

New Directions 2025 – St. Tammany Parish Comprehensive Plan

2025 Land Use Plan - Supporting Policy and Statement of Fundamental Principles¹

I. Preface and Preamble

The Comprehensive Plan for St. Tammany Parish – called “New Directions 2025” (ND 2025) - was initiated in December 1998 and its first major product, the “Vision Element” - a Vision Statement defining community goals for the Parish to be achieved by 2025 - was prepared and adopted by the Parish Council in early 2000. Subsequently, a Phase I Transportation Plan Report was prepared and adopted by the ND 2025 Steering Committee in August 2001. At the same time, preparations for development of a parish-wide 2025 Land Use Plan began, building upon all previous work done by citizens, parish staff and consultants up to that time.

Between October 2001 and July 2002, approximately 24 structured public meetings were held with citizens to obtain input and delineate a Draft 2025 Land Use Plan. That Draft Plan has been adopted by the ND 2025 Steering Committee, and is ready for appropriate review and refinement by the Parish Planning Commission, and the Parish Council. The following statement shall serve as supporting documentation to clarify and expand upon information presented graphically in the Draft 2025 Land Use Plan (or “Map”).

The Maps depict generalized areas designated for future land uses, by broad category (as clarified below and noted on the maps). Neither the Map nor this document constitutes a “zoning” map or policy, nor do they indicate – except broadly – levels of intensity of use. Efforts that will follow adoption by the Parish Council of this 2025 Land Use Plan and Policy Statement will develop detailed zoning and other parish policies (such as, capital improvement, incentives, and regulatory) that will, in effect, “implement” this recommended Plan. These policies will provide greater detail than was called for in these documents, although the intent of these documents is to direct the formulation of such new or revised Parish policies regarding future Land Use.

The process from which these documents have been derived is described in the attached Appendix, and we refer readers interested in our “sources” to those paragraphs. They do not include all details of the information shared and gained from the multiple, duly noticed, Planning District and special interest group “work sessions,” but that information is available in the supporting files maintained by St. Tammany Parish Government.

Consistent validation of the Land Use Vision Statement should define the pattern of settlement in St. Tammany Parish as an inextricably intertwined series of towns, corridors and countryside. The preservation of this pattern was

articulated to be of paramount importance to the successful development of our Parish in the future. From a land use-planning standpoint, this concept should be the fundamental premise upon which all planning decisions are based. All elements of the Land Use Plan – and of the entire Comprehensive Plan - should be subordinated to this fundamental concept.

II. Contents, 2025 Land Use Policy and Principles:

A. A statement of supporting policy recommendations and fundamental principles to direct land use decision-making that has emerged from citizen input to date. These are intended to ensure consistency with this Plan in zoning and other related ordinances to be developed subsequently. Such ordinances will effectively “implement” the Plan, but this statement should be considered as an interim guide for residents, property owners, developers, parish officials and other public agencies. This statement of recommended policy and principles has been derived primarily from citizen input received across the Parish during the past 3-½ years, but also (as many citizens recommended) draws upon successful model land use concepts applied elsewhere.

B. An Appendix that provides background information as to the foundation of this Land Use Policy and Principles Statement

1. The ND 2025 Vision Statement.
2. The Land Use Element Definition, Purpose and Value Statement.
3. Key Excerpts from the Land Use Framework Paper, adopted by the Land Use Element in August 2001.
4. A brief description of the approach and process taken in developing the ND 2025 Land Use Plan.

III. Recommended Policies in support of the 2025 Land Use Plan and Principles to direct the preparation of ordinances for implementation of the Plan.

A. General

1. Planning Process and Implementation Recommendations

a) St. Tammany Parish, through a broad citizen-based democratic process, determines when and where development or redevelopment should occur, what levels of intensity of use will be allowed, and where development should be limited for purposes of public safety and/or conservation of natural resources. This process should determine the timing and sequence of development, based upon the willingness and ability of the Parish and its citizens to support such development with adequate public facilities and services.

b) The 2025 Land Use Plan and supporting statement of policies and principles, once adopted by the Parish Council, and implemented via the appropriate implementing ordinances, shall have the force of law. Until such time, this document shall be advisory in nature. Recognizing dynamic and evolving market, social and environmental variables, the Land Use Plan may be amended periodically, following due analytical and public review processes as shall be set forth in new Parish ordinances. Similarly, as other Elements of this Comprehensive Plan are completed, the 2025 Land Use Plan should be reviewed and refined accordingly,

following technical and citizen evaluation. Predictability of land use or re-use has remained elusive in St. Tammany, and is sought by landowners, developers, and residents alike. A more stable Land Use Plan will allow the Parish to focus and utilize its valuable human and financial resources more efficiently and effectively.

c) The Comprehensive Plan shall be updated at intervals appropriate to address major changes in demographics, land use and transportation.

