

**PARISH OF ASCENSION**  
**OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**



**APPENDIX III**  
**MASTER PLAN AND LAND USE PLAN**

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**ORDINANCE HISTORY**

**Ordinance# LU98-01, adopted February 5, 1998**

**Ordinance# LU03-01, adopted March 20, 2003**

**Ordinance# DC09-09, adopted December 17, 2009**

**17-301.**

**Purpose**

**A.** The Master Plan and Land Use Plan presents the recommendations of the Parish Planning Commission for the development of Ascension Parish from 2001 to 2003. The Master Plan applies to the unincorporated areas of Ascension Parish. The Ascension Parish Master Plan is written in accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute 33-106. This plan gives consideration, among other things, to the following factors:

1. The parish transportation system, including railroads, highways, streets, bridges, and waterways;
2. The parish recreation system, including playgrounds, squares, parks, and other public ways, grounds, and open spaces;
3. Public buildings, schools, and other public property;
4. Affordable housing and the planning of blighted areas; and
5. Public and private utilities for water, light, sanitation, communication, power, and transportation.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**B.** The plan is intended to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Ascension Parish. It represents the cumulative recommendations of the residents of Ascension Parish, as interpreted by the Planning Commission.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**C.** As the state statute recognizes, a master plan includes several components and that preparing a master plan is a process. This document provides an overview of the entire Master Plan for the Parish and incorporates by reference other plans and reports prepared for the Parish.' This Master Plan provides a framework to translate our vision of the future for Ascension Parish into action. The Master Plan is structured around guiding principles, plans, and action steps.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**D.** The Commission also intends for this Master Plan to be easily read and understood by the citizens of the Parish. Most master plans are not. The common plan is hundreds of The Guiding Principles pages long with dense language, tables and charts. This plan takes a different course. This Master Plan is short. It aims to set out major principles and major development challenges. It then explains how the Parish will meet these challenges with a variety of different enactments, policies and programs. Following this Master Plan is critical for a number of reasons:

1. Industrial operations in the parish involve the manufacture and transportation of chemicals. These operations pose a risk to public health and safety and should be adequately separated from *high density residential* development.
2. Large portions of the parish exist *within* a flood hazard area. Construction within this area must meet special building standards in order to minimize the risk of loss from flooding.
3. The Parish is undergoing rapid growth and suburbanization. The Parish has a limited infrastructure to support this growth. Building new infrastructure should be geographically concentrated in order both to reduce the cost of this infrastructure and to encourage development outside the flood hazard area.
4. The Parish has a limited amount of land available for industrial and business development. The Parish needs land use regulations to balance residential, commercial and industrial growth in order to protect the long term tax base of the parish.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- E.** The Master Plan is formulated around a core set of guiding principles.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-302. Guiding Principles**

- A.** The guiding principles outline what the parish residents want the Master Plan to do. They reflect the broader concerns of the parish residents regarding how they want Ascension Parish to develop in the years ahead. The Master Plan focuses on seven guiding principles. These principles reflect community priorities for growth in Ascension Parish for the next five years.

1. Principle 1: Protect the public safety and property values by providing adequate separation of industrial, commercial, and residential uses. Public safety issues arise in four areas.
  - a. The first involves providing adequate buffer zones around industrial development. The petrochemical complex in the parish needs an adequate buffer with high density residential development. Without this separation, no amount of emergency preparation will protect the public safety from potential industrial accidents. In addition, industrial development in other parts of the parish threaten to encroach on residential areas and schools.

- b. The second major public safety issue involves increasing traffic volumes on the parish roads. Ascension Parish operates with a largely rural road system. Roads and road beds are narrow. Higher traffic volumes on these roads increases the likelihood of serious accidents.
  - c. The third major public health and safety issue involves sewage disposal. Inadequate waste water treatment systems create a serious public health risk in the parish. This risk increases with development.
  - d. The fourth major public health issue involves the risks posed by residential development near toxic waste sites.
  - e. 36 LRS 106 reads in part: "As the work of making the whole master plan progresses, a commission may from time to time adopt and publish a part or parts thereof, any such part to cover one or more major sections or divisions of the parish or municipality, as the case may be, or one or more of the aforesaid or other functional matters to be included in the plan."
  - f. Incompatible development reduces adjacent property values. For example, a small lot, high density subdivision can depreciate a neighboring large lot residence. An auto junk yard or a nearby strip mall reduces the value of neighboring residential property. These conflicts appear frequently in the parish, and they threaten to become more serious with additional growth. Comprehensive land use management reduces the risks to property owners.
2. Principle 2: Manage growth. Encourage growth only in areas of the parish which can support it with adequate soils, drainage, and physical infrastructure.
- a. Residential and commercial growth requires the infrastructure to support it. In many respects, Ascension Parish is not prepared for the growth which is occurring. Roads are clogged. The drainage systems can easily overload. Inadequate sewage disposal creates public health hazards. To help the Parish Council plan basic infrastructure investments, the Planning Commission will manage growth in the parish through land use regulation.

- b. Managed growth encourages public and private development investment to follow the guiding principles of this Master Plan. Managed growth means that the decisions of the Planning Commission and the Parish Council will be made in concert with the land's natural carrying capacity, the parish's ability to financially support development through the provision of infrastructure and related community services and facilities, and the desire of parish residents for additional growth and development.
  - c. New infrastructure and new public services will be planned in direct relationship to the ability of Ascension Parish to support this growth. Any new infrastructure or new public services deemed necessary during the Master Plan's projected time frame will be analyzed, studied and considered for the Parish's Infrastructure Capital Improvements Program.
  - d. Managing growth involves balancing individual property interests with the interests of neighbors and the other residents of the parish. Often there are several approaches to consider. In implementing the Master Plan and related plans, the Parish Council and the Planning Commission will minimize the adverse impacts on individual property owners
3. Principle 3: Preserve the rural character of the parish. Preserve rural, conservation, and recreation areas from high intensity residential and commercial development. In portions of the parish, residents feel strongly about preserving the rural character of the countryside. This principle means:
- a. Preventing development on sensitive environmental and natural hazard areas which would endanger the environment.
  - b. Protecting productive agricultural land and other rural undeveloped areas of the parish for their economic and open space value, while encouraging the sensitive development of parcels more easily served by water and sewer.
  - c. Preserving significant natural features such as scenic vistas and open spaces.
  - d. Discouraging linear, "strip" commercial developments with frequent access points to the main street, large, unrelieved expanses of parking, and numerous detached, small buildings unrelated in architecture.

4. Principle 4: Encourage compact commercial centers. Encourage the development of compact commercial centers throughout the parish and discourage "strip" commercial development along highways. Strip commercial development creates additional traffic congestion, especially on two lane highways. By concentrating commercial development at intersections of two lane roads, traffic congestion will be minimized.
5. Principle 5: Keep the process simple and open. Streamline the process of land use management and encourage continuous public comment on development practices. Developing a zoning system that is "fundamentally fair" represents an important goal of the Master Plan. Based on public meetings, citizens worry deeply that any effort to manage land use and public infrastructure investments in the parish will be unfair. In order to guide the Master Plan and its implementation, the Master Plan sets forth the following fairness principles. A fair process:
  - a. Is timely;
  - b. Relies on open meetings for public information and comment;
  - c. Respects individual property rights;
  - d. Considers the cumulative impacts of development projects;
  - e. Applies due process in all administrative deliberations; and
  - f. Has an appeal process.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**B.** In addition to these principles adopted by ordinance in 1998, the Planning Commission is adopting the following principles, based on the development patterns in the Parish. These principles reflect the experience that the Commission has accumulated with managing growth in Ascension Parish.

1. Principle 6: Use flexible performance zones that focus on controlling the intensity of development. Instead of having a lot more single use zones, the parish should expand the allowable uses of the existing zones and add a few more flexible use zones. The Commission should focus on managing the intensity and impact of development and not so much on the use. This approach meets the needs of a rural parish and reduces the cost of administration. Ascension parish has a small planning staff. A complex set of single use zones will burden the staff and lead to more uneven results.

