


# Ruston21

# Comprehensive Plan

City of Ruston  
21 March 2011

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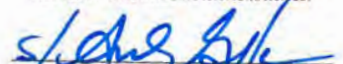
  
By: Cheryl L. Lyles  
Deputy District Clerk  
Lincoln Parish, La.

**Linda Cook**  
Lincoln Parish Clerk of Court

**F116982**

4/12/2011 10:50 AM



  
DEPUTY CLERK





**RESOLUTION NO. 1 OF 2011**

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE RUSTON 21 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
AND AMENDED FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE CITY OF RUSTON,  
LOUISIANA**

**WHEREAS**, the Ruston Planning Commission (the "Commission") under provisions of LA R.S. 33:106 shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality and may from time to time amend, extend, or add to the plan; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission of the City adopted a Master Plan for the City (the "Original Master Plan") on December 7, 1961, which was recorded under Instrument Nos. C-34238 through C-34245, of the records of the Clerk of Court of Lincoln Parish, Louisiana; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Original Master Plan included the following: I. General Land Use Plan, Growth of the City; II. General Land Use Plan, Present Urban Pattern; III. Land Use Plan, Future Pattern; IV. (A) Zoning Ordinance of 1959 (Ordinance No. 526), and (B) Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land; V. Recreation Plan; VI. Land Use Plan, A Summary Report; VII. Urban Highway and Major Street Plan for Ruston, Louisiana; VIII. General Land Use Map; and IX. Zoning District Map; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City adopted an amendment to the Original Master Plan entitled Ordinance Amending Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Ruston, Louisiana, By Adding Section 20-25 Relating to a Comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Ruston and Adopting Chapter Two Relating to Land Use (the "Amendments") on May 2, 2005, which is recorded under Instrument No. F-64296, of the records of the Clerk of Court of Lincoln Parish, Louisiana; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen contracted with Tipton Associates, APAC, lead Consultant, ("Consultant") to prepare the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan, (the "Comprehensive Plan") as an amendment to the Original Master Plan; and,

**WHEREAS**, in connection with the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Consultant did carefully and comprehensively survey and study present conditions, projections of future growth and the relation of the City to neighboring areas and jurisdictions; and,

**WHEREAS**, in connection with the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Consultant did conduct workshops, advisory committee meetings, focus group sessions, and community meetings, from which the plan was distilled and developed; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Plan and the amended Future Land Use Map contained in Chapter 4 of the plan, have been prepared for the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the City and its environs; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan consists of the following chapters:  
1. Vision; 2. Community Fabric; 3. Economic Development; 4. Land Use, including an amended Future Land Use Map; 5. Housing and Neighborhoods; 6. Core District; 7. Natural Systems, Public Recreation, and Parks; 8. Transportation and Circulation; 9. Public Facilities; 10. Implementation; and Appendices: A. Public Education Report; B. Zoning Use Classifications; C. Land Use Classifications; D. High Density Residential Design Guidelines; E. Core Commission Organizational Structure; and,

**WHEREAS**, after the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan the Commission gave notice of the time and place of the public hearing to be held on the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan as an amendment to the Original Master Plan and the amended Future Land Use Map for the City by giving notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the City; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Commission held a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan and amended Future Land Use Map on February 22, 2011, in the Ruston Civic Center; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Commission took into consideration the testimony presented at said public hearing and now desires to present its recommendations for an amendment to the Master Plan and Future Land Use Map for the City of Ruston, Louisiana; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission desires to adopt the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan and the amended Future Land Use Map, and to replace the Original Master Plan and Amendments with the new Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the City pursuant to LSA-R.S. 33:106, et seq.;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF RUSTON, LOUISIANA:**

**§1.** The Ruston Planning Commission adopts the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan, dated March 21, 2011, and an amended Future Land Use Map of the City referred to therein dated March 21, 2011, as an amendment to the Original Master Plan and its amendments.

**§2.** This Resolution shall become effective upon final adoption and signature of the Commission Chairman.

Said Resolution having been read and considered by a quorum of the Ruston Planning Commission, on motion to adopt by Commissioner Otha Anders, seconded by Commissioner Wilbert Ellis, a record vote was taken and the following result was had:

**YEA:** COMMISSIONER TRAVIS DEFREESE, CHAIRMAN  
COMMISSIONER CHARLES JIMERSON, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN  
COMMISSIONER OTHA ANDERS  
COMMISSIONER JOY ANNISON  
COMMISSIONER WILBERT ELLIS  
COMMISSIONER JIM KING  
COMMISSIONER LEE SUTTON

**NAY:** NONE

**ABSENT:** NONE

**WHEREUPON**, the presiding officer declared the above Resolution duly adopted in full on this the 21<sup>st</sup> day of March, 2011.

