust will be formed as a subcommittee of the Economic Development Foundation to implement specific housing development and re-development expectations outlined in the plan.

The Ruston Core Commission designated in Chapter 6 and more specifically described in Appendix E, will assume primary responsibility to oversee design, development, marketing, and communication vital to implementation of the core vision outlined in Chapter 6. This effort will require special expertise and skill to build all aspects of the core community.

10.2 Immediate Response

In response to citizen input at Community Visioning Day and to provide attention to specific issues identified during the planning process, the Ruston 21 effort has included a targeted response process to execute immediate and continuous improvements where the method of resolution was obvious and where capital resources were available. This approach has resulted in a number of completed and ongoing projects which have already made significant impact in our community. Examples of immediate response efforts are noted on the following pages.

In addition to the positive impact associated with respective initiatives, the immediate response approach has demonstrated the City's commitment and resolve to execute improvements associated with Ruston 21. In many respects, this plan document simply builds upon momentum established by efforts already underway. Ruston 21, therefore, has both a present and future reality. Citizen involvement and community commitment will continue to build upon the foundation laid by the immediate response approach.

Downtown Revitalization

Street improvements are designed to improve pedestrian access, relocate overhead utility services, and improve the visual impact of the downtown district. Improvements will be designed and implemented in phases to minimize disruption.

- Phase 1 and 2 complete
- Phase 3 and 4 tentative Spring 2011
- Phase 5 in construction design
- Phase 6-9 conceptual design.

Substandard Housing Removal

Increased focus on enforcement of existing policy is evident through efforts to identify applicable properties, seek authorization for removal through the Board of Aldermen, and demolition of subject properties as authorized. Experience to date indicates applicable properties are abandoned; removal will eliminate shelter for potential criminal activity, vagrants, and vermin.

- Of the 220+ structures currently identified, 95% have been demolished or improved, with the remaining 5% in process;
- Increased awareness in neighborhoods for safety, revitalization, long-term stability, and improved property standards;
- Five-Year Plan to identify and improve or remove all substandard structures.

Junk Vehicle Removal

Increased public works initiative is in place to enforce existing policy regarding abandoned vehicles. Removal will increase public safety and improve quality of affected properties and neighborhoods.

- Stepped up efforts
- Streamlined regulations
- Raised awareness of serious environmental health threats posed by junk vehicles
- Reduced blight.

Alternative Transportation

- City identification of complete streets for designated shared use by bicycles and automobiles
- Cooperative effort with local cyclists
- Plan under review by State DOTD
- Street markings to be initiated on priority routes by January 2011.

One-Stop Permitting

- One-stop approach implemented for development applications and building permitting
- Simplified administrative approval recommendations developed for public comment
- Single point public interface with City regulatory agencies
- Internal routing to applicable agencies on a project specific basis
- Tracking of progress for clear communication.

Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

- Ongoing communication with Parish to develop limited land use regulations in perimeter zone around City limits.

Annexations

Strategic City growth to include land areas that will provide future benefit for the entire community. Proactive efforts to include favorable response from current property owners and maintain demographic balance with the City limits.

- Tarbutton Road areas annexed into Ruston;
- Goal to construct I-20 interchange;
- Property along I-20 to Rough Edge Road annexed into Ruston. Initiated conceptual design for frontage road and interchange;
- Exploration of annexation options north of the City by mutual election.

Education Initiative

- Research and team recommendations complete;
- Continued engagement and support of community with School Board;
- School Board adoption of performance goals; in top 12 districts by 2013; top 7 by 2015 and top district by 2017.

Public Safety Initiatives

Changes to City Police Policy are designed to increase community cooperation, ensure accountability, and increase transparency in an effort to enhance trust and increase safety.

- Formation of public safety management teams
- Performance-based management plans
- Self-initiated policing activity in neighborhoods
- New Police facility completed to provide adequate space to meet current and future public safety needs
- Directed patrols to increase officer visibility in the community
- Expanded volunteer Reserves program
- Improved recruitment and retention of quality officers.