2. Principle 7: Discourage subdivision development within the 100 year flood plain. Subdivision development is occurring in large areas of the parish that cannot support the intensity of this development. The allowable subdivision development should be largely restricted to the northern part of the parish outside the 100 year flood plain.
3. Principle 8: Support subdivision development where water and sewer lines are likely to run. Clustering subdivision development near water and sewer lines will reduce the overall cost of water and sewer to the taxpayers of the parish.
4. Principle 9: Within a zone allowing subdivision development, use a flood plain overlay zone to restrict development within the 100 year flood plain. This overlay zone will reduce drainage problems from development by restricting the amount of fill that can be added within the flood plain.
5. Principle 10: Reduce the amount of commercial development to discourage strip commercial development along rural roads. The 1998 parish zoning map encouraged commercial zones all along the highways. With the exception of Airline Highway, most roads in the parish cannot support major new commercial development. The Commission should encourage commercial development around intersections, where traffic flow can be more easily managed.
6. Principle 11: Establish a truck route between the industrial plants and the interstate. Currently trucks are mixing with residential traffic on parish roads. This problem will only worsen as the parish grows. A truck route, with limited commercial and residential development, will separate industrial from residential traffic. This step will protect the public safety and provide an efficient corridor from the industrial plants to the Interstate.
7. Principle 12: Create an additional business development zone in the parish. The 1998 Zoning Map did not provide a site for locating high end office, research and technology development. This district should be located near the current industrial zones and should be compatible with surrounding residential development. The district should encourage high quality business development with minimal environmental impacts. The Parish needs additional business development to diversify the economy. In addition, expanding business development will strengthen the tax base to handle the continued growth of residential development.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-303.** Implementing the Master Plan

**A.** This Master Plan represents a consistent set of policies which the parish will follow. The Parish Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and other government entities in the parish will implement the following sets of plans:

1. A zoning ordinance and zoning map to regulate land use and development density, which has been adopted by the Parish;
2. A plan for water and sewer, which has been completed by engineering firm GSA;
3. A plan for roadways and bridges, which is underdevelopment by the parish Engineer;
4. A plan for drainage, which has been adopted by the Parish; and
5. Specialized plans, such as economic development and historic preservation.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**B.** Maps and technical reports

1. This plan includes maps and technical reports available from the Planning Commission. The Master Plan Technical Reports and Maps are presented in the Technical Appendix to the Master Plan. These supplemental documents are the basis of information used in the development of the plan.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**C.** Citizen participation

1. The Ascension Parish Planning Commission began public discussion in the comprehensive planning process in July, 1996. Over ten public meetings were held. Since the adoption of the Master Plan in 1998, the Commission has continued with a series of public meeting to review and update this plan. A record of these meetings is available from the Planning Department.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-304.** The Development Challenges Facing Ascension Parish

**A.** Overview

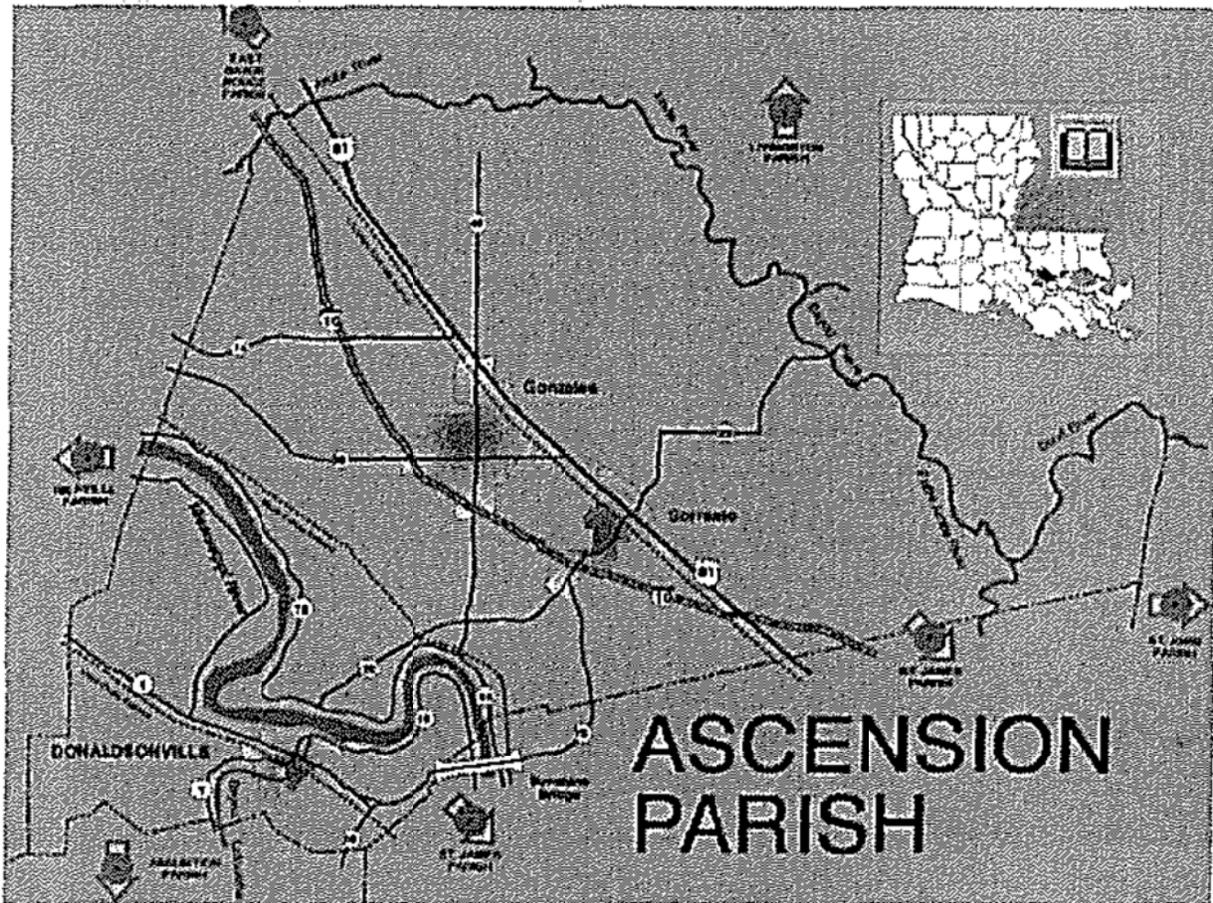
1. The development challenges facing Ascension Parish come down to one word: growth. In recent years, the parish has experienced an accelerated economic and population growth, especially in the northern part of the parish. Except for a four-year period from 1987 to 1990, the parish's population has steadily grown at rates significantly higher than the state average. For example, over the period from 1969 to 1994 statewide population grew by 19.2 percent. The Ascension Parish population grew by about 75 percent.
2. Two factors contributed to this strong population growth. First, Ascension Parish has been creating jobs at a rapid pace over the last twenty-five years. Employment in Louisiana rose by 65 percent. Ascension Parish employment grew by 217 percent over the same period.
3. The key to Ascension Parish's economic strength is an unusually large manufacturing sector in chemical processing. Over one-third of our residents' income comes from manufacturing. Only two other parishes in the state with a significant manufacturing base exceed this percentage. The extensive petrochemical industry in the parish creates a need for careful emergency preparedness planning.
4. The urban-to-suburban shift has also contributed to Ascension Parish growth. Families have been moving from urban population centers to nearby bedroom communities.
5. Geographically, Ascension Parish is the most desirable area for future development between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Ascension Parish will continue to expand as these two metropolitan areas experience more suburban growth. Typically, development occurs along highways, and Ascension Parish is no exception. Development of the parish has concentrated in the northern parts of the parish along Airline Highway, Burnside Avenue, and Interstate 10. Industrial development is focused along the Mississippi River.
6. Ascension Parish is prone to flooding. Nearly all the soils in Ascension Parish are either somewhat poorly drained or poorly drained. Extensive investments in drainage systems have reduced drainage problems. Continued residential and commercial development, however, creates

more extensive storm water runoff and a continuing need for drainage improvements.