**ATTEST:**

  
EMMETT GIBBS, CLERK

  
TRAVIS DEFREESE, CHAIRMAN

**ORDINANCE NO. 1609 OF 2011**

**ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE RUSTON 21 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND SUPERSEDING AND REPLACING THE ORIGINAL MASTER PLAN AND AMENDMENTS THERETO**

**WHEREAS**, the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission of the City adopted a Master Plan for the City (the "Original Master Plan") on December 7, 1961, which was recorded under Instrument Nos. C-34238 through C-34245, of the records of the Clerk of Court of Lincoln Parish, Louisiana; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Original Master Plan included the following: I. General Land Use Plan, Growth of the City; II. General Land Use Plan, Present Urban Pattern; III. Land Use Plan, Future Pattern; IV. (A) Zoning Ordinance of 1959 (Ordinance No. 526), and (B) Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land; V. Recreation Plan; VI. Land Use Plan, A Summary Report; VII. Urban Highway and Major Street Plan for Ruston, Louisiana; VIII. General Land Use Map; and IX. Zoning District Map; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City adopted an amendment to the Original Master Plan entitled Ordinance Amending Chapter 20 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Ruston, Louisiana, By Adding Section 20-25 Relating to a Comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Ruston and Adopting Chapter Two Relating to Land Use (the "Amendments") on May 2, 2005, which is recorded under Instrument No. F-64296, of the records of the Clerk of Court of Lincoln Parish, Louisiana; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City desires to adopt the Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan (the "Comprehensive Plan"), and to supersede and replace the Original Master Plan and Amendments with the new Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the City pursuant to LSA-R.S. 33:106, et seq.;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF RUSTON, LOUISIANA:**

**§1.** The City adopts a new Comprehensive Plan dated March 21, 2011, and an amended Future Land Use Map of the City referred to therein dated March 21, 2011.

**§2.** The City supersedes and replaces the Original Master Plan and Amendments.

**§3.** If any section, paragraph, sentence, clause and/or phrase of this Ordinance or the application thereof is declared unconstitutional, unenforceable or invalid by the valid judgment of any court of competent jurisdiction such unconstitutionality, unenforceability or invalidity shall not affect any of the remaining sections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and/or phrases of this Ordinance, since the same would have been enacted by the City without the

incorporation of this Ordinance of any such unconstitutional, unenforceable or invalid section, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase. To this end, the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby declared severable.

**§4.** All other Ordinances, or parts thereof, which are in conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance, are hereby repealed. To the extent that any provision or provisions of this Ordinance are inconsistent or in conflict with any other provision of the Code of Ordinances or any regulation of the City, the provisions of this Ordinance shall be deemed to control.

**§5.** This Ordinance shall become effective upon final adoption and publication of the same in the manner prescribed by law.

Said Ordinance having been introduced on March 7, 2011, by Alderman Elmore Mayfield, Notice of Public Hearing having been published on March 11, 2011, March 18, 2011, and March 25, 2011, and said Public Hearing having been held, the title having been read and the Ordinance considered, on motion to adopt, as amended, by Alderman Elmore Mayfield, seconded by Alderman Jim Pearce, a record vote was taken and the following result was had:

**YEA:** ALDERWOMAN GLENDA HOWARD  
ALDERMAN JEDD LEWIS  
ALDERMAN ELMORE MAYFIELD  
ALDERMAN JIM PEARCE  
ALDERWOMAN MARIE S. RIGGS

**NAY:** NONE

**ABSENT:** NONE

**WHEREUPON,** the presiding officer declared the above Ordinance duly adopted on the 4th day of April, 2011.

**ATTEST:**

  
EMMETT GIBBS, CLERK

  
DAN HOLLINGSWORTH, MAYOR

# The Planning Team

Challenged by Mayor Hollingsworth's vision for Ruston to seize its destiny proactively, the planning team conducted focus groups with City administrators, individual aldermen, and community stakeholders in an effort to assess strengths and weaknesses of the current land-use environment and to identify challenges and opportunities facing the Ruston community. Individual workshop findings were recorded and distilled into seven critical community development principles that should be addressed if Ruston is to realize its fullest potential. Issues, along with statements gleaned from workshop participants, are identified in the following sections.

Issues include a range of social, political, and land-use opportunities that will require a true community effort to address prevalent concerns and effectively leverage current potential. The Ruston 21 planning process has been characterized by broad engagement, open communication, quick response, and public accountability in an effort to ensure benefits for all.

## Special Thanks to:

Pat Doane, Policy Planning Administrator  
Lori Faile, Development Services Manager

## Tipton Associates, APAC

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## Neil Erwin Law, llc

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# Acknowledgements

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 District 2: Elmore Mayfield  
 District 3: Jedd Lewis  
 District 4: Jim Pearce  
 District 5: Marie Riggs

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 Charles Jimerson  
 Otha Anders  
 Joy Annison  
 Wilbert Ellis  
 Jim King  
 Lee Sutton

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 Ben Humphries  
 Robyn Brown  
 Ryan Kilpatrick  
 Dickie Crawford  
 Terry McConathy  
 Neal Deforest  
 Willie McKeever  
 Richard Durrett  
 Wilbert Ellis  
 Gregg Phillips  
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 Edward Smith  
 Dud Holland  
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 Steve Rogers  
 Kevin Peden  
 Dan Hollingsworth  
 Ed Pittman  
 James Austin  
 Chris Womack  
 Eric Brazzel

## Leadership Development Committee

Wayne Parker, Chair

## Homer Street Partnership

Richard Aillet, Chair  
 Davie Norris  
 John Freeman  
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## Education Excellence Committee

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 Lynda Henderson  
 Mark Baker  
 Kelly Hogan  
 John Buske  
 Ted McKinney  
 Cathi Cox-Boniol  
 Kia Richardson  
 Jo Ann Dauzat