Sidewalk Improvement Plan

Focused public works initiative to identify needs, correct problem conditions, and add pavement in locations of high demand. Improvements designed for incremental implementation will improve accessibility and increase pedestrian safety.

- Inventory complete
- Plan to target incremental improvements annually
- Safety for pedestrians
- Improved accessibility
- Initial targets at high demand locations.

Recycling

- Recycling guidelines published on web site;
- Featured recycling initiatives: Operation Hard Drive, Christmas tree recycling;
- Operation Paper Recycling;
- Exploration of options and potential partners;
- Monthly hazardous waste collection at Public Works;
- City facility recycling program as community model;
- Monthly paper and cardboard collection at Public Works.

Economic Foundation

- Partnership: Private Sector, City and Universities
- Community promotion
- Recruitment and retention
- Attract Investment
- Leadership identified and seed capital raised from private sector
- Executive Director hired
- Board operational by August 2010.

Partnership Initiative with Louisiana Tech

Shared engagement to develop infrastructure vital to the University's future vision. New development within Tech Village will be designed to new City standards to provide a vital, pedestrian friendly, mixed use district.

- Utility infrastructure and drainage study to address service needs for proposed Louisiana Tech research campus development;
- Engineering construction plans for Homer Street improvements are complete. Construction began in September 2010;
- Joint grant funding with a \$2.0 million EDA grant.

10.3 Communications

The Ruston 21 effort is based upon community input and plan to initiate efforts targeted to meet citizen expectations for the future of the City. The depth and communication to promote the plan, identification of opportunities for involvement, and methods to share results of the collective action will be critical. As a result, the Ruston 21 communication plan is multi-faceted with specific designs to maximize interaction between team members integrally involved in development of the plan and the broadest possible community audience. Specific ongoing communication initiatives are described in additional detail here.

Recognizing that individual parts of the communication plan should be effectively coordinated to ensure a consistent message and maximize community engagement, the City has plans to retain a multi-disciplined public relations / marketing firm to provide support for future efforts.

The City is currently in the final stage of a regional search process to identify the best partner to provide leadership and technical support. We anticipate the City's public relations partner to be selected and in place by early 2011.

Ongoing electronic media-based communication tools include an updated City website and consistent use of social media sites (Facebook and Twitter) to keep the public informed about Ruston 21 progress and to provide access to reference information developed by Ruston 21 for community use and implementation. Interactive capabilities at these sites will allow the community to ask questions, provide feedback, and receive timely responses as the implementation of the plan evolves.

Traditional print media communication is planned specific to initiatives underway or planned that will have direct positive impact on individuals and target constituencies in the community. The Ruston 21 legacy will live in these personal stories of improvement and the engagement of the City's citizens throughout the process.

The Ruston 21 communication plan also includes a promotional poster for public distribution to provide an overview of the process, a summary of respective plan chapters or elements, and graphic illustrations of key initiatives or programs. This tool is designed to enhance public awareness and provide appropriate contacts for additional information or opportunities for additional involvement.

Perhaps the most influential component of the plan is the development of a summary community presentation designed for presentation to civic, faith, and philanthropic groups on their regular meeting cycle. By design, this information will be presented by a member of the steering or advisory committee in an effort to communicate not only facts but community and personal passion behind the plan as well.

As a continuing Ruston 21 legacy, the plan also anticipates a periodic “town hall” meeting to report on progress and obtain community feedback. These meetings will build upon the unprecedented success of community gatherings in November 2008 to establish a community vision and December 2009 to provide an update of plan findings and solicit feedback on plan priorities. The annual community meeting will also provide for consistent communication and thereby serve as a primary tool to reconnect the community as established in the plan’s guiding principles.

Ruston21 public outreach poster.

