

FINAL



Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update

July 2007

Covington, Louisiana



VILLAVASO & ASSOCIATES, LLC

Acknowledgements

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I. Introduction

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Introduction

A rich heritage and friendly atmosphere have been the primary draw of Covington in the past. Despite its location in the State's fastest growing Parish, Covington has maintained its unique neighborhoods and quaint downtown. However, growth pressures are being felt in the city. As a result, the City of Covington requested that Villavaso & Associates produce an update for Covington's comprehensive land use plan. For this update, the process was designed to encourage citizens to take a more active role in the planning process for their neighborhoods and the city as a whole. This was done with the belief that involving residents as major stakeholders and contributors to the process would result in a more practical and relevant plan, dealing with specific neighborhood and citywide issues. This updated Covington Comprehensive Plan Initiative is a strategic framework for future development decisions that will attract new investment, maximize resources, and balance the growth, economic development and quality of life issues facing this community into the future.

Covington's initial Comprehensive Planning Initiative was completed in 1998 by GCR & Associates, Inc. This comprehensive planning effort focused heavily on land use, community growth and infrastructure expansion. GCR & Associates applied statistical and locational models in the planning process to predict future growth and development, as well as traffic impacts resulting in this predicted development. However, these models did not anticipate the population growth and the shift in the community's needs, nor did it anticipate the regional impacts of the natural disaster sustained by the New Orleans Metro area after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Regardless, key recommendations for the City of Covington included in this plan are listed below. It should be noted that these recommendations were considered and incorporated into this current planning process.

- Village Center Concept
The creation of village centers throughout the community, similar in land use to downtown Covington. These village centers would allow for a variety of uses including commercial, office, and higher density residential.
- New Traffic Corridors
A new road proposed between 21st Avenue and Columbia Street to provide additional access to public buildings and reduce traffic at key congestion points
- Industrial/Business Park Corridor
Adjust land use, transportation, and zoning systems to allow for the development of business parks and industrial areas along the proposed U.S. Highway 190 bypass

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- Green Space and Bike/Pedestrian Trails
Provide alternatives to automobile traffic through the creation of bike/pedestrian paths connecting commercial areas, as well as existing and new parks
- Pedestrian Crossing of the Tchefuncte River
Build a pedestrian crossing over the Tchefuncte River to provide access for bikers and pedestrians
- Infrastructure expansion and update
- New Schools
- City Limits Expansion
This study extends the city limits of Covington to the following:
 - Northern Boundary: Up to and including Section 45
 - Southern Boundary: To the Abita River and Interstate-12
 - Eastern Boundary: Along the Bogue Falaya River to the Claiborne Hill area. Then paralleling U.S. Highway 190 to the Abita River
 - Western Boundary: To the limits of Sections 1, 45, and 37.

The City of Covington is a dynamic and growing place with a rich history and a future filled with potential for growth and expansion. Covington has experienced a steady increase in its population that far exceeds averages for the metropolitan region and the State. Since 1970, the average population increase has been approximately 6.3% every decade. According to population calculations performed by the U.S. Census Bureau, Covington's population was at 8,340 in 2000 and was estimated to be at 9,347 in July of 2005, a 10.8% increase within a five-year time period. Covington is a city that has evolved from its early days as a lumber and agricultural depot into a destination for recreation, business, and cultural tourism. With the growth in population and commerce, there is also a growing recognition in the need to plan for and conserve the natural, built, and historic environments that make Covington unique.

In June of 2005, the City of Covington requested Villavaso & Associates to produce an update for Covington's comprehensive land use plan. Villavaso & Associates applied a communicative planning model that involved an intense citizen participation method. Citizens were given the opportunity to participate throughout this process. As a result, all citizens were given multiple opportunities to convey their needs and visions of Covington, and planners were able to better understand the way in which the community should be directed. This method consists of four levels of participation: a Steering Committee, 1-on-1 Meetings, Neighborhood Meetings, and Issue Meetings. In addition to the information gathered during the four-tiered citizen participation method, all available demographic and socio-economic data were considered during this process.

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The following bullet points are key area trends and planning factors that were identified and considered during the updated comprehensive planning process:

- Substantial post-Katrina data for all of Louisiana remains unavailable. All data included in this report come from the 2000 Census Report or earlier reports issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. Reliable sources maintain that this data is still applicable, as there is no evidence to indicate that the demographic and socio-economic compositions have experienced a significant shift.
- Covington has continued to gain in population in recent decades, growing at a slower rate than St. Tammany Parish, as a whole, but at a faster rate than the statewide rates for Louisiana.
- The averages for both household size and family size have decreased in Covington since 1990. This rate is comparable to those of St. Tammany Parish and Louisiana.
- Covington's median household income of \$36,949 is lower than the reported median income of \$47,883 in St. Tammany Parish. The number of individuals below the poverty level in Covington was reduced by 27.4% between 1990 and 2000, which brings the population percentage from 21.5% to 15.6%.
- There is a \$13,382 difference between Covington's median household income and median family income, compared to the \$7,463 difference in St. Tammany Parish.
- The median age within Covington is higher at 38 years than St. Tammany Parish at 36 years and Louisiana at 34 years.
- Covington residents make up 4.4% of the population in St. Tammany Parish.
- The 2000 median housing value for Covington, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, was higher at \$117,500 than St. Tammany Parish at \$116,000 and Louisiana at \$77,500.
- Water is a prominent characteristic of the area, as a defining quality, a historical tie, and a source of recreation.
- The area economy is strong and has potential for growth.

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- Healthcare and Parish Government dominate the business establishments in Covington.
- The 2000 residential vacancy rate for Covington was at 8.3%, which was similar to St. Tammany Parish at 8.2% but lower than Louisiana at 10.4%.
- U.S. Census data suggest a strong family-oriented community with 68% of the residences having family households, of which 33.8% had children under the age of 18 living with them.
- Covington has established a growth boundary, which must be factored in to all growth, development, and infrastructure decisions.

The recommendations of this plan incorporate the goals identified in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative, conform to the vision of Covington, and address the issues identified by the citizens of Covington during the communicative process. They provide a framework for the re-establishment of physical and social connections within Covington and between the City and the surrounding areas. They identify means to increase and attract investment, as well as to guide current and additional development.

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Methodology

The methodology for the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative relied heavily on statistical predictive models. The methodology for this update is slightly different in that it incorporates additional data sources and anecdotal information into a citizen participation-based approach to planning. The ultimate goal of this process was to gain insight into current conditions and to build consensus between stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder participation was achieved through several means: an appointed Steering Committee, 1-on-1 meetings, neighborhood meetings, and citywide issue meetings. In particular, input from the residents who live, work, and play in Covington was invaluable and contributed greatly to the recommendations included in this plan intended to guide the future development of Covington.

This planning process was divided into *five-phases*, with three levels of participation¹:

- Phase 1: Research and Data Analysis Phase*
 - 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative
 - Census data
 - Geographic data
 - Land use analysis
 - One-on-One meetings
 - Steering Committee meetings
 - Visioning

- Phase 2: Citizen Participation Phase*
 - Neighborhood meetings
 - One-on-One meetings
 - Steering Committee meetings
 - Visioning

- Phase 3: Drill Down Phase*
 - Issue meetings
 - One-on-One meetings
 - Steering Committee meetings
 - Data analysis

¹ The Calendar, available in Appendix I, lists the dates of all meetings throughout the planning process.

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Phase 4: Planning Phase

- Steering Committee meeting
- Update 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative
- Development of Land Use Plan

Phase 5: Adoption Phase

- Work Session
- Public Presentation
- Public Hearing
- Planning and Zoning Commission Adoption
- City Council Adoption

The preparation of this comprehensive plan update required extensive background research to develop an extensive understanding of the neighborhood dynamics, the growth areas, and the surrounding contexts and limitations.

1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative Analysis

First, the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative document was carefully examined. Connections were then established from the 1998 document to Covington's physical environment.

Inventory of Social and Physical Elements

Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Covington, and field surveys were utilized as tools for gathering and analyzing all data during this update process.

GIS mapping tools were used to analyze current land use and zoning practices of Covington. In addition to land use and zoning, these tools were used to geographically illustrate Covington's socio-economic data and future land use recommendations.

Data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and analyzed in order to fully understand the community's population and income distributions, its employment industry, and its housing characteristics.

Public and Political Input

One-on-one meetings were scheduled with the Steering Committee members, city officials and employees, and community stakeholders to begin the visioning process.

This data was used to facilitate discussion at each of the neighborhood meetings, and all data compiled during the 1-on-1 meetings, the neighborhood meetings, and the issue meetings was reported back to the Steering Committee for

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validation and discussion during regularly scheduled meetings. These meetings were open to the public, and planners and city leaders encouraged citizen attendance.

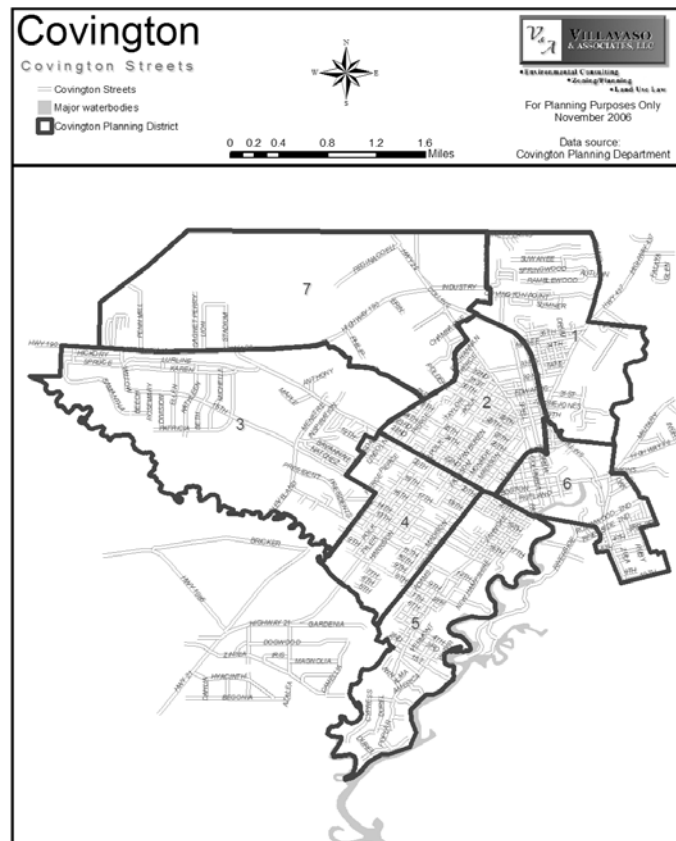
Six neighborhood meetings were scheduled for the six planning zones established by the Steering Committee members. During their neighborhood meeting, residents were given the opportunity to discuss in an open forum setting issues with their neighborhood and the City of Covington as a whole. These neighborhood meetings fulfilled an important role in the visioning process of this update.

Finally, three issue meetings were scheduled for residents of all neighborhoods to come together. Information collected during Phases 1 and 2 were presented, and the citizens were asked to participate in a series of drill down exercises. These exercises were intended to establish a better understanding of the issues uncovered during the six neighborhood meetings and to identify possible solutions for these issues.

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Community Profile

Located in western St. Tammany Parish, Covington is a self-contained community with a rich cultural history and thriving arts community. Located approximately 40 miles north of New Orleans on the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain, the city has a total area of 6.9 square miles and is surrounded by three rivers, the Tchefuncte, the Little Tchefuncte, and the Bogue Falaya. While having a distinct identity of its own, Covington is the seat of St. Tammany Parish government and is connected to nearby communities through recreational amenities such as the Tammany Trace.

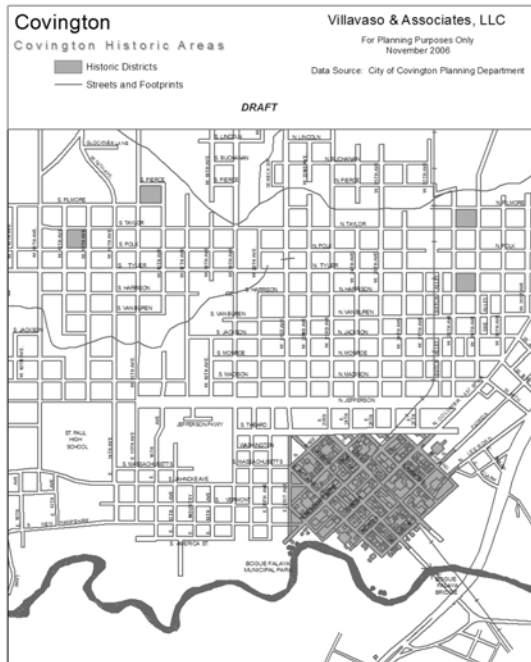


John Wharton Collins, a New Orleans merchant originally from New York, founded the City of Covington in 1813 as the Town of Wharton. However, the earliest known settlement by Europeans was in the late 1700s, drawn here by the abundant resources and access to major waterways. Upon his arrival, Wharton laid the town out in its unique pattern of squares within squares (ox lots), which were accessed by alleyways. It is this unique design and preservation of the

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historic center that earned Covington placement on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. The city was formally incorporated in 1816 and officially renamed Covington after the War of 1812 hero General Leonard Covington. However, other local historians suggest that the city may have been named in honor of the Blue Grass whiskey enjoyed by town officials that was made in Covington, Kentucky.

Covington was designated the parish seat in 1829, and has remained a center of commerce, industry, and government ever since. At that time the courthouse was built in what is now called Claiborne Hill, on the eastern side of the Bogue Falaya River. Some years later, it was moved to the western side of the River on Boston Street. Significant growth experienced in the Parish, as well as the region, required a new location for a larger courthouse, which now occupies an entire city block located on Jefferson Avenue, just outside of the St. John division boundary.



Covington's urban form began at the Columbia Street Landing on the Bogue Falaya River with a traditional downtown that continues to serve as the community's center of commerce. Surviving two fires, Covington's downtown resembles the system of streets, squares, and alleys practiced by the French and is composed of vernacular architecture that attracts visitors and defines Covington's distinct sense of place. Its 28 square blocks are made up of historic structures that date back to the 1880s.

Covington's first neighborhoods were established along the Bogue Falaya River and expanded outward along the west bank of the River. Early on, growth was slow and steady in Covington, with most development occurring near the downtown area. The first major construction period in the City occurred between 1970 and 1989, during which approximately 30% of Covington's homes were constructed. This building boom coincided with the opening and expansion of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, which boosted the fortunes of small Northshore communities by reducing drive time into New Orleans, thus bringing the North Shore into the New Orleans metropolitan area. It was during this boom time that

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the community experienced a large increase in its population, which continues to this day.

Early in its history, Covington's principle industries included lumber and related pine products, brick production and agriculture. Many of these products were extracted and produced to supply markets in New Orleans and surrounding communities. However, Covington is also known for its clean air and water. Tourism in the small town became popular at the turn of the century, as visitors traveled to the Northshore to bathe in the natural 'ozone' waters common to the area. Today's tourists travel across the lake and from throughout the region to partake in Covington's art scene, recreation opportunities, tree-filled parks, cultural events, and unique downtown attractions. Further, individuals and families continue to move to Covington for the high-quality natural and cultural environment.

Covington's reputation for being a family-oriented community attracts new residents every year. Residents enjoy quality public and private education options, multiple health care providers, and a variety of community activities that keep the downtown area lively even on weekends. Notable events include the annual Chef Soiree, Mardi Gras festivities, Final Fridays, the Three Rivers Art Festival, Columbia Street Landing, events, and gallery openings.

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Environmental Setting

The initial step in developing the comprehensive plan update was to analyze and document the various aspects of Covington's environmental resources and natural environment. As the environmental setting has not been significantly altered since the production of the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative, the following information only illustrates land use, zoning, wetland, and flood zone data. An extensive discussion of Covington's environment can be found in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative.

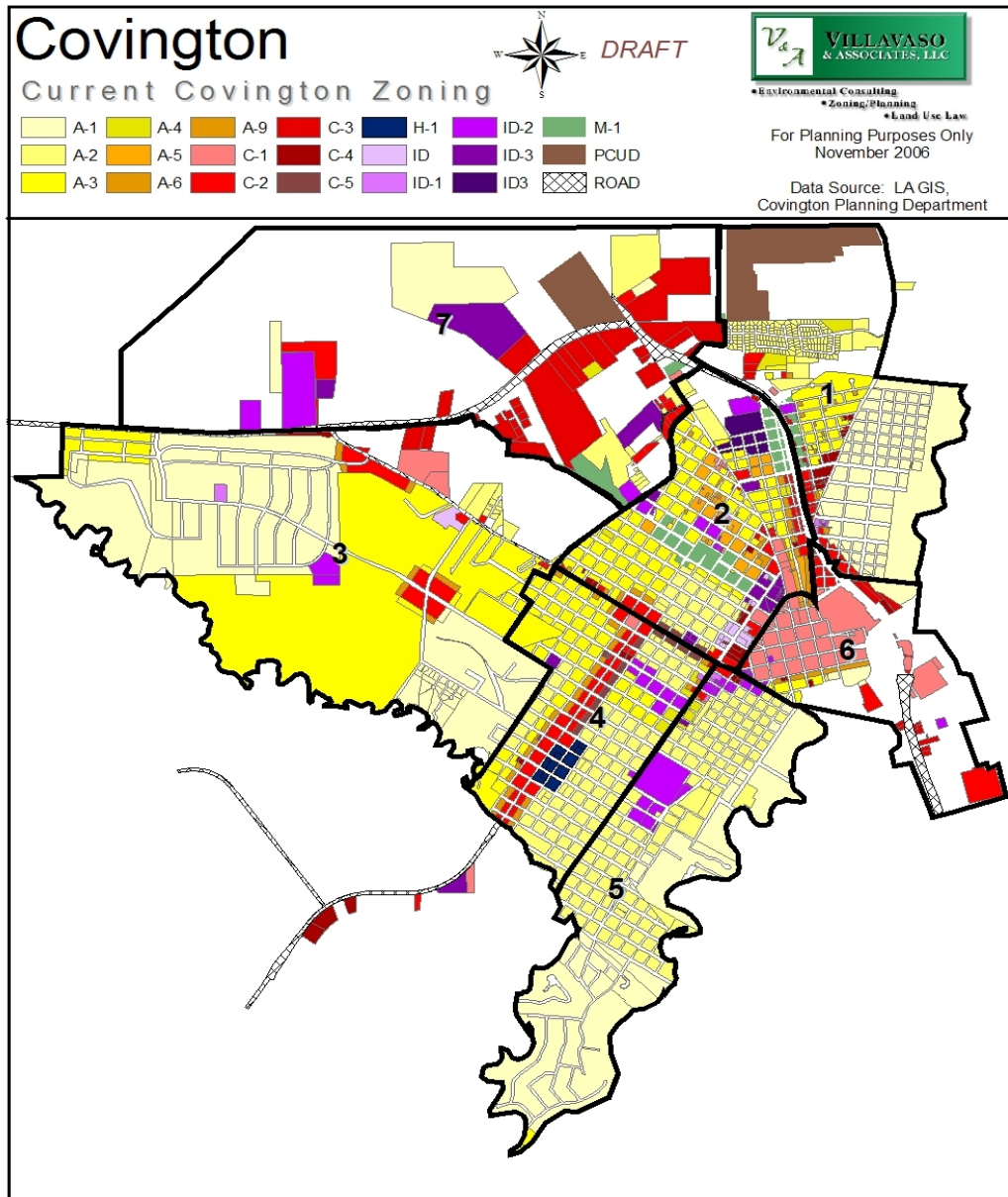
Land Use

In the table below, an analysis of Covington's land use indicates a significant percentage of the city consists of residential use, followed by commercial use. This is a typical distribution of land uses in most communities. Please refer to the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative for a detailed description of Covington's Existing Land Use.

Land Use	Acreage Percentage
Residential	70%
Commercial	16%
Institutional	6%
Industrial	1.5%
Hospital	0.3%
Other	6.2%

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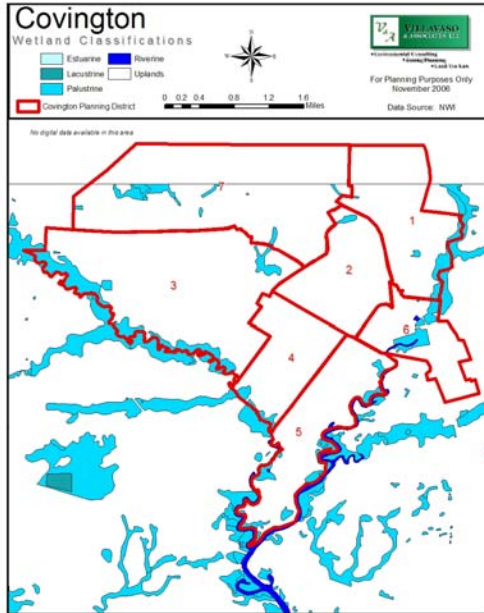
Existing Zoning



Covington’s zoning ordinance and map use eighteen different zoning classifications to implement land use and guide development. Upon adoption of the future land use plan, the City of Covington must update this zoning ordinance and map. It is recommended that the updated version collapse these eighteen classifications into a maximum of twelve distinct zoning classifications.

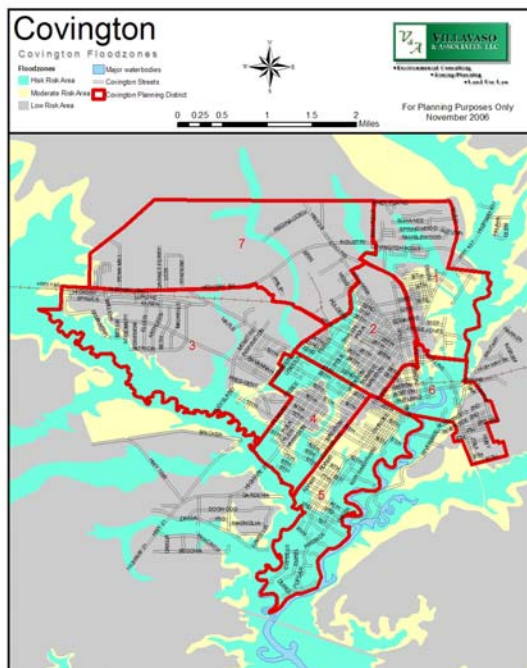
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Wetlands



Covington is the only city in St. Tammany Parish situated at the fork of two rivers. These rivers define the shape and identity of the city and provide both public and private recreational use of the Bogue Falaya River and Tchefuncte Rivers.

Flood Zones



The Bogue Falaya and Tchefuncte Rivers have created flood plains that surround the City on two of its three sides and extend inland, as shown in the map to the left. These areas bear the closest examination for future growth opportunities and concern.

Covington currently has ten residential Repetitive Flood Loss Properties within its flood plain. Developers must proceed with caution with development and build appropriately on this flood plain to prevent future repetitive loss.

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Socio-economic Analysis

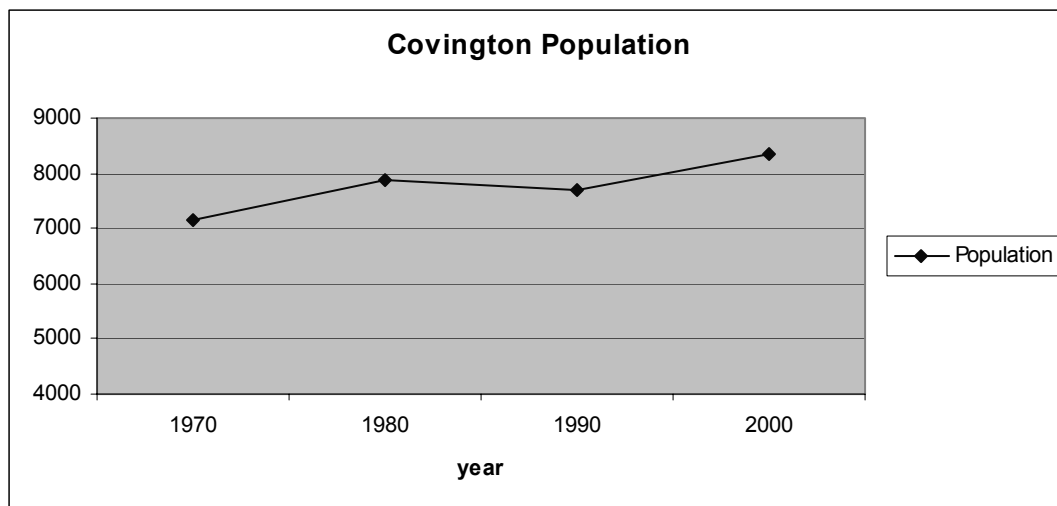
The City of Covington is steadily growing and diversifying in a number of ways. However, it remains safe to say that within both Covington and St. Tammany Parish, the population is predominantly Caucasian, likely to be middle income, and more likely to be a homeowner versus a renter. Further, residents are likely to be employed in management and/or administrative positions.

A note on available data

It should be noted that this Area Profile was prepared using 2000 census data. Release of Summary File 3 (SF3) by the U.S. Census Bureau provided information regarding age, economic data, families, housing, households, population, sex, and race. Area employment data used in the preparation of this profile comes from the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Census Bureau, and data obtained by Covington's Office of Economic Development.

Population

The population of Covington is one that is steadily increasing. From 1990 to 2000, Covington's population increased by 9.34%, from 7,691 to 8,483, a total gain of 792 residents. This population increase has been an ongoing trend. Since 1970, Covington has experienced an average population increase of 9%. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated in 2005 that Covington's population increased to 9,347. As population projections are based on past population growth patterns, Covington's population increase is expected to continue to increase by approximately 9% every decade.



Households

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U.S. Census 2000 Data Households by Type	1990	2000		
	Covington, LA	Covington, LA	Difference	% Change
Total:	7,691	8,483	792	9.34%
In households:	7,679	8,215	536	6.52%
In family households:		6,989		
Householder:	1996	2,213	217	9.81%
Spouse	1445	1,525	80	5.25%
Child:		2,638		
Natural-born or adopted	2613	2,485	-128	-5.15%
Step	107	153	46	30.07%
Grandchild	232	246	14	5.69%
Other relatives	241	104	-137	-131.73%
Nonrelatives	90	128	38	29.69%
In nonfamily households:		1,226		
Male householder:	361	384	23	
Living alone	304	308	4	1.30%
Not living alone	57	76	19	25.00%
Female householder:	594	661		
Living alone	446	587	141	24.02%
Not living alone	39	74	35	47.30%
Nonrelatives	109	181	72	39.78%
In group quarters:	12	268		
Institutionalized population	0	250	250	100.00%
Noninstitutionalized population	12	18	5	27.78%

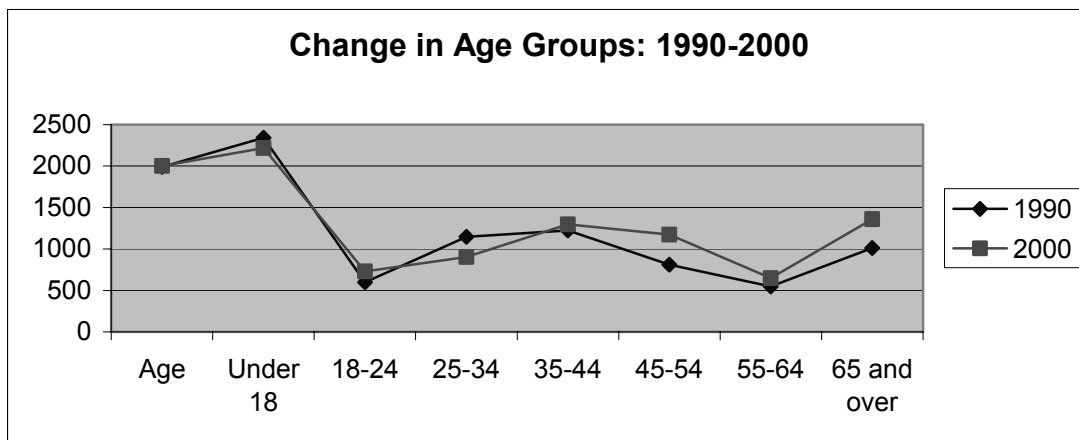
In line with population, households in Covington increased steadily from 1990 to 2000. Notable is the fact that the overall number of children in households decreased during this period. This may be attributed to an aging population, or to the expansion of single-family residential development outside of the incorporated city limits.