## Economic Development Committee

Benny Denny, Chair  
 Bill Hogan  
 Kristi Lumpkin  
 Dud Holland  
 Scott Terry

## Land Use Advisory Committee

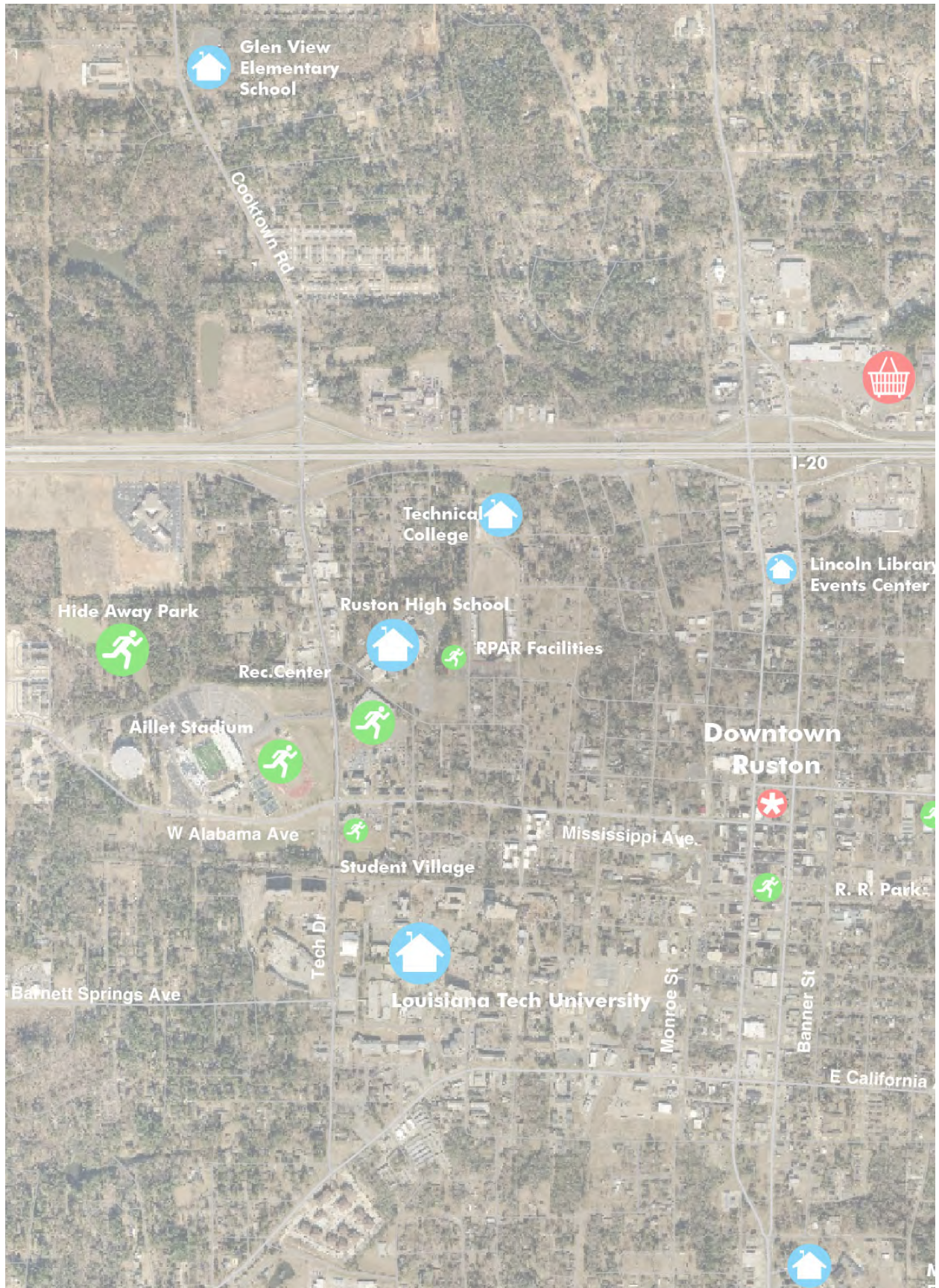
Otha Anders  
 Peter Gallagher  
 Neal Deforest  
 Delores Harris  
 Pat Doane  
 Dud Holland  
 C.P. Drewett  
 Neil Erwin  
 Christie Wheeler

## Public Facilities & Transportation Committee

Richard Aillet, Chair  
 Paul Riley  
 John Freeman  
 Ron Riley  
 Lewis Love

## Steering Committee

Dan Hollingsworth  
 Lewis Love  
 Richard Aillet  
 Pat Doane  
 Kristi Lumpkin  
 Lori Faile  
 Neil Erwin  
 Kenneth Tipton





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# Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan



## Message from Mayor Hollingsworth

Ruston 21 is our uniquely tailored long-range community planning process. To build a strong community that is forward looking, represents our values, and preserves our heritage and traditions, we must define our shared vision in a thoughtful and intentional way. Developed through citizen involvement every step along the way, we believe Ruston 21 is the springboard for complementary growth that preserves our small town character and provides wider opportunities for the future.

# Ruston 21 Guiding Principles

## Develop Our Community Character

As Ruston grows, we will maintain and enhance our unique character: historic and 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 embracing new opportunities for applied technology and making considered choices to develop new generations of civic leaders. We will be innovative, encouraging growth while enhancing our community's natural environment.

## Maintain our Balance

Ruston should maintain its unique balance: big city amenities with small town convenience, small town quality of life with global access, and quality development both north and south of I-20. We will encourage planned development which complements the City's attractive and defining tree canopy.