7. Ascension Parish has a largely rural highway infrastructure which divides into three distinct layers. The north central and east central portions of the parish are laid out in the familiar rural American grid system. The main roads for three to five miles on either side of the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche, as well as parts of Bayou Manchak follow arpent, or long lot property lines originally surveyed by the French colonists. The highways which stretch between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, U.S. 61 (Airline Highway) and Interstate 10, form the third layer. The road system, aside from Interstate 10, has come under significant stress due to the growth in the parish.
8. With the exception of the municipal corporate limits of Donaldsonville, Gonzales, and Sorrento, very few residential subdivisions or rural areas of the parish have a collection and treatment system for waste water. The majority of the parish consists of septic tanks or individual home treatment system discharge to roadside ditches or canals. The soils in the parish, which mainly consist of clays, reduce the percolation of septic tank effluent. As a result, waste water often collects in ditches where algae and bacteria growth accelerates.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- B. FIGURE 1. Ascension Parish is in the southeastern part of Louisiana about fifteen miles southeast of Baton Rouge. Donaldsonville is the Parish Seat. The total land area is 192,000 acres. The population of the Parish in 2000 was approximately 77,000. The Mississippi River cuts across the southwestern part of the parish and flows from northwest to southeast. About 18 percent or 34,000 acres is west of the Mississippi River (the "Westbank").



(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03)

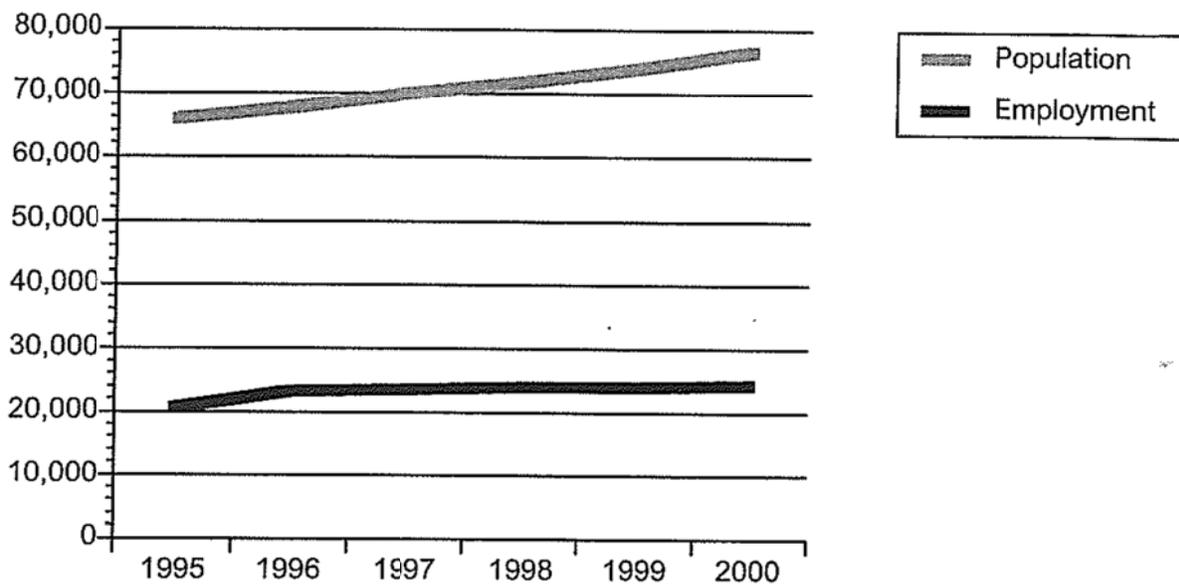
C. How Much Growth?

1. Ascension Parish is among the fastest growing parishes in the state. In the past five years, 11,000 more people now live in the parish. Based on the 2000 Census, that population increase translates into 3,860 new households.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**D. FIGURE 2. Most of the growth is coming people moving into the parish who work outside the parish. The growth in the parish employment base has been relatively modest. Population growth, however, has not.**

**Population and employment growth in Ascension Parish, 1995-2000**



(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- E. How much land is being consumed by growth?
1. Estimates of population growth vary, but the Planning Commission is using the following projections for planning purposes.
  2. **TABLE 1. Ascension parish will continue to experience accelerating growth through the planning horizon of this Master Plan.**

	2000	2010
<b>POPULATION &amp; HOUSEHOLDS</b>		
POPULATION PROJECTION	76,627	95,695
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	26,691	33,228
 <b>ANNUAL GROWTH RATES</b>		
ANNUAL NEW HOUSEHOLDS	720	810
 <b>RESIDENTIAL LAND DEMAND PER YEAR</b>		
ADDITIONAL HOUSEHOLDS		

3. **TABLE 2. Ascension parish will continue to experience accelerating growth through the planning horizon of this Master Plan.**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
SINGLE FAMILY	576	648
MULTIFAMILY	72	81
TRAILER	72	81
<b>ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNITS PER YEAR</b>		
SINGLE FAMILY	634	791
MULTIFAMILY	73	93
TRAILER	85	101
<b>TOTAL ACRES CONSUMED PER YEAR</b>		
SINGLE FAMILY	181	227
MULTIFAMILY	21	27
TRAILER	23	27
<b>ANNUAL ACRES CONSUMED</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>290</b>

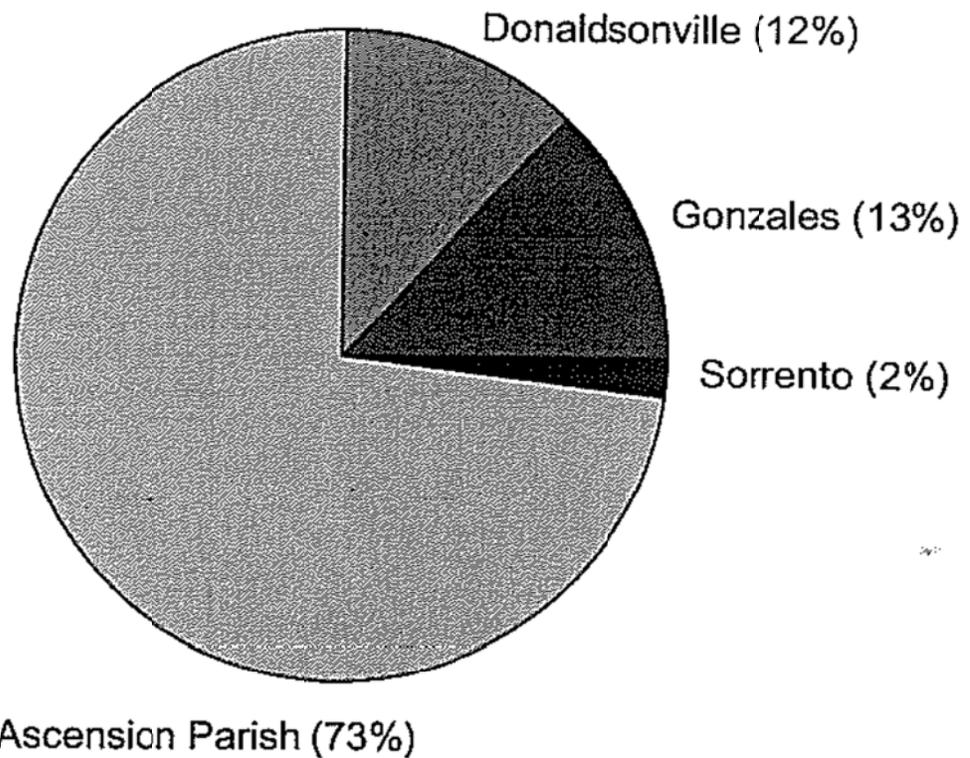
4. **TABLE 3. Underlying assumption in the projections are derived from the 2000 Census**

	<b>Ascension Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>
Population, 2000	76,627	4,468,976
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	31.60%	5.90%
Housing units, 2000	29,172	1,847,181
Homeownership rate, 2000	82.30%	67.90%
Households, 2000	26,691	1,656,053
Persons per household, 2000	2.85	2.62
Housing units per household	1.1	

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**F.** Where is growth happening?