d) Through continuing dialogue with citizens and businesses, as well as state government leaders, the Parish shall endeavor to secure sufficient resources to complete and sustain this ND 2025 comprehensive planning process and implement the Comprehensive Plan, including the recommended capital investments, implementation of the recommended Small Area Plans, enhancement of public awareness and involvement related to the Plan, and the monitoring and enforcing of compliance with the Plan on an on-going basis.

e) The Parish shall continue its efforts, working with officials of incorporated areas and all affected citizens, to achieve cooperative long-term relationships that protect the interests of all jurisdictions and affected citizens with respect to public safety, land use, public facilities and services, revenue sharing, landscape and structure design quality, and other areas of public concern. Transitional overlay zones should be established on an interim basis until more permanent agreements can be reached.

f) On-going planning shall be pro-active in anticipating growth trends, accompanying public facility requirements, and threats to the loss or diminution of the Parish's natural resources. Comprehensive plans, based on technical analysis and citizen input, and fiscal arrangements should be made to address these challenges in a timely fashion.

g) For all categories of Land Use addressed in this Plan, implementing ordinances shall provide for appropriate levels of intensity of use permitted.

h) The role of citizen review and evaluation of development proposals, as well as any proposed amendments to the ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan, shall be increasingly formalized.

i) Incentives should be provided to encourage adjoining property owners to plan any development (or redevelopment) of their sites cooperatively where such cooperative plans provide efficiencies for the Parish or enhanced development quality.

j) The Parish should work closely with private and institutional owners of large tracts (e.g., the military, universities, or state agencies), as well as, with owners of major transportation arteries (such as the State and Norfolk Southern Railroad) to involve them in the on-going ND 2025 planning process.

k) Implementing ordinances – such as a revised zoning ordinance – shall provide for streamlined administrative review and permitting where a developer's proposal conforms to the intent of this ND 2025 Vision and

Comprehensive Plan. Such ordinances shall provide for flexibility in alternative site and building plans, if they are not to the detriment of the intent of the designation and meet performance standards to be specified.

l) The Parish shall address the cumulative impacts both of existing land uses together with multiple (planned, permitted or anticipated) future use development proposals within a corridor or district framework in order to safeguard existing public facilities and services standards from further deterioration. Impact assessments limited to a single site or development proposal fail to adequately equip the Parish – and its citizens – with an understanding of cumulative consequences – both short and long-term. However, such impacts must be identifiable and measurable so they can be assessed objectively.

m) The Parish should deal equally and fairly, but with in the spirit of this 2025 Land Use Plan and Policy Statement, with the problems created by recorded “paper subdivisions” containing sub-standard lots, or by established but non-conforming uses.

2. General Parish-wide Land Use Recommendations

a) The Parish should encourage redevelopment within existing cities and towns, villages and hamlets, whether incorporated or not, both as a means to efficiently accommodate growth where infrastructure currently exists or can be installed or expanded efficiently, and to serve market segments which prefer proximity to associated uses and required services.

b) The Parish should also encourage redevelopment of existing uses outside of towns and cities to alleviate fiscal constraints that limit required public facilities infrastructure improvements and services needed to satisfactorily serve its current population and economic base. Incentives for the redevelopment of underutilized sites should be adopted, where such sites have available infrastructure and access in place, and where the new use(s) are not incompatible with surrounding uses

c) In the subsequent development of more detailed zoning plans, transition areas shall be designated between more and less intensely developed areas, and fitting landscape, site, and structure design standards should be applied.

B. Land Use Considerations

In addition to the ND 2025 Land Use Maps (with their Legend designations), the following elements should receive careful consideration.

1. Commercial and Institutional

a) Commercial and institutional uses should be limited to concentrated focus areas, and not allowed continuously along the entire length of major two or four lane highways. This includes commercial developments along two lane highways. The redevelopment of existing commercial uses should be encouraged before new areas are allowed for commercial or institutional uses. Commercial uses should be focused in existing towns, villages or hamlets, or new centers, reflected in the ND 2025 Land Use Plan.

b) The Parish should not permit “spot” zoning that allows inappropriate commercial or institutional development in otherwise residential or rural areas. Alternatively, commercial and institutional uses should be encouraged in existing hamlets, villages or towns, or in newly designated planned mixed used centers.

c) Commercial and institutional uses should be located on major highways or at crossroads, within Planned Districts, and avoided in flood prone areas or impaired watersheds. Appropriate locations should be identified.

d) Aggressive efforts, both by the Parish and its municipalities, should be taken to redevelop existing commercial and institutional sites, and these should be given priority over new developments.

e) Sites for new schools, fire and police stations should be provided throughout the Parish.

f) “Big box” retail development should be carefully sited, given their infrastructure demands and impact on small business within the Parish. Developers should pay costs associated with impacts objectively attributable to their operations.

g) Additional classifications for commercial and institutional uses are needed to resolve compatibility issues with residential areas.