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Age

U.S. Census 2000 Data Population by Age	1990	2000
	Under 18	2343
18-24	599	732 (22% change)
25-34	1147	904 (-21% change)
35-44	1226	1299 (6% change)
45-54	812	1176 (45% change)
55-64	550	650 (18% change)
65 and over	1014	1361 (34%)

In terms of population, the two largest age categories are seniors and children under 18. Between 1990 and 2000, the senior population grew by 25.5%. All other age groups, with the exception of children under 18 and adults ages 25-34, increased in size. Notably, the number of children decreased by 5%, and the 25 to 34 age group decreased by nearly 27%. These changes are illustrated in the graph below.

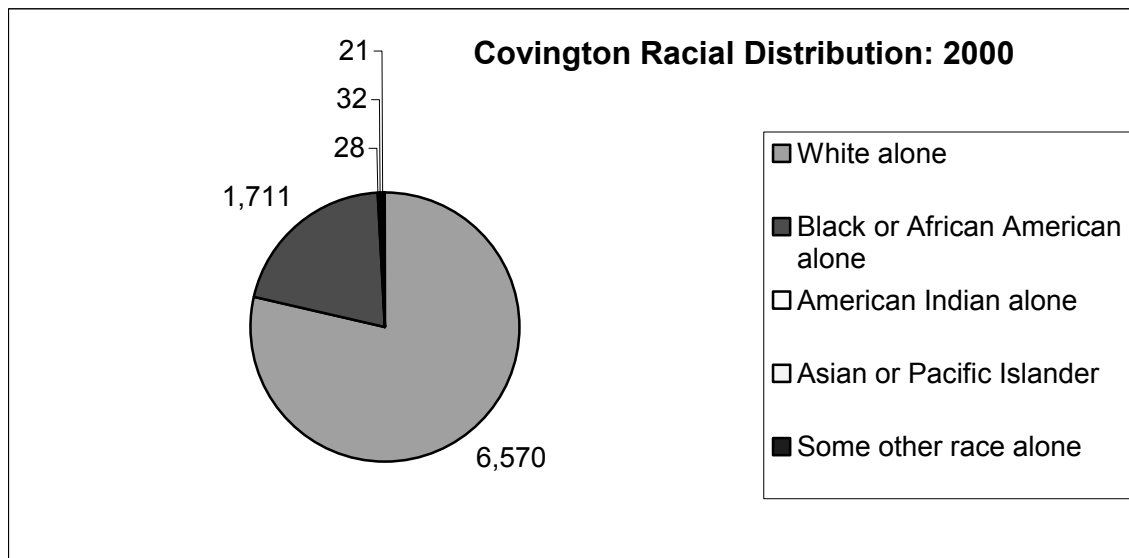


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Race

U.S. Census 2000 Data Population by Race	1990	2000		
	Covington, LA	Covington, LA	Difference	% Change
Total Population	7,691	8,483	792	9.34%
White alone	5,939	6,570	631	9.60%
Black or African American alone	1,683	1,711	28	1.64%
American Indian alone	25	28	3	10.71%
Asian or Pacific Islander	29	32	3	9.38%
Some other race alone	15	21	6	28.57%
Total number of households	2,896	3,258	362	11.11%
Average household size	3.25	2.52	-0.73	-28.97%

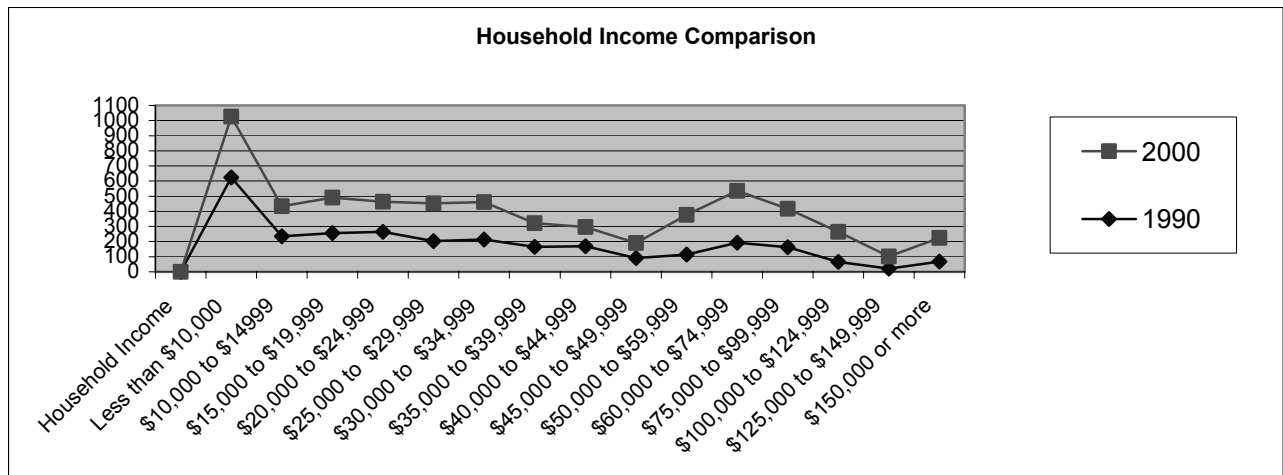
In terms of population, the two largest racial categories in Covington are White and African-American. Over the course of the past decade plus, the White population grew approximately nine percent, in line with overall population increase. On the other hand, from the period of 1990 to 2000, Covington's African-American population gained 631 persons, or 1.64%, a rate lower than the overall population increase. Other categories of race continue to grow slowly over this time period. The chart below illustrates the racial composition of Covington as reported in the 2000 U.S. Census.



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Income

U.S. Census 2000 Data Household Income				
	1990	2000		
	Covington	Covington	Difference	% Change
Less than \$10,000	623	402	-221	-54.97%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	234	200	-34	-17%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	255	236	-19	-8.05%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	264	199	-65	-32.66%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	204	249	45	18.07%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	214	248	34	13.71%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	164	157	-7	-4.46%
\$40,000 to \$44,999	169	127	-42	-33.07%
\$45,000 to \$49,999	90	101	11	10.89%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	114	263	149	56.65%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	193	343	150	43.73%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	163	253	90	35.57%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	65	199	134	67.34%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	22	79	57	72.15%
\$150,000 or more	68	157	89	56.69%



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U.S. Census 2000 Data Median Income	1990	2000	Difference	% Change
Median household income	\$25,970	\$36,949	\$10,979	29.71%
Family Income	\$31,862	\$50,332	\$18,470	36.70%
Individuals below the poverty level	1,655	1,299	-356	-27.41%

Income trends vary across income brackets in Covington for the period from 1990 to 2000. As noted above, the overall household population earning less than \$25,000 decreased over this decade. Similarly, those households earning between \$35,000 and \$45,000 also decreased over this time period. On the other hand, all other income brackets increased, with the largest gains coming at the high end of the spectrum. From 1990 to 2000, Covington's median household income increased almost 30 percent, from \$25,970 to \$36,949. This number is significantly higher than the State's median household income for 2000, which was reported at \$30,718.

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Employment

U.S. Census 1999 Employment by Industry	Louisiana	Covington
Managerial and professional specialty occupations:		
Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations	170420	442
Professional specialty occupations	230644	659
Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations:		
Technicians and related support occupations	59903	94
Sales occupations	202782	434
Administrative support occupations, including clerical	254084	426
Service occupations:		
Private household occupations	12460	24
Protective service occupations	34175	71
Service occupations, except protective and household	187187	349
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	40295	67
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations	205909	246
Operators, fabricators, and laborers:		
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	86756	72
Transportation and material moving occupations	90624	105
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	66375	73

In 2000, the population of Covington was 8,438; estimated 2005 population was 9,347. In 2000, Covington had 3,062 jobs, of which 67% were professional and/or administrative support, 15% were service, 16% were production and labor, and the remaining 2% identified themselves as farming/fishing.

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Covington Economic Development Data: Covington Employers

Employer	Type of Business	Estimated No. Of Employees
St Tammany School Board	Education	7,651
St Tammany Hospital	Acute Care	1,500
St Tammany Sheriff's Office	Protection & Safety	650
Gilsbar, Inc	Insurance	286
Blossman & Subsidiaries	Financial Services & Holding Co	239
Protocol	Telemarketing Services	170
Parish National Bank	Banking	160
Pontchartrain Foods	Fast Food Franchise	156
St Tammany Parish Clerk of Court	Recording Records	122

Data Source: City of Covington, 2006

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Housing

Covington has a very stable and expanding housing market. Owner-occupied residences are 67.8% in Covington. The last vacancy rate reported in Covington was 8% (compare to St. Tammany). Total housing units in Covington numbered 3,539, with 3,246 of these being occupied. Family households comprise 68% of all residences.

Housing affordability is decreasing in Covington as real estate values continue to increase, gas prices continue to rise, and the income shifts occurred mainly at higher levels. The following charts illustrate the Covington's housing stock in terms of vacancy rates, real estate value, rental prices, construction dates, and current permit data.

U.S. Census 2000 Data Occupancy Status	Louisiana	St. Tammany Parish	Covington
Total:	1,847,181	75,398	3,539
Occupied	1,656,053 (89.65%)	69,253 (91.85%)	3,246 (91.7%)
Vacant	191,128 (10.35%)	6,145 (8.15%)	293 (8.3%)

U.S. Census 2000 Data Vacancy by Housing Type	Louisiana	St. Tammany Parish	Covington
Total:	191,128	6,145	293
For rent	54,341 (28.43%)	1,467 (23.87%)	68 (23.21%)
For sale only	23,491 (12.29%)	1,339 (21.79%)	49 (16.72%)
Rented or sold, not occupied	23,121 (12.10%)	762 (12.4%)	16 (5.46%)
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	45,412 (23.76)	1,514 (24.64%)	35 (11.95%)
For migrant workers	636 (0.33%)	29 (0.47%)	0 (0%)
Other vacant	44,127 (23.09%)	1,034 (16.83%)	125 (42.66%)

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U.S. Census 2000 Data Real Estate Value	Louisiana	St. Tammany Parish	Covington
Total:	1,124,995	55,732	2,106
Less than \$10,000	44,660	799	23
\$10,000 to \$14,999	32,085	595	7
\$15,000 to \$19,999	28,132	685	0
\$20,000 to \$24,999	31,937	633	24
\$25,000 to \$29,999	33,798	645	33
\$30,000 to \$34,999	37,649	632	5
\$35,000 to \$39,999	37,636	734	27
\$40,000 to \$49,999	72,380	1,372	37
\$50,000 to \$59,999	83,689	1,784	44
\$60,000 to \$69,999	89,504	2,772	118
\$70,000 to \$79,999	94,210	4,171	142
\$80,000 to \$89,999	90,699	4,330	135
\$90,000 to \$99,999	74,768	3,969	218
\$100,000 to \$124,999	110,684	7,405	343
\$125,000 to \$149,999	84,661	6,452	275
\$150,000 to \$174,999	57,192	5,708	174
\$175,000 to \$199,999	32,749	3,551	130
\$200,000 to \$249,999	35,519	4,089	109
\$250,000 to \$299,999	20,902	2,341	91
\$300,000 to \$399,999	15,993	1,701	98
\$400,000 to \$499,999	6,286	572	36
\$500,000 to \$749,999	5,484	450	13
\$750,000 to \$999,999	2,023	229	18
\$1,000,000 or more	2,355	113	6

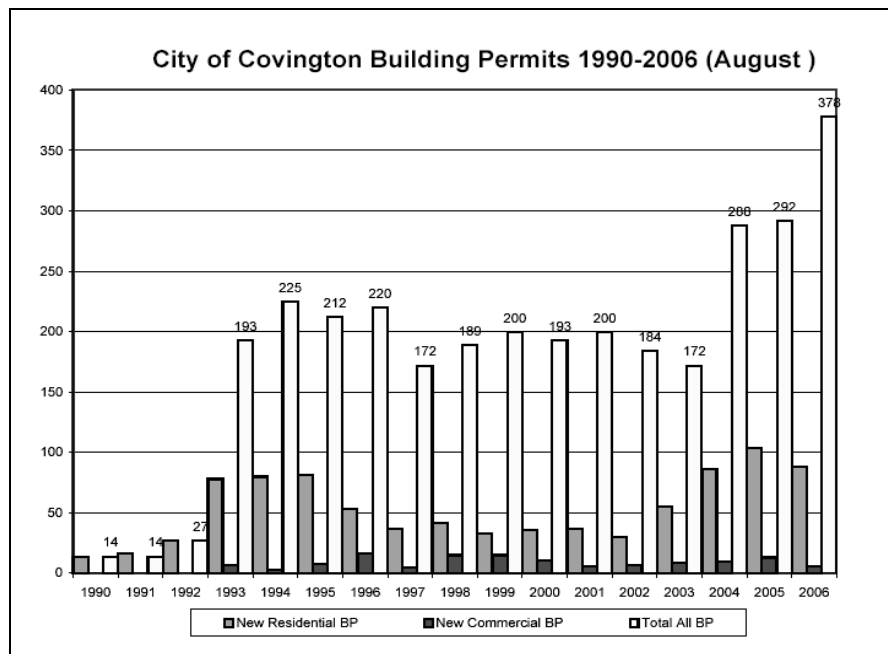
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U.S. Census 2000 Data Rental Distribution	Louisiana	St. Tammany Parish	Covington
Total:	525,722	13,369	1,140
With cash rent:	474,873	12,113	1,035
Less than \$100	27,391	168	13
\$100 to \$149	27,113	395	60
\$150 to \$199	27,963	302	93
\$200 to \$249	36,182	423	82
\$250 to \$299	48,575	645	42
\$300 to \$349	52,725	780	126
\$350 to \$399	59,585	1,018	62
\$400 to \$449	50,218	1,160	98
\$450 to \$499	41,066	1,364	99
\$500 to \$549	29,331	1,203	140
\$550 to \$599	19,931	1,047	38
\$600 to \$649	14,536	681	38
\$650 to \$699	9,619	631	21
\$700 to \$749	7,326	445	21
\$750 to \$799	5,172	415	17
\$800 to \$899	6,666	471	14
\$900 to \$999	3,117	231	43
\$1,000 to \$1,249	3,983	314	0
\$1,250 to \$1,499	1,476	90	7
\$1,500 to \$1,999	1,985	238	15
\$2,000 or more	913	92	6
No cash rent	50,849	1,256	105

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U.S. Census 2000 Data Residential Construction Dates	Louisiana	St. Tammany Parish	Covington
Total:	1,847,181	75,398	3,539
Built 1999 to March 2000	40,582	3,287	35
Built 1995 to 1998	123,982	11,173	289
Built 1990 to 1994	105,327	9,374	308
Built 1980 to 1989	339,849	20,835	609
Built 1970 to 1979	415,167	15,601	628
Built 1960 to 1969	300,717	7,401	440
Built 1950 to 1959	235,726	3,449	342
Built 1940 to 1949	129,565	1,357	260
Built 1939 or earlier	156,266	2,921	628

The majority of Covington’s housing stock was constructed after 1960, as shown in the chart above. The community experienced its most substantial increase in housing stock between 1970 and 1989, when its population an equivalent increase.



As shown in the table above, the City of Covington has undergone fluctuating cycles of residential and commercial building permits over the past 16 years. In the past four years, new single-family residential development in Covington has increased dramatically. On the other hand, building permits for commercial structures has remained static or declined over the same time period. Similar to

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Covington's paralleled population and housing stock increase between 1970 and 1989, Covington's population and housing stock continue to climb at an equivalent rate.

Several programs are in place to build affordable single-family homes in the City of Covington. The Hope Village, a Habitat for Humanity program designed to assist Hurricane Katrina victims, has already built 25 homes in west St. Tammany Parish (including Covington and Abita Springs) and is expected to start another 10 by the end of 2007².

Summary of 2000 Census Data

There were 3,258 households out of which 33.8% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 46.8% were married couples living together, 17.2% had a female householder with no husband present, and 32.1% were non-families. 27.5% of all households were made up of individuals and 9.9% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.52 and the average family size was 3.10.

In the city the population was spread out with 26.8% under the age of 18, 8.5% from 18 to 24, 26.1% from 25 to 44, 24.1% from 45 to 64, and 14.5% who were 65 years of age or older.

The median income for a household in the city was \$36,949, and the median income for a family was \$50,332. Males had a median income of \$36,434 versus \$23,859 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$21,438. About 11.8% of families and 16.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 23.5% of those under age 18 and 17.2% of those were age 65 or over.

The following information are important aspects of Covington's demographic profile that were considered during this update planning process:

- High median family income level
- Uneven income distribution
- Strong employment industry
- Lack of industry diversity
- High poverty rate on decline
- Declining youth population
- Increasing senior population
- Increase in property value
- Decrease in housing affordability

² City of Covington

II. Consensus

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consisted of sixteen Covington residents appointed by the Mayor. The Committee was made up strategically of both citizens and officials to ensure that all members of the diverse Covington community were suitably represented during this process. Regular meetings were held with the Steering Committee to discuss the method of each community meeting, to analyze the exercise results of each community meetings, and to participate in several exercises. These meeting dates are available in Appendix I.

The first exercise in which the Steering Committee participated consisted of three parts. First, the members of the Steering Committee were asked to develop a definition for a neighborhood in Covington. They were to determine if a neighborhood is different from a subdivision, and, if yes, in what way are they different. Next, they were asked to identify all of Covington's neighborhoods on a map of the city. After the members agreed upon the identified neighborhood, they were asked to strategically group these neighborhoods to form planning zones. These zones are not political boundaries. The establishment of these zones served as a planning tool to organize neighborhoods according to location, physical context, and to common socio-economic traits and needs. Many of the names designated to these neighborhoods were borrowed from a subdivision names. In this case, they refer to the general area and not the subdivision alone. This exercise was an important step in this consensus-based process, as it provided the framework for the neighborhood meetings.

In addition to these organizational exercises, the Steering Committee participated in a visioning exercise. During this exercise the visioning elements from the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative were compared to the visioning elements extracted from the 1-on-1 meetings and the neighborhood meetings to determine the relevance of the first. The Steering Committee and the planners agreed that the previous visioning elements remain relevant; however, the previous vision statement must be complimented by additional visioning elements resulting from a significant shift in the community due to regional change.

This Steering Committee remained to be an essential element in the planning process, as they assisted the planners throughout the four phases of this process. The committee members assisted in the development of the issue meeting citizen exercises. More importantly, they assisted in the interpretation and analysis of the issue meeting exercise results.

Being the most informed citizens of the planning process, the several committee members volunteered their time to serve as meeting facilitators in the final issue

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meeting, during which meeting participants composed a land use plan. The results of all exercises are available in Appendix II.

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Results of 1-on-1 Meetings

In each individual meeting, or “1-on-1 meeting”, planners met with city and community leaders, city employees, the Steering Committee members, community activists, interest groups, stakeholders, and individuals interested in sharing his or her interests and concerns in order to gain knowledge about the community and its needs. This level of participation was ongoing throughout the planning process.

These 1-on-1 meetings were intended to provide opportunity for the citizens of Covington to discuss specific needs, concerns, or opportunities in and around the region that impact the community. The concerns, interests, and opportunities collected during these meetings were used to provide planners with a better understanding of the community and the residents’ needs, to validate the visioning elements included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative, and to reveal any shifts in the community’s vision of Covington. The following questions were asked to all one-on-one meeting participants:

- What are your concerns for the future of Covington?
- What are your interests for the future of Covington?
- What is your vision of Covington?

During discussion of their community, Covington residents expressed concern for the future growth of the city. Specifically, there is great concern for the conflicting development that takes place between the Parish and within Covington’s city limits.

Several conversations focused on the issues of annexation, development, and infrastructure. There remains a great concern for the way in which development is occurring, as well as the way in which development strains the existing infrastructure, affects drainage throughout the city, and impacts the flow of traffic in and around the community. While a portion of those interviewed expressed interest in annexing land into the city limits, others stated an interest in maintaining the current legal boundaries.

These 1-on-1 meetings revealed a concern for the scale of new development in Covington. The human scale of Covington’s downtown and earlier neighborhoods is a characteristic that residents are interested in maintaining, though recent development trends practice larger scale, sprawling patterns. More specifically, residents expressed concern for the way in which these development

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practices will affect Covington's neighborhood character and sense of community.

Traffic has become an issue and concern for the residents of Covington. Limited access to Interstate 12, the locations of Covington's schools, strained infrastructure, and an unbalanced distribution of commercial development all contribute to this increase in vehicular congestion.

In their discussion of Covington, the citizens and leaders offered ways to address their concerns. The suggestion to increase the downtown density while maintaining the current height was recommended by the residents during the 1-on-1 meetings as a method to contain growth, prevent sprawl, and maintain Covington's sense of place. Another topic of discussion pertaining to growth in Covington was an interest to apply design controls, a sign ordinance, and landscaping

Interests or opportunities at the neighborhood level included public transit, the establishment of neighborhood businesses, and an increase in housing choices. Some of the citizens and leaders that participated in the 1-on-1 meetings expressed interest in addressing these opportunities through zoning methods.

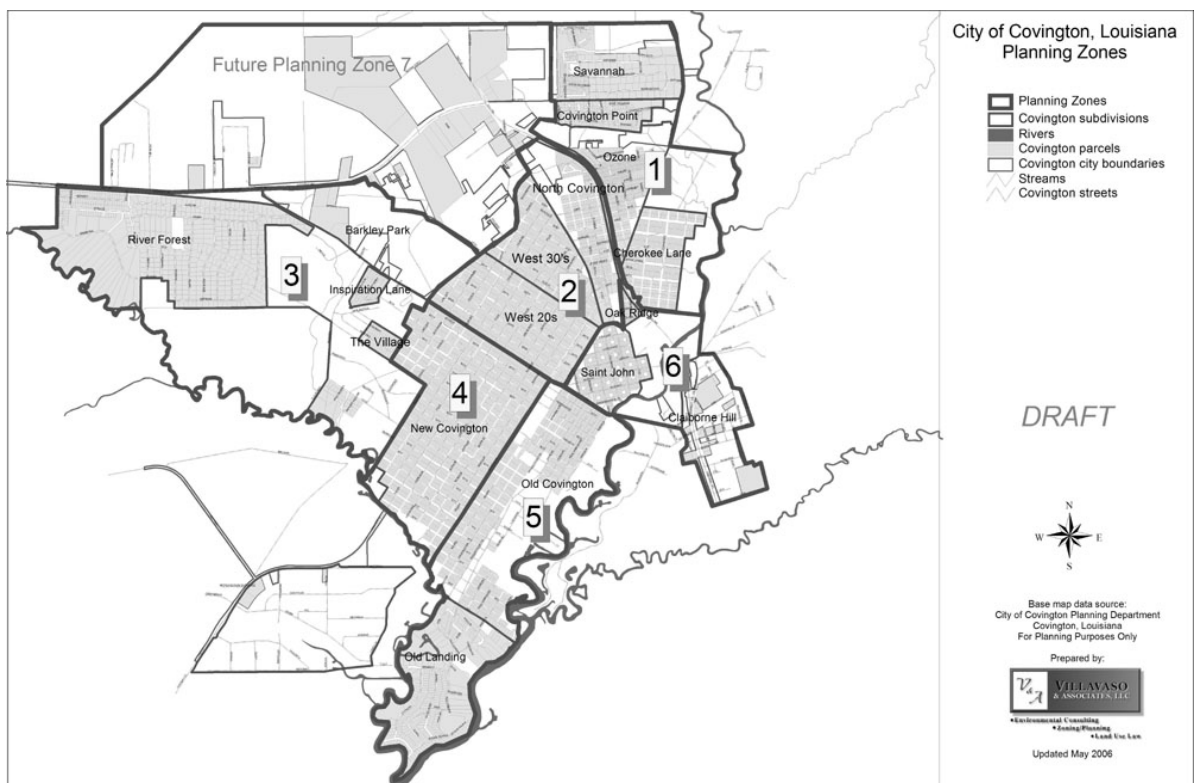
In addition to their interest in utilizing the zoning tool, Covington's leaders believe that applying other planning tools such as development agreements and impact fees may prove to be advantageous in the future growth of the community,

The concerns and interests heard during this 1-on-1 process revealed information pertinent to the planning process. Planners were able to use these concerns, interests, and opportunities to facilitate discussion during community meetings, to validate planning decisions and the application of various planning tools, and to make recommendations that will appropriately and advantageously guide the future development of Covington.

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Neighborhood Meetings

An important part of the visioning process for this update was the six neighborhood meetings. One neighborhood meeting was held in each of the six existing planning zones created during the Steering Committee's organizational exercise. Citizens were asked to attend the neighborhood meeting for their planning zone and encouraged to attend all of the neighborhood meetings. These meetings provided citizens with multiple opportunities to offer and discuss their concerns and interests for Covington. These interests and concerns express what the citizens do and do not want Covington to be in the future, which translates into their visions for the community.



In addition to discussing their neighborhoods, the citizens also were asked to complete a questionnaire requesting the primary and secondary issues in their neighborhoods, as well as their interests for the neighborhood. The information gathered during these meetings provided insight to the citizens' vision for Covington. Once it was gathered and analyzed, this information was used to facilitate discussion during the issue meetings that came later, to construct the drill down exercises for each issue meeting, and to compose a vision statement to guide the City's future development.

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Covington Neighborhood Meeting Questionnaire

1. What is the **name** of your neighborhood?
2. What is the single biggest **issue** in your neighborhood?
3. The next 4 issues?
4. What is the single biggest **improvement** you would like to see in your neighborhood?

Additional comments:

Please answer the following demographic questions:

1. Are you male or female?
2. What is your age?
3. Do you rent your home?
4. How many people live in your household?
5. How many school-aged children live in your home?

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Zone 1 Meeting

July 26, 2006

Ozone Covington Point The Savannahs

The neighborhood meeting for Planning Zone 1 was held at Lyon's Elementary School for the neighborhoods identified as Ozone, Covington Point, and The Savannahs. The issues presented by the residents during the meeting discussion accurately reflect the issues listed in the resident questionnaire. Specifically, recreation, transportation choice, and housing choice were the dominant topics of discussion.

A need for recreation was expressed and discussed. Discussion revealed a need for the identification of the existing parks and recreational facilities and a need to inform the residents of these sites in order to increase the utilization of these spaces.

Transportation choice was offered as a way to relieve traffic caused by the recent increase in population and the high number of school-aged drivers and thru traffic from Collins Boulevard caused by drivers seeking a shorter route for their destinations. Residents expressed concern for the vehicular consequences of growth on Collins Boulevard. Will this jeopardize the automobile and pedestrian safety in their neighborhoods?

Finally, the main issue discussed was housing. Residents believe that there is a substantial need for housing choice in Covington to increase the affordability of living in order to address the needs of Covington's senior citizens and young professionals. Suggested housing alternatives included condominiums, apartments, and a moderate density increase in some neighborhoods. More importantly, the community must identify potential locations for these housing alternatives.

The results of the questionnaire were similar to the meeting discussion, though significant land use issues and interests were listed that were not topics of discussion. A common primary issue listed was commercial encroachment on residential development along Collins Boulevard. Residents of these neighborhoods are concerned about height increases and commercial expansion on Collins that could potentially compromise the environment of the residential areas. Interest in commercial design was listed as an opportunity to protect and preserve the neighborhoods while encouraging attractive commercial expansion.

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Zone 2 Meeting

May 31, 2006

West 20s West 30s North Covington

The Neighborhoods identified by the appointed Steering Committee as West 20s, West 30s and North Covington were included in Planning Zone 2, the focus area for the first neighborhood meeting held at Pineview Middle School. A variety of issues were discussed. These issues ranged from the consequences of the Comprehensive Plan, to spatial issues, to social issues.

Zoning, housing, and transportation issues dominated the spatial issues discussed. The residents in Zone 2 are concerned with spot zoning and encroachment trends that have developed over time and expressed an immediate need for decent, affordable housing for Covington residents and temporary workers resulting from the reconstruction after Hurricane Katrina.

The residents' support and need for affordable housing was justified with rising property value, renters' rights, and a perceived increasing number of college students, high school graduates, and seniors in need of rental property. Solutions to resolve the conflicting need for affordable housing and the homeowners' opposition to the existence of rental property was explored during the discussion. Among these solutions, owner occupied rental property was suggested as a way to provide affordable rental housing while encouraging the maintenance of and investment in the property.

