



Memorandum:

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Wes Morrison, City Planner
Date: February 3, 2014
RE: Growth & Development Advisory Committee Report

The Growth & Development Advisory Committee was created in June, 2012 to address the unprecedented growth experienced by League City and the frustration that the growth had occurred with a lack of policy and guidance by government leadership. Through several meetings, the Committee agreed that the City of League City should continue to grow and was able to develop policies to manage growth with the focuses of financing, infrastructure, character, and growth management tools such as downzoning.

One of the focuses of the Committee was managing the financing of infrastructure and to continue consistent level of services related to water, wastewater and transportation services. These related policies include maintaining that the financial burden is on the developer to extend services to projects. Also, financial incentives may be considered, but only if the project brings an added value to the City. The Committee focused that these future projects need to follow the Comprehensive Plan and meet the vision of the City. One determination was the Committee wants to see more centers and corridors while promoting urban lifestyle multi-family and less garden apartments. Additional policies by the Committee included utilizing growth management tools such as downzoning, creating adequate public facilities ordinance, conservation development (i.e. not in floodplains or wetlands), and limiting permits in order to meet the desired rate of growth of the City.

The Committee then created steps for Staff and Council including pursuing the possibility of extending impact fees to include transportation/traffic and stormwater management improvements. One specific aspect was to propose an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance for Council to define level of service thresholds for a variety of services that is also concurrent with the Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvements Plan. Finally, the Committee tasked Staff and Council to inform developers and investors of proposed changes.

Growth & Development Advisory Committee Report

August 28, 2013

On June 26, 2012, City Council approved creation of a Growth and Development Advisory Committee following a request by several councilmembers to address some of the fundamental issues related to growth.

The Problem

During the 1990s and 2000s, League City experienced an unprecedented level of growth. In 1990, the population of League City was just 18,996 residents; however, by 2010, the population had grown to 83,560 persons. Numerous new subdivisions and apartment units were constructed to accommodate the extensive boom in population. This occurred without sufficient public will to ensure that roadways, infrastructure and other services were fully adequate to meet the needs of the

growing populace or that development was occurring in a manner that would meet the community's long term needs. The result was a growing level of frustration by area residents and resentment about the lack of policy guidance by government leadership.

In 2008, the national economy collapsed and growth slowed substantially. The slowdown offered city leadership the opportunity to make much needed physical improvements and establish policies that would allow League City to move forward in a more strategic and responsible manner.

In May of 2011, City Council approved a new Comprehensive Plan for the City of League City. The Comprehensive Plan represented a substantial step forward in efforts to guide

daily decisions related to development. The Plan addressed many of the growth related issues of the community through an extensive series of policies that could be used by staff and the development community alike. It acknowledged an expected rate of growth and offered guidance on the manner in which that growth should occur.

The Comprehensive Plan did not attempt to establish larger scale policy direction to elected officials. For example, while the Comprehensive Plan anticipated a growth rate, it never attempted to determine whether that growth rate was the most desirable to elected officials or if the city should even grow at all while it was attempting to build sufficient infrastructure to catch up with prior development. If so, how much? Should the City

allow more apartment complexes or promote density in any areas of the community? Should Council follow the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan in regards to where growth should occur and what types of growth are preferable? More, assuming that the city should grow, what role should the city play? Should it implement specific measures to manage growth? Should it offer incentives to reward or attract desirable growth?

In an effort to address these larger issues City Council sought the assistance of local residents. It established the Growth and Development Advisory Committee (GDAC) as a nine-member body including one individual nominated by each City Council member and two individuals nominated by Mayor Paulissen.

Members of the Growth and Development Advisory Committee as nominated by City Council included:

- Bonnie Benkula (Vice Chair)
- Chuck DiFalco
- Eric Froeschner (Chair)
- David Hake
- Shane Hamilton
- Mike Hembree
- Penny Ignacio
- Yvette Jones
- Laura Teatsworth

The Mission and Scope

At the June 26, 2012 meeting, City Council agreed that the mission of the GDAC should be to provide policy recommendations to ensure that growth in League City occurs in a manner that allows the city to:

- Provide adequate infrastructure and services to all residences and businesses;
- Promote a reasonable and balanced tax burden;
- Ensure the safety of residents;
- Conserve water to the greatest extent practical; and,
- Respect the character and values that define this community.

City Council further determined that policy recommendations made by the GDAC should address the city's approach to:

- Growth in general, including the pace, type and location with full understanding of the impacts of restricted as well as unrestricted growth;
- Possible use of one or more growth management techniques such as adoption of an adequate public facilities ordinance, conservation development requirements, downzoning, limitation on permits, or increased exactions; and,
- Use of development financing tools such as municipal utility districts, tax increment reinvestment zones,

public improvement districts, and 380 development agreements to strategically promote specific types of growth.