2. Industry

a) Industrial uses should be located in close proximity to Interstate Highway System, and in areas that minimize public infrastructure costs.

b) Research or other low impact high tech industrial uses may be located in rural or semi-residential areas, depending upon transition uses, siting and performance standards – all to be defined in detail in subsequent phases of the ND 2025 comprehensive planning process.

c) Industrial uses should be avoided in flood plains or in areas where they would adversely affect drainage, water or air quality, sensitive environmental areas and traffic. Residential, institutional, park and greenspace areas should also be protected from noise and other nuisances caused by industrial uses.

3. Planned Districts

a) Specific locations of recommended Planned Districts are shown on the 2025 Land Use Map.

b) Some locations may contain a mix of almost all use types (“mixed use”) – including various forms of residential. Other planned districts would be limited to commercial and industrial activities. There is one new “village” Planned District recommended, northwest of Mandeville and to the southeast of the new I-12 interchange at Hwy. 1088. Specific provisions for the layout, form and content of this new village will be developed subsequently, but it is intended that it follow traditional town patterns as seen in Covington and Madisonville.

c) By definition, a “Planned District” will overlap several individual property tracts, but be planned with full consideration of all market factors, public policy and fiscal impacts, environmental impacts, and St. Tammany

community Vision and goals, as enunciated in the “New Directions 2025 Vision Element” – and its subsequent amendments.

4. Small Area Plans

a) Specific locations for recommended Small Area Plans (SAPs) are shown on maps supplemental to the 2025 Land Use Map.

b) These designations reflect a recognition that certain areas have special characteristics (whether historic or cultural, social, transportation, topographical, or environmental) and/ or face growth pressures, such that they deserve more detailed planning for future stabilization and/or development, based on thorough consultation with local residents and property owners, and analysis of area-specific data. Such SAPs should be conducted under the management of the Parish, although funding of these efforts should come from multiple sources, and the timing of each effort must be evaluated against market pressures, opportunity windows, and funding and professional staff availability.

5. Recreational

a) Both active and passive public recreational facilities and services should be provided, programmed and maintained by the Parish throughout St. Tammany, although priority should be given to: (1) locations close to residential populations and (2) remote locations best for passive recreation, hunting and fishing, conservation and habitat protection.

b) Small parks should be provided along the Tammany Trace – and its future extensions, and along Scenic roadways. Rest facilities should be provided at these, as far as possible.

c) Public access to St. Tammany’s most attractive streams should be provided at appropriate locations, while assuring activities at these and other designated locations will not cause deterioration to stream water quality, aquatic life, or to neighboring residents.

d) Specific sites for active or passive public parks or for publicly owned nature preserves as recommended, the ND 2025 Critical and Sensitive Areas Element should be consider by the Parish, regional, state, federal and private authorities and organizations.

6. Residential

The 2025 Land Use Plan is a recommendation founded on St. Tammany’s citizen input for patterns of generalized uses of land. It is not a Zoning Plan. Therefore, it does not address specific tracts, and utilizes only three broad categories of residential uses, as follows:

- “Infill” residential – which is a pattern of residential use like what is immediately adjoining the area;
- “Planned Residential / Conservation” – which is a form of residential development that allows denser individual home sites, if a large percent of the total tract is left in agricultural or stormwater retention uses or undeveloped, in perpetuity. Undeveloped areas should be mostly in natural landscape, with a goal of maintaining connectivity of the undeveloped areas in order to optimize habitat protection. This landscape may be appropriately managed as best for native flora and

fauna. The density of such Planned Residential / Conservation developments should be similar to the immediately surrounding areas.

- “Rural Residential” – Accommodation should be provided for a wide variety of single-family residential and associated agricultural uses in rural areas.

a) Survey results from the 2025 Land Use planning process to date show that about one-third (1/3) of respondents preferred that the Parish offer all types of housing patterns. Over fifty percent (50%) preferred either “Rural Residential” (32%) or “Village and town” (18%) living, and a little more than 16% preferred “traditional suburban residential.”

b) Among influences that should guide the designation of residential development areas:

- (1) Proximity to employment centers (including the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain);
- (2) Siting, relative to floodplains, commercial and industrial uses and to environmentally sensitive areas, and site plan design quality;
- (3) The clustering of homes within a significant greenspace, in addition to the “large lot” approach;
- (4) Town and village infill housing, some in mid-rise structures (up to 8 stories);
- (5) Housing for seniors in areas (such as towns and villages) that provide close proximity to amenities and health facilities;
- (6) Affordable housing to provide for a diverse work force;
- (7) The actual (market-based) need for new residentially-zoned areas, given the existing surplus of available appropriately zoned areas, and the public cost impacts of residential areas, given their relatively low public revenue contribution (under Louisiana law);
- (8) The separation of manufactured homes from traditionally-built homes, until and unless the gap in depreciation/appreciation over time is minimized;
- (9) The overall density of residential development, notwithstanding lot size alone.
- (10) Traffic impacts – measured cumulatively with existing and other proposed or anticipated uses – of new residential developments on the Parish’s roadway network, and the contribution of these new developments to associated roadway improvements. Also, it is recommended that residential developments provide multiple points of access to adjoining areas and highways.
- (11) Planning of residential developments to ensure no added flood loading to watersheds or sewage effluent that travels beyond individual tracts (unless it passes to a central treatment system).