Public transportation was also discussed during the meeting. Many of the residents believe that Covington has a great need for a public transit system in order to provide transportation for the elderly and the car-less population to access all areas of the city for employment opportunities, as well as access to the region.

Residents revealed that drug trafficking and speeding drivers plague the neighborhood and threaten the safety of the residents and children in the neighborhood. While these issues are commonly viewed as social problems, spatial analysis and revision may provide a solution for these complaints. These issues will be considered and analyzed during the planning process.

While the results of the questionnaire were similar to the meeting discussion, the primary issue of connectivity was not a topic of discussion. Significantly, the

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issue of affordable housing and housing choice continued to be an issue and an improvement for the lower income residents and senior citizens in these three neighborhoods.

Upon our analysis of the land use and socio-economic composition of this neighborhood, we have identified significant issues that are specific to this planning zone. The light industrial use in this residential neighborhood creates conflicting land uses and has a significant impact on the surrounding residential use and environment. The impending transfer of development rights the plant has made with the Parish has the potential to affect this neighborhood in a positive or negative way. As a result, it is important to include this in the comprehensive land use plan.

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Zone 3 Meeting

July 12, 2006

The Village River Forest Barkley Parc

The Neighborhoods identified by the appointed Steering Committee as The Village, River Forest and Barkley Parc were incorporated into Planning Zone 3, the focus area for the third neighborhood meeting held at Kehoe France.

Zoning was the primary issue discussed during this neighborhood meeting. Concern about the A-3 zoning, which allows for multi-family dwellings, was expressed during the meeting and in the Neighborhood Questionnaire. Most of the residents felt the existence of multi-family dwellings is inappropriate for the current single-family trend of the neighborhoods, while some expressed that a small amount in the appropriate locations is necessary and acceptable.

Another prominent issue was the safety and stability of the natural environment. Pine trees compromised or killed by Hurricane Katrina pose a threat to many homes in the area. As a result, the residents urged political officials to revisit and revise the current tree ordinance.

Recreation received notice during the Zone 3 meeting, during which Councilman Alexius discussed the proposed Covington Recreation District. Residents expressed dissatisfaction with the current amount of recreation, the condition of existing parks and ball fields, and recreational choices.

Public transportation for the elderly and for citizens who do not wish to utilize private transportation was also suggested for the entire city. Residents feel that a moderate amount of public transportation is necessary to accommodate the needs of the Community's aging population and young, inexperienced drivers.

The Trailhead received significant attention in relation to recreation and safety issues. Residents that frequently utilize the Trailhead mentioned the connectivity and safety issues that they experience, specifically the crossing at Highway 21.

The questionnaires collected from the citizens are identical to the meeting discussion, with an emphasis on down zoning.

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Zone 4 Meeting

June 21, 2006

New Covington

The neighborhood meeting for Planning Zone 4 was held at William Pitcher Middle School to bring together the residents of New Covington. The issues discussed during this meeting ranged from growth to recreation to transportation.

Residents expressed concern for the implications that will follow the widening of Highway 22, the proposed shopping center anchored by a Big Box business³, and the expansion of St. Tammany Hospital, all of which will significantly affect the accessibility and the density of Tyler Street. Residents expressed support for the Hospital and acknowledged the need and desire for Tyler Street to remain as a medical corridor. However, other residents questioned the need for the Hospital to remain centralized and to expand at its current location. Can the Hospital choose another site in the City for development?

Concern for the current recreational conditions and choice was expressed. The need for youth programs was proposed as a method of educating the youth of Covington, as well as a method of petty crime prevention.

Finally, transportation choice was discussed. The residents of New Covington expressed interest in the consideration of senior transportation, public transportation, and alternative modes of transportation. The alternative modes of transportation suggested include the establishment and maintenance of sidewalks, as well as measures to increase pedestrian safety in the neighborhoods of Covington. In addition to a more pedestrian-oriented environment, the residents expressed interest in bike paths and bike lanes in Covington in order to promote the use of bicycles and to provide cyclists with safe riding conditions.

The results of the questionnaire correlate to the topics of discussion during the neighborhood meeting. However, recreation was listed in a majority of the citizen questionnaires as both an issue and an interest. Currently, recreation in Zone 4 is limited, and recreation for different age and interest groups throughout Covington are inadequate. Residents of Zone 4 must travel outside of their neighborhood in order to meet their recreational needs.

³ Current status of this project is now a lifestyle center without a Big Box anchor

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Zone 5 Meeting

July 19, 2006

Old Covington Old Landing

The neighborhood meeting for Planning Zone 5 was held at St. Paul's private boys' school for the neighborhoods identified as Old Covington and Old Landing. As the Bogue Falaya River or the Tchufuncte River at one or more sides binds each neighborhood, environmental issues dominated this neighborhood discussion; however, concerns with growth, housing, and pedestrian safety were present but took on a very different method of discussion than the other Planning Zone meetings. The results of the citizen questionnaire accurately reflect the views and visions expressed during this meeting.

Residents of Old Covington and Old Landing have private access to the Rivers that bind the City of Covington. They are a source of recreation, identification, and isolation for the property owners lining Riverbanks. These property owners expressed great concern over the current condition of the Rivers resulting from Hurricane Katrina. Fallen trees have limited access up and down river and cause environmental concern.

What are the consequences of Parish development and City growth? The Old Covington and Old Landing neighborhoods are in close proximity to the proposed Lifestyle shopping center development off of US Highway 21. Residents in the area expressed concern for the traffic and environmental repercussions of this development.

Another concern related to the City's growth is the issue of affordable housing and housing choice. One resident of the Old Covington neighborhood spurred a conversation to modify the existing zoning code of Old Covington to allow for rental property. This idea received significant opposition until the discussion developed into more specific detail on stipulations. A majority of the residents agreed to the consideration of accessory use rental property in existing structures where the property owner is present and the rentals are imposed with development criteria and density restrictions. These rentals will be intended for young professionals, extended family members, etc., as a method of both preserving the character of this traditional neighborhood form and providing affordable housing options for the community's residents.

Finally, the meeting ended with the issue of pedestrian safety. The location of St. Paul's High School significantly increases traffic in this residential area.

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Residents insisted that this traffic, composed of teenaged drivers in large vehicles, threatens the safety of other drivers and, more importantly, the pedestrians and young children in the neighborhood, as the drivers do not obey the traffic laws and speed limits. Notably, the issue of pedestrian safety has so far engaged discussion in all of the previous neighborhood meetings.

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Zone 6 Meeting

August 09, 2006

St. John Claiborne Hill

The neighborhood meeting for Planning Zone 6 was held at the Covington City Council Chambers to bring together the residents and business owners of St. John and Claiborne Hill. Because this Planning Zone is primarily commercial with very little residential, the meeting took on a different tone. The issues of transportation, pedestrian safety, and the character of downtown Covington dominated the discussion for this final neighborhood meeting.

The transportation discussion included public transit and alternative modes of transportation, as well as the development of a transportation plan to address the pre- and post-Katrina growth that Covington has experienced. The citizens of Covington are concerned with the increase in traffic that Downtown Covington has experienced post-Katrina. This increase in traffic threatens the safety of pedestrians and induces a feeling of inconvenience in Covington residents.

Residents and business owners were particularly interested in the future of Downtown Covington. It is the character of the downtown area that makes Covington identifiable and unique. The pedestrian scale and the natural mix of uses makes downtown Covington a desirable location. While they expressed interest in maintaining and improving the mix of uses in the downtown area, many of the residents expressed opposition to a height increase from fear that the increase might decimate the character of Covington with which they identify themselves; thus, it was decided that an appropriate location for height increase must be determined.

Lee Lane received significant attention, as businesses located here generally experience unusually high retail turnover. The turnover rate on Lee Lane is now the worst it has been in more than ten years. Possible solutions offered by the citizens to reverse this problem included a pedestrian mall, a parking garage, and one-way streets forcing traffic onto Lee Lane. Although elected officials have expressed assurance in the future of Lee Lane, residents and business owners believe that this issue must be addressed.

Pedestrian safety is a very important issue in all zones but more so in Zone 6 as its built environment encourages and, at times, requires pedestrian activity. The current speed and behavior of automobile drivers has created a feeling of concern and danger for the pedestrians of Downtown. This is an issue that must

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be addressed, as pedestrian safety should be a priority and Downtown Covington is designed to the scale of the pedestrian.

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Summary

This second phase of the planning process exposed land use patterns and commonalities among Covington’s neighborhoods. The information gathered during this phase was put into a matrix in order to reveal those patterns and commonalities.

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6
Primary Issue						
Drainage	X	X	X		X	X
Pedestrian Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zoning		X	X			
Transportation	X	X		X	X	
Affordable Housing		X		X		
Recreation	X	X	X	X		
Growth/Connectivity	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blight		X	X	X	X	
Improvements						
Capital Improvements	X	X		X	X	
Commercial Design	X					
Bike Paths/Sidewalks	X	X		X	X	X
Sustainable Growth	X			X	X	
Housing Choice		X	X		X	
Recreation	X		X			
Community Development		X	X			
Public/Alt Transportation		X	X		X	
Rezoning			X			

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Discussion in each neighborhood meeting revealed a common concern for the safety of pedestrians in the community, as the issue was identified during every meeting. Covington's built environment is designed at the human scale to provide a walkable community; however, the residents of Covington feel that their safety is compromised by recent preference for vehicular traffic, development trends, and deteriorating sidewalk conditions.

Residents raised the issue of growth and connectivity during every neighborhood meeting. There remains a great concern for the way in which the community is growing, as residents feel that current development trends promote a physical and social disconnection within the community; however, each neighborhood has a different concern for and perception of growth and connectivity in Covington. Example: encroachment, design, social connectivity, physical connectivity, regional connectivity, growth impacts on future infrastructure, consequences of growth on the built environment, current development trends and methods.

Transportation was a common issue shared by all Zones. Each zone expressed different transportation needs, but there remains a common transit need throughout the city, which stems from a growing senior population, an expanding built environment, a large number of residents required to travel outside of the community for employment, and a significant percentage of the population living below the poverty level.

While the residents of Covington enjoy several public parks, community events, and water bodies, they expressed a need for recreation choices that are available to people of all ages, incomes, abilities, and interests. Recreation was not identified as an issue during neighborhood meetings and in the citizen questionnaires for Zones 5 and 6. Analysis and discussion indicate the following reasons for the absence of recreation in these neighborhoods:

- The availability of recreational choices of downtown in Zone 6
- The recreational choices available to residents of Zone 5, which include parks, direct access to the Bogue Falaya River, and their proximity to Zone 6

Both the issues and the improvements listed in the citizen questionnaire served an important role in the visioning process, as the questions listed in the questionnaire indirectly asked each citizen to list the elements included in his or her vision of Covington's future natural and built environment.

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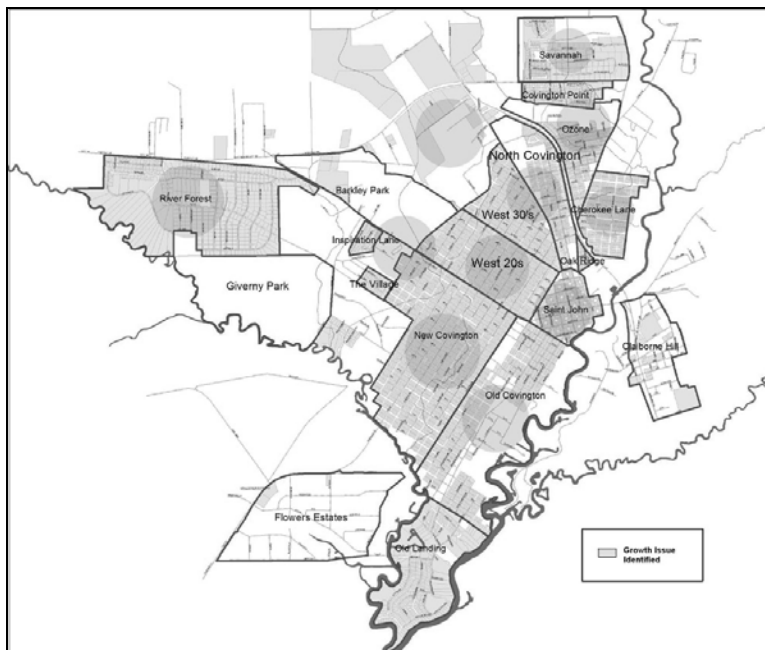
The top issues listed in the citizen questionnaire:

- Drainage
- Pedestrian safety
- Zoning
- Transportation
- Affordable housing
- Recreation
- Growth & Connectivity
- Blight

The top improvements listed in the citizen questionnaire:

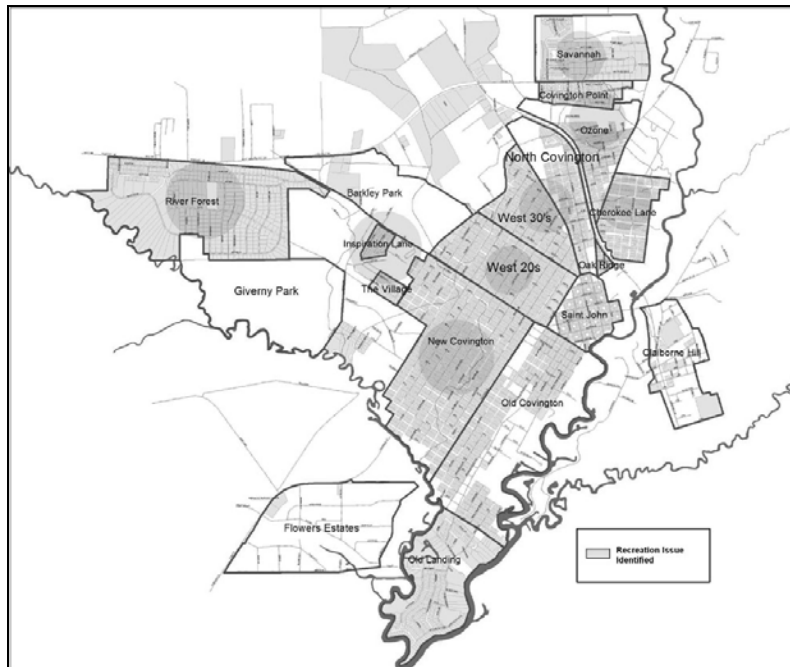
- Capital improvements
- Commercial design standards
- Bike paths
- Sustainable growth
- Housing choice
- Recreation
- Community Development
- Public transit

These issues and interests were combined by topic and applied to a map of Covington's neighborhoods. Each issue was applied as it was listed in each neighborhood. The results are as follows:

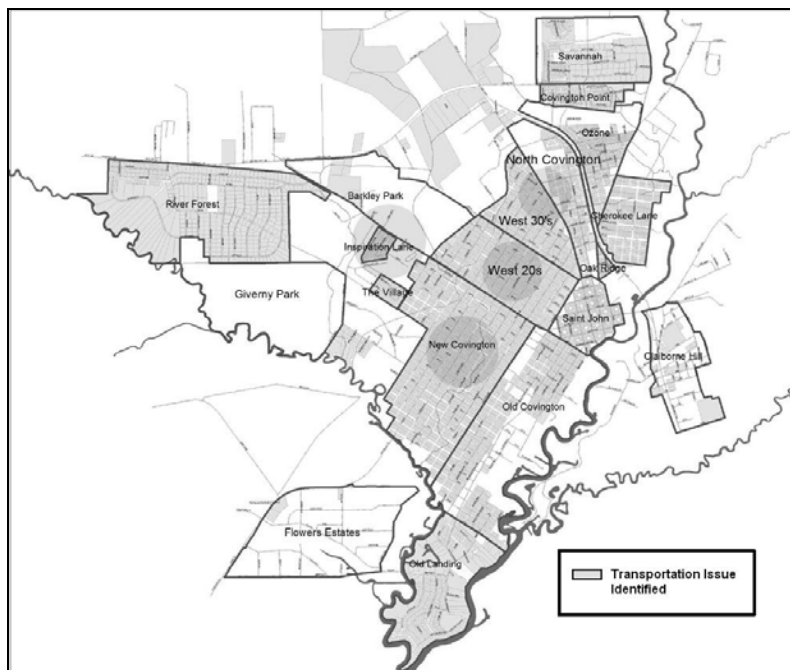


The map above illustrates the geographic application of the questionnaire results in which residents expressed a concern for the current trends in growth and connectivity.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

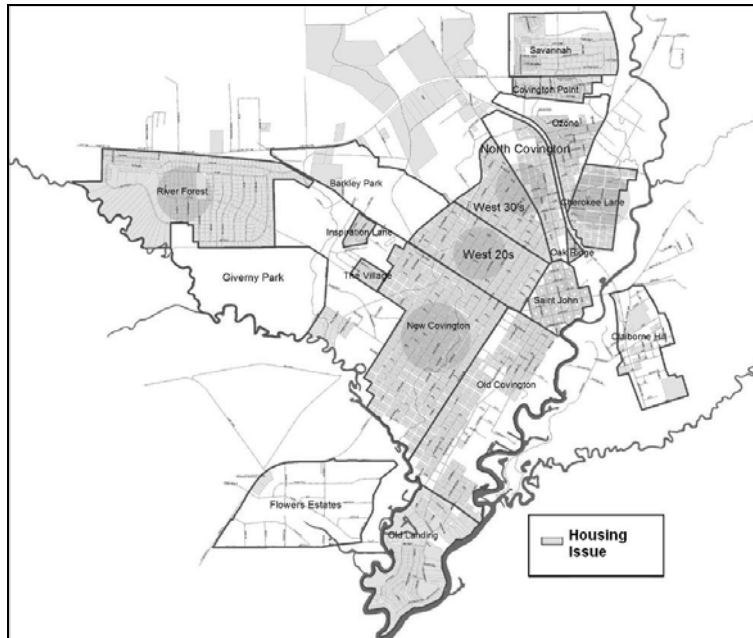


The map above illustrates the geographic application of the questionnaire results in which residents expressed a need for some type of, or increase in, the availability of recreational activities or facilities.

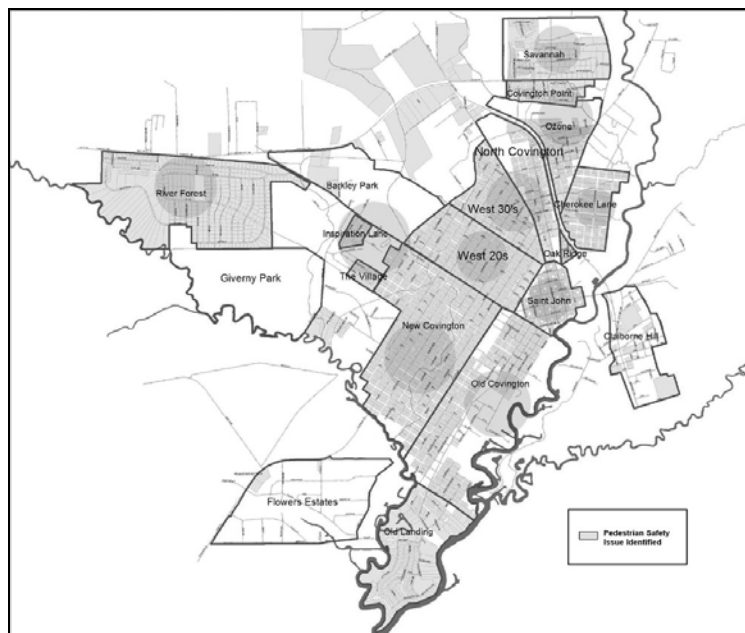


The map above illustrates the geographic application of the questionnaire results in which residents expressed a need for some type of public transportation option.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



The map above illustrates the geographic application of the questionnaire results in which residents expressed some type of housing issue, whether it be neighborhood preservation, housing choice, or housing affordability.



The map above illustrates the geographic application of the questionnaire results in which residents expressed a need for pedestrian safety (i.e. sidewalks, pedestrian-oriented development).

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Citizen participation in these Neighborhood Meetings was an integral part of the planning process. Covington's residents filled a valuable role in planning the future of their community. The information they provided played a key role in the development of the drill down exercises administered during the proceeding Issue Meetings.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Issue Meetings

Three (3) issue meetings were assembled to address the main land use issues in Covington. The purpose for these meetings was to drill down into the issues that were revealed at the neighborhood meetings. These issues were grouped accordingly: transportation, infrastructure, land use, quality of life, economic development, housing, and comprehensive issues.

Citizens attending the neighborhood meetings were asked to provide their names and contact information. This information they provided was used to inform citizens of the issue meeting dates and times. In addition, public notice for each neighborhood meeting was submitted to each of the three newspapers.

Each meeting began with the presentation of data gathered during the neighborhood meetings and from other sources. Based upon this data, the audience was asked to participate in discussion and in a number of exercises in order to drill down into these issues.

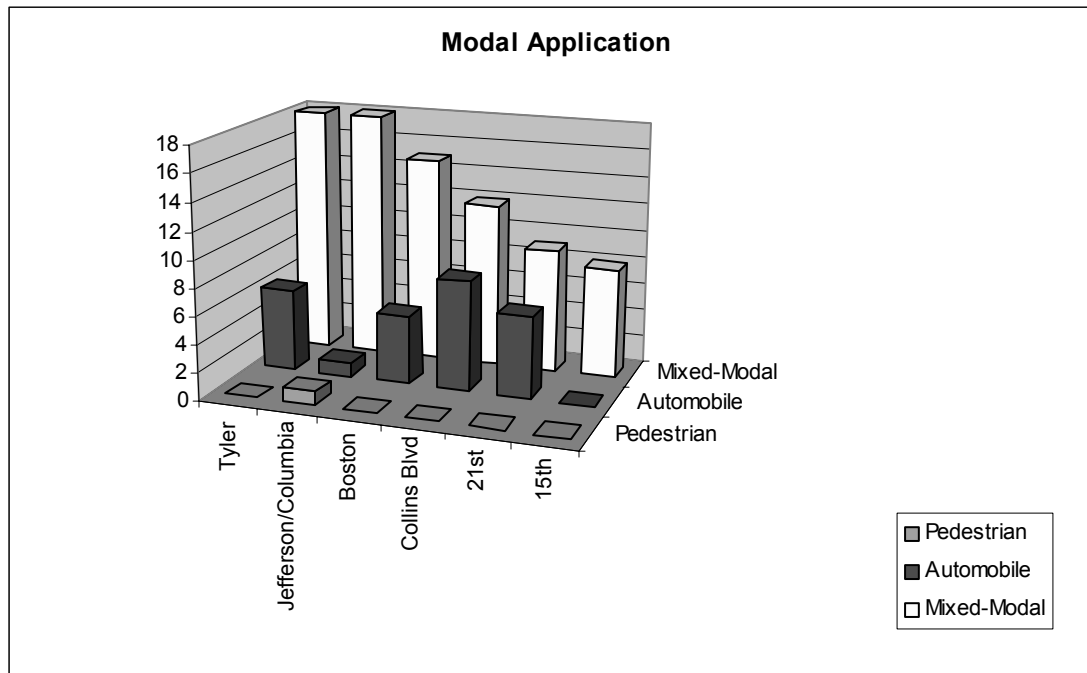
The results of these exercises are included in the following pages and served as a guide to the recommendations included in this plan.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Transit, Infrastructure, and Land Use

Greater Covington Center

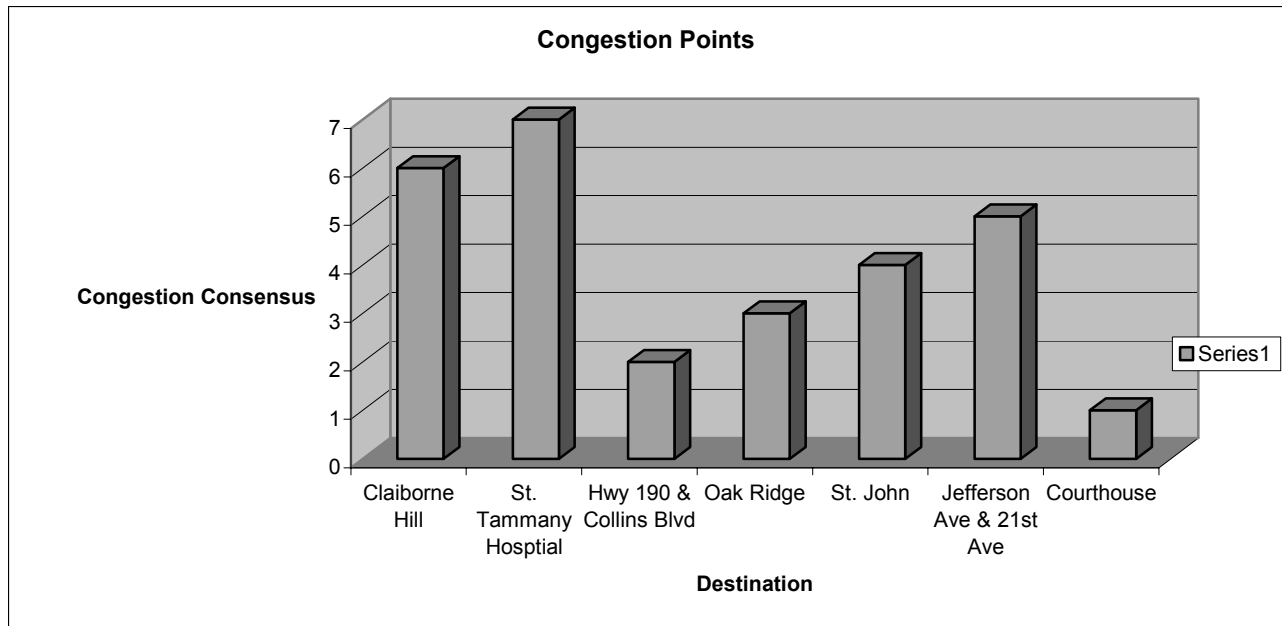
October 24, 2006



The first exercise presented a map that highlighted four major corridors in Covington's city limits. The citizens were asked to label each corridor as being primarily serving pedestrians, automobiles, or a mixture of bikes, pedestrians, and automobiles in the future. The graph above illustrates the general consensus that all highlighted streets should be mixed-modal transportation corridors in the future. A majority of the participants believe that Tyler, Jefferson and Columbia, Boston, and 15th are appropriate corridors for mixed-modal transportation. While the majority also wishes mixed-modal transit to be applied to Collins and 21st, several of the participants labeled these corridors as primarily automobile, as safety is a greater issue here.

It must also be noted that several other streets were discussed as potentially pedestrian- and bike-friendly as they will accommodate the safety issues required by pedestrians and cyclists while providing access to more than one destination point within Covington.

