



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS PROGRAM GUIDELINES

About the RDA

On July 10, 2007, Governor Kathleen Blanco signed Act 417, creating the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority (La. Rev. Stat. 33:4720.151). The essential purpose of the Redevelopment Authority is to eliminate blight and catalyze reinvestment in urban areas that would otherwise remain vacant, deteriorating, or underdeveloped. In order to do this, it has been granted the ability to: embark upon and lead planning efforts, acquire & dispose of property, participate in real estate development projects and incur debt.

Redevelopment authorities are being utilized around the country to attract private investment and support the efficient redevelopment of vibrant and safe communities. Redevelopment authorities are successful when they lead planning efforts, ensure economic competitiveness, address hurdles to private investment, address the causes of blight, facilitate the development of major civic projects, and leverage public and private investment.

Program Description

A Community Improvement Plan (“CIP”) is a tool that will be used by the RDA, in coordination with elected officials and community partners, to guide redevelopment and neighborhood improvements within a defined area. This plan will be created by overlaying the community’s vision with professional expertise to develop strategies that will address the priorities of the targeted area.

The objective of the Community Improvement Plan program is to provide economically distressed communities with a regulatory framework that will guide redevelopment efforts in a manner that addresses each community’s needs, while protecting its vision and character.

CIPs seek to create or re-establish sustainable, mixed-use, mixed income communities and enhance the quality of life for all residents. The CIP will maintain and enhance the positives in the neighborhoods and build on those strengths while aggressively addressing the challenges of the neighborhood. This will be based on balancing the importance of long term vision with the necessity of identifying short term realistic goals.

The RDA will fund consultants to work with communities within its Target Areas (see attached map) to develop CIPs and ensure that redevelopment efforts are sustainable and in keeping with each community’s needs, character and vision. This will be determined through discussions

between the RDA, elected officials and community stakeholders. CIPs will ultimately be presented to the Mayor-President, the Planning Commission and the Metro Council for consideration as amendments to the Horizon Plan and/or the Unified Development Code. Having CIPs with the force of law will be critical to ensuring sustainable redevelopment in the targeted communities. The RDA also recognizes that the City of Baton Rouge-Parish of East Baton Rouge is developing a new Comprehensive Plan for the Parish, and this program will coordinate with the Comprehensive Planning efforts so that the two are complementary.

Program deliverables will include a proposed land use amendment and/or overlay district ordinance that will provide the appropriate framework for redevelopment. Each CIP will also identify Catalyst Areas, those in which investment should yield the quickest results and stimulate additional redevelopment.

Process

The steps below outline the Community Improvement Planning process used by the RDA. Each CIP will employ this framework, which includes at least five public community meetings, as well as several additional meetings with stakeholders, focus groups, and elected officials. This process is expected to yield a Community Improvement Plan document, complete with illustrative maps and other appropriate documents for implementation (i.e. draft ordinances, design guidelines, etc.).

1. Requests for Qualifications & Consultant Selection

The RDA will send out a Request for Qualifications (“RFQ”) from consultants or consultant teams specializing in urban redevelopment, and/or community development planning. The RDA may issue RFQs for any number of CIPs, and may also package several CIPs into one project. Respondents may be given the opportunity to respond for any number of CIPs, or for all of them. Preference will be given to those respondents who utilize local businesses.

2. Data Collection & Analysis (Neighborhood Meeting #1)

The RDA and its consultant(s) will begin to collect as much pertinent data as possible on the community for which it will be developing a CIP. This phase will begin with an introductory community meeting, as well as other meetings with key stakeholders and elected officials, to identify and capture the general strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and concerns as perceived by the community, as well as find additional sources for information. Some examples of critical data include topographic, demographic, existing and proposed transportation and land use, real estate values, crime, and historic maps and photos.

The RDA and its consultant(s) will carefully analyze all available data to identify overall trends, as well as those areas of greatest need and opportunity. The outcomes of this analysis will form the basis for a strategic direction for the community, as well as proposed Catalyst Areas.

3. Strategic Direction & Catalyst Areas (Neighborhood Meeting #2)

After the proposed options for strategic direction and Catalyst Areas are formulated, the RDA and its consultant(s) will hold additional meetings, including another public community meeting, to collect feedback from stakeholders and ultimately determine the community's respective strategic direction, as well as finalize the locations of the Catalyst Areas.

4. Community Improvement Plan Development

Once the strategic direction and Catalyst Areas are finalized, the RDA and its consultant(s) will begin developing specific action items to support the strategic direction, as well as development/investment recommendations for the Catalyst Areas. This phase will culminate with the delivery of draft versions of the CIP document, maps and implementation documents.

5. Presentation of Community Improvement Plan (Neighborhood Meeting #3)

The draft CIP will be presented to the community at a public meeting, and will also be vetted through the RDA website, and through meetings with stakeholders and elected officials. The RDA and its consultant(s) will again gather feedback and use it to make any necessary revisions to the CIP documents and its appendices. The goal of this phase is to inform the community of the recommended action items and affirm that those recommendations are supporting the community's vision.

6. Mayor-President, Planning Commission & Metro Council Approval (Neighborhood Meeting #4 & #5)

The final phase will include presenting the CIP to the Mayor-President for feedback and support, then to the Planning Commission for approval in whatever form is most appropriate for implementation (i.e. overlay district, land use amendment, etc.), and finally to the Metro Council to be given the force of law, thereby becoming the plan by which all redevelopment and neighborhood improvements within that targeted area shall be implemented.

Implementation Plan

Once the Community Improvement Plan is adopted by the Planning Commission and the Metro Council it will become part of the City-Parish Comprehensive Plan as an overlay district. The CIP will include design guidelines by which future developments must adhere to, that will enhance and preserve the character of the community. Future developments will blend in with the existing urban fabric of the neighborhood and create a unified vision for the neighborhood. The RDA will continue to work with the community to further explore and develop priorities for implementation.

The RDA will use additional assets to aid with the implementation process. First and foremost, the RDA may provide gap financing for real estate developments that provide attainable rental housing units. An "attainable rental housing unit" is defined as a residential rental unit in which the annual rent does not exceed thirty percent (30%) of the annual household income, for those households that earn a maximum of 120 percent of Area Median Income ("AMI"). For East Baton Rouge Parish, the 2009 AMI is \$59,800. Therefore, the maximum rent for an attainable rental unit in 2009 is \$1,794 per month.

The RDA also has monies available for the Small Business Façade Grant program. This program will focus within the Targeted Areas to assist small business owners with cleaning up and making improvements to the facades of their businesses in order to make them more attractive to customers and the surrounding neighborhood. The program will match up to 75% of costs for improvements that may include, but are not limited to removing old facade structures, installing new and replacement awnings, canopies, signs, and landscaping.

The RDA also has the capabilities to assist in CIP implementation by:

- Applying for and accepting State and Federal grants;
- Incurring debt;
- Issuing bonds;
- Borrowing and investing funds;
- Land banking properties;
- Buying, selling and/or transferring real property;
- Conducting appraisals, title searches and property inventory;
- Clearing title expeditiously;
- Implementing voluntary or mandatory repair programs; and
- Creating and executing redevelopment projects.