Downzoning. The process by which an area of land is rezoned to a usage that is less dense and less "developed" than its previous usage. This is typically done in order to limit sprawl and overgrowth of cities, to help concentrate areas of development into smaller sections, and to keep from over-zoning a community.

Meetings & Topics of Discussion

The Growth and Development Advisory Committee took a very methodical approach to achieving the objectives set out for them by City Council by addressing each of the items in the scope individually and then collectively to ensure that they seamlessly met the group's mission.

In total, the GDAC met eleven times between October 2012 and April 2013 as follows:

- October 10, 2012 – The GDAC nominated Eric Froeschner to serve as Chair and Bonnie Benkula to serve as Vice Chair. The committee and staff discussed League City's development history and the group provided some initial thoughts and issues that they

would like to address during the process. The committee agreed upon a process that would address each of the scope tasks individually, beginning by tackling the question of whether the community should grow and, if so, at what rate.

- November 7, 2012 – The committee discussed growth rate in earnest and determined that the city should continue to grow, but in a manner that is manageable and respective of the community’s capacities. The concept of establishing a numerical growth rate by committee was dismissed because it lacked any association with the market. Instead, it was determined that the most appropriate course of action was to tie growth to adequacy of infrastructure and the ability to provide an acceptable level of service for water, wastewater, transportation and other services.
- December 5, 2012 – Based upon discussion from the prior meeting, staff proposed initial language for a policy related to growth rate and offered modifications. The committee also debated the type of growth desirable for League City. Discussion included a desire to move away from “cookie cutter” typical development and toward development patterns that would be more beneficial to the city. Committee members voiced the need to address impact fees during discussion of

Level of Service. A measure used to determine the effectiveness of different types of infrastructure. LOS is most commonly associated with transportation elements, but can also be used to determine an acceptable level of service for water service, wastewater service or other services or infrastructure. Level of service for infrastructure, for example, is rated from an “A” which represents near free-flow of traffic to an “F” in which traffic movement is severely impeded.

financing growth, endorsed the need to create “places”, bolstering the city’s willingness to say “no” to projects that are not in the best interest of the city, and the need to amend development codes to better meet the city’s vision.

- January 9, 2013 – The Committee engaged in an overall discussion about crafting policies that would be aggressive, specific and realistic to guide the type of growth for the future. The discussion included the need for a clear vision for the City and it was determined that the Comprehensive Plan is one tool that should be actively used to ensure that the vision becomes reality. The committee also discussed the city’s role in encouraging or discouraging growth in certain areas. It was agreed that the

city should play a role in the location of growth; however, the extent to which the city should aggressively encourage and discourage growth was a topic of lengthy discussion.

- January 23, 2013 – The committee discussed different roles the City could play in promoting desired development. Initially, committee members felt that all the roles provided to them were acceptable under limited conditions ranging from constructing infrastructure and roadways to property acquisition and development. However, after extensive discussion it was decided that, at this time, the city was not in a position to purchase/lease land or construct “spec” buildings. Instead, city leadership and staff should focus on providing amenities and infrastructure and revising regulations.
- February 6, 2013 – The committee discussed different methods to finance growth and showed strong interest and support for impact fees. Financing methods with “end terms” were considered more favorable. On the other hand, giving “upfront” money through grants or loans was not considered in the best interest of the community because it placed city funds at risk, given that a project was not underway or complete.
- February 27, 2013 – The committee

discussed cost of service and funding of future growth. David Hawes gave an overview of the Westwood Management District as an example of how districts can be used to fund development. The committee discussed the different types of districts and agreed that the City should look at whether a development brings value to the City before providing any incentives.

- March 6, 2013 – The committee continued their discussion of cost of service and funding of future growth. The committee agreed that before incentives/funding assistance should be considered, the proposed development should be evaluated against the growth policies and the benefit to the community should be shown.

Cost of Service. The cost to provide municipal services to the average single family home, multifamily residential unit or commercial establishment. For purposes of this report, cost of service does not include items for which an impact fee is assessed, including provision of water, wastewater and parks. Transportation costs are also not included in the cost of service. Eligible costs include law enforcement, fire protection, administration, library services, and operations and maintenance, among other items.