7. Rural

Among ND 2025 Land Use planning participants to date, there is generally broad agreement that the rural character of areas that currently have that character, be preserved. Land use patterns existing in the rural areas of the Parish today include: timber plantations, mixed hardwood forests, streams (and their tributaries and branches), agricultural, mining (typically dirt or gravel), non-tidal wetlands, livestock operations (at varying scales), publicly or privately owned nature preserves or conservation areas, traditionally planned suburban as well as “conservation” subdivisions, a wide range of individual tract residential types, and some small incorporated or non-incorporated villages or hamlets. It is not intended that no change occur, but that it occur in such a fashion that maintains rural character. Mechanisms to do so include, but are not limited to:

- Re-forestation;
 - Landscape buffering along roadways – and the designation of some roads as “Scenic” (meaning a higher level of road-front design standards would apply);
 - The creation of parks and preserves whose natural systems are maintained, together with better stewardship and/or the granting of conservation easements by private landowners;
 - The expansion of productive agricultural uses, such as viniculture, other specialty produce, and livestock operations with waste treatment systems that protect public health and stream water quality;
 - The strengthening of existing villages and hamlets as commercial, institutional, and cultural centers in the rural areas, providing improved infrastructure and design quality.
- a) Timberlands and other agricultural
- (1) Preservation of the timber industry within the Parish should be a priority.
 - (2) Timber operations should adhere to “Best Professional Practices,” and the Parish should: assist in educating timber owners and operators; adopt clear and specific regulations for timbering (particularly to minimize adverse off-site impacts such as flooding, deteriorated water quality and the deterioration of roads) and tightly enforce such restrictions.
 - (3) Landscape buffer zones – wherever they are designated – shall be properly managed; they should be predominately, though not exclusively, in native plant materials.
 - (4) Livestock operations are encouraged, but must manage waste so as not to deteriorate stream water quality or otherwise cause a nuisance to adjoining land uses.
 - (5) Specialty produce farming should be encouraged, particularly where soil conditions are supportive and valuable crops can be raised for market. One example is viniculture. In addition, value-adding operations that use timber, livestock or plant materials produced in St. Tammany can contribute to the Parish’s economic base.

(6) Since most agricultural operations are economically infeasible on tracts of less than 20 acres, areas that may be designated for agriculture shall maintain a minimum tract subdivision size of 20 acres.

b) Rural residential

(1) In the ND 2025 Land Use survey distributed to participating citizens, the term "Rural residential" was defined as "very large lot or conservation subdivision." As reported above, this type of residential development was highly ranked by respondents. Residential in existing rural areas of the Parish ranges in fact from those two types of development to farmhouses, homes on small sites, and mobile or manufactured homes widely scattered throughout the rural areas of the Parish. Input from citizen participants in this ND 2025 Land Use planning process indicates a desire that a more orderly and compatible organization of rural residential areas prevail in the future.

(2) Limitations should be placed on the development of new suburban residential subdivisions in rural areas.

c) Conservation areas

(1) Respondents to the question in the ND 2025 Questionnaire regarding the percent of existing natural areas they would like to see preserved ranged from one-third (1/3) to two-thirds (2/3) of the currently undeveloped areas.

(2) Citizen participants in the ND 2025 Land Use planning process recommended many specific sites for conservation and habitat protection. The ND 2025 Critical and Sensitive Areas Element of the ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan has already stated its support for these recommendations. The ND 2025 Community Facilities and Implementation Elements, the Parish, regional, state, federal and private authorities or organizations should also consider these recommendations.

(3) Existing Parish land use regulations do not offer nearly enough protection of green spaces – again, one of St. Tammany's most valuable assets. There should be requirements of all new residential, commercial, institutional and industrial developments that a significant percent of the total tract be set aside for managed natural green space – in perpetuity. In addition, new Parish regulations (to be developed) should require mitigation for habitat destruction, just as mitigation is required (by the Corps of Engineers, under the National Environmental Protection Act) for wetlands consumption, directing that mitigation to sites within the Parish.

(4) Because it's more economical to protect existing habitat areas sooner than later, the Parish should build partnerships

to accelerate the protection of critical habitat areas and establish funding sources for the purchase of conservation easements and land acquisition.

(5) Expand and extend existing protected areas, and establish a “network” of contiguous green space throughout the Parish. This will facilitate species preservation and leverage the value of existing green spaces and corridors (such as the public and private preserves already dedicated, and the Tammany Trace and stream corridors). The 100-year flood plain network throughout the Parish (as currently defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), or as may be updated) should be a base starting point for designation of green space/ conservation use.