## Be a City of Opportunity

We will promote a supportive business climate, leveraging the opportunities provided at the university level to encourage entrepreneurial ventures while taking full advantage of our strategic location on the I-20 information corridor. We will target appropriate development in the community core, the Highway 167 corridor, and the I-20 corridor.

## Be More Accessible

We will plan transportation for ease of access, working to reroute regional truck traffic while preserving avenues to the community core. We will be more pedestrian friendly, providing alternative transportation choices, encouraging pedestrian and bicycle paths, and expanding our park system. We will maintain open access to governmental leadership, working to streamline regulation while protecting the public interest.

## Connect our Community

We will use master planning as a means to strengthen community connections, including expanded ties between the City and universities, renewed cooperation between City and regional political entities, development of public-private partnerships for community benefit, and coordination of volunteer efforts for maximum impact. We will build economic, civic, and communication bridges among all parts of Ruston.

## Aim for Excellence

We expect excellence in our educational system and civic endeavors. We will work to develop universal pride in property ownership. We will reduce blighted property and establish gateways through regulation of signage and landscaping, creating an even cleaner, safer, and more livable community.





# Chapter 1 Vision

## 1.1 Introduction

### What is Ruston 21?

A community's Master Plan is a statement of its policies regarding future physical development and community growth. It is comprehensive in scope, general in nature, and long range in perspective. The Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a guide for development to the Planning and Zoning Commission and to the Board of Aldermen. It is also intended as a yardstick for the citizens of Ruston in evaluating community growth efforts.

Louisiana State Law R.S. 33:106 states that "A municipal planning commission shall make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality." The law goes on to provide for the inclusion of "maps, plats, charts and descriptive material" used to demonstrate the commission's recommendations for the development of the community and planning for future community needs.

Our plan not only satisfies the state statute, it also provides a clear vision of how the people of Ruston see the City developing and growing. This plan is a result of combined efforts of the public, community stakeholders, the City Administration, Board of Aldermen, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Mayor. Collaborative effort has resulted in a strong consensus and shared community aspirations for the future of our City.

Our plan is principle based. Its foundation and its ultimate metric of success are a set of Community Development Principles identifying broadly held community values and aspirations. These principles reflect who we are and what we wish to become. Plan initiatives build upon this foundation to establish policies, facilities, systems, and structures designed to deliver the community we desire.



## How will Ruston 21 Be used?

The Ruston Comprehensive Plan contains the framework to establish local government policies and strategies to impact existing conditions and enhance characteristics unique to our community. It will accomplish this result in six specific ways:

- It states the intentions of the City concerning the physical development of our community;
- It establishes local policy concerning future growth and development;
- It identifies programs and initiatives in the form of specific goals and recommended actions to achieve respective goals;
- It identifies capital needs and priorities;
- It identifies the type, scale; and density of future development; and
- It serves as the blueprint for the area's future economic and physical development.

Our plan is a living document. The Ruston 21 planning process by design is an ongoing collaborative effort. It provides for a continuous process of evaluation, public accountability, and adjustment over time as the community addresses new opportunities and challenges. The legacy of this effort will be vital partnerships connecting all segments of our community and coordinated action for maximum community benefit.

## 1.2 Organization of The Plan

The Ruston 21 Comprehensive Plan is organized into ten chapters or plan elements. Each chapter addresses existing conditions; designates issues, goals, and objectives for community development; and identifies implementation strategies with specific information that can be used to accomplish the goals and objectives stated in the plan. A brief summary of each chapter is noted below.

### Chapter 1 Vision

This chapter identifies the intent of a comprehensive plan, shows how the plan will be used, outlines the contents of the plan, reviews the community history, identifies existing issues of concern, and touches on some of the demographic information that makes Ruston unique. This chapter outlines the seven critical Community Development Principles distilled from community responses at public meetings, special focus groups, neighborhood meetings, and advisory committee discussions. These Community Development Principles identify public aspirations and expectations for the future of Ruston and, therefore, should be used to guide and evaluate all planning efforts and future decision making. Further, Community Development Principles describe the values and cultural beliefs that guide the community's image of itself and set the standards for maintaining that image.

### Chapter 2 Community Fabric

This chapter provides insight into the value system and character that is unique to Ruston. In an effort to reinforce this heritage and ensure a living legacy for future generations, this chapter designates specific initiatives designed to enhance the existing community fabric, with special focus on culture, education, leadership, and resource conservation. Individual initiatives rely heavily upon partnered efforts for strategic response.

### Chapter 3 Economic Development

This chapter provides an examination of the economic health of the community and establishes a working framework for economic development for the region. This Economic Development Plan designates short-term response strategies, business retention strategies, and target markets for future development. It identifies Ruston's unique assets upon which to capitalize, partnership opportunities to leverage, and economic incentives to fuel diversified growth. This chapter also provides for a public-private Economic Development Foundation tasked with leadership of the community's economic development initiatives.

## Chapter 4 Land Use Plan

This chapter explores existing land use patterns and sets the guidelines for future density and use, including designation of critical and sensitive areas. Land use is the test against which future infrastructure development is measured. Updates for the current zoning code are anticipated for base districts, overlay districts, hazards, parking, landscaping, signage, administrative procedures, and smart growth policies as a result of the recommendations included. In addition, this chapter establishes expectations for development in a zone surrounding the City's perimeter.