- March 20, 2013 – The committee reviewed and discussed the financial incentives policy. Some committee members reiterated that they were not in favor of providing upfront money, including proposals to offer revolving funds or micro loans. The committee scored the Westwood Management District and agreed that when the subdivision is evaluated as it currently exists, it scores negatively. However, creation of a municipal management district with a Development Agreement that aligns the project closer with the policies could make the project acceptable.
- April 10, 2013 – The committee discussed different growth management tools and their potential use in League City. The committee agreed that growth management tools should be used, and emphasized the need for developers to cover the cost of capital improvements and cost of service. The Committee strongly favored the use of impact fees as a tool and would like Council to further evaluate all forms of impact fees.
- April 24, 2013 – The committee discussed different types of multi-family developments and agreed that they generally opposed the concept of additional “garden style” apartments. However, the committee also agreed that multifamily development associated

Impact Fee. A fee that can be imposed by the City of League City on a new or proposed development project to pay for all or a portion of the costs of providing public services to the new development. Current impact fees imposed by League City include “capital recovery fees” for water and wastewater, as well as a parks dedication fee that is imposed for parks acquisition and development.

with an urban lifestyle development such as those found in Nassau Bay, Pearland and Sugar Land would be desirable. The committee reviewed and finalized all of the growth and development policies. They discussed at length the financial incentives policy and whether to allow up-front money or loans as an incentive. Originally the financial incentives policy stated that incentives would not include any up-front money or loans. However some committee members were not in favor of this, as it may be an appropriate incentive under certain circumstances. It was decided to change the wording of the policy to “discourage up front money and loans”.

Recommended Policies:

1. Development and redevelopment in League City should occur at a rate that

is consistent with the City's ability to provide adequate infrastructure and services particularly, water, wastewater and transportation services.

- 1.1 Utilize this policy to promote growth that occurs in a responsible fashion.
 - 1.2 Permit a development to grow beyond the capacity that is currently available, but only as long as the developer can pay for the cost of extending services or provide the services themselves AND only if services/facilities provided by the developer are in the best interest of the City and meet City specifications.
 - 1.3 Measure availability of adequate infrastructure and services by Levels of Service for Water, Wastewater, Transportation, Fire, Police, EMS etc.
 - 1.4 Coordinate with outside agencies (i.e. school district, utility companies, post office) to allow them to adequately prepare for future facilities and services.
2. Growth and development patterns in League City should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and specifically encourage:
- 2.1 Highly walkable commercial

and "urban" centers in strategic locations such as the Entertainment District and Riverbend.

- 2.2 Urban lifestyle multi family.
 - 2.3 Suburban and rural clusters, villages and neighborhoods, particularly west of the Gulf Freeway.
 - 2.4 Prominent, well connected streets, trails and open spaces.
 - 2.5 Recreational Lifestyle components such as trails (including golf cart paths and bike trails), parks, water amenities, entertainment opportunities, events and activities that are deeply integrated into all aspects of the community.
 - 2.6 Attractive and highly marketable corridors and centers, including gateway improvements, wayfinding signage, streetscape improvements, and improvements/redevelopment of existing strip retail commercial sites/structures.
 - 2.7 Consideration of impacts of a project on the quality of life both within a development and upon the surrounding community.
3. While discouraging:
- 3.1 Traditional "auto-dominant" development patterns such

as strip commercial retail and residential subdivisions, except where appropriate for completion of an existing project.

- 3.2 Development in sensitive areas such as floodplains and wetlands.
4. The City should actively pursue projects that are consistent with the vision set forth in the City's Comprehensive Plan through the following actions:

Wayfinding System. A comprehensive program of signage, monumentation and gateways intended to promote a better visitor experience and improve traffic patterns by providing an introduction to the community or a particular district, essential information that visitors and residents need to find the important destinations and navigate the community.

Streetscape Improvements. Items within a right-of-way that are necessary or complementary that improve the experience of all users, including guests, shoppers, business owners, and residents. Streetscape improvements include vehicular and pedestrian oriented improvements and could include street, sidewalks, trails, signage, lighting, landscaping, bike racks, seating, parking, public art, and a variety of other features.

- 4.1 Encourage desired types of development by revising the development regulations to reflect the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan and community input.
- 4.2 Construct amenities that make a specific location more desirable/valuable to development
- 4.3 Construct roadways and infrastructure
- 4.4 Construct park improvements
- 4.5 Construct parking areas (lots or structures)
5. Financial incentives may be considered for development if:
 - 5.1 The project brings added value to the City
 - 5.1.1 Meets growth and development related policies
 - 5.1.2 Brings documented value to the City
 - 5.1.3 “Recharges” investment into and improves upon existing development
 - 5.2 The timing of development is right
 - 5.2.1 Utilities and public facilities are adequate and available
 - 5.2.2 Adjacent to existing development

- 5.3 Discourage “up front” money or loans
- 5.4 Each project would be judged on its own merits, based on the scoring of the project in accordance with the growth and development policies.
- 5.5 It includes a well-defined time limit/expiration
- 5.6 Includes a development agreement or other means of ensuring desired characteristics (pattern, timing, etc)
6. To the greatest extent practical, impact fees should be used to cover the costs of services and infrastructure associated with new development.
7. Growth management tools should be employed as needed to meet policies related to the rate, location and type of growth, including:
 - 7.1 Downzoning;
 - 7.2 Adequate public facilities ordinance;
 - 7.3 Conservation development; and,
 - 7.4 Limitations on permits.