(6) Corollary benefits of land conservation and habitat protection include (among others): flood protection; stream water quality; hunting, fishing, birdwatching, and other “nature-based” recreational activities; and the preservation of St. Tammany’s pre-eminent biodiversity (foremost in Louisiana) for future research and related benefits.

(7) The Parish should promote “Best Practices” in land management and stewardship through public education.

(8) Transition zones adjoining established conservation areas should be designated, wherein uses would be limited so as not to interfere with the conservation areas. Within these, as well as otherwise designated “conservation” areas, there shall be designated specific levels of use within each. Some conservation areas, for instance, would accommodate some residential or commercial uses.

(9) The Parish shall make every effort to protect existing conservation areas from large-scale commercial redevelopment.

(10) Historic and archeological sites should also be conserved with Parish assistance.

C. Other Significant Elements

1. Flood protection

a) Much of St. Tammany, including coastal areas as well as stream floodplains, is subject to storm water or tidal flooding. The coastal (lakefront) areas, south of Interstate 12, are also heavily populated and developed. Recent flooding experiences (whether caused by tropical storms or heavy rain falls) have dramatically illustrated the number of lives and value of property at stake. Accordingly, prevention of any additional contribution to flooding in the Parish was identified as one of the top four priorities for future land use decisions in the Parish.

b) Most participants in the planning process either strongly or moderately agreed that “natural systems” should be used to minimize flooding, but another almost equivalent group agreed that “a combination of natural and built systems” should be utilized. This should guide Parish

planners, engineers and decision-makers as they develop both strategies to deal with existing flood threats to life and property, as well as appropriate land use zoning and regulations.

c) Any development within the 100-year floodplain (as currently defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), or as may be updated with more accurate information in the future (by FEMA or other reputable source), or within areas of flat topography and “very wet” (hydric) soils, shall be required to use low impact development – site and structure design and construction – techniques. In follow-up work under this ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan process, such areas and techniques shall be carefully delineated.

d) Flood protection strategies should be developed and implemented prior to the permitting of new development, since this approach is less costly than remedial responses.

e) The Parish should have a comprehensive and effective drainage plan that addresses the “big picture” of surface water flow, along with a menu of responses to: retain storm water for as long as possible within watersheds, using principally low-cost natural systems; provide discrete, minimal, but effective structural and mechanical measures to retain surface waters, to eliminate any additional flood loading from any new developments or roadways or to allow them to flow quickly to Lake Pontchartrain; adopt stringent site and structure design standards, particularly within already impaired watersheds, to eliminate any additional flood loading. The Parish should assess flooding and drainage impacts cumulatively, based upon existing, proposed and anticipated developments.

f) Natural drainage channels should be monitored and their function preserved by Parish regulation and enforcement, even where such channels are privately owned or pass through incorporated areas.

g) Solutions should be sought to overcome impediments (such as undersized culverts) created by existing transportation structures, but not if doing so adds risk to downstream properties.

h) Some timber harvesting is identified as a potentially significant contributor to flooding, depending upon the timing of rainfall and the timing, location, type and extent of timber harvesting. Accordingly, the Parish’s granting of timber harvest permits should incorporate review by its Engineering, Public Works, Environmental Services, Planning and Emergency Management staff.

i) For northbound evacuation, additional roadway capacity in appropriate locations is needed. This would include major highways as well as secondary highways and connector roads. In addition, many segments of key roads must be elevated to retain their evacuation utility during flood conditions. Associated with these improvements should be provisions for rest areas, vehicle fueling and repair, and improved traffic flow management, interagency communications and signage systems.

2. Transportation

a) Land use is inextricably tied to transportation. Indeed, availability of paved roadways is often a greater determinant of land development than public policy. Likewise, land development, particularly if automobile-dependent, single use type, and not connected to adjacent uses with internal connector roads, represents the source of traffic congestion on existing roadways. Accordingly, land use plans and policy must be closely coordinated with transportation plans and policy.

b) Support for the principle of connectivity in transportation routes, including walkways, bikeways, roadways and transit was soundly recommended by participants in the ND 2025 Land Use planning process.

c) Citizen participants in the ND 2025 Land Use planning process recommended many specific roadway, bikeway, walkway and navigable waterway improvements. The ND 2025 Transportation Element and Parish, regional and state transportation authorities and officials should carefully consider these recommendations.

d) Again, the Parish must address transportation impacts of proposed developments cumulatively – including the base of existing traffic along with proposed and anticipated developments – within given corridors and/or districts. Moreover, the cumulative transportation impacts must be addressed across jurisdictional boundaries.

e) Among the tools recommended by participants for managing traffic flow in a cost-effective manner (relying principally upon existing major highways), is to have developers assist the Parish with right-of-way and the provision of service roads, and with the provision of connector links among adjoining commercial and/or institutional facilities. Another recommended tool is to limit allowed “curb cuts” (driveway access to arterial roads).

f) Neighborhood planning adjacent or near to mixed use commercial centers offers the possibilities of walking or bicycling for many trips, thereby reducing vehicle trips. Such development planning should be encouraged. Similarly, mixed-use centers facilitate the viability of some form of scheduled transit service.

g) Homebuilders participating in the ND 2025 process have recommended that the Parish initiate the extension of a roadway network, and subsequently call upon developers whose projects would use that capacity for partial reimbursement of its costs. The Parish should consider this approach.