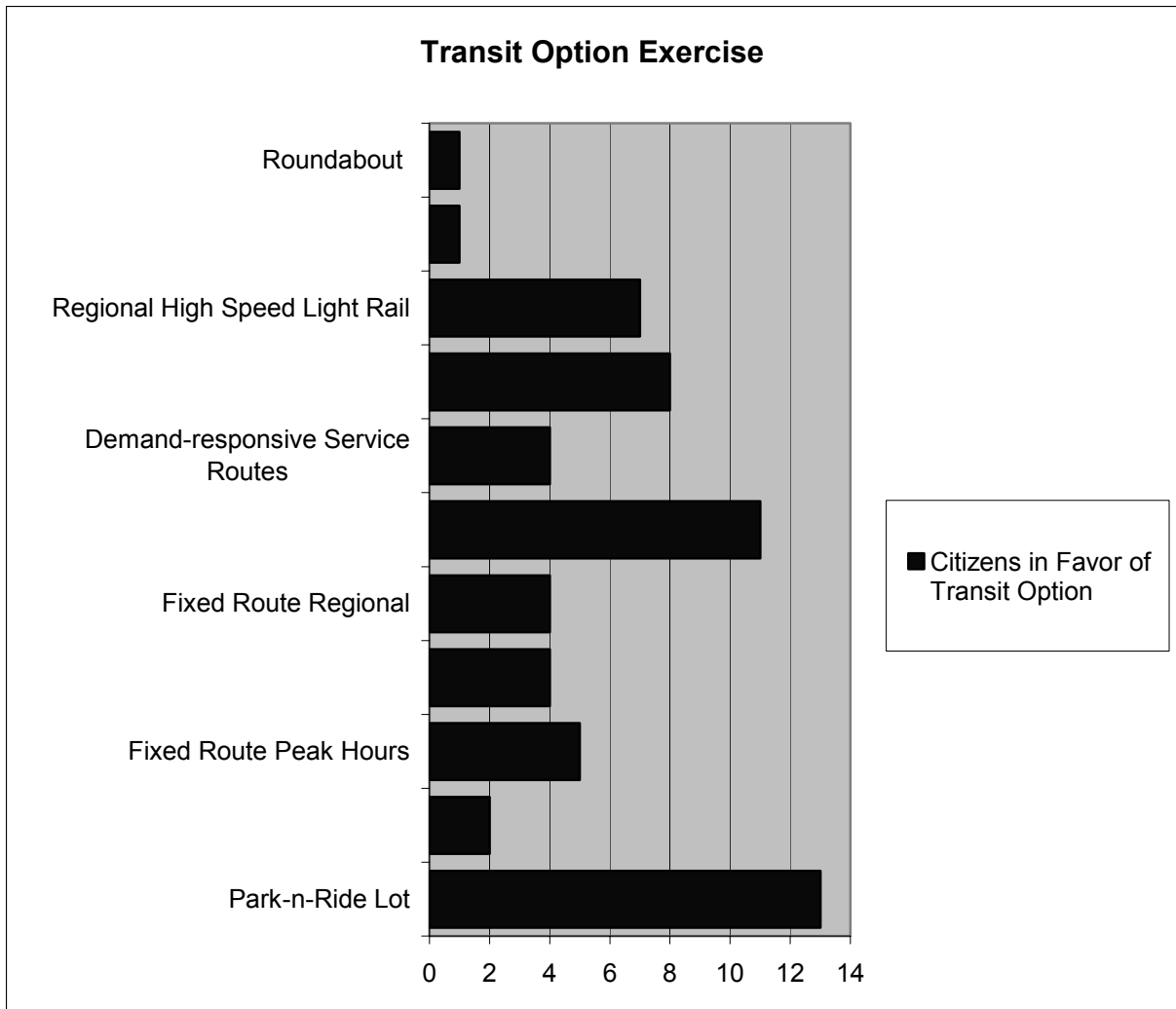
COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



In this exercise, the citizens were asked to rank the identified destination points according to the congestion each point experiences. The graph above illustrates a general consensus that the area surrounding St. Tammany Hospital receives the most congestion and the area around the Parish Courthouse receives the least congestion. When asked if these destination points experienced congestion at all hours of the day or at peak hours, the general consensus was that congestion occurs at peak hours relating to school and rush hour traffic at all points.

When asked if any of these destination points experience drainage problems, the general consensus identified drainage problems in the area bound by the last four destination points listed in the graph above.

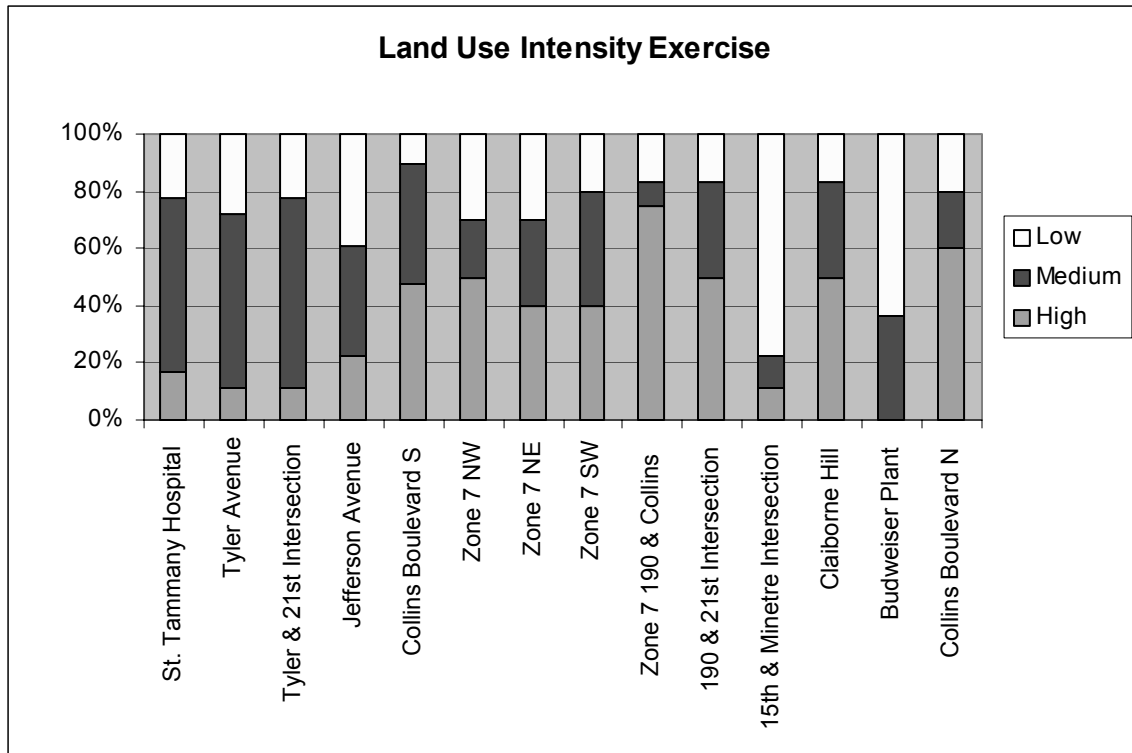
COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



Citizens were given a list of transit options that have been implemented in communities similar to Covington. They were asked to identify transit types that they believe could be suitable and beneficial in Covington. The graph above illustrates the results of the citizen input.

The top 2 options chosen were the demand-responsive transit for senior and disabled citizens and the park-n-ride lot options. However, the participants also believe that continuous fixed route transit and demand-responsive transit will serve the transportation needs of Covington's residents, and a significant number of residents would like connector routes with the New Orleans metro area, as well as a regional high speed light rail system, in the future.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



In this exercise, a map included several highlighted commercial and mixed-use areas throughout Covington, as they were identified in the neighborhood meetings as areas of concern. In addition to the map, the citizens were given visual aids of three different levels of land use intensity. Using this visual aid as a guide, the citizens were asked to identify the levels of intensity they believed to be appropriate for each highlighted area. The graph above illustrates the results of the exercise.

On average, the citizens expressed interest in significantly altering development on Collins Boulevard and Zone 7 to high intensity levels and maintaining a majority of development at medium intensity levels, while the primarily residential areas remain at low intensity levels.

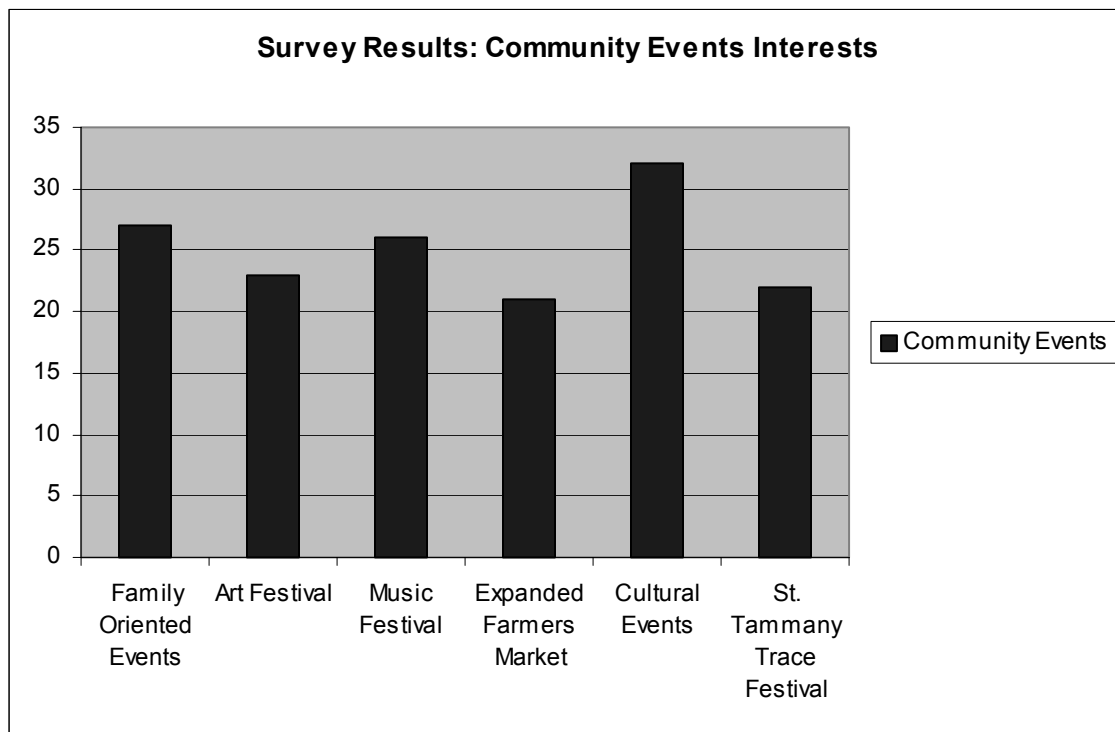
In addition their identification of appropriate intensity levels, the citizens were asked if any of the highlighted areas are appropriate for a possible increase in allowable building height. Several of the residents verbally expressed that an increase in building height is appropriate in all commercial areas outside of the St. John neighborhood, otherwise known as Downtown. Specifically, the exercise revealed that most of the participants believe that Collins Boulevard is the most appropriate corridor for an increase in allowable building height.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Quality of Life, Economic Development, & Housing Greater Covington Center November 28, 2006

Quality of Life

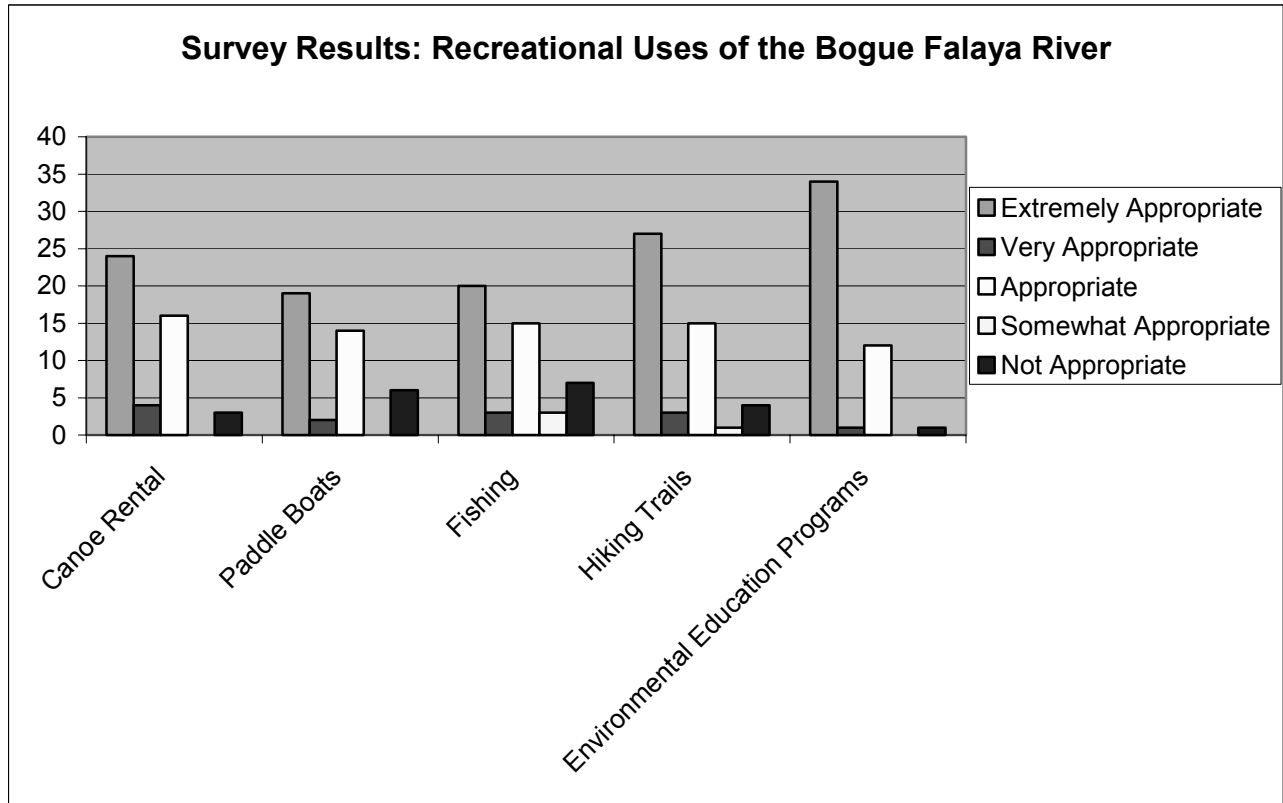
The first exercise consisted of questions regarding nonessential quality of life issues in Covington that were discussed in the neighborhood meetings and listed in the citizen questionnaire.



During the neighborhood meetings and in the citizen questionnaire results, the citizens of Covington have expressed an interest in more downtown events. As downtown events currently include City sponsored art openings, block parties, and the farmer's market, six options were presented. The first quality of life question asked participants to indicate which events they are interested to host in Covington. The results are display in the chart above.

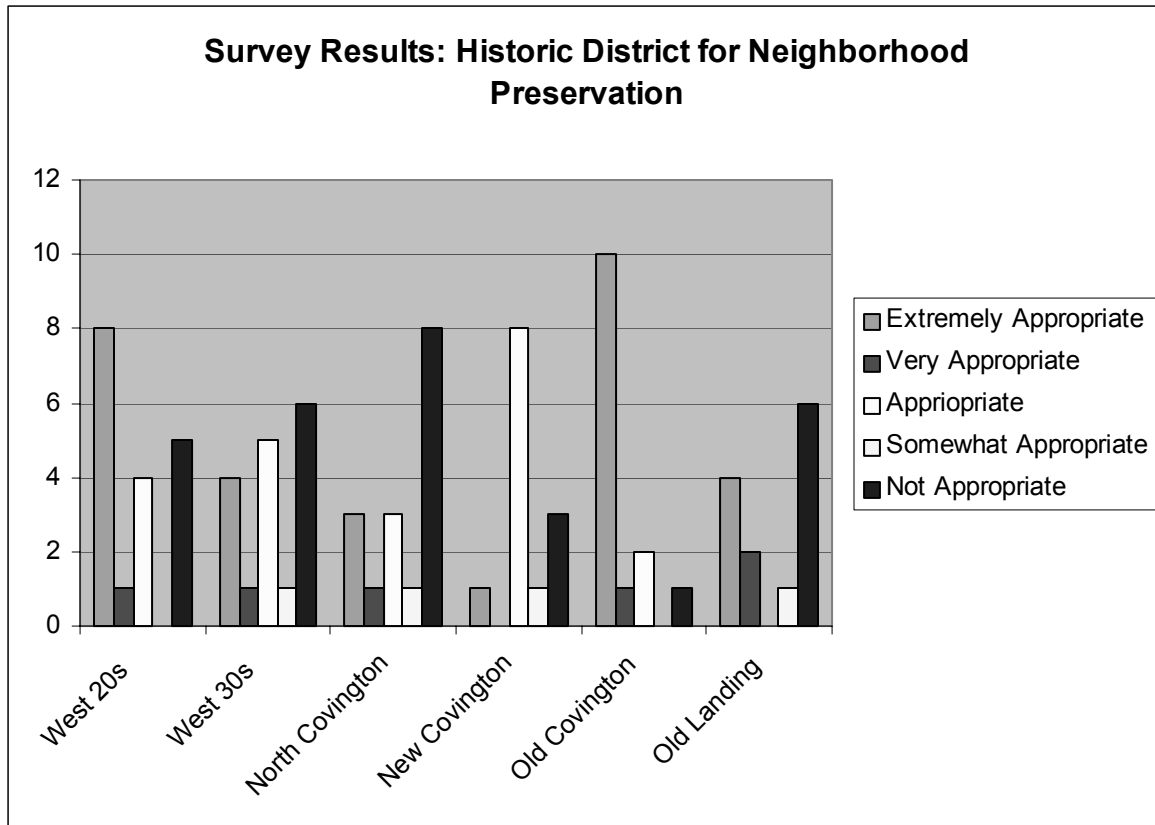
As an increase in the number and types of events hosted in Covington would require an alternative location to Downtown, the participants were asked to identify another location suitable to host these types of events. Among the results, participants identified the Bogue Falaya Park, the Greater Covington Center, and the proposed Recreation Center.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



A majority of the recreational use of Covington’s three rivers remains private, as public access is limited. Residents expressed interest in increasing use of and accessibility to the Rivers during neighborhood meetings and in the citizen questionnaire. As a result, the second question in the quality of life exercise addressed appropriate uses for the Bogue Falaya River. The results illustrated in the chart above demonstrate a desire for a more passive use of the River with hiking trails and environmental education programs.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

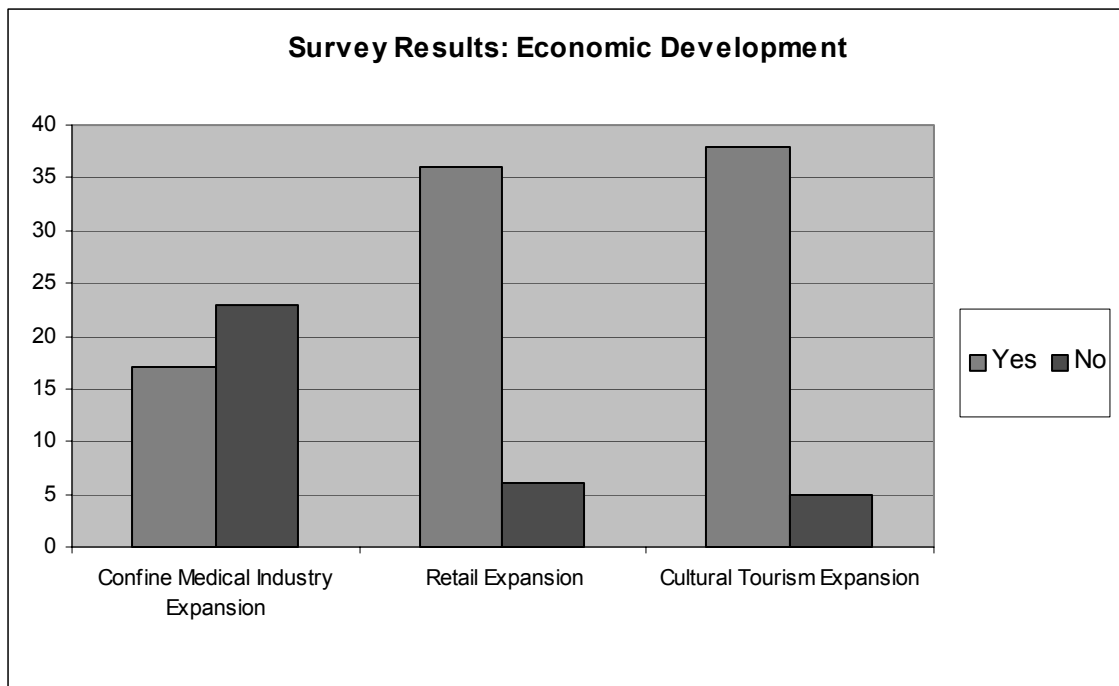


During the neighborhood meetings and in the citizen questionnaire, residents expressed concern for architectural and neighborhood preservation. The results of this exercise reveal that the Old Covington, West 20s, and West 30s neighborhoods are interested in utilizing the historic preservation tool, while Old Landing and North Covington are not in need of this tool and New Covington remains indifferent.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Economic Development

The second exercise consisted of questions regarding the future economic profile of Covington. As regional and local shifts in population, demographics, and economics have occurred, it is pertinent to discuss the way in which Covington will conduct business in the future. The first question asked participants to evaluate the current economic profile of Covington and provide a yes or no answer to three (3) questions.



First, participants were asked if possible medical industry expansion should be confined to its existing location.

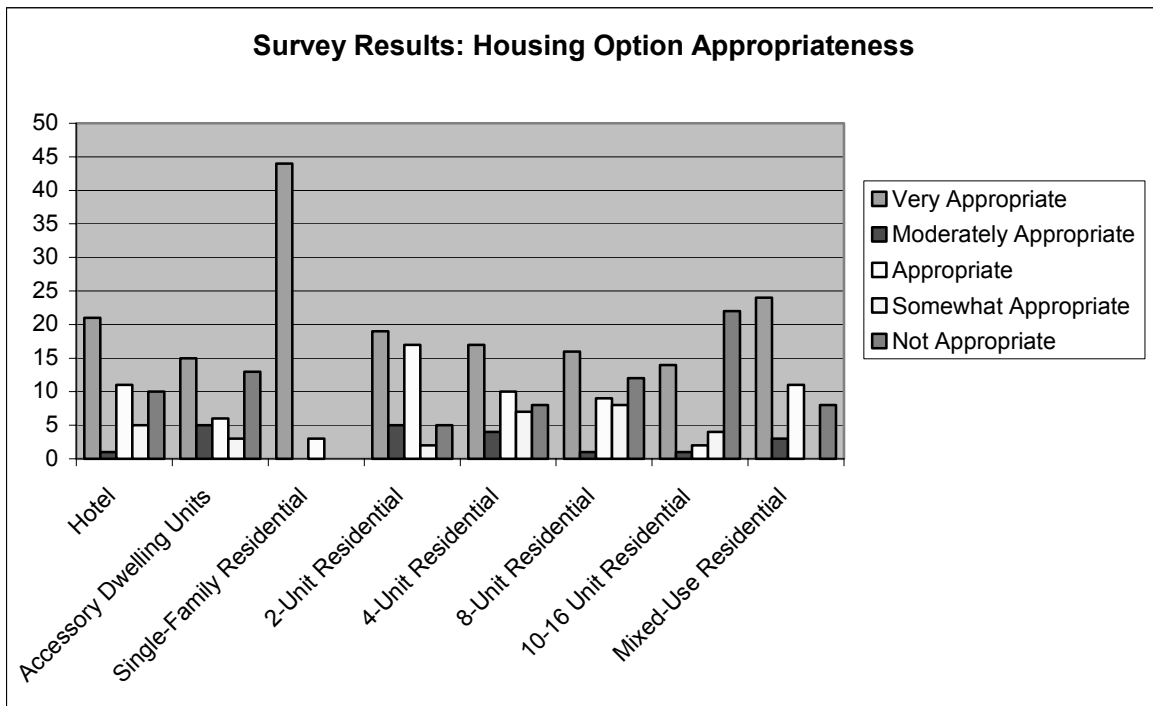
Second, participants were asked if retail expansion is appropriate for Covington. A majority of the participants agreed that Covington should move forward with retail expansion. When they were asked to identify an appropriate location for retail expansion, participants identified first Collins Boulevard and second the future zone seven.

Citizens of Covington enjoy a unique environment and rich cultural history. When participants were asked if the establishment of a small cultural tourism industry is appropriate, a majority of the participants agreed that a cultural tourism base should be established in the St. John area.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

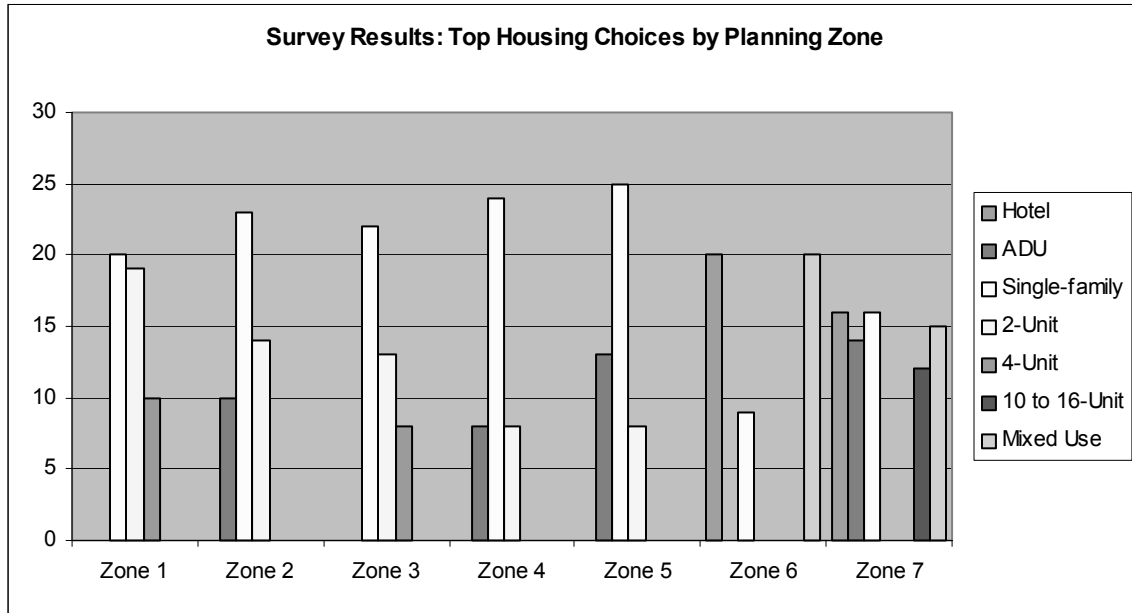
Housing

The third exercise asked the participants to analyze the housing affordability issue in Covington. The income levels of Covington’s citizens were presented for discussion, which were followed by several visual examples of the way in which housing options can be provided in a small community.