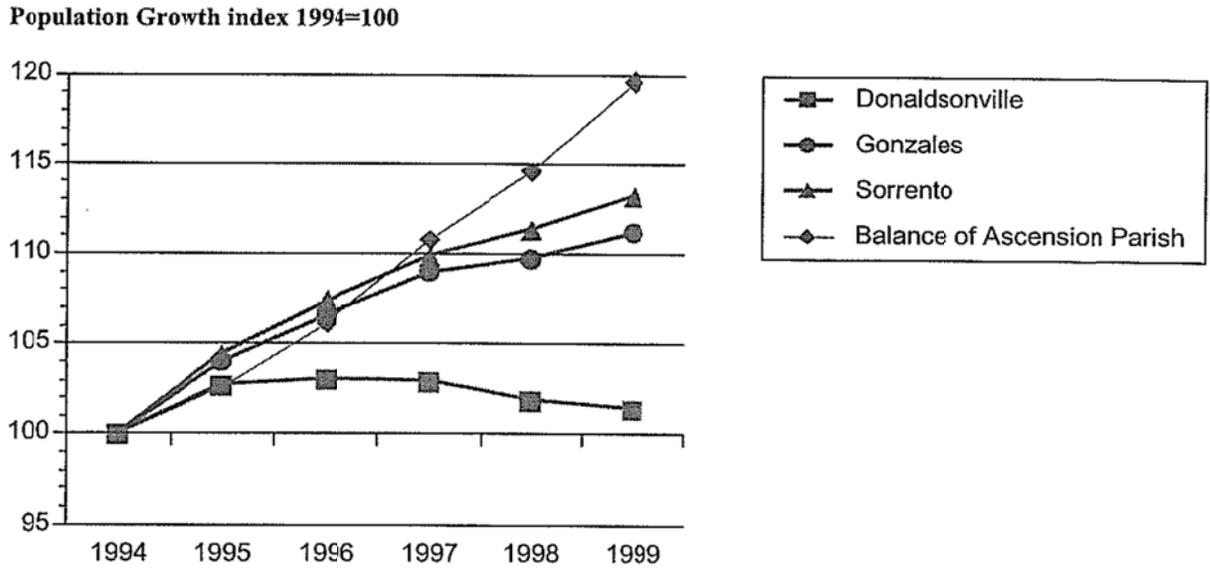
- 1.** The majority of the growth is occurring in the unincorporated parts of the parish.
- 2.** **FIGURE 3.** 73% of the population in Ascension Parish resides in the unincorporated parts of the parish., according to the 2000 Census.



**Source: Census Bureau**

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**G. FIGURE 4. The growth rate in the unincorporated parts of the parish exceeds the incorporated areas, even after the effects of annexation are figured in.**

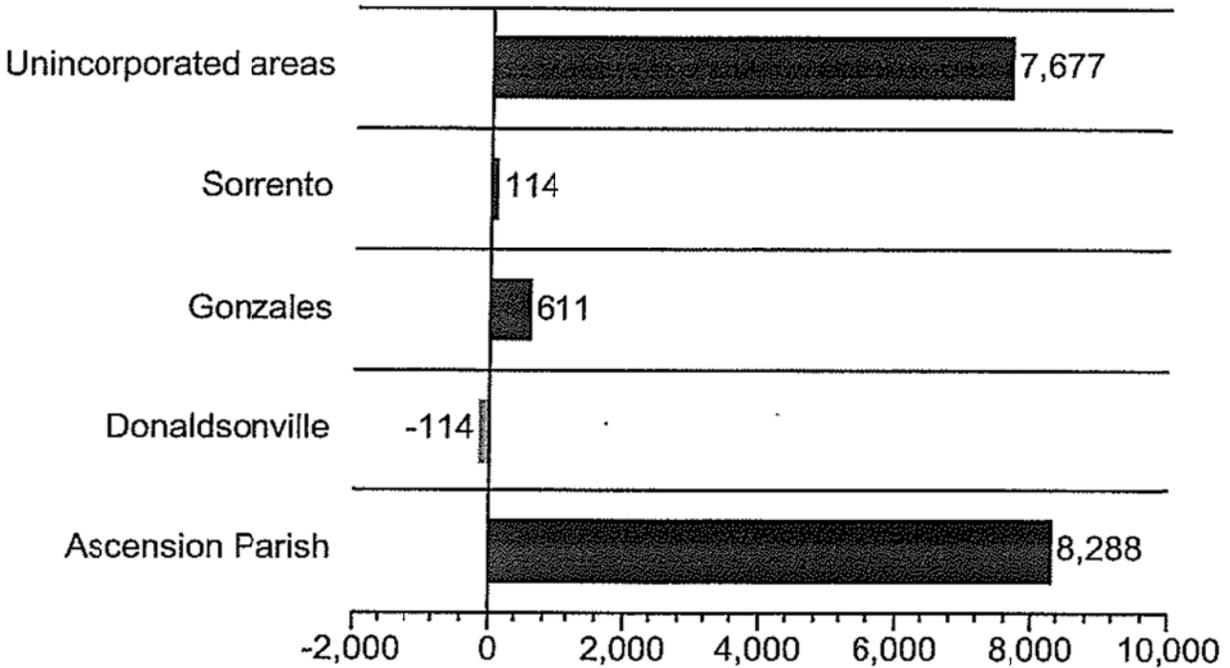


Source: Census Bureau

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

H. FIGURE 5. Virtually all of the population growth in the past five years has taken place in the unincorporated areas of the parish.

**Population growth, 1995 to 1999**



Source: Census Bureau

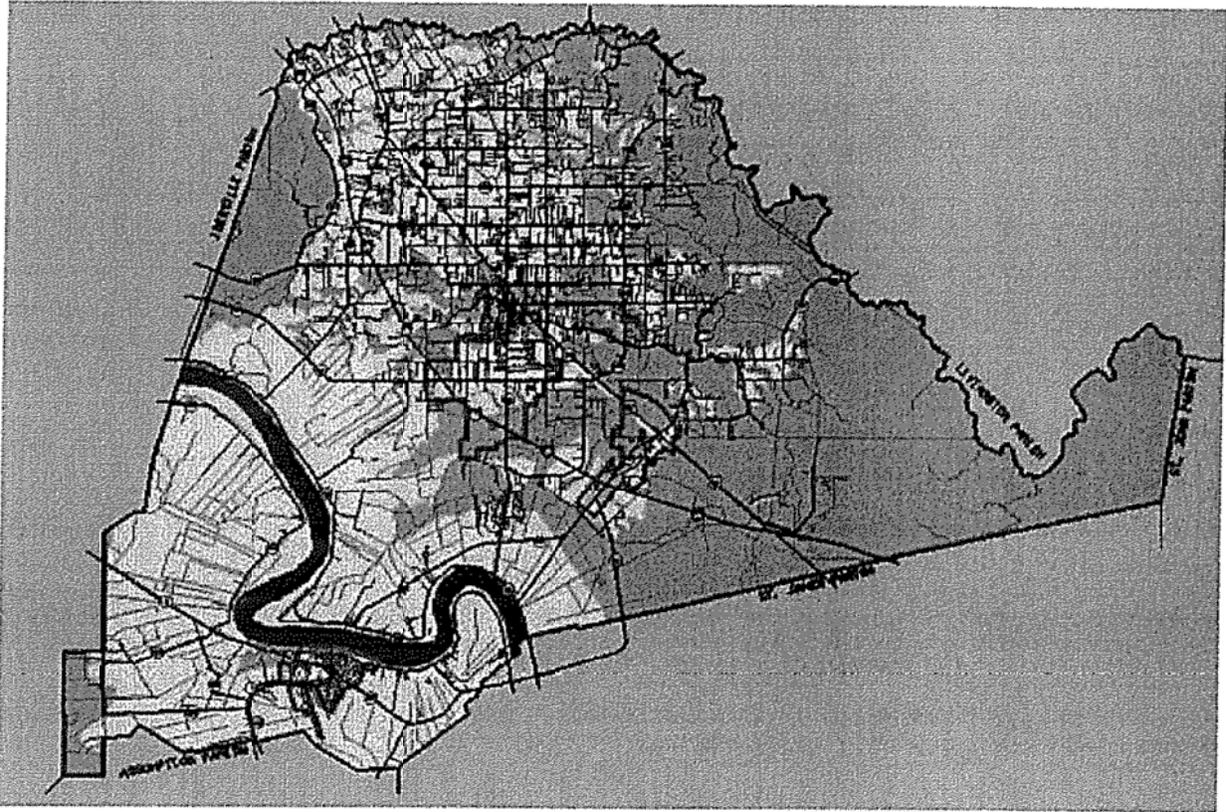
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