3. Tax base expansion and economic development

a) The Parish’s continued growth will demand increasing resources for public facilities and services. Given Louisiana’s tax structure, most of the Parish’s property tax base, and its entire sales tax base, are derived from commercial or industrial activities. Moreover, a significant portion of the Parish’s operating budget is derived from development permit fees. Given existing unmet needs for public facilities and services, together with anticipated future needs, an expanded tax base is needed.

b) In addition to the revenue-producing role of commercial and industrial uses, they, along with major institutional uses, offer an expanded employment market for local residents. Such employment opportunities should be attracted and assisted.

c) While the Economic Development Element of ND 2025 will develop targeted strategies to attract commercial, industrial, institutional, and retirement residential uses, and to develop tourism, agricultural and mining activities, the ND 2025 Land Use planning process has suggested appropriate locations for these uses. Most of these are near the crossroads of major highways, so that some of the needed access is available. The locations recommended are also generally removed from existing residential or environmentally sensitive or flood-prone areas. It is the desire of the Land Use Element that the Economic Development Element target its strategies to these, or similar, locations.

d) The extent and diversity of the natural systems in St. Tammany provide abundant opportunity to develop water and nature related tourism. These opportunities should be preserved and enhanced.

e) Zoning, regulatory and administrative ordinances and procedures should be developed to facilitate entrepreneurial, research, small business and value-adding activities.

4. Aesthetics

a) The overall visual appearance of the Parish, views of both natural landscapes and manmade structures, represent one of its most valuable assets, and the foundation of its attractiveness. Measures should be taken to maintain a high quality of appearance throughout the Parish – and within its towns as well.

b) One of the most effective measures to achieve this is through landscape buffers, both tree and under-story growth. While these will require some maintenance over time, they should be provided both on public and private properties, particularly along roadway frontages, but also between differing land uses. They should be composed largely of native plant materials so as to reduce the need for maintenance.

c) There is strong support from participants in the ND 2025 Land Use planning process for Parish regulation to maintain a 100-foot green or landscape buffer along the entire length of Interstate highways within the Parish, where such areas are not already developed.

d) Certain rural, urbanized or residential roadways, or segments of these corridors should be designated “Scenic,” with added protection of their natural beauty.

e) Additional greenspaces throughout the Parish – both public and privately owned – should be preserved through any of several means.

f) Of 315 responses to the ND 2025 Land Use Questionnaire, 245 indicated either strong or moderate support for enhancing and extending the traditional pattern of settlement in St. Tammany, namely one of towns, villages and hamlets separated by rural areas and green space.

g) Lighting and signage are important elements of the landscape and should be regulated by appropriate ordinances.

5. Adequate Public Facilities

a) The Parish currently doesn't have the road network or other vital infrastructure to support significant growth – except perhaps within Covington, Mandeville or Slidell. Continued development, unsupported by adequate public facilities and services (including green spaces), will destroy or damage property through flooding and otherwise diminish residents' quality of life and property values. Accordingly, the Parish, its citizens, landowners, developers and municipalities must find ways to provide adequate facilities and services, or limit growth until such time as they can do so.

b) Of 325 responses to the ND 2025 Land Use Questionnaire, 289 indicated either strong or moderate support for the principle that the Parish and/or developers should provide adequate facilities to support development projects by the time of their opening. One of the key challenges here is the differing time frame for private development of buildings and the public construction of highways, schools and other public infrastructure and services.

c) Parish planning must be pro-active and anticipatory, since it is much more expensive to address public facility and service needs after development occurs than before. Specific areas of use and density should be designated for growth so that adequate facilities can be put in place. Certain concentrations of development must occur so that such supporting facilities can be installed and maintained economically.

6. Sewage and stream water quality

a) The Parish should prohibit the deterioration of stream water quality from development or land use activities, including, but not limited to, turbidity and silting from timbering, other agricultural activities, land clearing or development.

b) Poorly maintained or installed septic and individual sewage treatment systems in the Parish create a serious health problem. Measures should be taken to address this problem.

c) New septic or sewer systems should be carefully regulated within the 100-year floodplain and within 100 feet of any stream. Central sewer systems should be mandated for new developments.

d) Any development within the 100 or 200-year floodplain (as currently defined or as may be revised in the future by an authoritative source) should be strictly controlled, and low impact development techniques required.

e) Scientific studies to document current land use and biologic conditions in the principal streams – and their watersheds - of St. Tammany should be supported. Such studies (for example, resolutions supporting such a study of the upper Tchefuncte River have already been endorsed by both the St. Tammany and Tangipahoa Police Juries) will establish a base against which future land use activities can be evaluated.