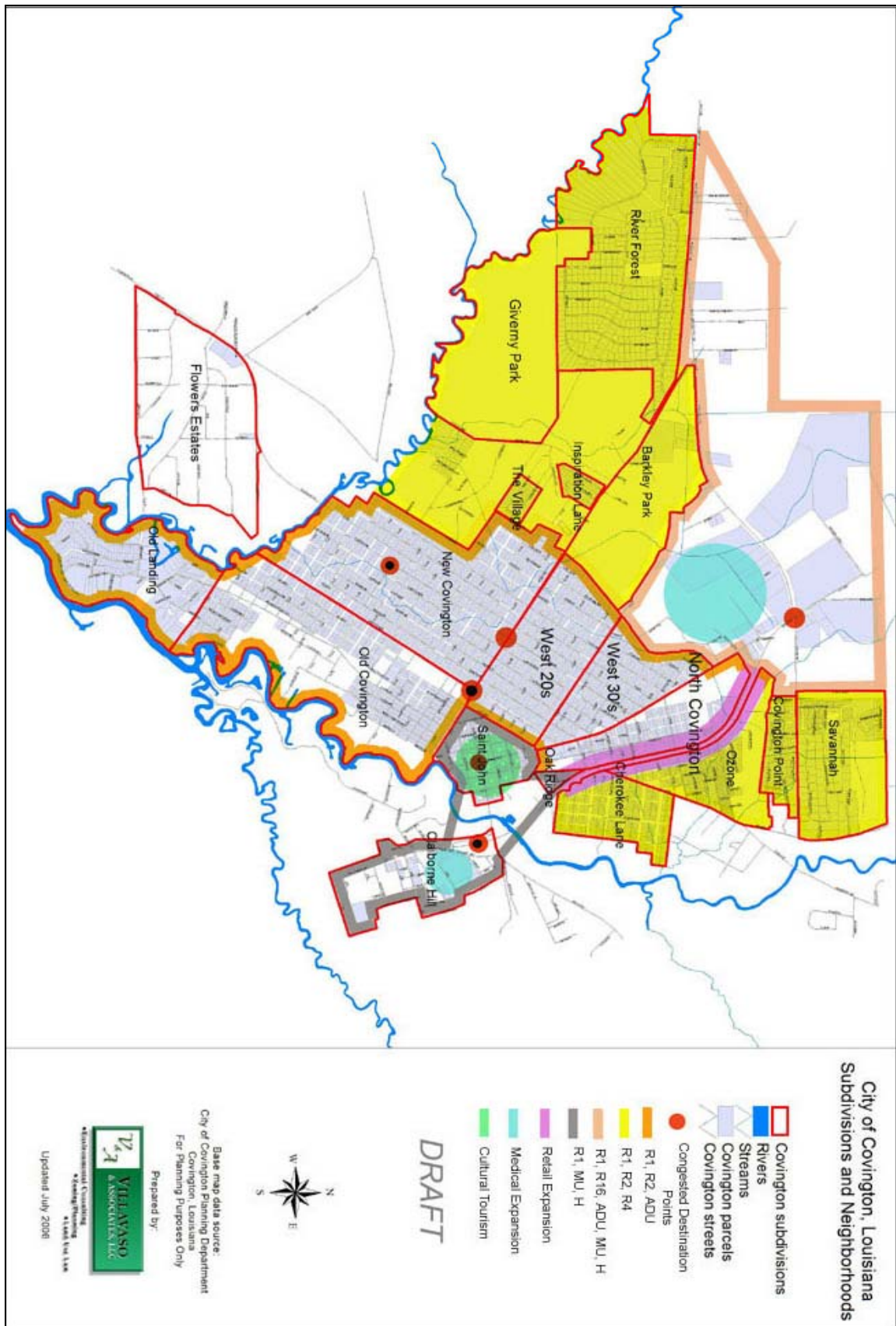
Once they were informed of the different levels of housing affordability and the ways in which different options increase affordability, participants were asked to identify the appropriateness level of the housing choices for all of Covington’s citizens. The chart above illustrates that the participants believe all but the 10-16 unit residential option are appropriate at some level for Covington.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

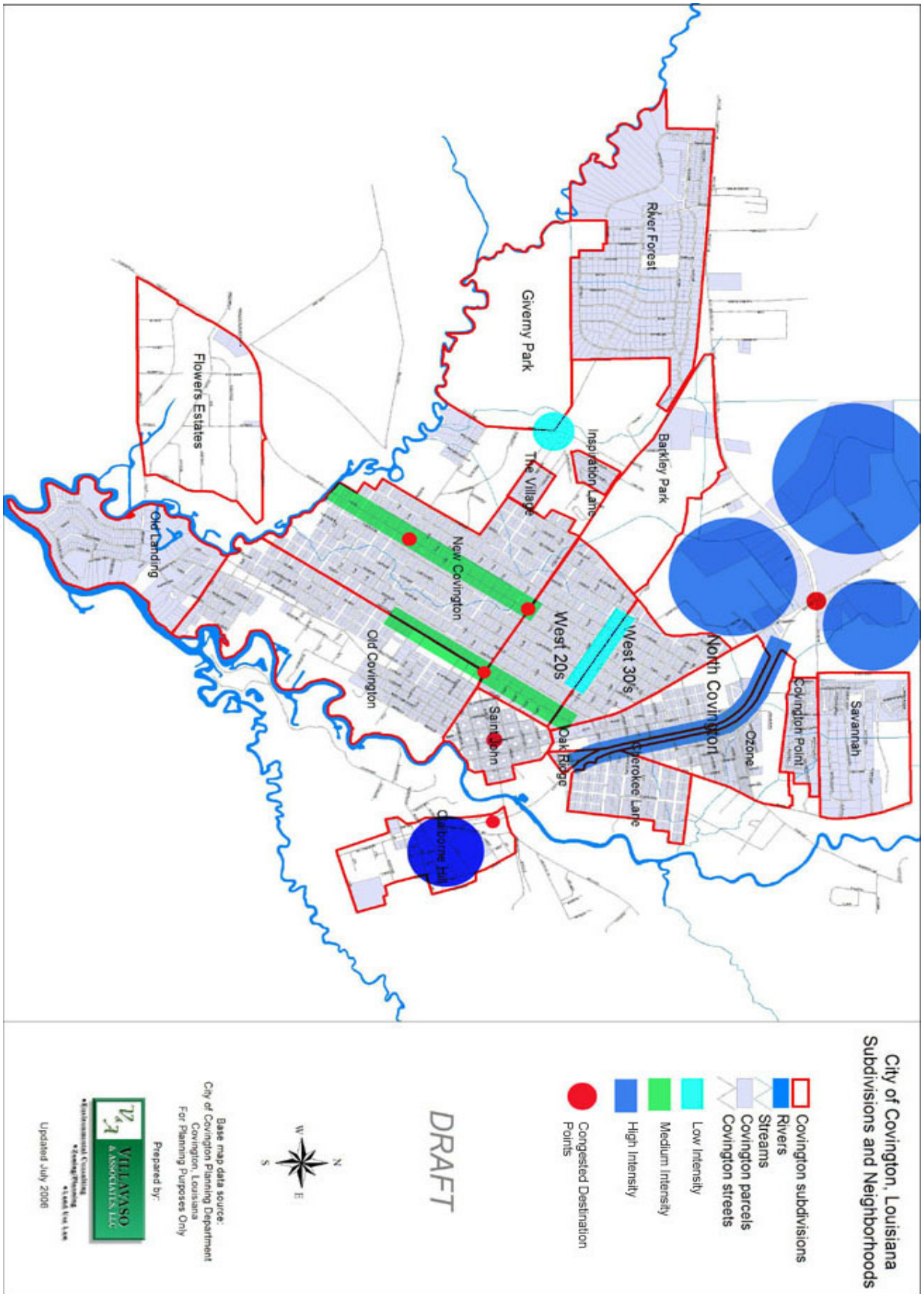


After determining the appropriateness of each housing choice, the citizens were asked to assign these housing choices to a planning zone map. The chart above illustrates the top three housing choices for each planning zone as identified by the exercise participants, with the exception of planning zone seven, which illustrates the top five choices for the zone.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE



COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Comprehensive Issue Meeting

December 11, 2006

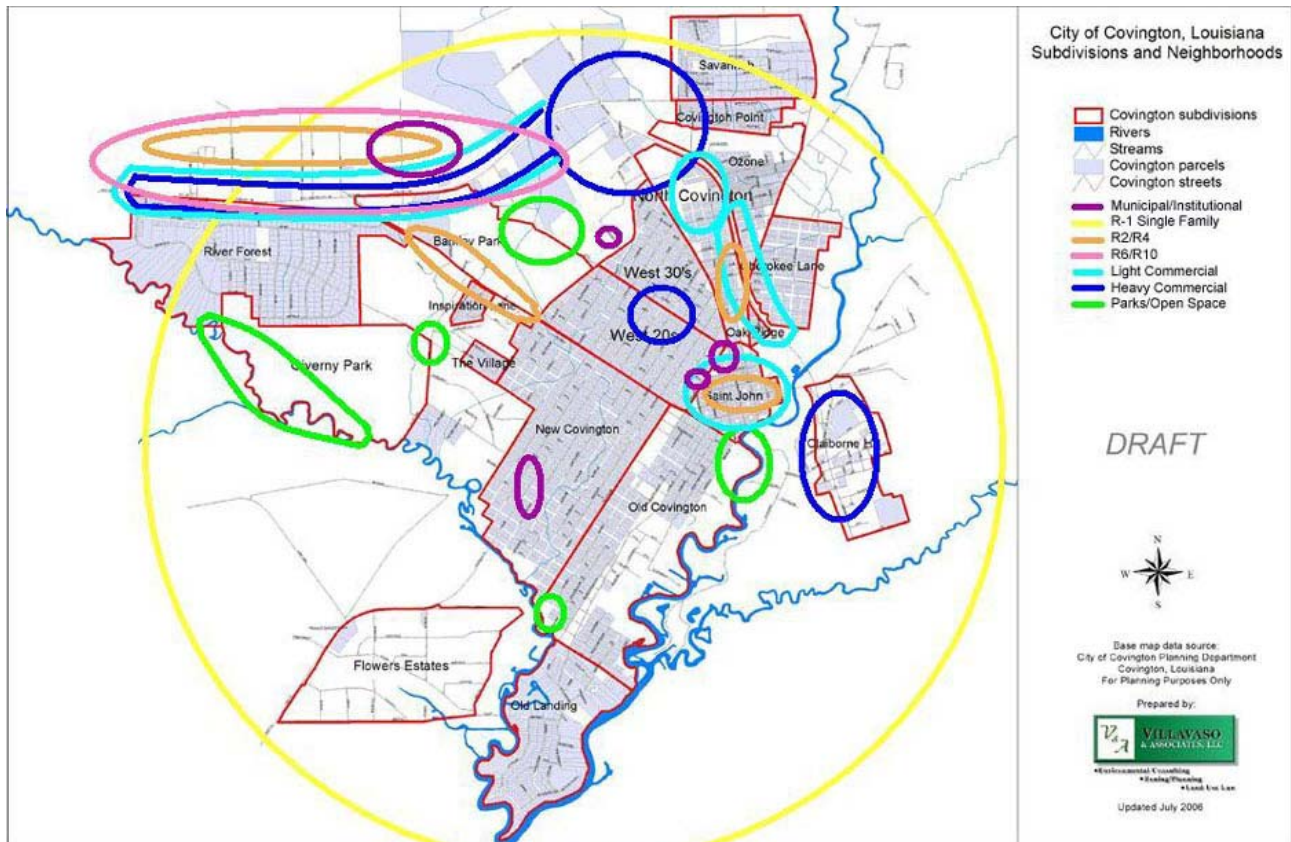
Bogue Falaya Hall

The final issue meeting combined all issues discussed in the neighborhood meetings and the drill-down issue meetings in the form of a comprehensive land use exercise. After Villavaso & Associates presented the results and knowledge gained from the first and second issue meetings, the participants were asked to break into five groups. Each group was provided a map of Covington, containing only streets, parcels, and rivers, and a handout containing all of the information presented to them at the beginning of the meeting (see appendix). Participants were asked to draw on the maps to produce a generalized land use map consisting only of bubble diagrams that represent the type of future development they believe is appropriate based on their knowledge gained during this communicative process. Group numbers have been assigned randomly, and the results of each group have been documented electronically so that they may be viewed on the following pages.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Comprehensive Exercise Results

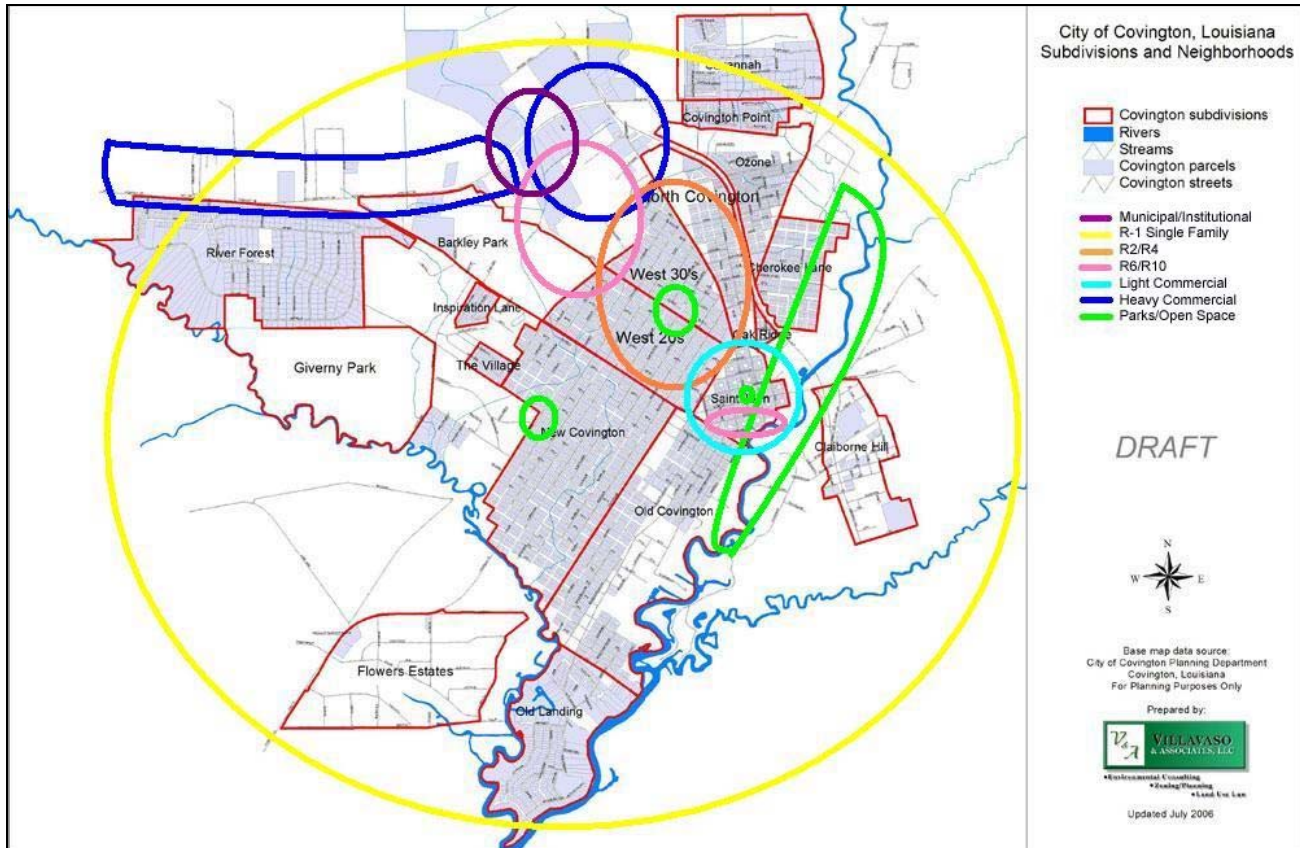
Group One



Group one produced a land use map similar to the existing land use of Covington. The map above illustrates concern for the way in which the northern and eastern portions of Covington will develop. It also illustrates an interest in a moderate distribution of municipal and institutional uses throughout the City. Housing choices and densities have been designated to the primarily undeveloped areas that have been designated as commercial uses. Overall, the generalized land use map produced by group one shows an interest in combining uses, increasing commercial uses, and increasing housing choices in the future development pattern.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

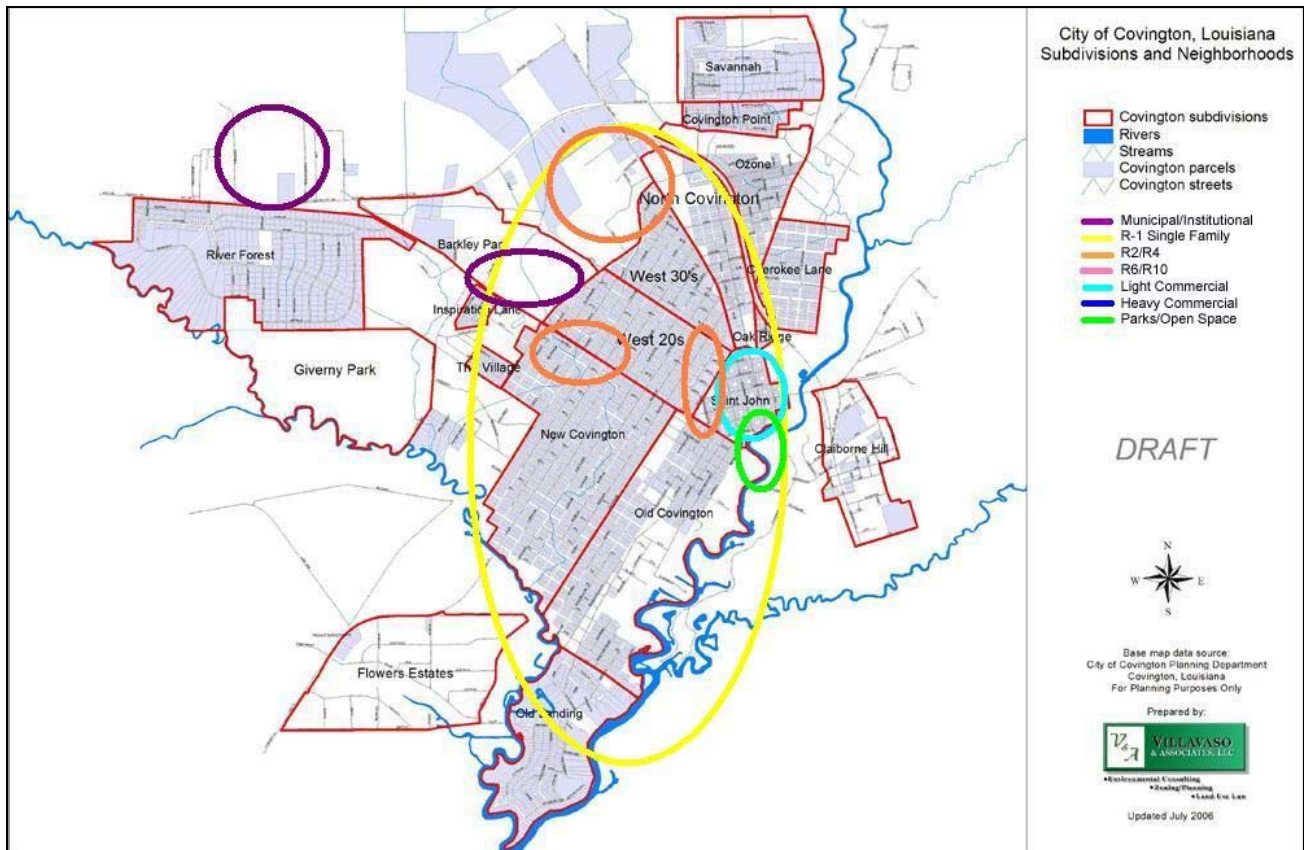
Group Two



Group two produced a land use map that aims to separate commercial uses from residential uses. While it does not designate mixed uses other than the downtown area, which is made up of mixed uses, the members of group two illustrate a desire for housing choice in the existing residential neighborhoods and an even distribution of municipal and institutional uses. The map above also shows an interest in increasing the amount of community parks and open space, as well as use of the Bogue Falaya River at Covington's eastern border. Overall, the generalized land use map produced by group two shows an interest to allocate all heavy commercial uses to the northern portion of Covington, to increase housing choices, and to increase recreation choices and availability.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

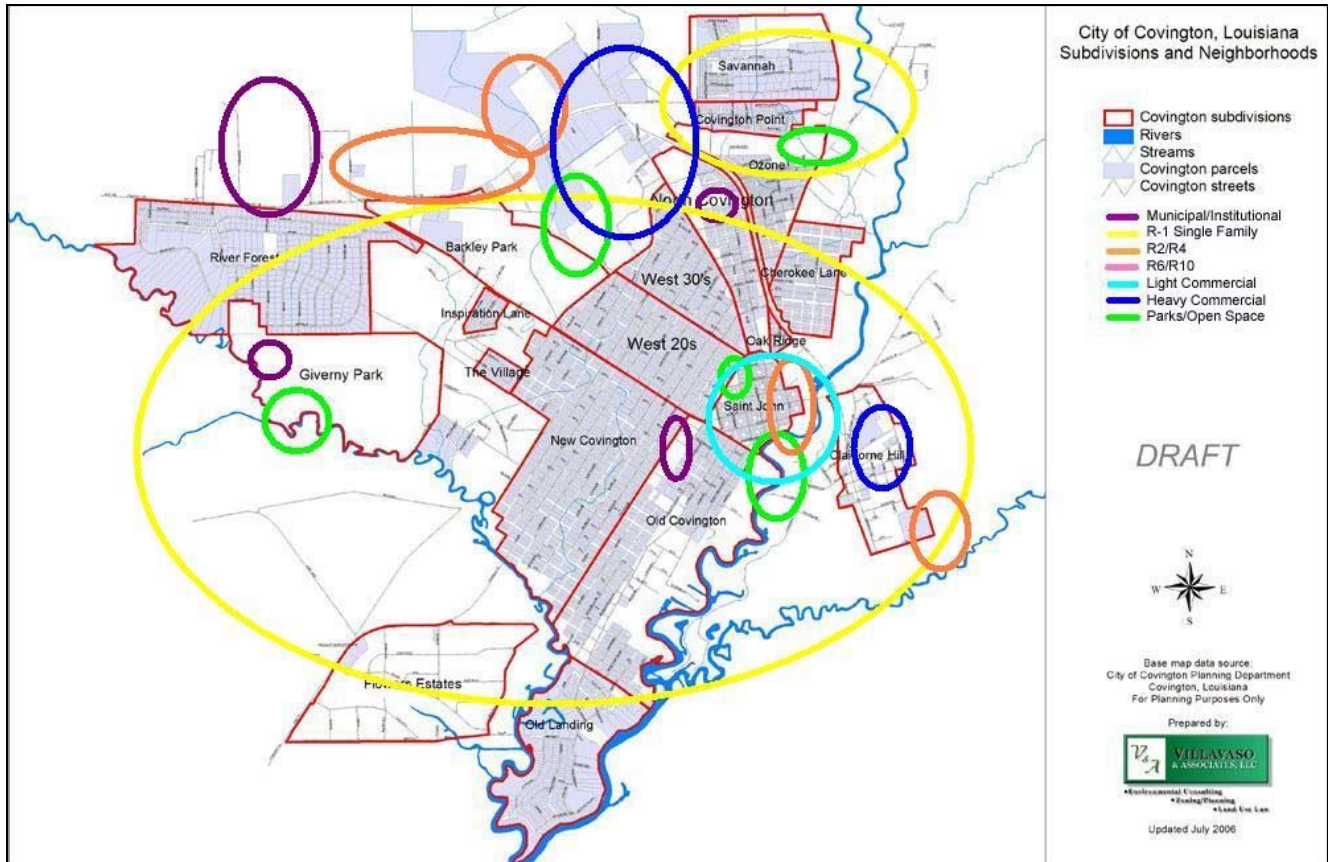
Group Three



Group three produced a land use map that focuses on the existing development of Covington. More specifically, attention was aimed at residential uses and municipal and institutional uses. The map above represents an interest in slightly increasing the low-density housing options and the preservation of single-family residential character of the community's older neighborhoods, while designating future municipal and institutional uses to the undeveloped areas. Overall, the generalized land use plan produced by group three shows a desire to focus to the way in which land is used in the developed areas of the city and an interest to increase housing options for Covington's residents.

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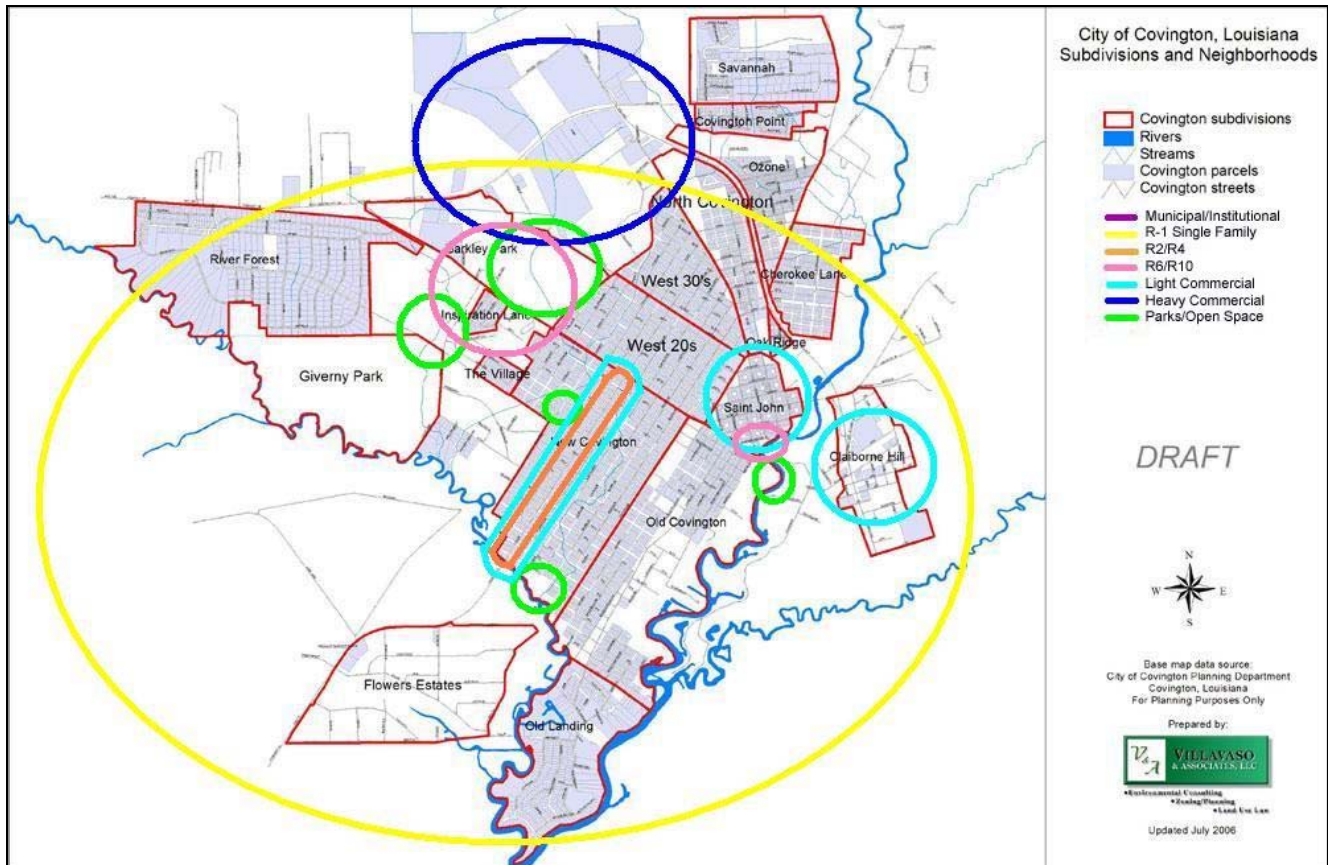
Group Four



The land use map produced by group four represents a desire to preserve the current condition of the community's residential areas, as most land use applications in the map above concentrate on the mixed use, commercial, and undeveloped areas of Covington. Group four communicates an interest in increasing parks and open space, as well as low density housing options in commercially designated areas. Overall, the generalized land use map produced by group four shows maintains the current single-family residential status of existing neighborhoods by designating low density housing options and heavy commercial uses to outlying areas.

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Group Five



Group five produced a land use map that aims to address the way in which land is used in the existing development of Covington. Group members express an interest in combining uses, increasing the amount of parks and open spaces, and increasing housing options. Overall, the generalized land use map produced by group five maintains the low density character of Covington's existing neighborhoods by allowing heavy commercial use in an area that experiences lower traffic volume, combining uses and increasing housing options, while increasing recreational uses throughout the community.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

III. Visioning

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Visioning Process

The visioning process of the comprehensive plan update was the first and most important step to be taken. It began with the visioning discussion included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative and continued to develop with each phase of the planning process. The interests and concerns expressed in the Steering Committee meetings, the 1-on-1 meetings, the neighborhood meetings, and the issue meetings were an important part of the visioning process. They uncovered the issues that face Covington today and the way in which the citizens of Covington wish to live, work, learn, and play in the future.

Visioning questions asked during these meetings included:

- What issues face Covington today?
- What are your greatest concerns about the future of Covington?
- What are your interests for the future of Covington?

Analysis revealed that many of the visioning elements from the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative remain to be visioning elements today. These elements include sense of place and identity, community, safety, recreation, education, and family centered community. However, Covington has experienced a shift in its vision of the future, as the community's demographics have changed. An analysis of Covington's census data uncovered a demographic profile requiring a diverse variety of needs.

The interests listed in the questionnaires and discussed during the neighborhood meetings validated the needs that were exposed in the U.S. Census data. These interests include housing choice, transportation choice, pedestrian safety, recreation choice, community involvement, sustainable growth, connectivity, and improved infrastructure.

The visioning process produced a vision statement that united the visioning elements of the 1998 plan and the elements gathered during the visioning process that reflect the new needs of Covington's residents. This vision statement was presented to the Steering Committee for analysis and validation. After extensive discussion, the vision statement was modified and finalized.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Assets to Life in Covington

Assets are those amenities of living in Covington that positively impact the quality of life. They are items that are appreciated or cherished by the local community and warrant ongoing maintenance or enhancement.

Community and Values:

- Strong sense of community
- Number and quality of churches
- Number and quality of schools
- Citizen involvement
- Proud community with a sense of identity
- Respect for the Arts
- Neighborhood sense of place and ownership
- Family-oriented
- Environmentally aware
- Strong central core “town center” area

Environment and location

- Rivers with fishing and recreation opportunities
- Climate
- Elevation
- Parks
- Safety
- Downtown

Economic opportunity and incentives

- Location
- Available land
- Established identity
- Available structures
- Available and growing workforce
- Medical expansion
- Professional services
- Parish Seat
- Tax incentives

Trade and transportation amenities

- Transportation corridors: I-12, Causeway/Highway 190/Collins, Highway 21

Facilities and services

- Medical facilities
- Law enforcement
- Parish Courthouse

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Challenges to Life in Covington

Challenges represent real or perceived issues that negatively impact Covington. It is important to realize both real and perceived issues and develop the capacity to address each appropriately. Also, challenges should be viewed as additional opportunities for the community. They represent the chance to achieve positive results in implanting the recommendations included in this comprehensive plan update.

