

Chapter 9 | Public Facilities

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9.1 Introduction

Recent major capital improvements to the City sewer system, water supply and storage facilities, electrical substation upgrades, and aggressive maintenance programs to City collection and distribution systems leave existing infrastructure systems in reasonable shape to support future land use goals as identified in Chapter 4. Increased population demand is anticipated where adequate main distribution capacity exists; therefore, infrastructure improvements are anticipated on a development-level basis only at respective locations. Growth on the perimeter will require infrastructure improvements.

Ongoing projects in the historic downtown are relocating utilities underground. These improvements ensure increased reliability and adequate infrastructure for anticipated core development. Increased cooperation with Louisiana Tech University has led to more reliable utility systems on campus and initial street and infrastructure improvements to support the planned Enterprise Campus along Homer Street.

The City of Ruston has a robust fiber network and unique proximity access to LONI, the Louisiana Optical Network which has been developed along the I-20 corridor. These resources are major infrastructure advantages to support economic development proposed in Chapter 3 and proposed land use as described in Chapter 4. The ability to link these systems would provide world-class telecommunication and computing resources within easy reach of much of the community core and opportunity for connection to one of the most advanced supercomputing resource networks in the country.

Proposed infrastructure improvements should recognize both utility demands and quality of life requirements to support the future of Ruston.

9.2 Public Facilities Goals and Objectives

Ruston public facilities represent the necessary energy to fuel proposed improvements described in other chapters. Maintenance of existing systems, upgrade of existing systems to enhance capabilities to meet future demand, replacement of antiquated or deficient systems, and extension of systems in anticipation of future growth require continued City focus on system performance, regular project work to maintain existing infrastructure, and parallel planning to upgrade systems in advance of demand to ensure a consistent level of quality required to support desired community development.

City-wide capital programs are planned to extend infrastructure to match anticipated perimeter growth patterns. Future land use planning anticipates a re-concentration of growth in the City core where existing infrastructure capacity exists and existing systems are in reasonable condition. As a result, major City-wide capital expenses to extend or replace major service lines can be appropriately planned and managed in anticipation of demand. All proposed infrastructure improvements should recognize both utility demands and quality of life requirements to support the future of Ruston.

Recent history has demonstrated the City's capability to perform each of these tasks at a high level. Future performance will require consistent capital investment in people and quality components to support Ruston's future effectively.

Goal: Enhance existing utility distribution systems.

Strategy: Develop public wireless hotspots in the community core.

The ability to communicate wirelessly is essential for technology-savvy individuals and companies identified in Chapter 3. The ability to provide wireless access will further support the desired culture in the core district identified in Chapter 4.



Strategy: Provide commercial data access via the City's fiber backbone.

The City's internal fiber network offers the potential of higher speed, higher capacity, and greater reliability of data access than are available through any commercially available means. This system has significant commercial value and is a significant competitive advantage for businesses in need of high quality data transfer.