I. The challenges created by rapid development

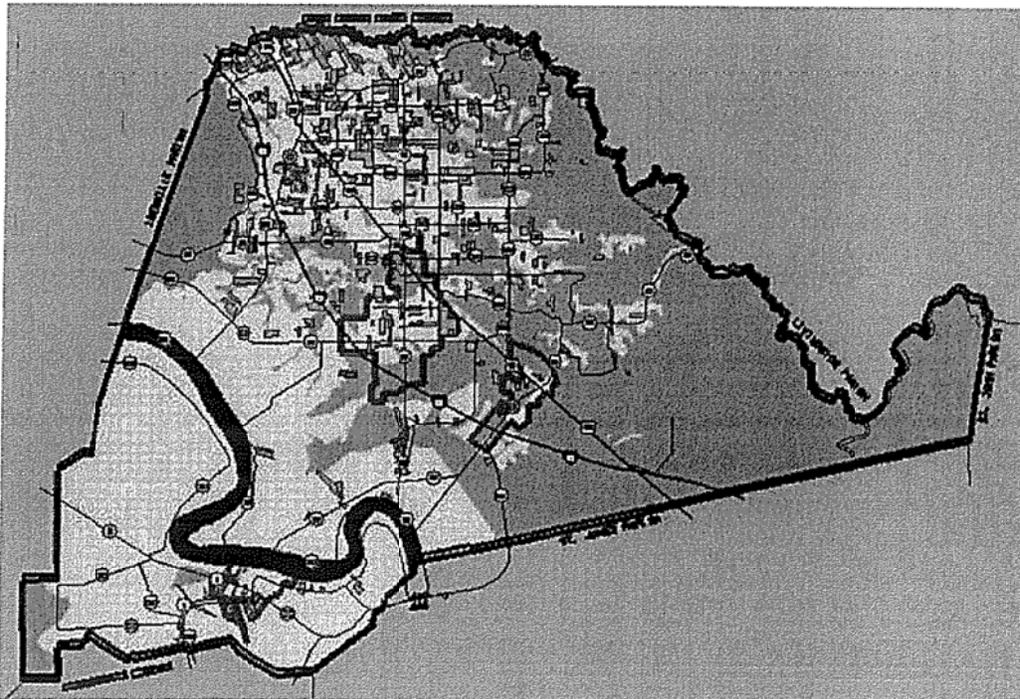
1. During the course of drafting this Master Plan, the Planning Commission has documented the problems that Ascension Parish encounters from accelerated development. These problems reinforce the need for the adoption and implementation of the Master Plan.
2. Inadequate drainage. Despite heavy investments in drainage systems, additional development creates more impermeable surfaces. With accelerating storm water runoff, drainage problems become increasingly severe.
3. Residential encroachment on industrial sites. Without adequate buffers, residential development is encroaching on the petrochemical complex in the parish. This situation creates serious public health risks.



5. Residential development and imported fill in the flood plain. The pressure to build housing is pushing residential development into the flood plain. As this development occurs, more imported fill is for development. Imported fill creates more flooding problems and undercuts the effectiveness of the overall parish drainage plan.
6. Deteriorating traffic safety and excessive traffic congestion. With few exceptions, the road structure in the parish is designed for a rural area. Increased traffic on inadequate roads increases delays and accidents. These problems are acute in several traffic corridors in the northern section of the parish.
7. FIGURE 7. The 100 year flood plain (shaded) extends to much of the parish.



8. Inadequate sewer systems. The parish has recently undertaken plans for parishwide sewer service. Until that system is in place, the parish does not have adequate sewer systems to support growth. These problems are particularly acute in the northern part of the parish, where residential development is heaviest.
9. Damage to historic sites. Incompatible development is encroaching on several important historic sites in the parish.
10. Residential development near toxic waste sites. The parish has a number of toxic waste sites. Under current land use regulations, there are no controls to prevent high density residential construction near these sites.
11. A shortage of affordable housing. In public meetings, members of the Planning Commission heard citizen concerns that accelerated development was reducing the opportunities for young residents to stay in the parish.
12. A loss of rural character. Residents in the rural areas of the parish, particularly St. Amant, expressed grave concerns about the loss of the rural character of the parish.
13. FIGURE 8. Subdivision development has absorbed much of the land outside the 100 flood plain in the Northern part of the parish. Subdivision development (shown in shaded rectangles) is increasingly encroaching in the 100 year flood plain.



14. Increased demands for fire and police protection. The parish relies on volunteer fire departments. Several members of these departments have expressed concerns to the Commission about the impact of new development on fire and police protection.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**J.** Strategies to meet these challenges

1. The Parish Council and the Planning Commission will follow three strategies to meet these challenges: gather solid information, enforce development standards, and manage infrastructure investments.
2. Collect and use accurate mapping information. The parish has undertaken an extensive program to implement a sophisticated geographic information system (GIS). This computer system provides flexible and responsive support for making decisions. It compiles, organizes and analyzes data on changes in the parish. Until facts are systematically sorted, it is difficult to identify and understand the challenges facing the parish. Maps presented in this plan are taken from the GIS system.
3. The GIS provides accurate and timely answers to critical questions concerning how land use is changing. It will provide information needed to analyze the social, economic, fiscal and environmental impact of these changes. In addition, the GIS will be able to compare these changes to historical trends and future projections.
4. Enforce development standards. Local governments impose building standards to protect the public health and safety from unsafe construction. In the same way, local governments impose development standards to protect the public from careless development. Land use regulations, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, provide quality control to development in the parish.
5. By setting minimum standards, land use controls will preserve property values throughout the parish. In isolated instances, development standards may depress the values of a particular building or property. Overall, however, development standards will increase the total real property values in the parish.
6. Manage infrastructure investments. Without careful planning, two problems can arise from careless infrastructure development. In the first instance, development can place too much pressure on available infrastructure. This situation increases the risk to public health and safety. We encounter problems such as too many cars on the road or open ditches carrying untreated sewage.

7. Building infrastructure carelessly causes other problems. Infrastructure is expensive, and the taxpayers of the parish must pay for it. Without careful planning, we can easily waste money. Building a large subdivision on an inadequate road costs parish taxpayers money. Eventually, the parish will be forced to improve the road. Studies have shown that communities that carefully plan their infrastructure investments pay 20% to 30% less in infrastructure to support the same number of people.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-305. Components of the Master Plan**

- A.** As state law recognizes, a master plan includes a variety of different components. Different parish entities are responsible for planning. For example, the Department of Public Works is responsible for planning roads and bridges; the Recreation Department is responsible for parks and recreation; the Office of Emergency Preparedness is responsible for public safety.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-306. Land Use Map**

- A.** The Commission focuses its future planning land use planning on a Land Use Map. A copy of the map is included in the Appendix. This Land Use Map reflects the policies set forth in this Master Plan. The Land Use Map also reflects the contributions that citizens have made to the process. Based on its public meetings, the Commission and its subcommittees have used the Land Use Map to discuss specific land use issues that concern the citizens of the parish. The Land Use Map reflects the sum total of these discussions that have occurred since 1997.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-307. Official Zoning Map**