Next Steps for Council & Staff:

1. Adopt recommended policies
2. Establish and annually update a fully

- functional Cost of Service model
3. Pursue the possibility of extending impact fees to also include transportation/traffic and stormwater management improvements
4. Review park dedication fees to ensure that they are appropriate and fully adequate
5. Propose an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance for Council consideration that:
 - a. Includes Levels of Services thresholds for a variety of services ranging from water, wastewater and roadways to libraries, parks, law enforcement and fire protection
 - b. Is strongly associated with a capital improvements program and the Comprehensive Plan
6. Develop a scoresheet for use by developers, staff, elected officials and the general public when evaluating the decision to offer financial incentives for all projects.
7. Incorporate the scoresheet into the economic development incentives policy
8. Implement a mid-term update of the Comprehensive Plan to reflect and incorporate the growth management policies.
9. Update development codes, including the zoning and subdivision ordinances, to correspond to the Comprehensive Plan and the growth management policies

10. Update the zoning map to downzone undeveloped properties where appropriate to correspond to the Comprehensive Plan
11. Market League City to developers that have a history of developing projects that match the vision established for future League City.
12. Inform developers and investors of proposed changes.

Scoresheet

Type of Project: List the type of project here, including any relevant information that will help put an overall score into context (For example, is the project an existing development or new activity? Are there unique conditions to consider? Etc.)	To what extent is the project consistent with the following policies					
	Not at all	Little extent	Unable to Determine	Moderate extent	Large extent	Not Applicable
	1	2	0	4	5	--
Development and redevelopment in League City should occur at a rate that is consistent with the City's ability to provide adequate infrastructure and services particularly, water, wastewater and transportation services.						
Utilize this policy to promote growth that occurs in a responsible fashion						
Permit a development to grow beyond the capacity that is currently available, but only as long as the developer can pay for the cost of extending services or provide the services themselves AND only if services/facilities provided by the developer are in the best interest of the City and meet City specifications.						
Measure availability of adequate infrastructure and services by Levels of Service for Water, Wastewater, Transportation, Fire, Police, EMS etc.						
Coordinate with outside agencies (i.e. school district, utility companies, post office) to allow them to adequately prepare for future facilities and services.						
Growth and development patterns in League City should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and specifically encourage:						
Highly walkable commercial and "urban" centers in strategic locations such as the Entertainment District and Riverbend (if a part of a project)						
Urban lifestyle multi family (only applicable if the project includes multi family. This policy should not be considered promotion of multi family development)						
Suburban and rural clusters, villages and neighborhoods, particularly west of the Gulf Freeway.						
Prominent, well connected streets, trails and open spaces.						
Recreational Lifestyle components such as trails (including golf cart paths and bike trails), parks, water amenities, entertainment opportunities, events and activities that are deeply integrated into all aspects of the community.						
Attractive and highly marketable corridors and centers, including gateway improvements, wayfinding signage, streetscape improvements, and improvements/redevelopment of existing strip retail commercial sites/structures.						
Consideration of impacts of a project on the quality of life both within a development and upon the surrounding community.						
While discouraging:						
Traditional "auto-dominant" development patterns such as strip commercial retail and residential subdivisions, except where appropriate for completion of an existing project.						
Development in sensitive areas such as floodplains and wetlands.						
The City should actively pursue projects that are consistent with the vision set forth in the City's Comprehensive Plan through the following actions:						
Encourage desired types of development by revising the development regulations to reflect the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan and community input.						
Construct amenities that make a specific location more desirable/valuable to development						
Construct roadways and infrastructure						
Construct park improvements						
Construct parking areas (lots or structures)						
Financial incentives may be considered for development if:						
The project brings added value to the City						
Meets growth and development related policies						
Brings documented value to the City						
"Recharges" investment into and improves upon existing development						

Type of Project: List the type of project here, including any relevant information that will help put an overall score into context (For example, is the project an existing development or new activity? Are there unique conditions to consider? Etc.)	To what extent is the project consistent with the following policies					
	Not at all	Little extent	Unable to Determine	Moderate extent	Large extent	Not Applicable
	1	2	0	4	5	--
The timing of development is right						
Utilities and public facilities are adequate and available						
Adjacent to existing development						
Discourage "up front" money or loans						
Each project would be judged on its own merits, based on the scoring of the project in accordance with the growth and development policies						
It includes a well-defined time limit/expiration						
Includes a development agreement or other means of ensuring desired characteristics (pattern, timing, etc)						
To the greatest extent practical, impact fees should be used to cover the costs of services and infrastructure associated with new development.						
Growth management tools should be employed as needed to meet policies related to the rate, location and type of growth, including:						
Downzoning						
Adequate public facilities ordinance						
Conservation development; and						
Limitations on permits.						
Score						
Total Score						