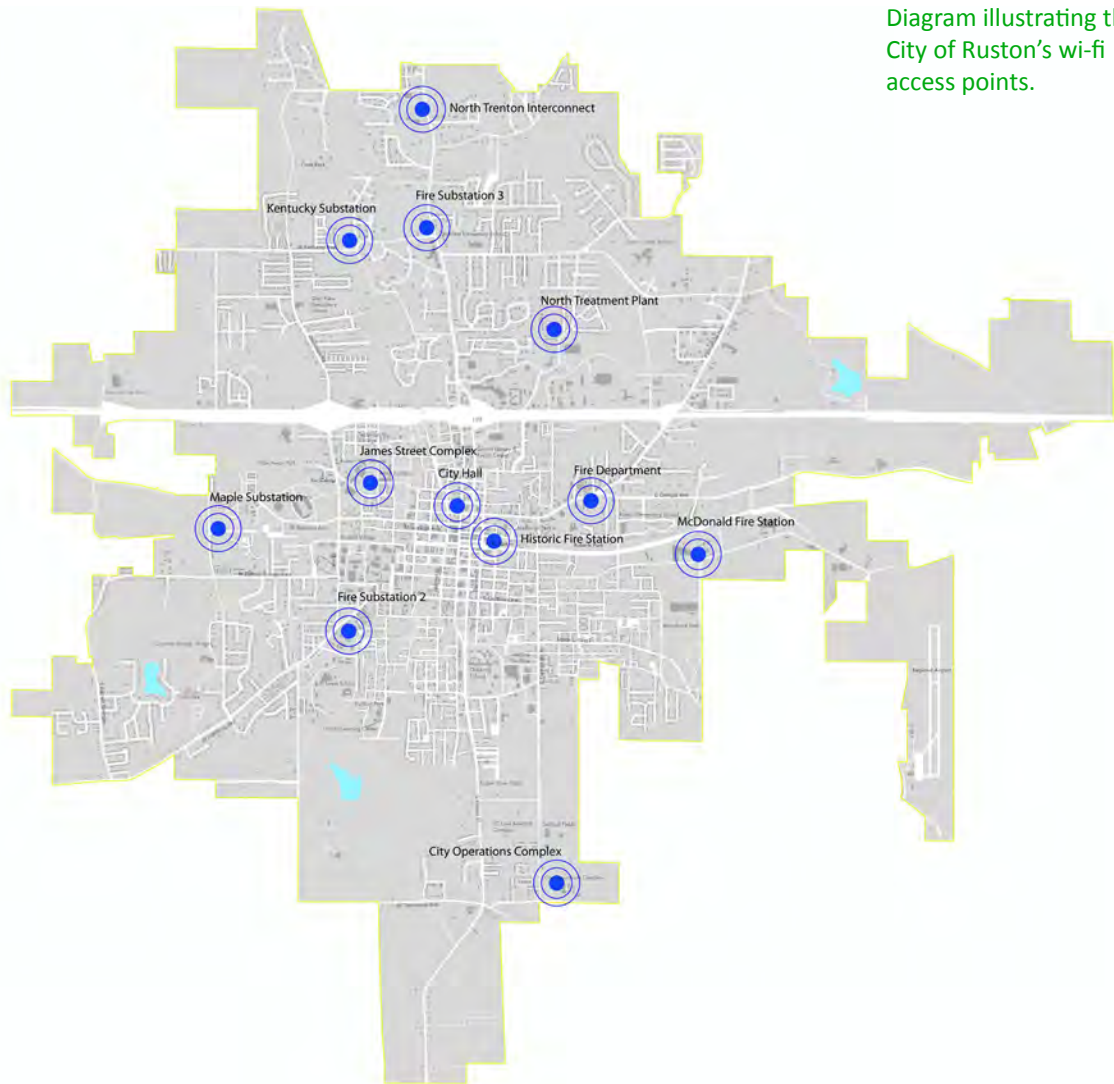


Diagram illustrating the City of Ruston's wi-fi access points.

Strategy: Where feasible, expand underground utility distribution.

The City should plan for underground utility routing concurrent with proposed transportation improvements. Ongoing work in the historic downtown district has demonstrated the ability of underground utilities to upgrade capacity, increase reliability, reduce conflicts with tree canopies, and dramatically improve the visual character of City streets. Similar improvements should be included incrementally as transportation networks are upgraded over time.

Proposed image of California Street at Bonner Street illustrating new street trees and relocation of overhead utility distribution lines.



Strategy: Leverage sewer system upgrades.

In 2009, the City of Ruston received an Environmental Leadership Program Award from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality for the expansion and upgrade project at the North Wastewater Treatment Plant.

According to DEQ Louisiana, City leaders were thinking wisely when they decided to invest dollars and man-hours into revamping its aging sewer system. The sewer system had nearly 40 lift stations and more than 130 miles of collection system that were tied into a treatment plant that was nearly 25 years old. Working with DEQ, Ruston utilized the department's State Revolving Loan Fund to help finance the project that cost more than \$17 million and took nine years to plan, design, and construct.

The newly installed state-of-the-art facility not only ensures that the City will meet its permitted discharge limits but also allows Ruston the added capacity to accommodate future growth. At one time, the City could handle four million gallons of discharge per day. After the improvements, Ruston can handle up to six million gallons per day which ensures the ability to meet future demand.



Image of the new state-of-the-art North Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Goal: Archive and share information for maximum effectiveness.