## Chapter 5 Housing and Neighborhoods

This chapter updates property standards and provides the means for individual neighborhoods to further enhance standards through self-imposed, self-enforced requirements designed to maintain property values and reinforce the unique character of individual developments. It provides an operating framework for a Housing Redevelopment Trust tasked with restoring pride in property ownership and restoring substandard and adjudicated properties to commerce. This chapter also recommends new housing types for development in higher density, mixed-use districts designated in the future land use plan.

## Chapter 6 Core District

This chapter identifies the core as Ruston's leading edge and designates specific initiatives designed to re-establish this district as the cultural and economic heart of the community. Initiatives dovetail with Louisiana Tech University's plan to develop an enterprise campus within the district, reinforce the historic downtown as a unique retail destination, designate a cultural district to maximize public and private resources, encourage higher density residential development, and identify specific incentives to encourage desired development. This chapter provides an operating framework for a Ruston Core Commission tasked with oversight of design, promotion, communication, and neighborhood development within the district.

## Chapter 7 Natural Systems, Public Recreation and Parks

This chapter includes an evaluation of natural systems that make Ruston unique and makes specific recommendations to preserve and enhance these assets for future generations. This chapter also provides an assessment of existing park facilities and provides recommendations for future development as a comprehensive network system of parks. This network approach involves the use of public amenities held by the City, Parish, school system and University for passive and active recreation and the development of links between respective properties to create a true community recreation system. This chapter also identifies a need for a new complex to support youth and team sport activities in the Ruston area.

## Chapter 8 Transportation and Circulation

This chapter includes a comprehensive look at existing transportation systems and provides recommendations to improve these systems to support all modes of transportation: pedestrians, cyclists, local motorists, and regional automobile and truck traffic. In addition, this chapter provides recommendations for use of abandoned and active rail corridors, opportunities to improve access, and potential expansion of intermodal capabilities of the Ruston airport.

## Chapter 9 Public Facilities

This chapter provides specific recommendations for improvement and expansion of the City's robust infrastructure network in anticipation of development described in previous chapters. Improvements to public safety are also addressed as respective departments respond to identified needs through increased services, community partnerships, and specialized tactical units.

## Chapter 10 Implementation

This chapter identifies immediate response activities initiated by the Ruston 21 process that have already resulted in quantifiable improvements. It also provides a specific accountability structure for executing Ruston 21 initiatives, a recommended financing structure to put recommendations into action, and an evaluation structure to assess performance and make adjustments over time as the community responds to new opportunities and challenges.

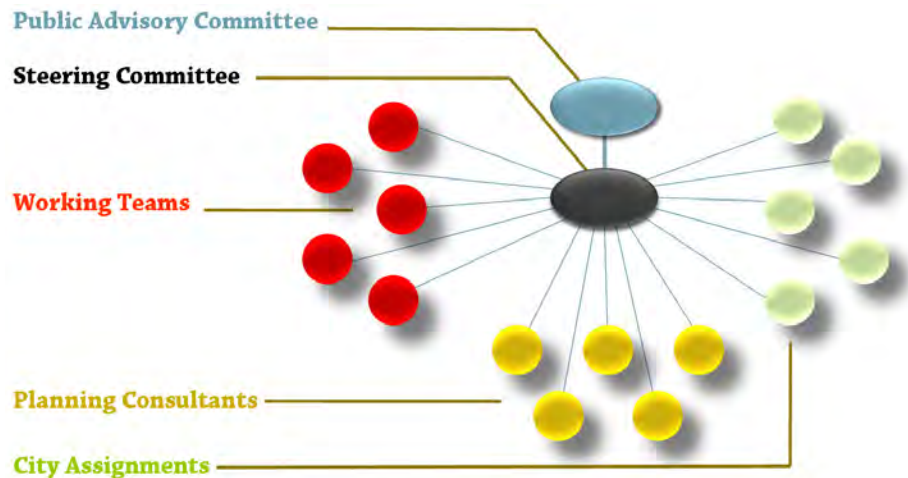
## 1.3 Process

### Ruston 21 Team

Ruston 21 is an ongoing collaborative effort based upon direction, leadership, and feedback from citizens and stakeholders. To date, the City Administration has handled the bulk of the day-to-day efforts, while the Steering Committee and Advisory Committee have provided leadership oversight to keep progress on track. The Board of Aldermen, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Administration have provided unique insight as the plan has evolved and remain engaged and committed to deliver the individual recommendations included.

Working teams addressed specific areas of interest which included Public Safety, Homer Street Partnership, Education Excellence, Leadership Development, Economic Development, Land Use, and Capital Systems. Regional and national planners, economists, and individuals with specialized expertise have been engaged in support of the community’s planning effort to ensure that Ruston 21 reflects best practices gleaned from a broad base of experience. Through the efforts of these groups working simultaneously toward the community’s vision, the plan has evolved as the blueprint for the future of Ruston.

Diagram illustrating the planning team structure.



## Ruston 21 Plan Development

As illustrated, our plan was developed in phases to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of issues and opportunity, community engagement to set expectations and direction, effective evaluation of options for consideration, testing of options to find the best solutions for Ruston, and the assembly of respective initiatives into a comprehensive plan for community progress. This process was initiated in 2008. Over 400 members of the community participated at the initial Ruston 21 Community Visioning Day in November 2008 where ideas, shared values, and expectations were exchanged and clearly expressed.