Ruston 21 st century, 000 residents together

The City of Ruston Comprehensive Plan

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MASTER PLAN
 Most of us bring home experiences that if you don't know where you are going, you could get lost in a place you don't want to be. To cultivate growth and progress, we have to know where we are going. Ruston 21, our city's master plan, is the result of a year-long process to improve our quality of life, we need a long-term plan. This is the reason we launched Ruston 21, our city's master plan, to address our needs and aspirations well into the 21st Century. - Mayor Don Williams

THE PROCESS
 Ruston 21 is the result of ongoing team efforts with trust and feedback from citizens and stakeholders. City Administration, the Mayor, Planning & Zoning, and Aldermen were engaged. The Planning Committee and Advisory Committee provided monthly opportunities to bring progress on track. The planning team solicited the public to voice the current environment, as well as identify challenges and opportunities facing the Ruston community. Input was gathered from more than 400 diverse participants at the Ruston 21 Community Listening Day. Additional meetings with administration, community leaders, and citizens were held. The process was transparent and open to all. The process was a success. The process was a success. The process was a success.

RUSTON21 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Develop Our Community Character
- Keep Ruston a Leader
- Maintain our Balance
- Be a City of Opportunity
- Be More Accessible
- Connect our Community
- Aim for Excellence

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN
 The Ruston Comprehensive Plan contains the framework that identifies local government policies and strategies regarding the setting and future conditions and characteristics of the city. (1) It states the mission of the city concerning the physical development of the community. (2) It establishes local policy concerning future growth and development. (3) It identifies specific, action-oriented actions. (4) It identifies specific responsibilities and priorities. (5) It identifies the type, scale and density of future development. (6) It serves as the blueprint for future economic and physical development. The plan and the process associated with Ruston 21 is ongoing. It involves leadership, the community, leaders and developers. It sets the foundation and provides guidance for future decisions and actions.

Develop Our Community Character
 As Ruston grows, we will maintain and enhance our unique character - historic, faith-based, with unity of purpose and quiet confidence. We are committed to a strong downtown as the heart of the city with mixed-use development and civic facilities designed to create a true community destination.

Keep Ruston a Leader
 We will build upon Ruston's reputation as a leader in higher education, commerce and culture. We will encourage our tradition of entrepreneurship by providing new opportunities for applied technology and making consider of business to identify new generations of job leaders. We will be innovative, encouraging growth with embracing our community's natural resources.

Be a City of Opportunity
 We will provide a supportive business climate, managing the opportunities presented in the current trend to encourage entrepreneurial citizens while taking full advantage of our strategic location for 21st-century commerce. We will target appropriate development in the community, use the Highway 167 corridor and the I-20 corridor.

Connect our Community
 We will foster planning as a means to strengthen community connections, including transportation, connectivity and services, renewed cooperation between city and regional political entities, development of public-private partnerships for community benefits, and coordination of strategic efforts for maximum impact. We will build responsive, safe and transportation bridges among all parts of Ruston.

Be More Accessible
 We will plan transportation for ease of access, seeking to remove regional travel efforts while promoting better access to the community. We will seek to meet pedestrian, bicycle, wheelchair, stroller, and other needs. We will encourage our citizens to use public transit and encourage our citizens to use public transit. We will encourage our citizens to use public transit. We will encourage our citizens to use public transit.

Improve our Ruston
 Ruston should maintain its unique character. We will promote and enhance our community's small town quality of life and historic character and quality of life. We will encourage physical development which complements the city's structure and defines the city's identity.

RUSTON 21

10.4 Key Year One Performance Expectations

Performance expectations provide guidance for respective groups charged with implementation of the plan and ensure accountability around accepted performance criteria/metrics. First-year performance criteria for respective entities are noted below:

Economic Development Foundation

- Secure 3-year to 5-year funding commitment from 10 sponsors
- Develop strategic City marketing plan for core and City/Parish
- Secure 25 new jobs (new business or expansion of existing business).

Development Trust

- Establish revolving fund from existing housing account
- Secure one financial institution as primary sponsor
- Execute improvements and complete sale on initial property
- Implement home ownership education/counseling program.

Core Commission

- Implement transition main street director and associated budget to Core Commission
- Joint marketing strategy
- Draft initial development code for district (language and graphics); core development plan coordinated with research park plan
- Identify initial demonstration project (building).