A state-of-the-art geographic information system (GIS), freely available to the public, has helped position the community as a technology leader and model for other communities. In 2009, the Louisiana Legislature (HB 647, Act 69 of 2009) honored the GIS office, by making it a public entity - the Lincoln Parish GIS District - the first public GIS office of its kind in Louisiana.

Founded in 1993, seven local governmental agencies fund the Lincoln Parish GIS District and share data and technology with each other - the Lincoln Parish Assessor, Lincoln Parish Police Jury, City of Ruston, Lincoln Parish Communications District, Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Office, Lincoln Parish Fire Protection District, and the Lincoln Parish Clerk of Court. Unified mapping and data sharing have resulted in more accurate information, new ways to use member agency data, and cost reduction through elimination of redundant data collection and mapping.

The founding agencies shared a vision of elevating rudimentary E-911 maps to an advanced geographic information system which in 1993 was in its technological infancy. As GIS software and technology advanced, so did local data collection and interconnectedness of data shared by the local agencies. Accurate aerial photography, an additional investment shared by the member agencies, allowed further development of land features. The Lincoln Parish Assessor's commitment to creating mapped parcels of land ownership - cadastral information - increased data development exponentially by offering all member agencies a ground-based platform for new land use layers.

Zoning and land use data and maps are built upon these foundational maps. Some of the many types of data layers used for analyses of land use include infrastructure, public facilities, topography, political boundaries, flood plains, and public services. Many layers are created by one member agency for the vital role they serve that agency but often become just as vital to another agency or in another role. One example is the data used in a land use analysis project. Data layers such as parcels, aerial photography, flood plains, zoning, and municipal boundaries are not created to determine land use. However, land use can be determined because these layers exist.

Strategy: Continue to partner with other agencies to update and expand GIS data.

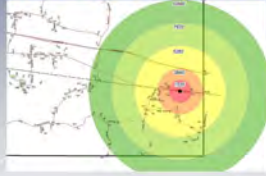
The City should continue to partner with other agencies and private entities to update and expand the current GIS database. The City should continue to share resources, and manage the development of network infrastructure to facilitate the exchange of information between public agencies and, where appropriate, the general public.

Strategy: Integrate digital document management with GIS.

The City should convert documents to digital form and establish database links to enable better management.

Why do we need GIS?

Disaster Response



Zoning



E-911



Economic Development

2005
2010



Infrastructure Planning



Flood Plain Determination





GIS information shared across public and private entities to facilitate planning, infrastructure management, and emergency response.

9.3 Public Safety

The visioning process identified pointed public concerns about the quality and effectiveness of respective public service agencies. Additional investigation revealed internal challenges as well little or no ability to track activities and determine the effectiveness of respective operations. Departmental stakeholders were engaged to review initial findings and plan changes for improvements.

This effort identified consensus principles to guide public safety for the Ruston community as

- Service focus
- Problem-solver roles
- Access to community resources
- Means to obtain/react to public expectation (feedback mechanism)
- Educator and mentor roles
- Means to communicate good results, PR capability; means of emphasizing the positive.

In an effort to align respective operations with these guiding principles, the Ruston Police Department targeted the following opportunities for immediate improvement.

Community Participation

- Clarity of mission (need to concentrate on core mission)
- Expanded social service resources – internal to departments
- Connections to allied agencies
- All officers and fire fighters trained for effective public communication

Team Approach

- Re-engineer internal operations to direct performance around shared goals
- Partner with neighborhoods and community groups
- Partner effectively with Parish agencies for coordinated response
- Coordinate and communicate at inter-agency level

Special Service Divisions

- Proactive role
- Tactical training (Special Enforcement)
- Flexible shifts
- Dedicated traffic unit (accident investigators)
- Support service unit = evidence, care, custody, and control crime scene investigation
- Special projects (rotating assignments)

Focused Investigation Division

- Build trust
- Expand resources
- Provide adequate oversight
- Rotate patrol participation

Goal: Upgrade public safety culture to improve public service and build public trust.

Strategy: Align respective department operations based upon performance-based management with specific goals and metrics to evaluate performance against desired outcomes to reduce crime, protect property, improve emergency response, and increase community safety.

Advancement structures should be realigned to reward organizations and individuals for fulfilling strategic mission objectives rather than focusing on seniority alone. Specific training will be developed to enhance skills to build trust and confidence with members of the community. Specific operational initiatives identified include the following.