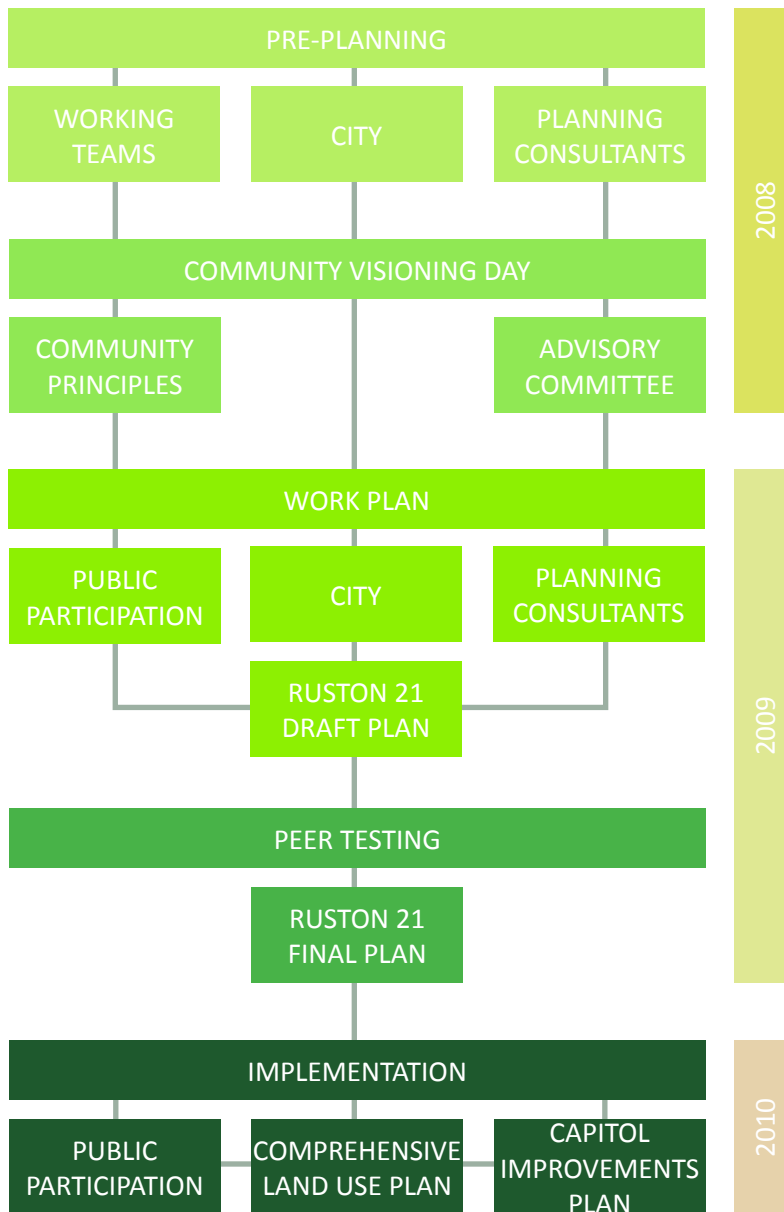


Diagram illustrating the planning process and timeline.

Stakeholders' walking tour.



Image of downtown core work session with members of the Steering Committee and representatives from local business organizations.



Additional meetings with Administration, Aldermen, Commissioners, and Civic leaders broadened the planning effort. Regional neighborhood meetings were conducted in North, Central, and South Ruston. Community core charettes were held to include downtown business owners, Louisiana Tech University, Louisiana Technical College, Louisiana Center for the Blind, core neighborhoods, public schools, community representatives, city officials, and cultural organizations.

On December 8, 2009, over 200 citizens attended a community update presentation. Over 97% of those attending said they supported the initiatives presented, and over 90% said the overall Ruston 21 picture represented a unified community approach.

## Peer Cities

Precedent cities were identified early in the planning process. These communities represent thriving university cities in the southern United States that have faced similar issues to those currently being experienced in Ruston. Our peer cities have provided valuable insight during the planning process; we have benefited from their success and challenges in an effort to maximize the potential of this plan.



### Ruston, LA

Population: 20,546  
 Housing Units: 8,397  
 461 per sq. mi.  
 54% rental  
 18.2 square miles



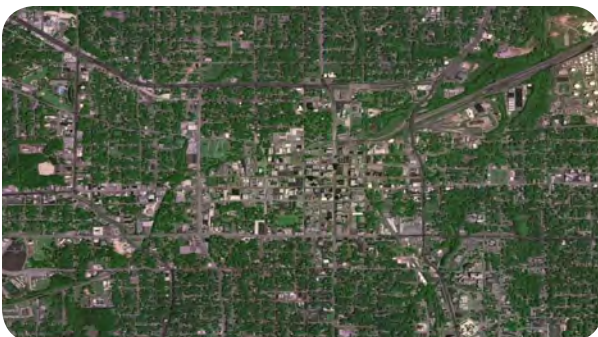
### Clemson, SC

Population: 11,939  
 Housing Units: 5,679  
 728 per sq. mi.  
 54% rental  
 7.8 square miles



### Fayetteville, AR

Population: 58,047  
 Housing Units: 25,467  
 572 per sq. mi.  
 58% rental  
 44.5 square miles



### Tyler, TX

Population: 83,650  
 Housing Units 35,337  
 721 per sq. mi.  
 44% rental  
 49 square miles

## 1.4 Background and History

### Historical Setting

President Thomas Jefferson appointed W.C.C. Claiborne as governor of the new territory of Orleans when this territory was acquired by America from the French. Lincoln Parish was then part of the larger Ouachita Parish. During the Reconstruction Period following the Civil War, there was a need for smaller parishes to fill the demand from carpetbaggers for political offices and power. Lincoln Parish was formed in 1873.