City Administration - Mayor's Office

- Obtain School Board support of education initiatives
- Form leadership group; execute initial project
- Form cultural initiative partnership; shared goals and timeline for implementation in place.

City Administration - Public Works

- Update City zoning map; complete City zoning code; develop ETJ Structure consensus
- Identify and approve initial City property standards
- Establish City Environmental Court
- Design street improvements on Mississippi, from Bonner to Monroe
- Identify initial transportation projects
- Begin coordination and development of neighborhood conservation overlay covenants for two test neighborhoods outside of core.

City Administration - Parks and Recreation

- Plan for Heritage Parks: Railroad and Memorial Parks - unified campus plan
- Investigate potential regional recreation complex.

City Administration - Public Safety

- Consolidate emergency responders dispatch
- Acquire early warning system
- Bolster ambulance service
- Develop preliminary plan for Fire Station No. 2
- Enhance cooperative enforcement with LPNET
- Continue development of performance and community reporting goals.

10.5 Five-Year Key Performance Expectations

Suggested fifth-year performance for respective entities criteria are noted here.

Core Commission

- Neighborhood covenants in place
- Street improvements complete at Mississippi, Bonner, and Monroe
- Initial core “demonstration project” occupied
- 50 additional housing units available
- Commercial occupancy > 80%
- Owner housing occupancy >35%.

Development Trust

- Five properties acquired annually
- Five properties repaired and sold annually
- Strategic alliances in place with allied groups (habitat, churches, etc) to double annual impact.

Economic Development Foundation

- An endowment fund established
- Strategic marketing plan in place for Core and City/Parish
- 5% Employment growth
- Monthly communication vehicle in place.

City Administration - Mayor's Office

- Education goals meeting established performance goals
- Leadership group >50; self governance in place; annual projects underway
- Consistent PR effort in place
- As part of the marketing plan, sponsors and sites secured for landscaped community gateways
- Annual community update meetings held for plan accountability
- Cultural initiative programming nearing maturity with annual calendar of events in place.

City Administration - Public Works

- Priority Transportation projects in development (design and/or construction)
- Initial sidewalk plan complete; planning for expanded program underway
- Urban forestry initial plan in place
- Recycling programs underway.

City Administration - Parks and Recreation

- Planning underway for a Cultural District park: Railroad and Memorial Parks - unified campus plan
- Resources and sponsors defined for potential regional recreation complex.

City Administration - Public Safety

- Improved Fire Insurance Rating to level Number 2
- EMT Intermediate training for 90% of Fire Department personnel achieved
- Continued training and progressively increase in the percentage of personnel with paramedic certification
- Online public crime maps developed, with interactive capability
- Success of performance and community reporting goals evaluated and continued development of new goals
- Upgraded fire facilities.

10.6 Financing

The Ruston 21 plan represents a broad, comprehensive approach to guide community growth and future development. Implementation of the plan will require an equally comprehensive financing structure for maximum effectiveness. Alternative financing models are identified below. In some cases, implementation of individual plan goals and strategies may be linked to a specific funding structure. It is more likely, however, that partnership implementation efforts will also involve access to more than one funding resource for maximum impact.

Pooled resources in support of Ruston 21 implementation will assure more immediate results, less duplication characteristic of parallel implementation strategies, and broader community commitment for long term benefit. Wherever possible, shared financial commitments should be encouraged to further this partnered approach. Alternative funding sources for consideration include:

City Budget

This source is most appropriately applicable to recurring personnel, operations, and maintenance costs that can be anticipated and managed over time.

City Budget – Special Projects

This source is most appropriately applicable to enabling projects for: planning; legal; communication and consulting support to more clearly define specific design requirements; code development and regulatory procedures consistent with the plan; initiation and direction for economic development foundation, housing trust, and core commission; and to maintain on-going public engagement efforts as identified in the plan.

Grants

This source will require constant monitoring to identify sources, engage appropriate partners, and develop applications through published channels. Many of the initiatives identified in the plan have existing grant programs that may be applicable. Grant considerations must facilitate action consistent with the plan rather than allowing grant restrictions or requirements to alter the plan. Applications, where possible, should involved allied community interests for increased influence, enhanced selection potential, and more effective allocation of funds in support of results.