Community and values

- Irresponsible landlords
- Lack of strong, available neighborhood associations
- High poverty rate
- Lack of social connectivity
- Lack of communication with Parish and surrounding cities

Environmental and location

- Water quality

Economic opportunity

- Minimal business development
- Commercial vacancies
- Lack of coordination with Parish development
- Difficulty in providing middle-income positions

Trade and transportation

- Poor street lighting
- Lack of physical connectivity
- Deteriorating pedestrian facilities
- Automobile friendly development
- Nonexistent public transit choices
- Significant traffic congestion at peak hours
- Limited alternative routes

Facilities and services

- Recreation choices
- Law enforcement visible presence
- Light industrial uses

Growth and housing

- Substandard housing, blight, and abandonment
- Lack of housing choice
- Lack of quality, affordable workforce housing

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Envisioning the Future for Covington

Through assets and challenges, numerous public meetings and significant data collection, a series of desires and aspirations for the future emerge that represent the essence of the vision for Covington. The assembled information indicates that stakeholders and residents seek a future for Covington that includes:

- ❑ A sustainable and attractive development pattern that will maintain the community's sense of place
- ❑ Enhanced economic activity and opportunities, particularly for small and local businesses
- ❑ An increased quality of life for all residents
- ❑ A clean and safe community
- ❑ Partnerships between Covington, St. Tammany Parish, and the surrounding cities

Vision and Strategies

The vision for the Covington Comprehensive Plan Update is designed to set focus on the broad picture that the stakeholders and residents envision as the future. Similarly, a vision statement can be applied to each element of the Plan to act as a guide for strategies and planning objectives. The identification of vision and strategies provides a basis for decision-making during both development and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Land use

- ❑ Promote efficient, long-term growth within Covington and outside of sensitive development areas
- ❑ Achieve a balanced, diverse and dynamic pattern of land uses that preserves and enhances the character of Covington
- ❑ Utilize, revitalize and maintain the urban areas of Covington in a manner that represents dynamic character and strengthens economic capacity
- ❑ Develop new areas with an appreciation for sensitive environments, long-term quality of life, economic efficiency, and community character
- ❑ Develop and implement a series of policies, regulations, processes, and incentives that consistently represent the vision of the community and the character of the area

Environment

- ❑ Encourage preservation and sensitive utilization of the rivers and wetlands
- ❑ Provide for the conservation of natural areas
- ❑ Encourage the rehabilitation of the Bogue Falaya River

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Economic Development

- ❑ Support and work with existing businesses and property owners to ensure the continued viability of Covington's commercial and downtown areas and other existing retail development
- ❑ Identify areas suitable for redevelopment and develop specific strategies on a site-by-site basis to encourage such redevelopment
- ❑ Identify areas suitable for new economic development
- ❑ Strengthen Covington's viability as a destination within the region

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

- ❑ Provide a diverse blend of parks, recreation, and open space areas throughout the City
- ❑ Encourage the preservation of open space to reflect the unique resources of Covington's natural environment and to enhance the community's livability, aesthetic quality, and natural beauty
- ❑ Expand and enhance youth programs to meet the current and future needs of the City
- ❑ Expand and enhance recreation programs to meet the current and future needs of all ages and interests in Covington
- ❑ Promote river activities and programs such that all persons have equal access and opportunity to enjoy the recreational value of local water resources
- ❑ Develop an on- and off-street network of pedestrian and bicycle ways and nature trails throughout Covington
- ❑ Establish cooperative agreements and coordinated efforts with other governmental jurisdictions, educational bodies, and private sector entities
- ❑ Identify dedicated funding sources for the acquisition, development, operation and maintenance of parks and recreation areas, facilities, programs and activities

Transportation

- ❑ Improve mobility at major congestion points and throughout the City by method of key thoroughfare improvements, new construction, and enhancing the existing street infrastructure
- ❑ Enhance and improve Covington's major entrance corridors
- ❑ Advocate beautification and enhancement of major thoroughfares
- ❑ Promote pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a viable alternative to automobile traffic
- ❑ Investigate opportunities for rapid, affordable transit between Covington and New Orleans
- ❑ Coordinate with state, regional, and city agencies to plan for current and future transportation needs of the area

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Utilities and Infrastructure

- ❑ Provide safe, reliable utility services to adequately meet present and future residential and commercial demands
- ❑ Provide environmentally sensitive, high quality service level, utility systems to adequately support future land use and development planning
- ❑ Revitalize all aging and failing utilities infrastructure

Housing

- ❑ Ensure that a variety of housing options are available to new and current residents of Covington that are affordable at all income levels
- ❑ Ensure that each neighborhood sustains only its fair share of multi-family and subsidized housing units
- ❑ Develop a new zoning classification for planned multiple family housing developments, to ensure optimally facilitated infrastructure and standards, and to apply it to appropriate sites in Covington
- ❑ Maintain a high standard for existing neighborhoods, including ongoing maintenance, neighborhood revitalization, community leadership and development of amenities
- ❑ Maintain an attractive, quality housing stock that promotes Covington as a community with pride
- ❑ Encourage the creation of a unified homeowner/neighborhood association representing the interests of all residents – homeowners and renters – of Covington

Facilities and Education

- ❑ Expand staffing and facilities as needed to meet and maintain high standards for law enforcement
- ❑ Provide for facility maintenance and development, staff enhancement and equipment acquisition needed to meet the long-term fire protection needs of Covington
- ❑ Support the St. Tammany Parish School Board and other educational institutions in providing quality education opportunities, including school facilities that are adequate to handle current enrollment and increasing enrollment projections

Safety and Clean-up

- ❑ Maintain public perception of safety in all areas of Covington
- ❑ Decrease litter in Covington
- ❑ Work with businesses and schools to assist cleanup and beautification

Achieving the Community Vision

As the foundation of the planning process, the vision represents the starting point for both preparing for the future and for successful plan implementation.

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Vision for Covington

The City of Covington will continue to preserve its natural and created environment while fostering its small-town wholesomeness and its family centeredness. To preserve its distinct identity, the citizens of Covington will accept the challenge of creating a safe, united, and identifiable community that enhances the quality of life for all residents. Covington will embrace its historic and environmental assets and recognize the needs of its diverse community. An improved quality of life will be accomplished by providing and protecting housing, recreation, employment, and transportation choices that meet the needs of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds. The City will create balanced economic development by utilizing its cultural, geographical, and social assets to achieve sustainable economic opportunities for its citizens. Covington's built environment will be one in which regulation and design is used to guide development in a safe, connected, fair, and balanced manner, while preserving, emulating, and respecting its existing identity, architecture, and trends. As its community and families grow, Covington will preserve the lifestyle that its citizens enjoy, desire, and deserve.

**COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE
UPDATE**

**IV.
Recommendations**

COVINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING INITIATIVE UPDATE

Land Use Plan

Building from information included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative, data obtained from the City of Covington and the U.S. Census Bureau, consensus gathered from Covington's citizens, and professional analysis, Villavaso & Associates developed a future land use plan that reflects the vision and needs of the Community.

This land use plan applied the Land-based Classification Standards (LBCS) model, a nationally accepted and applied method of land use classification. LBCS is a consistent model for classifying land uses based on their characteristics. It broadens the classification of land uses into multiple dimensions, such as activities, functions, building types, site development character, and ownership constraints. Each dimension has its own set of categories and subcategories, or coding scheme, to secure precise control over land-use classification⁴.

These classifications include Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Mixed, and Recreational uses. After it is identified, each use may be assigned a function. For example, institutional use may be assigned as educational, health care, utility related activities, emergency response activities, etc.

This land use plan applies ten land use categories:

- Residential-Low
- Residential-Medium
- Residential-High
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Urban Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Regional Commercial
- Institutional
- Medical
- Recreation

⁴ American Planning Association, "Land Based Classification Standards" Introduction, www.planning.org/lbcs

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Residential-Low/-Medium/-High

The residential land use category comprises all establishments offering residence or accommodation, such as houses, apartments, and housing for the elderly. The specification of “Low”, “Medium”, and “High” identify the maximum allowable density. For example, Residential-Low includes single family to two-family structures. Residential-Medium includes single family, two-family, and four-family structures, as well as townhouses and condominiums. Residential-High includes all previous dwelling types in addition to eight-family structures. These densities are general. They are most appropriately addressed in an updated Zoning Ordinance, which will specify the allowable number of dwelling units per acre.

Neighborhood Commercial

The neighborhood commercial land use category comprises all establishments offering commercial support to for local or neighborhood residents. Such uses include, but are not limited to, a neighborhood supermarket, a small retail shop, a restaurant, or neighborhood clinics. The specific commercial uses will be applied appropriately to city parcels designated as neighborhood commercial in an updated zoning ordinance, as not all neighborhood commercial uses are suitable for all neighborhoods.

Regional Commercial

The regional commercial land use category comprises light to heavy commercial for businesses serving the city and surrounding communities. Such uses include, but are not limited to, large retail, office buildings and complexes, automobile related services, studios, galleries, or restaurants. The specific commercial uses will be applied appropriately to city parcels designated as regional commercial in an updated zoning ordinance, as not all regional commercial uses are suitable for the City of Covington.

Neighborhood Mixed Use

The neighborhood mixed-use category comprises an appropriate mixture land uses that serve neighborhood needs, such as residential, recreational, neighborhood commercial, medical, and institutional needs. They include small community businesses and commercial facilities that serve the recreational business, medical, and institutional needs of a contained area. Such uses include single-family houses, apartments above small businesses, a community park, a doctor’s office, a convenient store, government buildings, or an elementary school. An updated zoning ordinance will specify a percentage of each allowable

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land use to all neighborhood mixed-use corridors and areas in order to achieve a suitable balance of uses (i.e. sixty percent residential, thirty percent neighborhood commercial, seven percent institutional, and three recreational).

Urban Mixed Use

The urban mixed-use category comprises an appropriate mixture of land uses that serve citywide needs such as residential, recreational, regional commercial, medical, institutional, and industrial. Such uses include, but are not limited to, single-family houses, apartments, office parks, educational facilities, community recreational facilities, government buildings, regional commercial businesses, or light industrial uses. An updated zoning ordinance will specify a percentage of each allowable land use to all urban mixed-use corridors and areas in order to achieve a suitable balance of uses.

Institutional

The institutional land use category comprises all establishments that serve the religious, municipal, and educational needs of the community. Such uses include, but are not limited to, permanent schools, churches, or government buildings and the administrative support for each use.

Medical

The medical land use category comprises all establishments that serve the medical needs of the community. Such uses include, but are not limited to, a hospital, outpatient clinics, physical therapy clinics, doctor's offices, labs, testing facilities, or other administrative and supporting uses.

Recreational

The recreational land use category comprises all neighborhood and city recreational activities, as well as environmental preservation needs. Such uses include, but are not limited to, a recreation center, a community center, a playground, or reserved open space.

The land use recommendations included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative were based on data, projection, and the assumption that surrounding land would be annexed into the city limits for development. This plan update includes recommendations for both parcels currently inside the city limits, as well as the area included within the Growth Management boundaries. These recommendations for existing property within Covington's city limits aim to balance the St. Tammany Parish land use and zoning, as well as the land use needs for Covington.

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General Land Use

Covington is described as being strategically located within the geographic parameters of the Bogue Falaya and the Tchefuncte Rivers. Its growth is limited by a growth boundary agreed upon by both the City of Covington and St. Tammany Parish governments. Because of its legal and physical boundaries, the way in which Covington uses its land is pertinent.

The central business district for Covington is the Division of St. John, a historic traditional downtown that has served as the town center since the community was first settled in the late 1700s. Residential development and the Bogue Falaya River, which significantly limits its expansion possibilities, surround it.

The future arrangement of land uses requires examining past growth patterns and current physical characteristics in term of the types, scale, density, and location of residential, commercial, and industrial, as well as other public and private land use types.

Transition zones

Transition zones address changes between land use categories. These changes are not reflected in the generalized land use map. Instead, they are best addressed in an update of the City's zoning ordinance and map.

Another way to address these land use transitions is the establishment of an overlay. Overlay zoning is a form of control that promotes certain types of development by placing additional limits on the use of an area already regulated by the City's general zoning ordinance. The following examples explain the way in which overlay zoning will address different uses in the City of Covington:

Light Industrial

The City of Covington could create a zone around an existing light industrial use to serve as a buffer in order to reduce the affects of noise and traffic on the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Commercial

An overlay will also address the way in which land uses change from commercial to residential, as it will specify the types of commercial uses that are appropriate for buffering incompatible uses from residential neighborhoods.

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Medical

An overlay will also address the way in which land uses change from medical to all other land uses, as it will specify the type of allowable medical use or supporting use is appropriate for surrounding areas. This includes issues such as parking, height, and waste needs.

Mixed Use

A major concept of the updated future land use plan is Smart Growth. Mixing compatible land uses is an important element in the Smart Growth philosophy. Downtown Covington is made of a mixture of uses that came together naturally over time. It epitomizes the Smart Growth model with its balanced mixture of various institutional, commercial, recreational, and residential uses in a walkable environment. Similar environments are beginning to occur throughout Covington. These are areas that require guidance to ensure that they become successfully balanced mixed-use developments.

The village center concept included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative is an application of mixed uses appropriate at the neighborhood level. This concept calls for a smaller scale of the uses that exist in Downtown Covington (District of St. John) and would be located in areas to serve a growing community.

This village center concept is an appropriate application for corridors such as Tyler Street, Jefferson Avenue, Columbia Street (outside of the District of St. John), and 21st Avenue, where a mixture of uses is slowly occurring.

As mixed use incorporates a mixture of different compatible uses, a variety of levels of mixed uses may be applied to the appropriate areas throughout a community. Neighborhood mixed use is a smaller scale of development appropriate near or in residential or neighborhood commercial areas. Urban mixed use is appropriate for dense areas near or in primarily neighborhood commercial or heavy commercial areas. The updated future land use plan acknowledges the distinction and included this separation of mixed-use levels in the future land use map.

Intensity

The term “intensity” describes a combination of height and density. High intensity land use takes advantage of the maximum height allowance and maximum density allowance. Low intensity land use is the opposite, where restrictions limit allowable height and density, and medium intensity land uses establish a middle

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ground between high and low intensity levels. The appropriate application and allowance of each intensity level varies by community; therefore, Covington's citizens participated in a land use exercise that applied the appropriate intensity levels to identified zones and corridors in the community. On average, the citizens expressed interest in significantly altering development on Collins Boulevard and Zone 7 to high intensity levels and maintaining a majority of development at medium intensity levels, while the primarily residential areas to remain at low intensity levels.

High Intensity



- Pedestrian friendly
- Mixed use
- Variation of allowable height
- Uniform streetscape
- Landscaping and design regulations

This compact land use is a suitable model for areas within Covington that are designated for heavy commercial land uses that do not border low-density residential neighborhoods.

Claiborne Hill is an area that is disconnected physically from most of Covington, as it is located on the east bank of the Bogue Falaya. This area consists of commercial uses and is situated at an intersection of U.S. Highway 190 and LA Highway 21. Because of its location and existing land use, the northern portion of Collins Boulevard is best suited for high intensity land use where it does not border low to medium density residential. Medium intensity land use is appropriate for the areas of Collins Boulevard that border low to medium density residential.

A majority of Zone 7 remains undeveloped, though existing land use and zoning allow mostly for heavy commercial use. As neighborhood and heavy commercial uses are beginning to develop, specific areas of Zone 7 are suitable for high intensity land use. These are areas that do not border low-density residential neighborhoods.

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Medium Intensity



- Limited nodes of increased height
- Overall moderate height restrictions
- Open space
- Landscaping
- Parking

This moderate level of intensity is a suitable model for most of the mixed-use corridors and areas within Zone 7 that do border low density residential neighborhoods. For example, the major corridors of travel within Covington are appropriate for medium intensity development, such as Tyler Street, 21st Avenue, and Columbia Street. Limited nodes of increased height are appropriate for the medical use on Tyler Street and for development along Columbia Street approaching Planning Zone 7.

Low Intensity



- Mixed use
- Low maximum building height
- Landscaping and Design requirements
- Uniform streetscape
- Pedestrian friendly

This moderate level of intensity is a suitable model for a mixture of uses within or along low density residential or a small-scale historic district. Jefferson Avenue is

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situated between Downtown Covington, a historic district in which a maximum height allowance of 35 feet is in place, and a primarily single family neighborhood, the West 20s. Because of its surrounding context, Jefferson Avenue is suitable for this type of low intensity land use.

Design Overlays

Covington's unique sense of place is an important community asset. Preserving its identity is an element of this community's future vision. Establishing design overlays along all of the major corridors will guide future development so that it will respect and reflect those tangible elements that create this unique sense of place. Major corridors appropriate for the application of a design overlay include: Collins Blvd, Tyler Street, Columbia Street, Boston Street, 21st Avenue, Highway 190.

Downtown

Downtown Covington is identified as a special needs area because of its historic status and preservation restrictions that control development, design, and height. These limitations are necessary for the architectural and historic preservation, which creates a need for new urban areas, designated for neighborhood commercial uses, heavy commercial uses, and a moderate height increase in appropriate areas.

New Districts

The identification of new districts is an important step in planning for Covington's current and future growth. Currently, Covington's arrangement includes the medical corridor on Tyler Street, historic Downtown Covington, and an eclectic collection of commercial and institutional uses along Collins Boulevard, and disconnected commercial pockets throughout the city limits. In order to direct and balance the future growth of the community, districts and corridors must be created and assigned a use or mixture of uses.

Medical District

Covington's medical district will continue to expand in response to the community's demand and growth. St. Tammany Hospital, located on Tyler Street/Highway 21, is surrounded by residential use; as a result, expansion is limited, and could require an increase in allowable height. The creation of a second medical district will allow for a balance of medical services throughout the community.

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Regional Commercial

There is a need within Covington's city limits for a district where height and density is appropriate. Two areas have been identified as appropriate locations for high intensity, regional commercial use: Claiborne Hill and a small parcel in Planning Zone 7.

Retail Corridor

Economic development was discussed and analyzed during the second Issue Meeting and in the meeting exercise. The participants agreed that the City should take action in expanding its retail industry. When asked an appropriate location for retail expansion, the majority identified Collins Boulevard.

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Proposed Land Use

Planning Zone 1

Planning Zone 1 is situated between the northern boundary of Covington, the Bogue Falaya River, and Collins Boulevard (Highway 190). Its current land use is primarily residential, with commercial uses along and extending from Collins Boulevard. The neighborhoods identified as the Savannahs, Covington Point, Ozone, and Cherokee Lane are contained within the boundaries of Planning Zone 1.

Collins Boulevard serves as the western border for Planning Zone 1 and is the major corridor within Covington's city limits. The development occurring along the Collins/190 corridor is a concern expressed during every Neighborhood Meeting, as it is emerging as low intensity highway commercial use. It lacks continuity, organization, and sense of place. This development trend contradicts the citizens' vision of their community and the development trends taking place in other neighborhoods. Because of its importance, Collins Boulevard was addressed during each Issue Meeting exercise. Results revealed that Covington residents would like Collins Boulevard to emerge as a medium to high intensity retail corridor with a design overlay that will create a sense of place through development, design, and landscaping requirements. The land use recommendations designate Collins Boulevard as a medium to high intensity Neighborhood Commercial corridor. Specific uses allowed on this corridor will be addressed in an update of the City's zoning ordinance and map.

The Savannahs, Cherokee Lane, and Covington Point are relatively low-density residential neighborhoods, with some exception along Collins Boulevard. A significant area of land within and around these neighborhoods remains undeveloped. Because of access and the large flood zone area extending from the Bogue Falaya River, Residential-low is the most appropriate use for the expansion of these neighborhoods.

Ozone is situated along Collins Boulevard and serves as a buffer between the highway commercial use and the single-family residential use of the surrounding neighborhoods. Because of its relationship to Collins Boulevard, the Ozone neighborhood will best serve as a buffer to the Residential-low land use majority of Planning Zone 1 with a Residential-Medium land use classification. While the majority of Ozone best serves as Residential-Medium, a nine blocks along Collins Boulevard are designated as Residential-High, which will increase housing choice with the inclusion of all housing types and will serve as the first buffer of residential use extending from the Neighborhood Commercial corridor.

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The proposed land use recommendations for Planning Zone 1:

- Increase a select portion of Ozone to Residential-high
- Medium to high intensity neighborhood commercial use on Collins with design overlay
- Residential-low land use for the majority of Zone 1
- Use Residential-medium use as buffer

Planning Zone 2

Planning Zone 2 is located in the heart of Covington. It is strategically located next to Downtown Covington, Collins Boulevard, and 21st Avenue. The Parish Courthouse, the St. Tammany School Board annex building, and the Covington Public Library are all located within the boundaries of Planning Zone 2. It consists of the West 20s, the West 30s, and New Covington neighborhoods. Because of the superfluity of issues identified in Planning Zone 2, the land use recommendations have been listed by neighborhood in order to thoroughly address these issues in an organized manner.

The West 20s is a low-density residential neighborhood with a conflicting land use created by the light industrial land use bound by West 26th Avenue, Filmore, Dutch, and Jefferson Avenue. The main issue in the West 20s is neighborhood preservation, as residents feel threatened by zoning change requests and commercial encroachment.

The proposed land use recommendations for the West 20s:

- Maintain low-density residential use
- Accessory dwelling unit allowance
- Designate Tyler Street a medium intensity neighborhood mixed use corridor with design overlay
- Designate Jefferson Ave a low intensity neighborhood mixed use corridor with design overlay

The West 30s is primarily a medium-density residential neighborhood that shares the same conflicting land use created by the light industrial land use. This is a neighborhood that houses many of Covington's citizens that live below the poverty level and suffers from blighted property, substandard housing, and enforcement issues. Maintaining the medium-density residential use is important to ensure affordable workforce housing for Covington residents in this neighborhood.

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Both Jefferson Avenue and Columbia Street border the neighborhood. These corridors have been recommended as mixed-use corridors in the land use discussion.

The proposed land use recommendations for the West 30s include:

- Maintain the medium-density residential use
- Designate Tyler Street as a medium intensity neighborhood mixed use corridor with design overlay
- Designate Jefferson Avenue as a low intensity neighborhood mixed use corridor with design overlay

North Covington currently serves as a transition zone between the highway commercial use on Collins Boulevard and the residential use in the West 30s. It is a mixture of commercial and residential uses, as the neighborhood is situated between two major corridors: Collins Boulevard and Columbia Streets.

Collins Boulevard, also Highway 190, is the major corridor within Covington's city limits. The development occurring along the Collins/190 corridor is a concern expressed during every Neighborhood Meeting, as it is emerging as low intensity highway commercial use. It lacks continuity, organization, and sense of place. This development trend contradicts the citizens' vision of their community and the development trends taking place in other neighborhoods. Because of its importance, Collins Boulevard was addressed during each Issue Meeting exercise. Results revealed that Covington residents would like Collins Boulevard to emerge as a medium to high intensity retail corridor with a design overlay that will create a sense of place through development, design, and landscaping requirements.

Columbia Street separates North Covington from the West 30s. It is parallel to Collins Boulevard and links Downtown Covington to future Planning Zone 7. It is slowly emerging as a mixed-use corridor, secondary to the highway commercial use of Collins Boulevard. Because of the residential use on both sides of Columbia Street and its connection with Downtown Covington, the use of Columbia Street should be designated as low to medium intensity neighborhood mixed use.

The existing residential use in North Covington is surrounded by commercial use on its eastern and western boundaries and by institutional use on its northern and southern boundaries. It is important that current planning efforts work to preserve the existing residential use of North Covington. Therefore, the future land use recommendations are to maintain the medium-density residential use, to designate the surrounding parcels as low to medium intensity neighborhood

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mixed use, and to maintain and expand institutional use of the northern portion of the neighborhood.

The proposed land use recommendations for North Covington:

- Preserve medium density residential use
- Low to medium intensity neighborhood mixed use
- Designate Collins Boulevard as medium to high intensity Regional Commercial land use with design overlay
- Designate Columbia Street as a low to medium intensity neighborhood mixed-use corridor with a design overlay.
- Institutional use

Planning Zone 3

Planning Zone 3 is Covington's largest Planning Zone, as it contains the greatest amount of land within Covington's city limits and is made up of primarily residential neighborhoods and undeveloped parcels of land. The neighborhoods within the area are River Forest, The Village, and Barkley Parc. The 2 major corridors in Planning Zone 3 are Highway 190, which serves as the northern boundary, and 21st Avenue. Fifteenth Avenue serves as a secondary corridor, providing access to all neighborhoods.

The assigned future use of Highway 190, where it separates Planning Zone 3 from Planning Zone 7, should carefully consider the institutional use of Covington High School in Planning Zone 7 and the single family residential use in River Forest. The future land use recommendation for the section of Highway 190 that borders Planning Zone 3 is the application of Neighborhood Mixed Use.

Currently, the section of 21st Avenue within Zone 3 is emerging as a neighborhood commercial corridor. Low to medium intensity neighborhood commercial use is appropriate for parcels extending from 21st Avenue between Highway 190 and Anthony, where residential use does not face the corridor. As portions of 21st Avenue are currently residential, low to medium intensity neighborhood mixed use is appropriate for parcels extending from 21st Avenue below Anthony.

River Forest is a single-family residential neighborhood, where Kehoe France school is located. The Little Tchefuncte River serves as the neighborhood's western border. Because of its current use, its location, and its limited access, River Forest is best used as a Residential-low neighborhood.

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The Village has developed as a single-family neighborhood. The future land use recommendations do not affect this neighborhood.

A majority of the land in the Barkley Parc neighborhood is inside existing St. Tammany Parish limits designated as Mixed Use Commercial. The land use plan recommends that the portions of Barkley Parc that currently exist inside the city limits be used as neighborhood commercial for those parcels extending from 21st Avenue and as Neighborhood Mixed Use and Residential-medium (see description of land use classifications) for those parcels extending from Highway 190.

A majority of the land within Planning Zone 3 is undeveloped, which can potentially be developed to serve the residential and recreational needs of the community. Low-density residential use is appropriate for these parcels due to the surrounding use and its limited access.

The land use plan recommends low intensity Neighborhood Mixed Use for the intersection of Menetre and 15th Avenue. Because of the amount of land that is designated as low-density residential use, it is important for this intersection to develop under the mixed-use village center concept. The uses will be carefully selected in the City's updated zoning code and ordinance to serve only the needs of the neighborhood as to prevent an increase in traffic into and through Planning Zone 3.

As Planning Zone 3 is deficient in recreational use, a small number of undeveloped parcels along the Little Tchefuncte River should be considered for recreational uses that will serve the residents of Planning Zone 3.

The proposed land use recommendations for Planning Zone 3:

- Medium intensity Neighborhood Mixed Use of Highway 190 bordering Zone 3
- Medium intensity Neighborhood Commercial/Neighborhood Mixed Use of 21st Avenue
- Residential-medium for Barkley Parc
- Residential-low between Tchefuncte River and 21st Avenue
- Low intensity Neighborhood Mixed Use for parcels located at Menetre and 15th Avenue
- Contained recreational use along Little Tchefuncte River

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Planning Zone 4

Planning Zone 4 is bound by the Little Tchefuncte, Jefferson Avenue, 21st Avenue, and to the west by Filmore, 15th Avenue, and Johnson Street. New Covington is the only neighborhood included in this Zone. This neighborhood includes a large portion of residential use, the community's medical/commercial corridor, and institutional use, thus making Zone 4 a destination point.

Southern access into Covington is limited due to the LittleTchefuncte River. Tyler Street is one of two bridged southern entrances into Covington and solely provides access to Interstate-12 and the surrounding commercial development. It is an emerging commercial/medical corridor, as St. Tammany Hospital and supporting uses are located along Tyler Street.