- A.** The land use plan for Ascension Parish is expressed in the Official Zoning Map. The map divides the parish into zones for development. The location of each zone takes into account the principles of this Master Plan.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- B.** The primary policy objectives in developing these zones are:
1. to separate hazardous industrial uses from high concentrations of residential development;
  2. to concentrate traffic from commercial and high intensity residential development around roads in the parish which can more easily handle higher traffic volumes;
  3. to protect the public safety by encouraging development which is adequately served by roads, fire stations, and police stations, and
  4. to preserve property values based on the rural character of the parish by discouraging residential subdivisions in remote areas of the parish and the commercial strip development which follows these developments.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**C.** In addition, the land use plan in Ascension Parish uses overlay zones. Overlay zones lie on top of zoning districts. They impose an additional level of land use control to handle specific development problems within the parish. Overlay zones handle particular development problems in the parish by imposing a new set of regulations on a special area. These problems are geographically localized and cannot be completely addressed by the underlying district regulations. To provide flexibility and ease of administration to the Development Ordinance, the parish adopts the following overlay zones to address these issues: flood hazard overlay zone, waste site overlay zone, historic site overlay zone.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**D.** The land use plan divides the parish into the following districts:

1. High intensity districts

a. Mixed use corridors

b. Industry

2. Medium intensity districts

a. Crossroad commercial

b. Medium intensity residential

c. Transition

d. Business park

3. Low intensity districts

a. Rural residential

b. Conservation

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**E.** Mixed use corridors. This district is characterized by the most intensive residential and commercial development. These districts are located in areas where the road system is most capable of supporting growth with a minimum risk to the public safety. High density residential development should include apartment buildings and townhouses. Commercial development should be concentrated or "clustered" at strategic sites in relation to population centers, other commercial sites, and adequate roads.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- F.** This district is designed to concentrate the most intensive residential and commercial development along the major arteries of the parish. By encouraging concentrated, cluster development, the Commission will minimize the infrastructure costs and manage public safety risks most appropriately. In addition, commercial development should use shared access to parking lots and shared parking lots in order to minimize traffic congestion and sprawl along the parish roadways. While this district allows many varied uses, the district should develop with adequate buffering, careful traffic planning, and appropriate lighting plans to minimize any nuisance between uses.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- G.** Industrial district. This district is designed to accommodate industrial and warehouse development which is compatible with the economic development and environmental protection of the parish. Industrial development will be concentrated in areas which are already providing a site for industry. This district is adequately served by infrastructure. Concentrating industrial development in this district also minimizes the public safety risks from production and transportation. In addition, concentrating truck traffic will reduce the maintenance costs on parish roads.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- H.** Crossroad commercial district. This district serves the commercial needs of the outlying residents in the parish. The purpose of this district is to disperse commercial development opportunities throughout the parish, while minimizing the adverse impact on traffic flows. Most of the commercial development in the parish should be focused on mixed use corridors, where the roads can handle traffic volumes. At the same time, residents in the outlying areas of the parish need convenience retail of stand alone stores or smaller neighborhood convenience centers. To reduce congestion on rural roads and improve road access, these commercial buildings should be located at intersections.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- I.** Medium intensity residential district. This district is designated for residential development, including multi family dwellings and subdivisions. This district exists largely outside the 100 year flood plain and in the northern part of the parish where planned water and sewer systems can support more intensive development; Commercial development in this district should be limited and located at highway intersections.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- J.** This district is designed to be adjacent to high intensity mixed use corridors, but commercial development should not be allowed to disrupt the residential character of this district. In addition to single family houses, town houses, garden homes and apartment buildings are intended for this district.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- K.** Transition district. This district is designated for limited residential and commercial development. The district lies within the chemical emergency warning zone established by the chemical plants in the Parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- L.** This district provides a public safety buffer between large-scale residential and commercial development and industrial plants. These plants pose a serious public health risk which must be carefully managed. Beginning in 1985, the chemical industry operating in Ascension Parish established the Community Awareness Emergency Response, or CAER, Committee. The Ascension Parish Chemical Industry's CAER Committee has installed a 26-siren community alerting system, designed to be heard within an approximate radius of 2.5 miles of each plant, in the area in which the plants are located. The system will provide effective early warning for the community. The Transition District falls within this community alerting system and is designed to discourage high density residential development within this warning zone.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- M.** Business park district. This district is intended to provide for the future economic expansion of the parish with high quality office, research and distribution development. This district enables the parish to expand its economic base without encroaching on residential development. By establishing high development standards for this district, the parish reduces the impact of business development on surrounding residential development, while at the same time encouraging investment in high income employment.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- N.** Low intensity residential district. This district is designated for low-density residential development in rural areas and small pockets of commercial development to service neighborhood needs. The area is generally characterized by rural roads and a lack of utilities. This district should develop consistent with the rural character of the parish. Commercial development should be low intensity carefully planned so as not to disrupt the rural character of the district. Careless commercial development, "suburban sprawl", represents both a nuisance to current landowners and jeopardizes property values. In addition, haphazard subdivision development in the more rural parts of the parish will stretch the parish's limited road, police and fire budgets. The parish cannot afford to service large concentrations of residential development in this district.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- O.** Conservation district. This area is designated to conserve the major environmental assets of the parish. The district is intended for single family residential development and limited commercial development. This district includes the most rural parts of the parish. These areas are not only environmentally fragile, they are not served by roads which can handle large traffic increases.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- P.** Flood hazard overlay zone. The purpose of flood plain overlay zone is to protect public safety and property by restricting residential development within the 100 year flood plain and keeping flood channels free of encroachment. Development in this zone must comply with the requirements of **Chapter 9.5, Flood Damage Prevention of the Code of Ordinances.**  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- Q.** The purpose of flood plain zoning is to regulate land use within the flood plain so as to minimize or prevent the harm caused by flood. The current development pattern shows that some subdivisions have been developed recently within the 100 year flood plain. This overlay zone is designed to protect the public safety and property rights by restricting intensive residential development in the flood plain.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- R.** Waste site overlay zone. The purpose of the waste site overlay zone is to protect the public health and welfare from toxic waste sites that are located in the parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- S.** Historic site overlay zone. The purpose of the historic structure overlay zones is to protect certain historical sites from incompatible development. This zone protects irreplaceable historic and economic assets in the parish. The Planning and Zoning Commission should encourage landowners with historic property to use this zone to preserve these structures.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- T.** Chemical emergency overlay zone. The purpose of this zone is to notify and protect residents living within a 2.5 mile radius of existing chemical plants in the Parish. In addition, the overlay zone protects the public safety by lowering the density of residential development that is allowable within a 2.5 mile radius of each plant. The operators of chemical plants in Ascension Parish have established the Community Alert Emergency Response (CAER) committee. CAER has installed a 26 siren community alerting system, designed to be heard within 2.5 miles of each plant. This is the radius selected by CAER that could pose the greatest threat to people who are near the chemical plants in the event of a chemical emergency.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-308.** Development Code

- A.** Ascension Parish implements the guiding principles of this Master Plan through its development code. Zoning regulations are enacted under the police power delegated by the state to the parish. The police power is the authority of government to enact regulations to protect the public health, safety, welfare and morals. The United States Supreme Court has called police power regulation "one of the most essential powers of government."  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- B.** Broad authority to regulate land uses is delegated to Ascension Parish through enabling legislation passed by the state legislature. This authority empowers the Parish Council to enact zoning regulations, create zoning districts, and adopt a master (or comprehensive) plan. This broad grant of authority carries with it the implied authority to choose the means necessary to accomplish the purposes of conserving the value of buildings and property and encouraging the most appropriate use of the land throughout the parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- C.** Because of the importance of police power regulations and the doctrine of separation of powers, the courts have adopted rules of self-restraint when presented with a challenge to a police power regulation. These rules presume the constitutionality of the regulation, impose a heavy burden of proof on the challenger, resolve doubts in favor of the regulator, and, in most cases, result in a low level of judicial scrutiny.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- D.** When presented with a challenge to a land use regulation, courts generally exercise judicial restraint. The regulation is presumed valid and the challenger bears a heavy burden of proof. However, where local regulations are set aside by the courts, their invalidation can be traced to several common errors:
1. The reasons for the regulations are not stated clearly;
  2. No comprehensive plan has been adopted or it has not been kept up to date;
  3. The plan has not been followed; or
  4. The local action is not justified by clear evidence but rather is primarily a response to the opposition of neighbors.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- E.** To avoid having parish zoning regulations set aside, the Parish has followed these guidelines in the implementation of its Development Code:
1. Keep the Master Plan up to date. The Planning Commission insures that land use regulations conform to the Master Plan. A zoning ordinance that is adopted specifically to further the guiding principles of this Master Plan will make a substantive connection to legitimate, clear public objectives and honor the legal demands of substantive due process. A substantive due process challenge to an Ascension Parish zoning ordinance would allege that the ordinance does not advance a legitimate public purpose.