Settlers poured into this section of Louisiana, attracted by the beautiful park-like look of the area, the vast forests, the bountiful game, the fertility of the soil, and the fact that land could be bought for next to nothing. The Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific Railroad (now the Illinois Central) was built through the Parish in 1883. Until that time, Lincoln Parish was strictly rural. There was no large town within her boundaries. Vienna was the parish seat, with a population of barely 1,000 people.

The economy of the area has followed the same path as that of Ruston. Timber, crops, and mineral development have provided the incentive for development in the Parish. Outdoor recreation and tourism development are two growth areas over the past few years.

Early image of downtown Ruston showing the railroad depot.



## Core District

Ruston, Louisiana is and has always been a city of intersections. It is the Parish high ground, a city on the hill where all water drains away and all roads lead to the core. The region is geographically and politically connected at this intersection. The first neighborhoods were built in this core area, and the historic downtown remains the heart of Ruston, while development radiates throughout the Parish.

The present-day community core is bigger than “downtown.” It includes the Commercial District, Louisiana Tech University Campus, University Enterprise Campus, and the original community neighborhoods. It is the community’s crossroad, a place in the City’s hearts and minds that evokes strong emotions and helps define the community’s identity.

The core offers unique shopping, great restaurants, and beautifully restored buildings. It epitomizes Ruston’s small-town charm, with flourishing pedestrian traffic, historic value saved for future generations, and a great sense of place.





## Historic Downtown

The Historic Downtown District was so designated in June of 1989. It is bound on the North by Florida Avenue, on the East by Bonner Street, on the South by Texas Avenue, and on the West by Monroe Street. The area encompasses twenty square blocks in the central business district. It is now a thriving commercial area; however, in 1988 the downtown area experienced the absenteeism that so many rural small towns were encountering. When the State of Louisiana entered into the National Main Street Program supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Ruston City leaders saw a new potential for their community.

Two qualifying factors made the Ruston downtown a prime candidate for revitalization. First, Ruston had the advantage of two main state highways traveling through the center of town. The traffic generated by those highways had continued to grow. Second, many of the downtown properties were still owned and managed by the original families, providing an incentive for local involvement in the community's central core. With the City's active participation in the Main Street Program and the facade reconstruction done on some of the older, more historic buildings, the core area began to strengthen. The downtown area is currently one of the unique places that make Ruston a strong community.

## Louisiana Tech University

Louisiana Tech University was established in downtown Ruston in 1894 by Act 68 of the Louisiana General Assembly. The mission of the new Industrial Institute and College of Louisiana was to be a “first class institution designed to educate citizens of the state in the arts and sciences and in the practical industries of the age.”

Since that time, Tech has evolved into the comprehensive university known today particularly for its unique offerings through the doctorate. There are 11,000 students enrolled at Louisiana Tech, with an employee base of 1,200 people. The campus encompasses 255 acres on the main campus in the City core and an additional 472 acres on the demonstration farm within the City limits, plus 43.7 acres in the Parish, two miles west of the main campus. The University is the primary source of information and technical support for the Ruston community and Northern Louisiana.



## Higher Education Institutions within a 90-minute radius of Ruston

Education, both past and present, has played a formative role in the development of the community. In addition to its strategic geographical location, Ruston is the educational hub for the entire North Louisiana region. Specific post-secondary institutions include the following:

### Universities

- Louisiana Tech University, Ruston ([www.latech.edu](http://www.latech.edu))
- Grambling State University, Grambling ([www.gram.edu](http://www.gram.edu))
- University of Louisiana at Monroe, Monroe ([www.ulm.edu](http://www.ulm.edu))
- Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches ([www.nsula.edu](http://www.nsula.edu))
- Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport ([www.centenary.edu](http://www.centenary.edu))
- Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, Shreveport ([www.lsuhsccshreveport.edu](http://www.lsuhsccshreveport.edu))
- Louisiana State University, Shreveport ([www.lsus.edu](http://www.lsus.edu))
- Southern University at Shreveport, Shreveport ([www.susla.edu](http://www.susla.edu))

### Louisiana Technical College System ([www.ltc.edu](http://www.ltc.edu))

*Northeast Louisiana Technical College* ([www.region8.ltc.edu](http://www.region8.ltc.edu))

- Ruston Campus, 1010 James St., Ruston
- Bastrop Campus, Kammell St., Bastrop
- Farmerville Campus, 605 W. Boundary St., Farmerville
- Delta Ouachita Campus, 609 Vocational Parkway, W. Monroe
- Northeast Campus, 1710 Warren St., Winnsboro

*Northwest Louisiana Technical College* ([www.region7.ltc.edu](http://www.region7.ltc.edu))

- Minden Campus, 814 Constable St., Minden
- Shreveport|Bossier Campus, 2010 N. Market St., Shreveport
- Natchitoches Campus, 6587 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches

*Central Louisiana Technical College* ([www.region6.ltc.edu](http://www.region6.ltc.edu))

- Huey P. Long Campus, 304 S Jones St., Winnfield

### Other Technical or Community Colleges

- Louisiana Delta Community College, 7500 Millhaven Rd., Monroe ([www.ladelta.edu](http://www.ladelta.edu))
- Bossier Parish Community College, 6220 E. Texas St., Bossier City ([www.bpsc.edu](http://www.bpsc.edu))
- South Arkansas Community College, 200 S. West Ave., El Dorado, AR ([www.southark.edu](http://www.southark.edu))

## Uniquely Ruston

The following chapters will discuss what is unique about Ruston. They will also discuss how to maintain that uniqueness while simultaneously embracing growth and development. Ruston is on the brink of moving from a small town to a city. At each step along the way, it will be important to re-examine what makes Ruston a good place to live and to adopt policies and ordinances that strive to maintain the Ruston character, lifestyle, and image.