The Tyler Street infrastructure and surrounding residential use significantly limits traffic, development, and expansion capacities; therefore, Tyler Street should be designated as a neighborhood mixed-use corridor. A design overlay can be applied to allow for an increase in height allowance to the Little Tchefuncte River area and to limit medical expansion to the surrounding blocks of the existing medical use.

This Medium Density Residential use will serve as a transition zone between Neighborhood Mixed Use and Low Density Residential use.

The proposed land use recommendations for Planning Zone 4:

- Moderate expansion of the existing medical use
- Low to medium intensity neighborhood mixed use with design overlay on 21st Avenue
- Medium intensity neighborhood mixed use with design overlay on Tyler Street
- Moderate increase in allowable height on Tyler Street at Little Tchefuncte River
- Residential-medium along the mixed use corridor
- Residential-low for specified areas

Planning Zone 5

Planning Zone 5 is bound by the Bogue Falaya River, Downtown Covington, and Jefferson Avenue. Neighborhoods include Old Covington and Old Landing. Existing land use in these neighborhoods is primarily residential with limited

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institutional and recreational uses. Land use recommendations do not alter the way in which land is currently used in these neighborhoods.

The proposed land use recommendations for Planning Zone 5:

- Maintain general land use categories

Planning Zone 6

Planning Zone 6 is made up of Downtown Covington and Claiborne Hill. It experiences issues different from the other Planning Zones because of the primarily commercial use, as it does not include a primarily residential neighborhood within its boundaries.

Downtown Covington is the community's historic district where a natural mixture of uses has come together since its settlement in the late 1700s. It is protected by a height limitation of 35 feet and design regulations. The land use plan does not recommend land use changes for Downtown Covington.

Claiborne Hill is an area in which select parcels of land are in Covington's city limits, and St. Tammany Parish controls the remaining parcels. The existing land use is heavy commercial with the exception of a medium density residential neighborhood. The land use plan recommends that the Claiborne Hill maintain its Regional Commercial Use and Residential-Medium use and that it increases to a high intensity zone in which the allowable height is increased.

The proposed land use recommendations for Claiborne Hill:

- Regional commercial use
- Residential-Medium
- Moderately increase allowable height – Maximum 5 stories

Planning Zone 7

Future Planning Zone 7 remains mostly undeveloped. A majority of the land is Planning Zone 7 is outside of Covington's city limits, under the control of St. Tammany Parish land use and zoning regulations. The recommendations for this area were reached by careful consideration of three factors: Covington's vision and needs, the area's existing land use, and the St. Tammany Parish land use plan for this area.

Zone 7 presents the City of Covington with the opportunity for more intense land uses that will provide housing choice and expand the tax base. Urban Mixed Use, Neighborhood Mixed Use, and Regional Commercial land uses are

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recommended for land inside the city limits above Highway 190. These land use recommendations do not change current zoning and allow for the range of uses and varying scale of development that is currently taking place.

Urban Mixed Use allows for a range of housing choices, which include single-family neighborhoods to the ten-family structure. Under this land use classification the City of Covington has the opportunity to create a district that will include recreational facilities, a business industrial park, regional commercial complexes, or light industrial uses. The specification and allocation of each allowable use will be included in the City's updated zoning ordinance and map.

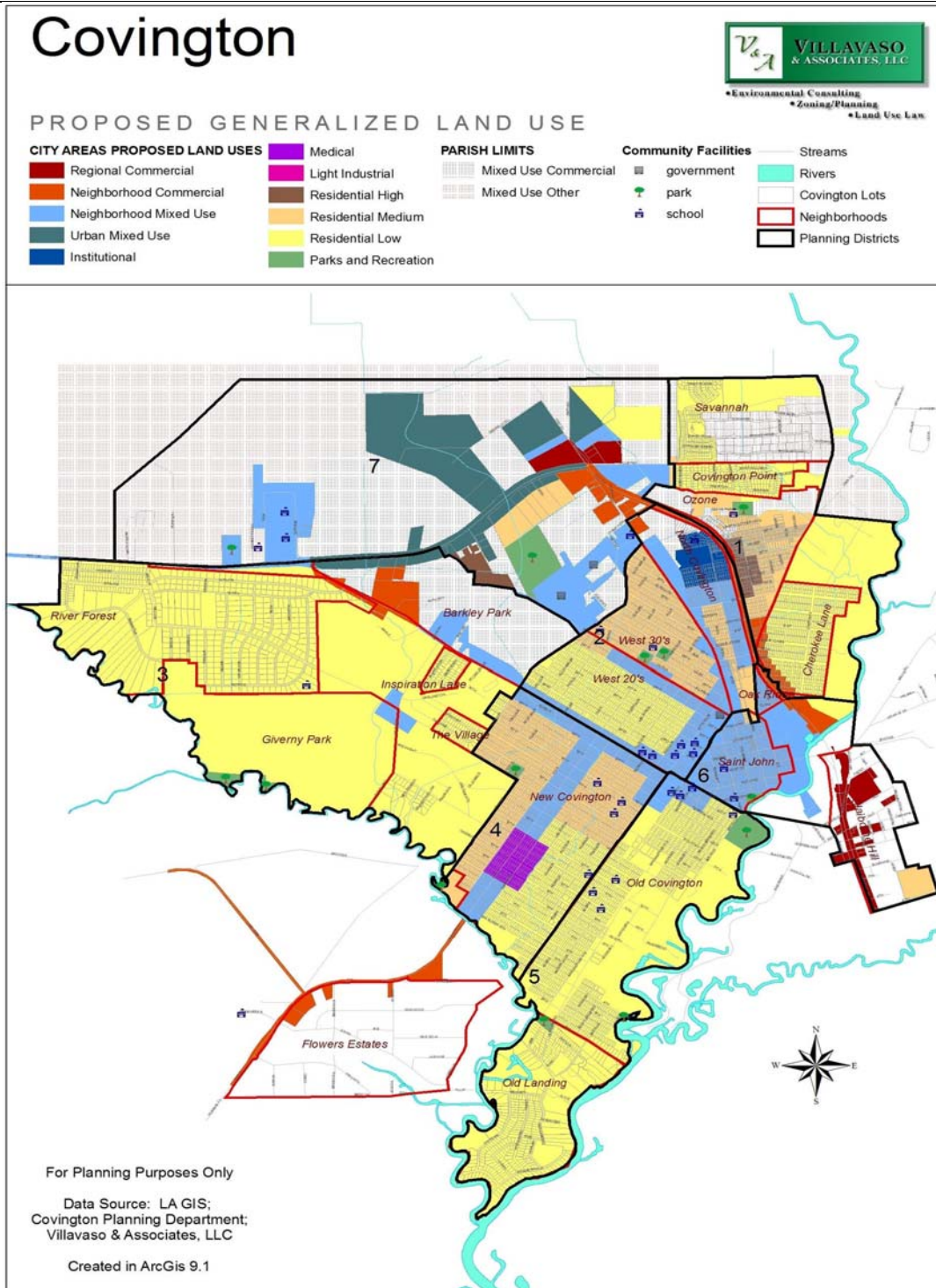
The St. Tammany Parish future land use plan has designated Parish property in Planning Zone 7 as either Mixed Use Commercial or Mixed Use Other; therefore, the land use plan must carefully balance the development of Parish land with Covington's future development.

The land use recommendations for Planning Zone 7:

- Medium to high intensity Urban Mixed-use for select portions of Highway 190
- Balance Parish Mixed Use Commercial with medium intensity Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Increase housing choice with Residential-medium
- High intensity Neighborhood Commercial on Collins Boulevard
- Limited high intensity Regional Commercial use

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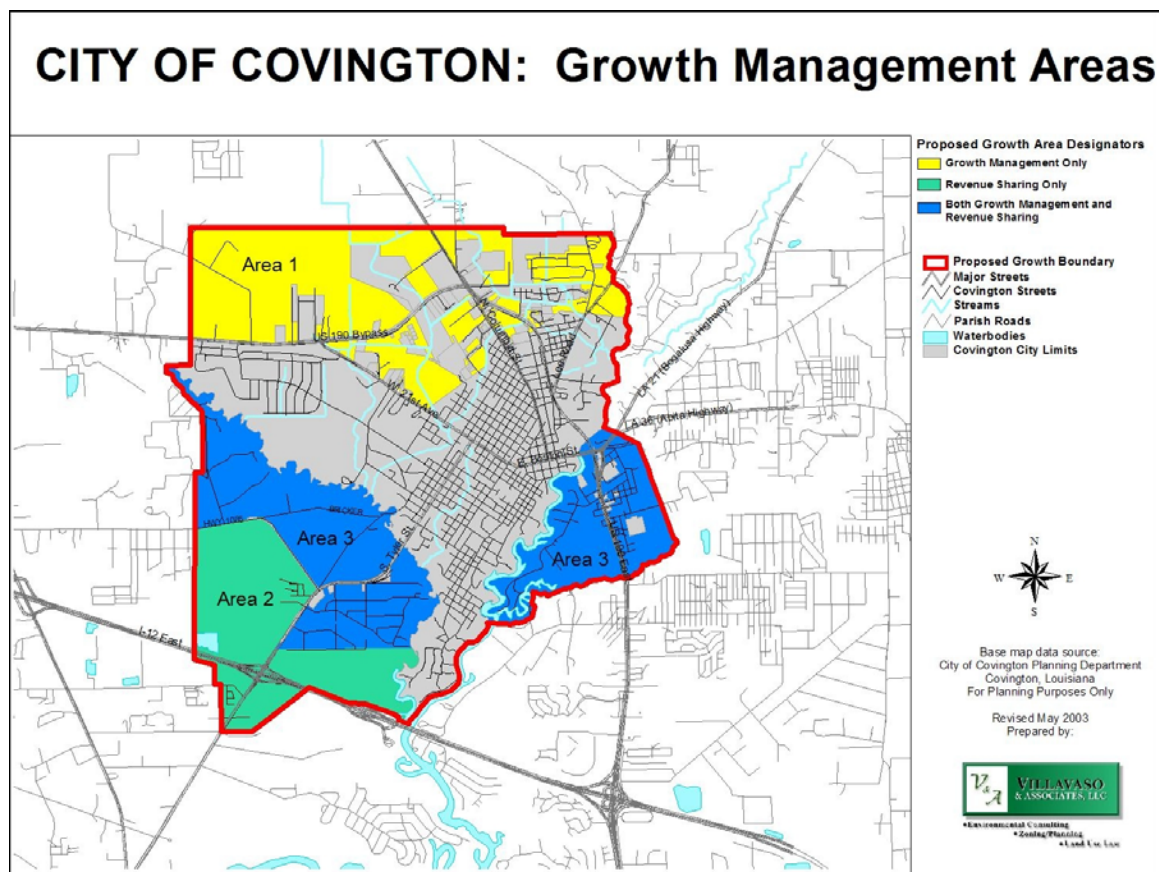
Proposed Generalized Land Use Map



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Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan includes recommendations for parcels within Covington's Growth Management agreement. These are areas in which an annexation agreement has been established between the City of Covington and the St. Tammany Parish government. The future land use recommendations are based on the community's needs and vision, as well as emerging land use trends and the proposed land use plan. All recommendations included in the Future Land Use Plan intend to complement the existing land use and emerging development, as well as the recommendations included in the Proposed Land Use Plan. The City of Covington recognizes that these properties may not be annexed into the city limits and remain under Parish zoning and land use control; therefore, the Future Land Use Recommendations serve as a basis for cooperation and coordination between the City of Covington and St. Tammany Parish regarding regulatory and land use tools.



Growth Management Area 1

Growth Management Area 1, located in Covington's northern region, includes Parish land currently within Planning Zones 1 and 7. The St. Tammany Parish

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Land Use Plan has identified this area as Mixed Use Commercial and Mixed Use Other, and this future land use plan intends to drill down these areas in order to assign more specific and balanced land use classifications.

Planning Zone 1

The Growth Management Area within Planning Zone 1 extends west from the Bogue Falaya River. At this time, the land is developing as Residential-low land use. As the surrounding neighborhoods are exclusively residential, it is important that the future land use of Growth Management Area 1 within Planning Zone 1 continue to develop as low density residential.

Because Collins Boulevard separates Planning Zone 1 from other Covington Planning Zones, it is beneficial to the residents of these neighborhoods to reserve land for recreational use. An appropriate location for recreational land use is a portion of the Growth Management Area that divides Covington Point from Ozone.

Planning Zone 7

Future land use recommendations for those parcels below the Highway 190 corridor extend and balance the Residential-low, Residential-medium, and Neighborhood mixed uses included in the Proposed Generalized Land Use Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan recommends that the land above Highway 190 respond to the future needs of Covington, as well as the current socio-economic and land use trends of the community. As the single-family residential neighborhood makes up the majority of Covington's existing land use, the future land use recommendations should continue this trend. The Proposed Future Land Use for Growth Management Area 1 is arranged to cluster Residential-medium, Mixed, Commercial, and Institutional land uses along Highway 190. By clustering denser land uses and surrounding them with low-density residential use, future development is shifted to the center of Covington, and traffic is not directed through single-family neighborhoods.

The Future Land Use Recommendations for Growth Management Area 1:

- Increase area of Residential-low
- Maintain and extend Neighborhood Mixed Use on Highway 190 next to Residential-low
- Maintain and extend Urban Mixed Use on remainder of Highway 190
- Increase area of Residential-medium
- Include supporting Institutional use

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Growth Management Area 3

Growth Management Area 3 is located in the southern region of Covington and is divided into two sections to the east and west of the existing city limits. It includes the portions of Claiborne Hill that are currently within St. Tammany Parish limits. The two major corridors included in this Growth Management Area are Highway 190 and Highway 21. The low-density, single-family neighborhood, Flower Estates, is also included in this growth area.

Growth Management Area 3 East

In continuity with Covington's land use trends and existing land use within the eastern portion of Growth Management Area 3, the future land use plan maintains and extends the regional and neighborhood commercial uses of Claiborne Hill and Highway 190. These areas are contained by Neighborhood Mixed Use, which serves as a buffer between the commercial uses and the surrounding residential land uses.

Residential-medium has been applied to a majority of those areas extending from Highway 190. In maintaining the low-density residential use along the River, Residential-low is reserved for those lots extending from the Little Tchefuncte River.

Growth Management Area 3 West

Similarly, the future land use plan maintains and extends the land use trends occurring in the western region of Covington and the surrounding development. Highway 21 is developing as a Neighborhood Commercial corridor. Because of development trends and its surrounding context, the future land use plan proposes that the Highway 21 corridor emerge as Neighborhood Commercial, bound by Neighborhood Mixed Use on either side to serve as transition zones into Residential-low. A secondary Neighborhood Mixed Use corridor is proposed for Highway 1085 in accordance with the mixed-use trend established in the Proposed Land Use Plan.

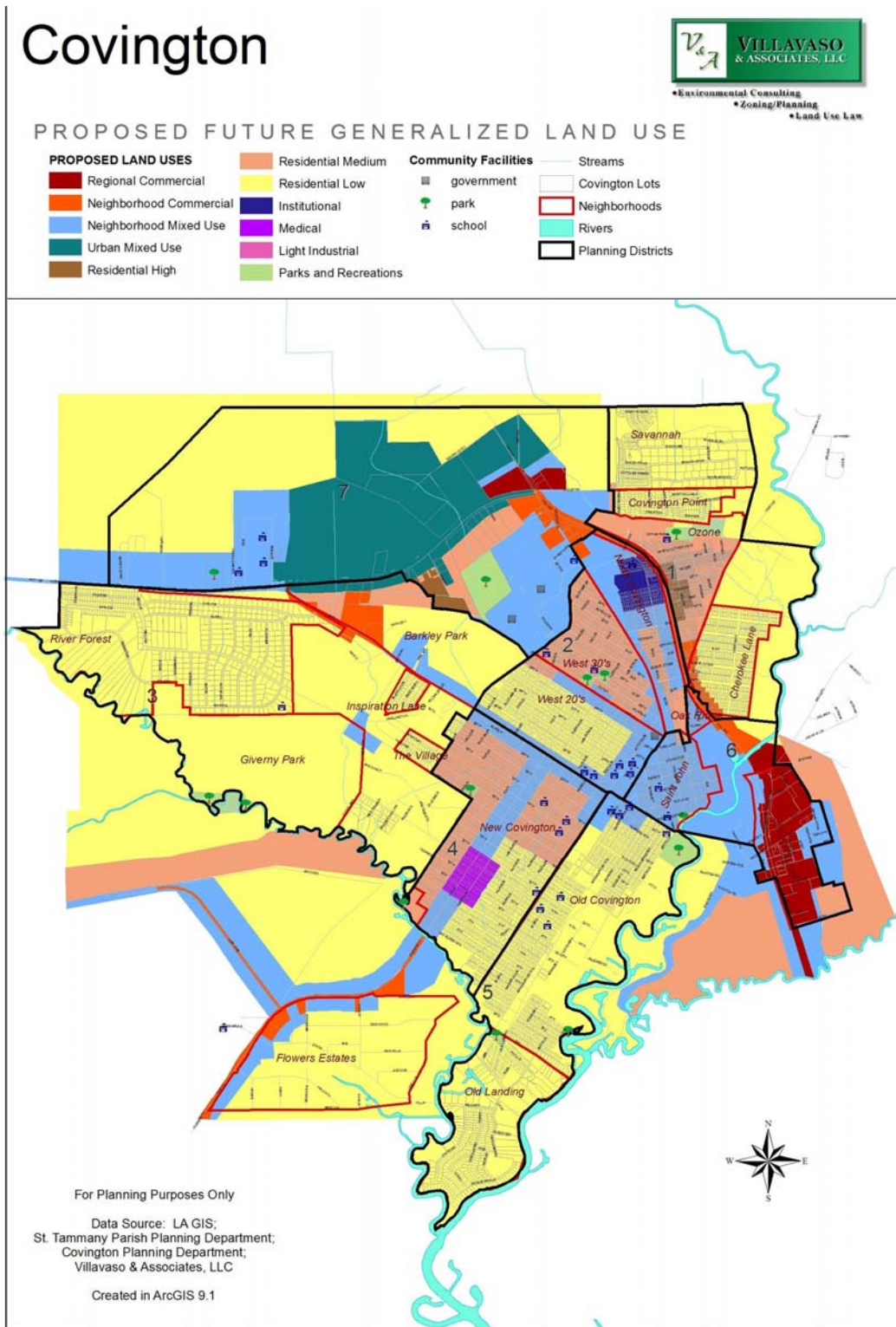
A majority of this area has been designated as Residential-low, the remainder designated as Residential-Medium, in accord with the access and surrounding context of the area.

The Future Land Use Recommendations for Growth Management Area 3:

- Increase housing density and choice in Management Area 3 East
- Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Mixed Use along Hwy 21
- Regional Commercial and Neighborhood Mixed Use along Highway 190
- Secondary Neighborhood Mixed Use corridors
- Residential-medium
- Extend Residential-low on both sides of the River

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Proposed Future Land Use Map



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Zoning

The first step in Covington's commitment to the City's comprehensive plan is to adopt the Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update. The next step is to develop a new zoning ordinance and map that will collapse the number and type of zoning classifications currently used by the City of Covington and will encompass a new interpretation in line with the Future Land Use. An updated zoning ordinance was a recommendation included in the 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative, and it remains to be a need.

The updated zoning ordinance will complement the land use map, as it will focus on the block and lot level and assign specific allowable uses to each parcel. It will address allowable height variations across the city and has the ability to assign design controls that will specify allowable signage and façade designs, as well as landscaping requirements with the use of overlay districts.

Please refer to the chart on the following page, which provides an example of the proposed land use classifications and a possible range of allowable uses in a typical zoning ordinance. It could serve as a guide for the City of Covington to develop an updated zoning ordinance and map.

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Land Use Guide To Typical Zoning

Land Use Classification	Purpose	Example of Use
Residential-Low	Low density residential use	Single family, two-family
Residential- Medium	Medium density residential use	Single family, 2-family, townhouse, condo, 4-family
Residential-High	High density residential use	Single family, two-family, townhouse, condo, up to 8-family building
Neighborhood Commercial	Community businesses and commercial facilities for local or neighborhood residents	Neighborhood supermarket, small retail, small clinics,
Regional Commercial	Light to Heavy commercial for businesses serving the city and surrounding communities	Large retail, office buildings and complexes, auto-related, studios, galleries, restaurant,
Neighborhood Mixed Use	Serve neighborhood needs such as residential, recreation, business, medical, and institutional	Elementary school, park, doctor's office, convenience store, small businesses, single family, two family, four family
Urban Mixed Use	Serve citywide needs such as residential, recreation, business, medical, and institutional	Office park, institutional, regional commercial, recreational, light industrial, all housing options
Institutional	Serve religious, governmental, and educational needs	Permanent schools, churches, government buildings and administrative support of each
Medical	Hospital, supporting uses	Hospital administrative offices, labs, testing lab/facilities
Parks, Recreation	Neighborhood and city recreational activities	Recreation center, reserved open space, playground, community center

Source: Villavaso & Associates, 2007

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Housing

Housing choice is a goal that the City of Covington must pursue. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2000 a high poverty rate of 17% for individuals, 11% for families, and 23% for children under the age of 18 in Covington. The 2000 Census data also revealed that the community has an increasing senior population. This is an indication that Covington will soon need an increase in senior housing options. Covington, also, experienced a significant decrease of 27% in residents between the ages of 25-34. While several factors combined have encouraged this decrease, the decrease in housing affordability in Covington is a likely factor.

As the service industries in Covington expand and the population ages, there is a growing awareness that to be a long-term viable community there needs to be a variety of people and housing choices. As such there is a growing mismatch between the city's low- to moderate-wage jobs and its expensive housing stock. In order to bridge this gap, affordable housing initiatives for working families should be considered and implemented. Commonly known as workforce housing, this has come to mean the gap facing those who earn too much to qualify for affordable housing subsidies, but not enough to afford a home or an apartment. The National Housing Conference, among the first to identify the issue in the late 1990s, defines workforce housing as "housing for those with at least one full-time worker who earns between minimum wage and the amount needed to afford to live in the area". The Urban Land Institute puts the bottom end of the workforce housing bracket at 50 or 60 percent of median family income — the upper cutoff for many federal subsidies. Previously these middle-income working families qualified for federal subsidies such as Section 8, but are now on their own. The need for workforce housing was born of the economic boom in the 1990s, while salaries for the top American earners increased dramatically, the bottom 60 percent barely kept up with inflation, and home prices doubled.

Workforce housing is defined by four principle factors:

- **Affordability**
Based on a set of criteria set by mortgage lenders, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) concludes that no more than 30% of household income should be allocated to housing principal, interest, taxes and insurance. Typically, price calculations that define 'workforce housing' use this 30% as the maximum threshold of affordability while still requiring minimum lending institution requirements to receive a mortgage.

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- **Home Ownership**
Workforce housing connotes single-family detached homes for sale at prices that workforce families can afford. Obviously working families often seek alternative housing opportunities such as rental units, town homes, condominiums, and subsidized housing. However, the valuable contribution workforce housing makes to this mix is the option for fee-simple ownership of single-family homes.
- **Critical Workforce**
Workforce housing connotes housing intended to appeal to key members of the workforce such as police officers, teachers, nurses, medical technicians, office workers, etc., whom we think of as the backbone of any successful community. Workforce families are generally younger and often include children.
- **Proximity**
Finally, workforce housing is located near employment centers and is sometimes cited as one antidote to issues of traffic congestion, lengthy commutes, and uncoordinated development. Ideally workforce housing aims to satisfy the housing needs of families earning 50% to 150% of the median household income in a given metropolitan area.

Inclusionary Housing Solutions

Many communities across the nation have successfully increased affordable housing choices for their residents with mandatory inclusionary housing solutions through ordinance or voluntary inclusionary housing solutions through incentive. The State of Louisiana currently encourages cities to implement voluntary inclusionary housing solutions as a method of increasing affordable housing choices. Voluntary programs rely on the provision of concessions or incentives to the developer in order to encourage them to provide a percentage of affordable units. The percentage requirement for concession usually ranges from 5% to 30%, depending upon the population that needs to be served.

Some key components of inclusionary housing for Covington to consider:

- Description of households to be assisted
- Percentage of inclusionary units to be met for incentives
- Household income guidelines and qualifications
- Tenure or type of unit (rentals, ownership, single family, multi-family)
- Length of affordability and resale/rental restrictions
- Developer concessions

When developing inclusionary housing policy, the following questions should be answered:

- Who is being left out of the local housing market and should be targeted?

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- (Example: seniors, low-income, young professionals, beginning families)
- What is the proposed inclusionary percentage requirement for Developer incentive?
(Example: 3% affordable to very low income, 3% affordable to low income, 5% affordable to moderate income)
 - What are the minimum threshold requirements?
 - In which areas or type of developments are the incentives applicable?
 - What are the Developer's incentives?

Concessions can include, but are not limited to:

- Financing subsidies – redevelopment housing funds, housing trust funds, HOME, CDBG, etc
- Fee Reduction, Deferral or waivers of permit processing fees, building permit fees, impact fees (if and/or where applicable)
- Fast track or priority processing
- Density bonus – allowing a higher density

Housing Choice

The variety of housing choices in a community respond to the housing demands and needs of the population and include a balanced mixture of ownership options, housing types, and densities.

Accessory Dwelling Units



- Provides housing for a variety of needs
- Increases Housing Affordability
- Neighborhood Preservation tool

Accessory Dwelling Units are existing structures, like a garage, a pool house, a carriage house, or a small portion of a single family house, that have been converted into a small, unobtrusive rental property. They are a tool used by many small communities similar to Covington as a method of increasing affordable, senior or workforce housing while preserving the character of traditional American neighborhoods. An ordinance may be written to control the number,

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location, and type of Accessory Dwelling Units. Communities that choose to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units gain only a small number of ADUs.

This housing tool is appropriate for some of the Covington Planning due to their locations and neighborhood fabric, and it should be considered by City leadership and residents as not only a housing solution but also an economic and a neighborhood preservation tool. This Accessory Dwelling Unit allowance may be written and controlled in the City's updated zoning ordinance as either a specific accessory use or some other classification allowing residential use.

Single Family Houses



Single-family houses offer ownership and rental options and are appropriate for all residential and mixed-use neighborhoods. They can be included in planned unit developments as a cost-efficient method of residential or mixed-use development or as infill development of neighborhoods that evolved naturally with time. The single-family residence is the most common dwelling unit in the City of Covington; therefore, this housing choice is likely to continue to dominate the community's housing market.

Two-Family Houses



Two-family houses also offer ownership and rental options and sometimes serve as a source of income for owner occupied doubles. They are appropriate for most residential neighborhoods, as they increase housing options and increase affordability in traditional neighborhoods. Planned unit developments include this housing option to increase affordability and workforce housing in communities of all sizes and regions. This housing option is found throughout many of Covington's neighborhoods.

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Four- to Six-Family Dwellings



Four to Six Family Dwellings can increase affordability with their compact designs and ownership options. It is important to note that this option does not refer to apartment complexes; instead, this option refers to a single structure in which four to six dwelling units exist. With development standards, Covington can provide decent, affordable housing for its citizens that will blend with the community's built environment and aesthetic. This type of housing option is important to include in communities of all sizes and regions to serve the needs of incomes and ages. This housing option is appropriate for those areas designated as Residential-medium, Residential-high, and Neighborhood Mixed Use in Covington's future land use plan.

Eight- to Ten-Family Dwellings



Similarly, Eight to Ten Family Dwellings can increase affordability with compact designs and ownership options. It is important to note that this option does not refer to apartment complexes; instead, this option refers to a single structure in which eight to ten dwelling units exist. This housing option is appropriate for those areas designated as Residential-high and Urban Mixed Use in Covington's future land use plan.

Summary of Housing Recommendations

- Increase workforce housing stock
- Voluntary inclusionary housing incentives
- Transition zones between densities
- Allow a limited amount of ADUs
- Increase housing choice

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Economic Development

The overriding goal of this portion of the Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update is the enhancement of the community's economic well-being. In a series of policy and land use recommendations, it identifies means of stimulating economic development and controlling that development in such a manner that Covington maintains its small town community feel. This section is the key to the integration of all elements of the Comprehensive Plan, suggesting ways in which the City, as well as others, can use economic strategies in order to achieve the goals of the Plan.

There are two primary ways in which local economic activity can be affected:

- Land use and infrastructure planning that determine the space available for residential and nonresidential development
- Directly or indirectly influencing private-sector decisions as to location, operation, and development of business real estate.