2. Follow an open, fair process. The Parish Council is following a deliberate and understandable process of adopting and amending parish land use regulations. All citizens and affected parties will be provided effective advance notice and given an ample opportunity to be heard in a forum that is conducted fairly.
3. Procedural due process challenges will be brought if the Parish Council and the Planning Commission fail to follow a clear process or rushes to judgment on a land use decision. In these cases, the Planning Commission may violate the rights of involved parties to receive notice, be given an opportunity to be heard, or enjoy the benefits of a deliberate and thoughtful process on the part of the Planning Commission.
4. To the extent possible, treat all similarly situated properties equally. By following this rule, the parish's zoning regulations are not likely be found unconstitutionally discriminatory. The Planning Commission is careful to act consistently when imposing standards on landowners or interpreting the zoning code. This step is important to insure that the parish complies with equal protection standards. Equal protection claims assert that a land use classification or decision treats one parcel, or a few parcels of land, differently than similarly situated parcels with no apparent justification for being treated differently.
5. Apply standards uniformly. In drafting and applying local ordinances, such as subdivision regulations, the Planning Commission will specify the standards that applications must meet and apply them uniformly and carefully. This rule represents another important step in keeping the process of land use regulation open and fair.
6. Follow the guidance of legal counsel. The Planning Commission consults with legal counsel to insure that the actions they take and the conditions they impose are within their legal authority to act. This step will protect the parish against ultra vires claims. These claims would allege that the Planning Commission did not have the legal authority to take the challenged action. They would assert that the Commission acted beyond the scope of its delegated or implied authority and that its action, therefore, is invalid because it is an unauthorized action of government.
7. Engage property owners, developers and the community. The Parish Council and the Planning Commission will engage the community and affected parties in meaningful discussions regarding the adoption or application of land use regulations. This step reduces the tendency of affected parties to challenge decisions. The reliance on development agreements over impact fees, for example, encourages mutual benefit over arbitrary exactions.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**F.** In interpreting the Code, the Parish should follow these guidelines:

1. Determine the public purpose of the standard for which an interpretation is required. Before any zoning interpretation is made, there must be an explicit identification of the purpose for which the initial regulation was imposed. Each zoning regulation is intended to protect the interests of both present and future neighbors and the general public. Each standard is developed as a regulatory response to an identifiable negative impact or potential. A sound interpretation of any standard in this ordinance cannot be ensured without a careful analysis of the end to which the regulation is directed.
2. Determine the impact of the proposed interpretation. It is not always possible to define precisely the impacts of a proposed interpretation. Those charged with interpreting the Code should determine impacts after evaluating the viewpoints of adjacent land owners and, where appropriate, expert opinion from parish employees or independent parties.
3. Determine an just balance. Fair land use regulation requires continuous balancing between the rights of the landowner and all others who will be affected by that person's land use proposal.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-309.** Development Agreements

**A.** Development agreements encourage landowners and developers in Ascension Parish to provide adequate and reasonable infrastructure to support development. New development in the parish imposes additional costs in roads, schools, and public safety. To avoid undue hardship on existing parish taxpayers, these costs should be recovered as part of a development project. Development agreements provide a flexible mechanism for the Parish to negotiate with developers over the public costs of private development. Specifically,

1. A development agreement is a binding contract between the development permit applicant and the Parish of Ascension.
2. The purpose of a development agreement is to provide reasonable on and offsite improvements to promote the public health, safety and welfare of *the* citizens of Ascension Parish.
3. Development agreements shall be negotiated during the application process for a development permit.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- B.** Development agreements can include one or more performance standards. Performance standards are additional and reasonable on and off-site improvements that an applicant may be required to provide after consultation with the director due to the unique characteristics of the applicant's site and proposed development plan. Performance standards represent an extension of existing site regulations that govern the applicant's property.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- C.** Some examples of performance standards include, additional parking spaces and landscape and buffering requirements, additional drainage plans, additional investments in highway infrastructure to manage access to and from the development site, opaque screening, advanced sewerage disposal systems, and additional easements and servitudes.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3010.** Drainage Master Plan

- A.** In 1980, the Parish initiated a major drainage program for south and east Ascension Parish. That program has resulted in a dramatic reduction of flooding occurrences in the parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- B.** Over the years, Ascension Parish development trends have resulted in increased pressures on the existing drainage systems of the parish. Presently the parish reacts to "drainage problems" as they appear. Fortunately, minimal flood damage has occurred to date. However, if development continues at or near its present rate, the future may not be as kind to Ascension Parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- C.** Within the next three years, the parish will complete the Drainage Master Plan. This plan will include:
  - 1. Survey of existing land use and stream conditions;
  - 2. Survey of homes which have sustained previous flooding;
  - 3. Survey of existing topography;
  - 4. Collection of geotechnical information and vegetation types;
  - 5. Hydraulic and hydrologic analysis (modeling) of existing drainage systems through various storm types;
  - 6. Evaluation of alternative structural damage improvement projects, such as storm water detention;
  - 7. Evaluation of storm water retention;

8. Evaluation of public works projects, such as channel enlargement, channel paving, pumping station, and levees;
9. Hydraulic and hydrologic analysis to evaluate the effects of alternative structural improvement projects, increased rainfall runoff of new developments, and various storm events;
10. Development of regulations and ordinances which would complement any structural improvements, such as flood-proofing, detention ordinances, flood-proofing requirements;
11. Estimate of the cost for the various elements of a drainage improvement program;
12. Evaluate compatibility with efforts of other federal, state, and local agencies within and adjacent to the parish;
13. Recommendation for drainage-related capital improvement projects, ordinances and regulations.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- D.** The development of a Drainage Master Plan is one of several essential elements necessary for the orderly growth of Ascension Parish. A Drainage Master Plan will take one to two years to complete and will require updating periodically as development trends evolve and as new data becomes available. Without a Drainage Master Plan, the drainage impacts of new developments will be difficult to determine accurately and establishing priorities for parish drainage projects will be based on considerations other than clear criteria.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3011. Roadway Master Plan**

- A.** As Ascension Parish continues to grow, its existing infrastructure is being pushed to the limit. The most obvious indication of this problem is the increased traffic in the northern part of the parish. More new traffic signals are being installed, longer waits at intersections are experienced, entering and exiting from subdivision onto collector and arterial streets is more difficult, and development on narrow rural roads are causing unacceptable safety hazards. Adequate transportation does not exist currently and will continue to deteriorate as growth continues.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- B.** The parish standard minimum roadway width is twenty feet. All newly constructed parish roadways are a minimum of twenty feet wide. However, many previously constructed parish roads are less than twenty feet wide. Of the approximately 360 miles of parish roadway, only 27 percent is greater than twenty feet wide. Approximately 26 percent of parish roads are less than 18 feet wide and should be considered substandard. Many large attractive tracts of land are accessed by one of these substandard roads.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- C.** The actual width of a passenger vehicle is approximately 7 feet, and the width of a bus or truck is approximately 8.5 feet. For two trucks or buses to pass on a two-way roadway with at least twelve inches of clearance, the pavement needs to be a minimum of 18 feet wide. Anything less than 18 feet wide would require one of the two vehicles to pull onto the shoulder for the other to pass.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- D.** As a practical matter, narrow roads with minimal traffic are treated as one-way roads. When opposing traffic meets on narrow roads, one vehicle slows and pulls over to the shoulder, and the other vehicle slows and passes. As traffic on a narrow road increases the frequency of opposite traffic encounters increases and will eventually increase to unacceptable levels.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- E.** There are no published rules for acceptable traffic levels on substandard roads. However, no major subdivision should be allowed to be constructed such that ingress and egress would be from a roadway of less than 18 feet in width. Until a substandard (less than 18 feet wide) road is upgraded to a parish standard, only minor subdivisions and family partitions should be approved on that road.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)
- F.** A Roadway Master Plan can help the parish to program its roadway improvements funds, better coordinate new developments, and evaluate their impacts on existing roadway infrastructure, identify future parish roadway needs to improve traffic flow, and improve public safety. A Roadway Master Plan will also enable the parish to pursue assistance from other agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration. A Roadway Master Plan will include:
1. A major street plan which identifies existing collector and arterial streets, propose new collector and arterial streets, and propose upgrades to existing arterial and collector streets;
  2. Evaluation of existing traffic characteristics, such as speed, travel time and delays, traffic volume, existing roadway capacities, and rates of accidents;
  3. Evaluation of regulatory measures for drivers, vehicles, and pedestrians, speed controls, one way streets, and intersection controls;