## 1.5 Public Process

Interviews with community stakeholders and elected officials prior to initiation of the planning effort resulted in an honest evaluation of community strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats. This process identified salient issues that the planning effort should address.

In addition to interviews, the public was engaged to explore their perceptions and expectations for their community. Over 600 citizens participated in this process. The results are summarized below.



Image of December, 2009 community open house; over 200 community members attended to guide the development of the plan.



## Public Process Summary

### What do you find special about the character of Ruston?

- Education                      Emphasis on education at all levels
- Size                                “Big” small town; best of both worlds; ideal size
- Attitude                        Welcoming, friendly, accepting, accessible
- Family                            Family friendly, family oriented
- University                      Strong ties to campus, community/campus connections
- Spirituality                    Religious values, faith foundation, moral fiber
- Community                    Shared pride, togetherness, shared direction
- Nature                            Retain natural beauty, trees, landscape preservation
- History                            Preserve historic fabric: historic homes, historic buildings
- Convenience                  Good location, ease of access, quality pace
- Business                        Good business climate, support of local business

### What changes should we consider to improve our community?

- Education                      Improve Kindergarten - 12 education
- Pedestrian                      Develop pedestrian accommodations: sidewalks, bike paths, etc
- Transportation                Provide for public access
- Recreation                      Improve/expand parks and recreation facilities
- Downtown                      Improve downtown for mixed-use community destination
- Development                  Design and implement aggressive economic development program
- By-pass                            Re-route truck traffic away from downtown
- Zoning                            Develop new, streamlined zoning policies
- Connections                    Re-unite community through progress and proactive citizens
- Housing                            Address housing needs comprehensively; promote ownership
- Infrastructure                  Upgrade transportation, drainage, power, and sewer; reduce outages
- Preservation                  Protect and adaptively re-use historic architectural fabric
- Recycling                        Develop comprehensive community recycling program
- Trees                                Adopt urban forestry initiatives; protect tree canopy

### What would we like Ruston to be known for in the future?

- Opportunity                    Place for opportunity, jobs, competition, entrepreneurship
- Education                      Quality education for all students; leadership education
- Unity                                Cooperative, together, welcoming, embracing, connected
- Family                            Great place for families
- Sustainability                Green initiatives, pedestrian friendly, recycle, downtown density
- Retirement                      Retirement community destination
- Authenticity                    Maintain small-town feel, community pride, unique character
- Destination                    Regional retail, restaurant, and recreation center
- Culture                            Creative culture and arts community
- Technology                    Center for applied technology
- Progressiveness              Vibrant, forward looking, live local-work global
- University                      Strong tie between universities and community

## 1.6 Community Development Principles

Community Development Principles are broadly held and, therefore, form the foundation for any proposed planning activities, provide the value system upon which land use regulation is promulgated, and set the benchmark for evaluation as choices are encountered that will direct the course of community development in Ruston. Economic development, marketing, and branding efforts should recognize the strong value system that undergirds and unites the community. These principles have served the community well and provide a broad framework upon which the future of the City should be built.



## Ruston 21 Guiding Principles

### Develop Our Community Character

As Ruston grows, we will maintain and enhance our unique character: historic and 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 embracing new opportunities for applied technology and making considered choices to develop new generations of civic leaders. We will be innovative, encouraging growth while enhancing our community's natural environment.

### Maintain our Balance

Ruston should maintain its unique balance: big city amenities with small town convenience, small town quality of life with global access, and quality development both north and south of I-20. We will encourage planned development which complements the City's attractive and defining tree canopy.

### Be a City of Opportunity

We will promote a supportive business climate, leveraging the opportunities provided at the university level to encourage entrepreneurial ventures while taking full advantage of our strategic location on the I-20 information corridor. We will target appropriate development in the community core, the Highway 167 corridor, and the I-20 corridor.

### Be More Accessible

We will plan transportation for ease of access, working to reroute regional truck traffic while preserving avenues to the community core. We will be more pedestrian friendly, providing alternative transportation choices, encouraging pedestrian and bicycle paths, and expanding our park system. We will maintain open access to governmental leadership, working to streamline regulation while protecting the public interest.

### Connect our Community

We will use master planning as a means to strengthen community connections, including expanded ties between the City and universities, renewed cooperation between City and regional political entities, development of public-private partnerships for community benefit, and coordination of volunteer efforts for maximum impact. We will build economic, civic, and communication bridges among all parts of Ruston.

### Aim for Excellence

We expect excellence in our educational system and civic endeavors. We will work to develop universal pride in property ownership. We will reduce blighted property and establish gateways through regulation of signage and landscaping, creating an even cleaner, safer, and more livable community.

Ruston21 Comprehensive Plan