Increase Directed Patrols

Increased officer patrols have been instituted to cover problem-specific areas and increase officer visibility within the community. By providing more of a presence in the community as a whole, but specifically within areas of concern, the Department is able to reduce citizen risk.

Foster Self-Initiated Activity

Uniformed officers are encouraged to get out of their squad cars and interact with the public to increase positive officer / citizen contact. Increased communication and positive relationships will have a positive long-term impact on the safety and security of Ruston's residents.

Expand Volunteer Reserves

A supporting unit of the full-time force, the volunteer reserves, supply additional manpower to the force and additional trained personnel within the community.

Improve Recruitment and Retention

Quality officer recruitment and retention are paramount to the long-term viability of Ruston. Policies, standards, and programs being implemented improve the quality of future applicant pools, screening techniques, and standards which applicants should meet.

Bolster EMS

The Department should improve personnel, training, equipment, and facilities to enhance the quality of emergency services available and to improve the ability to respond to public emergencies.

Improve Fire Response Services

The Department should upgrade the quality of operations, personnel, equipment, and facilities to improve fire department capabilities and response times.

Achieve Property Insurance Rating of Class 2

All property owners should benefit from the improvement of service quality and the associated change in property insurance underwriting.

Consolidate Emergency Response Dispatch

The City should task police personnel to handle responsibility for all emergency dispatch functions for increased efficiency and to free fire department personnel for improved response.

Implement Early Warning and Alert System

The City should establish multi-medium alert system to inform the public of impending weather or other public emergencies.

Strategy: Establish departmental management teams to oversee public safety operations.

Management teams in respective departments will allow true focus on public service and coordinated internal efforts for better results. Additionally, team participation will allow broad personnel engagement in issues of community importance and shared performance accountability. Oversight and coordination by the City administration would be improved as well by a coordinated team approach.

Strategy: Improve public service facilities to serve the community better.

Over time, the City should upgrade facilities and technology to support operations effectively and deliver excellent service. Specific improvements envisioned include a new police headquarters (recently completed) and a new Fire Station No. 2.

Recognizing the need for quality facilities and technology to support effective operations improvements over time should be anticipated, planned, and financed over time to maintain service excellence. Locations for capital improvements should respond to proposed changes in land use and population density as identified in Chapter 4.

Strategy: Improve partnering to enhance public safety.

The City should improve communication systems and modify organizational structure to collaborate effectively among City agencies and with allied forces at the University, Parish, State, and national level.

The City should improve communication systems and modify organizational structure to collaborate effectively with the public for a true community-based approach to public safety.

Recruitment, retention, training, technology, and operation should recognize the primary role that effective partnerships and collaborative action will play to enhance public safety for the future of the community. City Public Safety Departments are expected to provide exemplary leadership to implement procedures and practices, targeted and unified action, and efficient, coordinate response.

Public Safety Departments, to the extent possible, should publish collected data for public awareness and engagement. Quality information access will build trust over time and provide an effective tool for the public to measure the results of this collaborative community-based approach.

9.4 Public Facilities Implementation Summary

	Goal	Strategies	How	Target Timeline
1	Enhance existing utility distribution system	Develop public wireless hot spots in the community core	Equipment installation, business plan	2011-2012
		Provide commercial data access via the City's fiber backbone	Business plan; implementation plan	2011-2013
		Where feasible, expand underground utility distribution	Collaborative planning	2011-2012
		Leverage sewer system upgrades	Initial plan for collection system improvements	2011-2012
2	Share information for maximum effectiveness	Continue to partner with other agencies to update and expand GIS data	Cooperative endeavor agreements	Ongoing since 1993
		Integrate digital document management with GIS	Conversion of documents to digital form and establishment of database links to GIS.	2011 and ongoing
3	Improve public safety	Align respective operations based upon performance based management	Goals and performance metrics; tracking systems; public reporting	2009 and ongoing
		Improve facilities to serve the community better	Capital facilities plan; facility design and construction; Police facility completed; additional capital facilities plan	2009 and ongoing
		Improve partnering to enhance public safety	Communication system, alternative service models; ongoing public reporting	2009 and ongoing