4. Evaluation of traffic control devices such as traffic signals, pavement markings, and channelization devices;
5. Recommendations for minimum construction and geometric standards for local, collector, and arterial streets;
6. Recommendations for public relations and education; and
7. Recommendations for coordination between the Planning Commission and the Public Works Department for traffic and roadway improvements.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

- G.** The development of a Roadway Master Plan is one of several essential elements necessary for the orderly growth in Ascension Parish. A Roadway Master Plan will take one to two years to complete and will require updating periodically as development trends evolve and as new data and requirements become available. Without a Roadway Master Plan, traffic impacts of new developments will be difficult to determine accurately and creating priorities for street improvements will be based on inadequate information.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3012.** Water and Sewer Master

- A.** The parish has completed a water and sewer plan through a contract with Glenn Shaheen & Associates, Inc. (GSA)<sup>2</sup> This plan outlines the alternatives for developing a Parish-owned water and sewer system throughout the parish. The plan recommends that implementation begin in the north central portion of the parish. The initial system development will serve as a core system from which service to the rest of the parish can be launched. The Master Plan incorporates this plan by reference.
- B.** As the plan notes, although the area of initial implementation covers only 24% of the land area of the parish, it will serve 60% of the population. This area is the most densely populated in the parish. This Master Plan encourages a continued concentration of residential construction in the north-central portion of the parish.
- C.** **NOTE: 2. above in No. 1 reference: Glenn Shaheen & Associates, Inc, "Facility Plan for Parish-wide Water and Wastewater Facilities for the Parish of Ascension" (August 1998).**  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3013.** Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

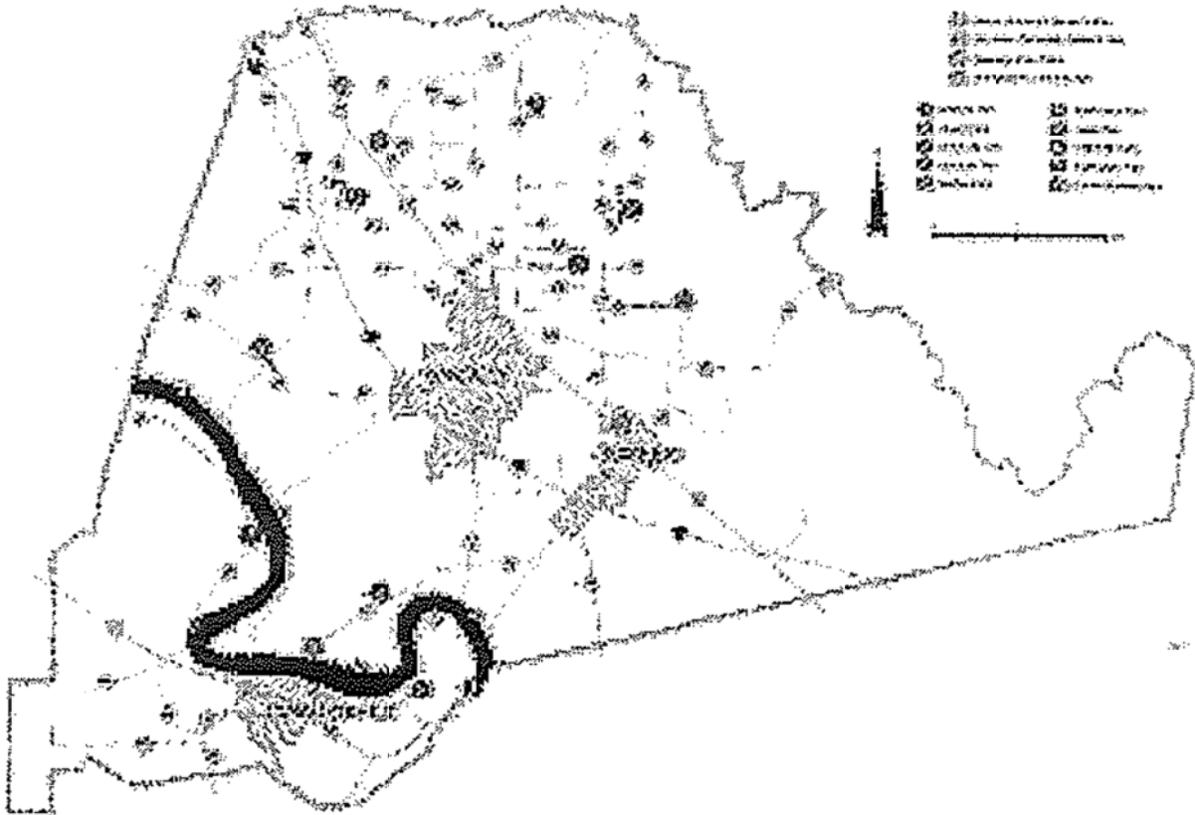
- A.** Public safety issues in Ascension Parish arise from the character and strength of the parish manufacturing plants. The great bulk of Ascension's manufacturing base is in the chemical industry. The chemical industry is located adjacent to the Mississippi River. Generally these are petrochemical plants which manufacture plastics, fertilizer, and other petroleum based derivatives. The Office of Emergency Preparedness has prepared emergency preparedness plans for the Parish in the event of a chemical emergency, and these plans are incorporated into the Master Plan by reference.
- B.** Because of the potential for industrial accidents, the Parish will continuously update its emergency preparedness plans. In addition, the Parish will adopt chemical emergency overlay zone. This zone will restrict high concentrations of residential development close to the petrochemical plants.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03)

**17-3014.** Recreation Master Plan

- A.** The master plan completed in 1994 included a recreation plan for the parish. In addition to an inventory of current park sites, the plan included the results of a citizen poll on recreational activities. This plan needs to be updated. In addition, the plan should be expanded to include a capital projects plan. Once this plan has been updated, the Planning Commission will incorporate it into this Master Plan.

- B.** FIGURE 9. The parish has a number of recreation sites, but the parish needs additional recreational facilities.



(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3015. Historic Preservation**

- A.** Historic sites in the parish need protection from careless nearby development. In addition to maintaining an inventory of historic sites, the Planning Commission will use land use controls to protect these sites. The steps required to protect these properties can also be set forth in an historic preservation plan. A map that specifies these sites is included in the Appendix to this Plan.

(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3016. Tourism Development Plan**

- A.** The Tourism Commission follows plan to attract tourists to Ascension Parish. Among other factors, this plan should also:

1. Clearly outline the infrastructure investments required to enhance Ascension Parish as a destination for tourists; and
2. Set forth any land use regulations which will support the tourist industry in Ascension Parish.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)

**17-3017.** Economic Development Forecast

- A.** The Parish follows an economic development plan that:
1. Encourages expansion of existing compatible commercial and industrial enterprises;
  2. Encourages diversification of the parish economy and employment base;
  3. Encourages continued planning for industrial site development; and
  4. Provides adequate land for commercial growth while minimizing the impact on traffic and residential neighborhoods.  
(LU98-01, 2/5/98; LU03-01, 3/20/03; DC09-09, 12/17/09)