Public-Sector Partnerships

This source offers significant potential to pool resources in support of mutually aligned needs. Partnerships of special interest included:

- City/Parish Initiatives – Partnerships offer significant potential to increase services with current resources and to jointly promote economic development for mutual benefit.
- State DOTD – The network of state highways linking the community underscore the essential nature of this partnership. Recent maintenance and improvement projects have resulted in significant community impact. Aligned planning efforts and shared resources (match programs) offer significant potential to fund specific plan initiations.
- Regional and State Economic Development – Participation and leadership to further engage in respective efforts will be essential to realize economic goals identified in the plan.
- City and University – Continued efforts to align expectations and leverage respective actions for mutual benefit will be vital.

Private-Sector Partnerships

This source represents a relatively un-tapped resource to implement projects where interests are mutually aligned, and to promote additional economic activity in Ruston. The impact of this funding structure will be most appropriately channeled through one of the Ruston 21 implementation agencies (Economic Development Foundation, Housing Trust, Core Commission) to assure aligned expectations and results consistent with the plan.

Formation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

This structure offers potential access to federal resources currently not available to individual parishes or municipalities. Growth recommendations in the plan further underscore the potential of this approach as the region continues to develop.

Tax Increment District (TID)

The current TID along the I-20 corridor generates dedicated revenue for infrastructure improvements within the district. Planning for future TID expenditures should reinforce plan initiatives with specific attention to connections at the perimeter of the district and gateway opportunities in the heart of the district.

Tax Credits

The city has the potential to become a receiving entity for federal tax credits. Receipt of tax credits has significant economic benefit in support of public works projects and public-private development opportunities to realize plan goals and strategies.

Dedicated Sales Tax

This source is most appropriately applicable to specific capital projects, as identified in the plan. This approach will require public support and additional planning to identify, prioritize, and budget for specific projects within revenue limits based upon the proposed sales tax structure.

Private-Sector Investment

The true catalyst for Ruston 21 improvements will be private initiatives aligned with plan objectives. Continued efforts to communicate, promote, and incentivize private-sector interest where possible must be a priority for effective plan implementation.

10.7 Tracking and Adjustments

The Ruston 21 planning process has included significant participation by the Mayor, City administrators, aldermen, and members of Planning and Zoning. As drafted, it represents a consensus vision for the future of the community. All involved recognize that, over time, individuals will transition and daily demands will press for immediate response. Under these circumstances, the comprehensive plan can be marginalized as an effective decision-making tool. It is important to establish systems to keep the plan in the forefront of public discussion, to utilize the plan document as development decisions are required, and to evaluate the document regularly to verify that it continues to align with community aspirations and needs. The following strategies are recommended for effective tracking and adjustment of the plan over time.

Strategy: Establish quarterly leadership reviews with City Administration, Economic Development Foundation, Redevelopment Trust, and Core Commission.

Respective agencies have been tasked with implementation of the plan. Quarterly meetings will provide opportunity for progress accountability, coordination of respective activities, collaborative assistance where required, and identification of changing needs over time.

Strategy: Review plan progress annually in a public “Town Hall” meeting.

Town Hall meetings have played a significant role in the development of the plan and in rebuilding trust and confidence throughout the community. Regular progress reporting sessions in a similar format will ensure public accountability for implementation of the plan and facilitate consistent community communication on values and expectations shared by all participants.

Strategy: Use the plan in preparation of annual operating budgets and capital.

Departmental work plans should reflect priorities listed in the plan in general and performance expectations listed in this chapter in particular. Use of the plan in the budget development process will force priority decisions to align with plan expectations wherever possible and will quickly identify changing needs that may require modifications to the plan over time.

Strategy: Schedule a public process to update the plan after five years.

This chapter includes one-year and five-year plan performance expectations. At the conclusion of this period, a public process to review progress to date, make appropriate adjustments in the plan, and establish additional performance metrics will be in order. This process should involve broad public input and oversight by a citizen advisory committee.