7. Incentives

a) A program of incentives for landowners and developers to comply with the 2025 Land Use Plan should be developed by the Parish.

Among the targeted objectives for such incentives are: redevelopment of underutilized sites, provision of public facilities or services attributable to the proposed development, use limitations or conservation easements of stream watersheds or habitat areas, and the provision of additional green space within new developments. Tools for such incentives are myriad (including, but not limited to tax incentives), and shall be developed in subsequent efforts of this ND 2025 planning process.

IV. Appendix of Background sources and processes

A. ND 2025 Vision Statement

“As a progressive and prosperous community, St. Tammany Parish respects and safeguards a desirable and sustainable quality of life and will continue to do so for this and future generations. In doing so, our parish will afford all residents the opportunity to live, learn, work, play and retire in a vibrant and cohesive community that respects and balances our natural resources and environment with our human potential and needs. Our vision is grounded in the values we have established to guide our actions in furtherance of each element of our comprehensive plan, New Directions 2025.”

B. Land Use Definition, Purpose and Value Statement (From the adopted “Vision Element.”)

1. “Land use concerns itself simply with how the land is being utilized, conserved or developed by residents and businesses. The Land Use Element of the comprehensive plan is a policy document that provides guidance and direction by the parish for residents, property owners and public agencies in the conservation or use of land. This policy document has been created and is sustained on an on-going basis by the consensus of the St. Tammany community, as determined through broad public participation.
2. The purposes of the Land Use Element are to translate the Vision Statement into physical terms and to provide a general pattern for the location, distribution, and characteristics of the future land uses within St. Tammany over a twenty-five (25) year planning period.
3. We will conserve and respect the natural splendor of our environment while we plan for economic opportunity; preserve our cultural identities, historic towns, countryside and scenic corridors; create livable communities; and enhance our quality of life with the support and enforcement of responsive, cooperative government.”

C. Key Excerpts from the Land Use Framework Document

The Land Use Element of the ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan process adopted this paper in September 2001. Its purpose is to lay a framework for future, more detailed, development of a long-range land use Plan for St. Tammany. The paper includes and recognizes previously prepared population projections, and describes alternative forms that development might take, parish-wide. Five areas of consensus emerged among citizen participants on land use concepts that should guide the development of the recommended Land Use Plan. These are summarized below.

1. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

Almost all of the citizen focus groups, or “Elements,” working during the development of the “ND 2025 Vision Element” cited environmental protection as an objective, balancing that with management and accommodation of projected growth. Among reasons given included: retention of storm water to minimize flood destruction and risk to life safety; long-term maintenance of recreational uses – both active and passive (including such activities as hunting, fishing and birdwatching); enhancement of stream and lake water quality, again for public health purposes; and the preservation of wildlife habitat – both for recreational purposes and for benefits not fully measurable at this time. The Critical and Sensitive Focus Group is principally focused on developing strategies to achieve these objectives, but the Land Use Group adopted this objective as one of its fundamental principles in guiding development of a ND 2025 Land Use Plan.

2. “Towns, Corridors and Countryside.”

The Land Use Group adopted as a theme for guiding ND 2025 Land Use Plan development, a pattern of “towns, countryside and scenic corridors.” This envisioned a recommended pattern of land use that would direct and concentrate development and redevelopment into existing or designated new areas of planned “urban” patterns, particularly for commercial and institutional uses, but also for some residential and industrial uses. Such areas need not be incorporated, though some are. The “countryside” would include all rural areas – whether in agricultural (including timber plantations), rural residential, or public or private conservation uses. Additionally, a linked “greenspace network” was sought, both for recreational and habitat purposes. Scenic “corridors” were to be identified as either: roadway segments that have not yet been continuously developed with commercial or industrial uses, and retain much greenspace and low-intensity uses along their lengths; stream corridors – and in many cases, their tributaries and branches – that are in a floodplain or provide continuous natural coverage and provide for storm water retention and habitat; and other corridors, such as the Tammany Trace and the Lakefront.

3. Land Use and Conservation.

The Land Use focus group recognized and recommends that the use of land be balanced with the conservation of land. This includes wise management and stewardship of lands such as timberlands, agricultural lands, wetlands, floodplains, watersheds and wildlife habitat areas. Many specific strategies to achieve this objective are available (and used in other places) and will be developed for potential application in St. Tammany in subsequent phases of development of the ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Group also adopted a “Design with Nature” approach to guide development that is allowed in environmentally sensitive areas. These are specific site planning and structure design techniques that minimize adverse impacts to natural systems.

4. Cluster Development vs. Sprawl.

The Land Use Group adopted for most new development a “cluster” approach, wherein buildings are sited relatively close to each other, while much of the site is left in an undeveloped (although properly managed) condition. The rationale here is not just to preserve more green space, but also to afford developers and the Parish greater economies in the provision of needed public facilities.