The economic development component of this comprehensive plan presents a focused approach to enhancing Covington's economic well-being. This approach addresses the concerns and issues raised by residents and stakeholders:

- The ability to support and work with existing businesses and property owners to ensure the continued viability of Covington's commercial and downtown areas and other existing retail development
- Identification of areas suitable for redevelopment and new economic development, complete with specific strategies to encourage such development
- Strengthening Covington's viability as a cultural tourism destination within the region

The following statistics may be useful in setting the background for the economic development policies. In 2000, the population of Covington was 8,438; estimated 2005 population was 9,347. In 2000, Covington had 3,062 jobs, of which 67% were professional and/or administrative support, 15% were service, 16% were production and labor, and the remaining 2% identified themselves as farming/fishing. The City remains a strong attractor of consumer spending, with the majority of revenues coming from local sales taxes.

Covington's unique sense of place is an important community asset, and has been identified as a potential driver for economic activity in the area. In particular, residents and stakeholders have identified downtown Covington as a cultural tourism engine because of its historic status, preservation efforts, and

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concentration of cultural events. Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned primarily with culture and the arts, and it is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. Further, it is agreed that the cultural tourist also inflicts less ‘wear and tear’ on the urban fabric, as long as systems are maintained. While Covington has done an excellent job developing events that bring people to town, the City has not yet attracted the infrastructure necessary to take the cultural tourism industry to the next level. In particular, there are currently no hotels or motels in the downtown area to keep visitors overnight.

Recommendations for Developing Cultural Tourism Industry in Downtown Covington

- Seek ways to accommodate and harmonize vehicular traffic and pedestrian circulation so that growth of the Town will not result in degradation of the City center.
- Encourage the establishment of lodging facilities within the existing historic business district that is consistent with the City’s character and that will not have significant negative traffic impacts or create significant demands for City services or infrastructure.
- Promote improvement and upgrading of the existing historic commercial areas, including a coordinated system of public parking and possible transit service, to encourage more downtown cultural events.
- Adopt zoning changes, such as new mixed use commercial districts and design overlays, to address specific land use issues in the historic center.

As earlier stated, the historic core of Covington has special considerations for future development. Placement on the National Historic Register means that the character of the buildings must be maintained, and infill development must be in line with past development patterns. In addition, the City of Covington has imposed height restrictions of 35 feet on buildings to further maintain the integrity of the area and the community’s human scale.

Throughout this planning process, residents and stakeholders indicated that these restrictions were important to maintain, so the City of Covington does not overdevelop. However, there are other districts studied where residents approved of multiple forms of development without the same development restrictions dictated downtown.

To date, Future Planning Zone 7 remains mostly undeveloped with a significant percentage of the land under the St. Tammany Parish land use and zoning regulations. Recognizing that this area as the potential growth corridor for the

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City of Covington, residents made recommendations for Future Planning Zone 7 that are in line with the Parish's existing zoning and future trends for the City.

Key Economic Development recommendations in Zone 7 include:

- The establishment and development of neighborhood, commercial, and urban highway mixed uses, especially along the Highway 190 corridor
- Increased height and density allowable in future development corridors north of the City limits.
- Expansion of the medical and business district from the core of the City to northern Covington as key parcels are developed and expanded.

Finally, there is also potential for growth and expansion of retail and commercial sectors of Covington's economy. In addition to those areas already discussed, the expansion and intensification of retail in the area east of the Bogue Falaya River was prioritized by residents and stakeholders. As such, this plan recommends:

- Significantly expanding the zoning for retail commercial uses along Collins Blvd, and support business expansion in this area that is consistent with the character of the area without significantly environmental impacts.

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Transit and Transportation

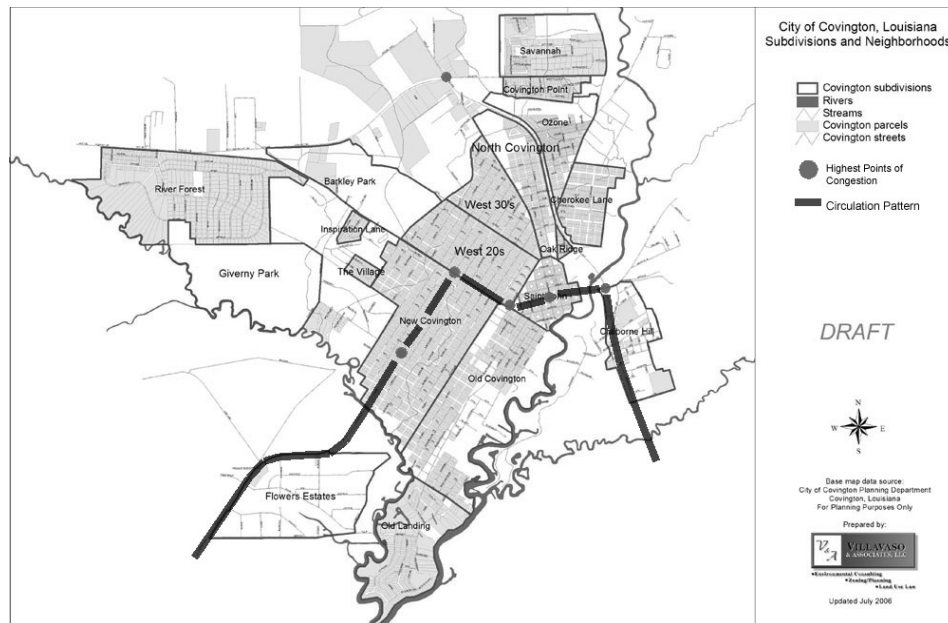
Providing people with more choices in land use, economic development and housing requires the provision of a wide variety of transportation options. In Covington, both local and state travel routes through the City provide strategic regional connections. These travel routes are important to the region and the City for a number of reasons:

- First, they serve the surrounding residential and employment community with products and service. Commuters spend a significant amount of time on these routes, either circulating between local businesses or passing through on their way to other destinations.
- Second, these corridors offer the best travel routes in the City for both residents and businesses because of arterial and freeway automobile access.
- Third, these regional thoroughways are also the front door to Covington's residential neighborhoods. These corridors create an impression and are a reflection of the community to the rest of the region.

As such there is the potential to implement multi-modal forms of transportation to effectively and efficiently move people around the region. Throughout this planning process, residents and stakeholders identified the related issues of traffic congestion and circulation as concerns. In particular, the circulation patterns between Louisiana Highway 21, Interstate 12, Causeway/Louisiana Highway 190 and downtown Covington experience peak-hour traffic congestion. As a result, the first citywide issue meeting focused on analysis of the traffic issues facing the city and possible methods to relieve the traffic.

As a result of the exercises completed during the first issue meeting, it was determined that congestion is experienced primarily during peak hours, and is associated with school and commuter traffic. More importantly, the results revealed a distinct travel pattern, created by common destination points and limited access that affects this congestion. Notable is the fact that this circulation pattern is in part a result of rapid development in St. Tammany Parish adjacent to Covington city limits. Residents and stakeholders also identified possible remedies to these issues. Preferred solutions include regional connections and Park-n-Ride lots for commuters, and demand-responsive transit for senior citizens and disabled residents.

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Issues

For the City's transportation corridors, residents and stakeholders identified the following concerns:

- Improve mobility at major congestion points and throughout the city by method of key thoroughfare improvements, new construction, and enhancing the existing street infrastructure
- Enhance and improve Covington's major entrance corridors to maintain or create distinctions of character along linear corridors in order to create visual interest
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a viable alternative to automobile traffic to reduce conflicts between cars and pedestrians
- Investigate opportunities for rapid, affordable transit between Covington and New Orleans
- Coordinate with state, regional, and city agencies to plan for current and future transportation needs of the area

As travel continues to increase into the future, choices will have to be made that address growing congestion, the threat of future environmental degradation, and the use of alternative modes of transportation. This comprehensive plan provides a baseline for the future studies that these choices will entail. During the exercises, citizens were given a list of transit options that have been implemented in communities similar to Covington. The following descriptions

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expand those options that citizens preferred to address traffic issues in the City of Covington:

Park-and-Ride Lots

For commuters who cannot walk, bike, or take public transit directly to their destination, park and ride lots provide an essential service – a place to leave the car. Park-and-ride lots may be defined as temporary or permanent facilities, with direct linkages to transit and highway infrastructure, which provide a safe and convenient location for long-term parking and access to transit/carpooling options. The use of park-and-ride facilities is quite common in suburban areas, and unique solutions to planning and/or traffic issues have been developed by local, state, and regional agency cooperation nationwide. It should be noted that it is most effective to plan park-and-ride facilities as part of a coordinated transportation system, than to plan individual facilities and try coordinate after the fact. Further, the viability of these facilities is often directly tied to the location and perceived effectiveness of the transit system. With the incorporation of effective architectural design and landscape planning, park-and-ride facilities can serve as major transit centers, becoming major focal points for the communities they serve. As such, these public investments can encourage transit-friendly developments and intensified land uses within walking distance of the lot when accompanied by supporting land use policies.

Case in Point: Triangle Transit Authority Rideshare Program

The Triangle Transit Authority (TTA), a regional public transportation authority serving Durham, Orange and Wake Counties in North Carolina, offers a combined program of park-and-ride facilities and vanpool and carpool services. In particular, as part of the vanpool program, TTA provides a 15-passenger van to no fewer than seven commuters who live and work near each other and who share approximately the same work schedule. In addition to the vehicle, riders are provided a park-and-ride space if necessary, and TTA pays for gas, and arranges and pays for maintenance. Vanpool riders pay a monthly fare based on monthly mileage. For example, a vanpool with a total monthly mileage of 520 miles pays in total \$500.45 (or \$35.75 per person based on a vanpool of 14). TTA offers a seat subsidy program to encourage the formation of vanpools. The rideshare program, among other TTA service and programs, is funded by a vehicle registration tax of up to \$5 per registration, authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1991, in addition to program revenues.

Case in Point: Newport, Rhode Island Peak Season Park n' Ride

Newport, RI (population 26,000) is a seaside community in Newport County, approximately 30 miles from the capital of Providence. With an abundance of historic homes, recreation opportunities, and festivals, the City of Newport finds itself inundated with visitors, especially on the weekends. In order to alleviate traffic congestion in the downtown area, a system of Park n' Ride lots have been

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strategically placed, which are either privately or publicly-owned, that are free of charge to anyone who parks a vehicle and commutes by transit or in a carpool. Commuters who would otherwise drive into Providence to work primarily use these lots during the week. On the weekends (between Memorial Day and Columbus Day), visitors to the city are also encouraged to use the lots to cut down on congestion in the downtown area, and shuttle busses are used to move people between destination points.

Demand-Responsive Services for Senior Citizens and the Disabled

An aging population in the US, low-density urban development and the accessibility needs of certain groups (particularly disabled and aged) increasingly point to the need for flexible demand-responsive transit (DRT) systems. DRT is an alternative travel method to personal vehicle, bus/light-rail, and carpool/vanpool, and has the potential to improve mobility and transportation accessibility to those who are elderly or disabled as well as to those who may not want to drive to work or shop. This type of system would provide services to the traveling public for journeys to work as well as journeys to other destinations (medical facilities, shopping centers, etc.). Depending on local conditions, a community may choose “on-demand” DRT service (similar to a taxi service with a van making multiple pick-ups) and/or “fixed-schedule” DRT (pick-ups and drop-offs are made at fixed but convenient locations).

Case in Point: City of Berea, OH Senior Jitney Service

Berea, OH is a historic community (population 18,970) approximately 12 miles south of Cleveland, in Cuyahoga County. As indicated in the City’s master plan of 2000, the population of the area is aging. While approximately 13% of Berea’s population was in the 55 and over age group in 1970, more than 22% of the population was in that age group in 1990. This percentage of seniors within Berea is continued to rise to 25% by the year 2000, and is expected to be over 30% by the year 2020. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, this is expected to be the norm across the country as the baby boomers reach maturity. Thus, in collaboration with the First Integrated Regional Senior Transportation (F.I.R.S.T.) and the Senior Transportation Connection of Cuyahoga County, the City of Berea provides on-demand transportation services for residents 60 years of age and older and those with disabilities. Fares are as follows: \$1 per one-way trip within the municipality or the nonprofit organization’s community that the passenger is picked up; \$2 per one-way trip outside of the municipality or the nonprofit organization’s community that the passenger is picked up, traveling within the F.I.R.S.T. primary service area; \$3 per one-way trip outside of the F.I.R.S.T. primary service area, based on vehicle availability.

Fixed-Route Peak Hours

Fixed Route Service is a transportation system that has a predetermined route with specified stops that conform to a timetable. Peak-hour service is transit

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service that runs during the peak commuting hours – Monday to Friday, approximately 6-9 a.m. and approximately 3-6 p.m. This type of service would provide services to local and regional commuters, as well as a viable transit option for students attending local schools. Depending on local conditions, a community may choose to run peak-hour service all day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) as well during events and in conjunction with perimeter park-and-ride lots.

Case in Point: Fixed-Route Transit Service for Boulder, CO

Using ISTEA funds, the City of Boulder, CO established an efficient and environmentally sound small-bus shuttle service. The shuttle has steadily increased local as well as regional transit ridership and improved access during peak hours. The shuttle was conceived as a fully packaged transit service, which provides frequent service connecting core activity areas: downtown, school campuses, retail areas, and businesses. People use it for shopping, lunch, errands, and meetings. Vehicles are small, clean burning, and attractive; and routes are direct. The route connects to the regional system, parking facilities, and intersects pedestrian and bicycle lanes. Daily ridership is more than double initial estimates, and has strengthened the local economy by providing access to activity centers. The service was designed with the participation of a 40-member community group including business owners, students and school staff, retail and employment center representatives, and residents. This group established the shuttle's routes, stops, frequency, vehicle characteristics, and fares.

Commuter Routes with the New Orleans Metropolitan Region

Commuter route service is generally operated during the morning and afternoon commute times with stops at park-and-ride locations in the community then operating non-stop into the downtown area. This type of service is relatively common in medium and large metropolitan areas. While it is possible for one agency to implement and maintain a metropolitan commuter system, these are generally collaborations between multiple agencies and jurisdiction as commuters generally come from multiple counties/parishes and incorporated areas. Again, depending on local conditions, this component is often the key component in designing and implementing a coordinated transportation system.

Regional High Speed Light Rail

In response to worsening traffic and overwhelmed transportation systems, communities are beginning to implement new approaches to transit, such as better coordination between land use and transportation; increased availability to high quality transit service; connectivity with between transportation networks; and connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit and road facilities. In other words, they are implementing a multi-modal approach to transit to create a wider range of transportation options. As such, more and more U.S. cities are finding various forms of regional passenger rail – so-called 'commuter light rail' – a viable option, under the right circumstances. Light rail or light rail transit (LRT) is

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a particular class of urban and suburban passenger railway that utilizes equipment and infrastructure that is typically less massive than that used for rapid transit systems, with modern light rail vehicles usually running along the system. A modern version of the streetcar, light rail is characterized by passenger rail cars operating individually (or in short, usually 2-3 car trains) on fixed rails in a shared or exclusive right-of-way. Generally, this type of rail transit service is provided in medium sized cities similar to Portland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and San Diego to alleviate peak hour traffic congestion.

Key Recommendation for Transportation Plan

The City of Covington must move forward with the production of a transportation plan. This plan should include citizen input/preferences and address connectivity, congestion points, expanding capacity, alternative transportation needs, and all transportation needs associated with future growth. It is important that the transportation plan coordination with the recommendations of the future land use plan, as the adopted transportation plan will become an element of Covington's Comprehensive Planning Initiative. Further, we recommend that the City of Covington work closely with the Parish and the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission to develop the coordinated and comprehensive transit system advocated in this plan.

Key Recommendations for Alternative Modes of Transportation

The New Orleans region's many historic communities provide the setting for some of the best walking and biking opportunities in the country. The historic urban form lays the basis for much of the tourist industry and helps to create the foundation for much of our distinct quality of life. However, this region rates fairly poorly when it comes to pedestrian and bicycle safety. It is this poor safety situation that makes it difficult for many residents to safely and efficiently move through their community. Therefore, it is clear from federal mandates, regional studies, and citizen participation in this process that the provision of safe and convenient walking and biking facilities must be considered for the City of Covington. Further, residents cite the overwhelming success of the Tammany Trace and the need to connect this route with other recreation and open space options throughout the City as justification for additional investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Summary of transit and transportation recommendations:

- Pursue a transportation plan that includes citizen input and coordinates with the City's future land use plan
- Preserve walkability and pedestrian safety: establish and maintain sidewalks

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- Consider transit options: park-and-ride program, fixed-route service, demand responsive service, future light rail demand
- Establish bike paths/lanes along the following corridors: Tyler, Columbia, 21st Avenue, Jefferson Avenue
- Consider bike paths/lanes along the following corridors: Collins Boulevard, Boston Street, America Street, Jahnke

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Quality of Life

Quality of life issues describe the way in which we live, learn, work and play. Some of the essential quality of life issues include housing, economic development, education, transportation, and infrastructure. There are the nonessential elements of life, as well. They are recreation, preservation, and environmental issues. Covington's citizens are fortunate to enjoy a high quality of life, but it is a quality of life with a great potential for improvement.

Recreation

Recreation options in Covington are limited to choices such as organized sports, gymnasiums, private social events, parks, and Downtown events.

Parks

A majority of Covington's parks, not including ball fields, are located in the southern region of the city, thus creating accessibility issues. Establishing a public partnership between City Government and Covington Schools can increase the number and accessibility of community parks.

Proposed Recreation Center

The City of Covington is moving forward with the development of its proposed recreation center located in Planning Zone 7 (See future land use map). The activities planned for the recreation center are primarily athletic activities, though future plans include recreational and cultural activities for different age groups and interests.

Construction of the recreation center is divided into phases:

Phase 1: Ball fields, parking, concessions

Phase 2: Gymnasium, Community Center facilities, additional parking, additional concessions

River Activity

As recreational choice was a prominent issue heard during the Consensus Phase of this planning process, it is important that the City of Covington take immediate action in offering recreational activities other than athletics. A short-term solution for increasing recreational choice for seniors and other interests groups is to increase the use of the Bogue Falaya River (see Quality of Life Issue Meeting Exercise).

The Bogue Falaya Park is located on the Bogue Falaya River between Planning Zones 5 and 6. Its location is ideal for a public-private partnership that will increase access and use of the River, and the amount of undeveloped land offers great potential for recreational use other than athletics or a playground.

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Community Events

Residents have expressed a desire to diversify the types of community events hosted by the City of Covington (See Quality of Life Exercise, page 52). Family-oriented and cultural events received the largest number of requests. When those in favor of these events were asked to identify locations outside of Downtown Covington, they identified the Bogue Falaya Park and the Greater Covington Center as appropriate locations.

Preservation

Covington's historic District of St. John (Downtown Covington) is an important asset to its identity, economic development, and community base. However, historic neighborhoods and individual sites outside of Downtown Covington have the ability to apply for historic site designation as a method of preservation. As the city expands, city leaders should continue to coordinate the use of historic preservation with land use and a new zoning ordinance.

Environment

The water quality of the Bogue Falaya and Little Tchefuncte Rivers has been a community and regional concern as a result of reports from the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF) that indicate a mean probable number of bacteria colonies harmful to humans. However, recent reports from the LPBF show that the water quality of the Rivers is improving. It is important that the City of Covington take a proactive approach to improve the water quality of its natural resources.

Access to the Rivers is limited with only one public boat launch and existing private property along the banks of the Bogue Falaya and the Tchefuncte. It is important that the City secure parcels along the River to increase public access to this valuable natural community asset.

Summary of Quality of Life Recommendations

- Accelerate the development of a Community Center
- New parks to serve population increase and neighborhood expansion
- Public-private partnership to increase access and use of the Rivers
- Public-private partnership to increase water quality of the Rivers
- Coordinate historic preservation with current planning

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Utilities and Infrastructure

As Covington continues to grow, its utilities and infrastructure will experience an increase in the number of people and structures it must serve. Deteriorating infrastructure and capacity are an expressed concern of Covington residents. Currently, the City of Covington is responsible for all costs associated with maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure and establishing new infrastructure in expanding areas. As a result, the city officials have moved forward with a bond package in order to make financial possible.

Sewage

In January 2007, the City of Covington approved and sold a new bond package that will finance the maintenance and repair of all existing sewage infrastructure and will increase sewage capacity. Covington's City Engineer and Public Works Director are certain that the increase in sewage capacity will be sufficient to serve an increase in development and density. However, investigation for the need of new lift station for Planning Zone 7 must be conducted once expansion begins.

While the City's bond package promises to finance the needed increase in capacity associated with expansion, Covington should consider using Impact Fees as a tool to relieve its responsibility for costs associated with expanding infrastructure to new development.

Drainage

Covington uses an open ditch drainage system to collect and remove rainwater. While residents expressed an interest in moving forward with a subsurface drainage system, this transition is not necessary for a majority of the City.

A drainage program for the West 20s is experimenting with subsurface drainage infrastructure, as this area does experience a problem with drainage after heavy rainfall. The pilot program will include subsurface drainage for West 24th Avenue through West 27th Avenue. Upon the results of this program, the City of Covington will determine if subsurface drainage will relieve Covington's drainage problems.

Water

Covington's water is supplied by underground wells. The community's water supply is not threatened by growth and an increase in density.

Streets

The 1998 Comprehensive Planning Initiative's recommendations included new roads. This need remains today as connectivity within the city limits and with the

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region is limited. Capacity for existing streets is out-of-date, and routes into and out of Covington are limited.

Widening of the Highway 190/Collins Boulevard Bridge over the Bogue Falaya River is top priority.

Recommendations for Utilities and Infrastructure:

- Impact Fees for all new development
- New Roads
- Widen Hwy190 Bridge over Bogue Falaya River

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Impact Analysis and Fees

Impact fees are payments required by local governments of new developments for the purpose of providing new or expanded public capital facilities and infrastructure required to serve the development. The fees typically require cash payments in advance of the completion of the development, are based on a methodology and calculation derived from the cost of the facility and the nature and size of the development, and are used to finance improvements offsite of, but to benefit, the development.

Local governments throughout the country are implementing impact fee policy to shift the costs of financing public facilities and infrastructure from the taxpayers to the beneficiaries of the new construction. These fees are capitalized into land values, thus representing an exaction on the incremental value of the land attribution to the higher and better use made possible by the new public facilities. The most widespread use of these fees is for sewer and water facilities, drainage and infrastructure, parks, and roads.

When included in a comprehensive plan and used in conjunction with a sound capital improvement plan, impact fees can be an effective tool for ensuring adequate infrastructure to accommodate growth where and when it is anticipated. The future land use plan, accompanied by a new zoning ordinance, will assist the city in its prediction of future growth needs.

It is important for the City of Covington to pursue an impact fee ordinance that will shift the infrastructure expenses to the developer and the beneficiaries of the new infrastructure. This impact fee ordinance should coordinate and complement the impact fees collected by the St. Tammany Parish government. This will work to avoid pushing developers to develop Parish land. Furthermore, it will direct growth and encourage growth to the appropriate sites at the appropriate intensity that meets the needs of the city and it balanced with the right infrastructure and promotes balance with other developed sections of the City.

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V. Conclusion

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Conclusion

The knowledge gained during this update process revealed several issues, concerns, and interests that should be addressed to increase the quality of life and to achieve a sustainable built environment for the citizens of Covington. The issues, concerns, and interests listed below were offered at least one solution in this Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update. Please refer to the Recommendations Chapter for detailed discussions and solutions.

Social and Economic Issues

During the research phase of the update planning process, data indicated that the Covington population is made up of mostly white, middle-class Americans; that the community has a large percentage of family households; that the number of children and the number of adults between the ages of 25 and 34 are decreasing, while the population as a whole and the number of senior citizens is increasing; that a notable percentage of individuals in Covington live below the poverty line.

Identity and Sense of Place

Covington is an identifiable community. Its unique sense of place is a valuable community asset. Residents believe that generic development and growth trends threaten Covington's integrity and sense of place. The recommendations included in the Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update offered land use and tools to address appearance, such as the application of mixed use and design overlays along the City's major corridors that extend from the natural mixed use of Downtown Covington.

Traffic and Transportation

As development occurs in and around the City, residents have experienced an increase in traffic congestion. Furthermore, residents are faced with a growing need for alternative modes of transportation as the community continues to evolve and expand. The recommendations listed in the Comprehensive Plan offered solutions that address the community's transit needs and a balanced land use map to redirect vehicular circulation, will ease traffic over time in conjunction with a Transportation Plan.

Growth and Connectivity

Residents are concerned for the way in which future growth will affect the physical and social connectivity within the Covington in terms of traffic, development trends, the natural environment, and the sense of community. These issues have been addressed in both the general and future land use maps that has rearranged land uses in Zone 7, as well as the other Planning Zones, to

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appropriately address the needs of the community and protect existing neighborhoods

Recreation Choice

Covington's recreational opportunities include many Downtown and sporting events, but there is room for an expansion in recreational choice. Citizens expressed a need for diversification of recreational opportunities in the community, especially in all neighborhoods. The recommendations included in the Quality of Life element offered solutions that will enhance recreational opportunities in the community by utilizing existing local assets.

Housing Choice and Affordability

Data and citizen input revealed a need for an increase in housing and ownership choices that address the socio-economic needs of Covington's residents. The recommendations listed in the Housing element offered solutions and tools that increase and balance housing choices that are appropriate to Covington's needs and scale.

Key Changes

- Increase allowable height in appropriate areas outside of Downtown Covington
- Increase housing density in select areas to enhance workforce housing options

Summary of Land Use Recommendations

- Designate mixed use corridors
Most of Covington's main corridors are emerging as mixed-use corridors. As mixed-use development is most appropriate for the scale and needs of the community, land use recommendations have selected the appropriate mixed-use levels for all main transportation corridors: Tyler Street, 21st Avenue, Jefferson Avenue, Columbia Street, and Highway 190.
- Apply intensity levels
While each land use category describes the way in which the land may be used, they do not describe the relationship of height to density, the definition of intensity. The future land use recommendations have offered appropriate intensity levels for each area based on the use and surrounding uses. In order to meet all community needs, Covington must utilize different intensity levels throughout the city, contrary to the general low level of intensity currently applied to the City as a whole.

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- Establish design overlays along all major corridors
The citizens of Covington are concerned with the way in which development is occurring: unnecessary curb cuts, inconsistent streetscapes, and sprawling commercial developments that rob the community of its unique identity. Design overlays along all major corridors will promote smart growth and preserve the community's sense of place. These major corridors include, but are not limited to: Tyler Street, Jefferson Avenue, Columbia Street, 21 Avenue, and Collins Boulevard. It is important that the design overlay does not impose strict regulations that will deter businesses to other communities.
- Create land use categories (i.e. Medical, Commercial)
New land use categories must be established for the different uses required to appropriately focus on Covington's needs.
- Increase residential density and options in suitable areas
To address the issues of poverty and a growing senior population that appear in the Socio-economic Analysis, Covington has the opportunity to expand its housing choice by increasing residential density in strategic areas. These areas are in close proximity to the medical industry, along major corridors, and in mixed-use development (i.e. residential above commercial). They may be included in planned unit developments or included in an update of the city's zoning ordinance and map. Housing choice will address the housing needs of the community's seniors, low- to moderate-income families, single professionals, and young families, for example.
- Move Forward With Transportation Plan
The City of Covington has moved forward with its need to develop a Transportation Plan. This plan should respond to the transit and transportation needs identified in the Comprehensive Planning Initiative Update and must correspond with the Future Land Use plan.
- Update Zoning Ordinance and Map
Covington must commit to produce an update of the City's existing Zoning Ordinance and Map. The update will coordinate with the adopted future land use map and will serve as a tool to guide and balance the growth of Covington.

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Recommended Implementation Schedule

Short-term Goals

- Adopt new Land Use Plan
- Begin Transportation Plan and integrate with Land Use Plan
- Consider use of overlay districts and corridor controls
- Continue role of citizen participation in the Master Plan process
- Update zoning ordinance and map

Long-term Goals

- Commit to complete comprehensive Master Plan elements (i.e. Housing, Economic Development, Quality of Life)
- Evaluate and consider impact fees and historic preservation tools
- Implement Capital Improvement Plan tied to Land Use Plan