Available data reflects that such development patterns add value to individual sites or buildings at the same time. Such patterns also allow for a range in individual lot sizes. As for the mixed-use pattern discussed below, cluster development relies heavily on high quality site and building design.

5. Mixed Use vs. Separation of Uses.

The separation of types of land uses has dominated local policy since the early 20th century, but recent findings – from many sources – reflect the limitations of that pattern of development. The Land Use Group adopted the concept of “mixed use” as one that should be encouraged in St. Tammany, based on detailed planning and performance standards. “Mixed use” patterns encourage the placement of a variety of reasonably compatible uses in relatively close proximity to one another. These generally include residential, commercial, institutional and recreational. In fact, the historic (sometimes referred to as “traditional”) pattern of development in St. Tammany was indeed one of mixed-use towns separated by extensive areas of agricultural or undeveloped uses. Moreover, mixed-use development patterns can serve to enhance the vitality of existing concentrated settlement patterns in the Parish (whether incorporated or not) and can serve significant market segments of the Parish’s future population and economic base. Moreover, mixed-use patterns generally offer comparable efficiencies in the provision of public facilities and services, not least because they afford citizens the convenience of walking to destinations.

D. Approach and Process taken to develop the Draft 2025 Land Use Plan and Statement of Policies and Principles

1. Integrated and balanced approach.

Notwithstanding the structure of citizen Focus Groups for the ND 2025 Comprehensive Plan into nine separate “elements,” the Land Use Group adopted an approach to preparation of a draft 2025 Land Use Plan that would integrate, as far as possible, the concerns and insights of all other elements and public perspectives. Accordingly, the Land Use Group has made every effort to seek input from all other ND 2025 Elements beginning in Spring 2000 and continuing today. The foundation of this approach is that determining a recommended land use plan for the future of development and conservation in the Parish is highly interactive with all other Element input and recommendations. Moreover, the range of “opinion” within an adopted “Vision Element” statement of community values and goals remains wide and diverse, so broad community input was sought through an aggressive public notification effort. As described below, public meetings regarding future land use recommendations were structured to afford both open dialogue among all participants (and learning from each other and from documents made available) and to seek consensus on recommendations that most could accept, given compromises in individual positions.

2. Community and constituency outreach.

Extensive efforts were made to inform and invite the participation of citizens in the development of the ND 2025 Land Use Plan. These included mailed notices to almost 700 registered individuals, press notices, and special meetings with several resident and commercial interest groups. The input of all of these groups and individuals is reflected in the recommended 2025

Land Use Map and accompanying Policy and Principles statement (below). Notwithstanding, further public hearings will be held in the process of Parish Council adoption of the recommended Plan and Policy Statement, and the Plan shall be open for amendments on an annual basis. The entire comprehensive planning process shall be re-inaugurated by the Parish and intervals of no more than seven years.

3. Two-stage citizen participation process.

The first step taken to obtain insightful input from local area citizens and property owners was to divide the Parish into seven Planning Districts. The boundaries of these Districts were structured according to Census Tracts for on-going data monitoring. While imperfect, these served adequately to elicit constructive input from locally based citizens who know their “neighborhood” well. Public participation meetings to gather citizen input for Plan development were structured in a two-step process, as described below. Many participants commended this format.

i. Dialogue and information sharing.

The first of two meetings within each Planning District was held on a Saturday morning. These meetings were structured to provide maximum time for two principle functions: (1) information sharing and learning; and (2) documentation of citizen comments, concerns and recommendations. Among the information made available for participant review were color maps of existing land use patterns in the area, 1998 aerial photographs of the area, Phase I Transportation Element recommendations, boundaries of the 100-year floodplain, and various publications addressing land use issues and recommendations – reflecting “best practices.” Following the period of review of displayed documents and informal dialogue among participants and staff, the group was reconvened in plenary to state their concerns and recommendations, and following that, they were given an opportunity to fill in Questionnaires regarding future land use, as well as mark on maps of the Planning District what future land uses they would recommend. All of this information was compiled by staff and consultants, and subsequently reviewed by Parish staff and the Land Use Element leadership. The results were draft consensus documents – both of questionnaire responses and map recommendations – for review at the second meeting.

ii. Review and consensus.

The second of the two meetings held in each Planning District were held on Wednesday evenings. At this time, many new participants attended, and their input was welcomed and documented. The “consensus” findings from the previous – Saturday morning – meeting was presented and described, and participants were asked for their comments and recommended revisions. These were also thoroughly documented, and ultimately recorded in the text and map documents. These summaries were then organized under an outline of topic headings that became apparent after review of all comments from all Planning District and other special group meetings, and are available for review. This distillation of citizen input parish-wide forms the fundamental basis for the recommend land use “Policy and Principles Statement” that proceeds.