

Planning Advisor

Introduction

The City-Parish Planning Commission (CPPC) has developed a computer application named "Planning Advisor" to assist in an effort to enhance objectivity in the review, analysis and decision making of land use applications subject to review by the Planning Commission and the Metropolitan Council.

The application grew out of an idea by the Planning Commission to further the use of technology in the land development application process. With technical assistance from Intergraph Corporation the unique application was designed, developed, tested, and implemented. The Department of Information Services provided countless hours of support and advice throughout the development. Additionally, the Department of Public Works was consulted to advise on scoring criteria specifically pertaining to infrastructure.

Planners from both the Current Planning Division and Advance Planning and Research Division provided information and guidance during the early stages of development. The Planning Commission Administration and several GIS Analysts coordinated the project between the different City-Parish agencies and Intergraph Corporation through its duration.

The Current Division staff are the primary users of the application while the GIS staff provides the support necessary to maintain the working order of the sophisticated application.

Design

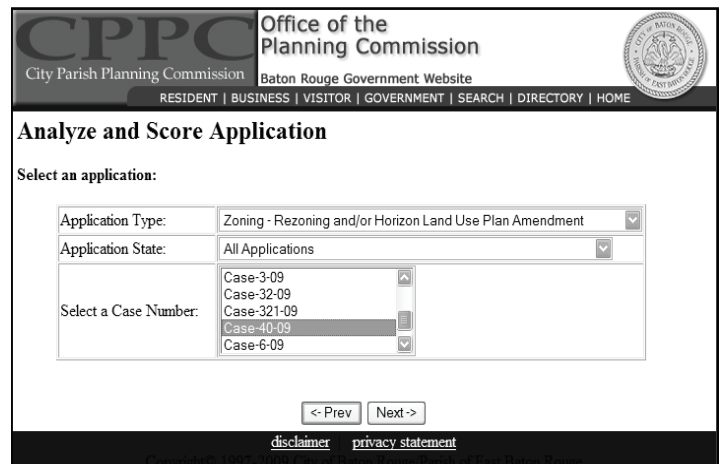
The custom designed software application is comprised of four components: 1) a Web-based interface for planning staff to input land development application data; 2) a Web-based interface for evaluation; 3) reporting capability for documentation and maps; 4) a utility interface for the administration of business rules.

The Planning Advisor was developed in three phases. The first phase dealt with Zoning and Land Use. The second phase incorporated Economics, Demographics, and Environmental information. The last phase added Infrastructure and Smart Growth Principles to the analysis and scoring.

Land Development Applications

The Planning Advisor is used to evaluate the following land development applications: 1) A-1 Rezoning and Land Use Plan Amendments; 2) A-2 Subdivision; 3) A-4 Site Plan; 4) A-12-A Planned Unit Development Concept Plan; A-12-B Planned Unit Development Final Development Plan; A-12-C Small Planned

Unit Development; A-12-D Infill/Mixed-Use Small Planned Unit Development; A-17 Conditional Use Permit; A-22-A Traditional Neighborhood Development Concept Plan; A-22-B Traditional Neighborhood Development Final Development



The interface for selecting a specific case to score.

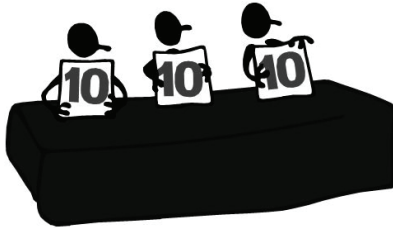


An existing land use vicinity map that may be generated.

In addition to providing an interface that captures a variety of land development application data, the Planning Advisor was also designed to retrieve certain information from the Application Tracking System. When land development applications are accepted, a receipt is generated which includes applicant contact information, receipt number, case number, case type, and the associated lot identification numbers. For the pertinent cases that can be reviewed the Application Tracking System triggers the Planning Advisor to create a new case. At such time, a planner will begin to input the remaining land development application information.

Analysis and Scoring

Once all of the land development application data has been entered the planner may then initiate the evaluation process. The analysis and scoring is either generated automatically from queries of the Parish wide Geographic Information System (GIS) or manually scored by the planner. For questions that require a planners assistance, the scores are generally divided into (+1), (0), or (-1). For example, if a development exceeds the standards, then the score would be (+1). If all codes are met, then the score will be (0), and if the development will have a negative impact, then the score would be (-1). Zoning and land use scores are weighted differently based on their importance. Other questions are not scored at all, because they are for informational purposes only. A user also has the ability to enter comments for any score. These comments are simply typed into a text box, and is then saved as part of the evaluation.



TAG	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT	SCORE
I. LAND USE AND ZONING SCORING			
1a	The existing land use is the same as or similar to surrounding properties.	5	2.917
1b	The property has no unique or unusual physical or environmental limitations due to size, shape, topography, or related hazards.	3	0
1c	The current land use does not limit the usefulness or economic aspects of the property.	4	0
2a	The proposed use creates no undue street congestion or traffic hazard.	3	-1
2b	The proposed change creates no undue burden on public facilities.	3	0
2c	The proposed change is compatible with the existing character of the neighborhood.	4	0
2d	The proposed change creates no oversupply of this use in proportion to the population.	4	-1
2e	The proposed change is in keeping with zoning law and precedent.	5	0
3a	The proposed zoning is compatible with surrounding Zones.	4	0.583
3b	The proposed zoning is compatible with surrounding ELUs.	2	3.667
3c	The proposed zoning is compatible with surrounding HLU's.	5	1.417
3d	The proposed HLU is compatible with surrounding Zones.	3	2.75
3e	The proposed HLU is compatible with surrounding ELUs.	2	3.083
3f	The proposed HLU is compatible with surrounding HLU's.	4	1.75
4a	The proposed development will not overburden streets based on Traffic Counts?	1	0
II. ECONOMIC, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCORING			
5a	Is lot in a National Registry Historic District?	-	-
5b	Is lot in a Local Historic District?	-	-
5c	Does lot contain a National Landmark Building?	-	-
5d	Does lot contain a Local Landmark Building?	-	-
5e	Is the lot in an Urban Design Overlay District?	-	-
5f	Is the lot in an Urban Design District?	-	-
5g	Is the lot in a Redevelopment District?	1	0
5h	Is the lot in a Growth Center?	1	1
5i	In what Watershed is the lot?	-	-
5j	Does the lot contain or touch a Wetland?	-	-
5k	If the lot does contain or touch a Wetland, then will the development preserve or mitigate the Wetland?	-	-
5l	Is the lot in an Enterprise Zone?	1	0
5m	Is the lot in an Economic Development District?	1	0

Scoring for rezoning case

During the analysis and scoring of an application, it is possible for the planner to generate a thematic map relative to the subject property. The various maps that can be created "on the fly" include: 1) zoning vicinity map; 2) existing land use and zoning vicinity map; 3) sanitary sewer facilities map; 4) bus route map; 5) bike path map; 6) public facilities map; and 7) flood zone map. Each vicinity map includes features available to the planner for changing the scale, panning the map, typing text, and editing the legend and title boxes. The ability to generate these maps greatly enhances the tools that are readily available to planners who are evaluating land development applications.

Planners are also equipped with the ability to save and print the digital version of the land development application with all the data that was provided at the time of submission. The Planning Advisor automatically generates the standard Planning Commission staff reports. This report may be saved, edited, and printed when necessary. Additionally, a scoring summary is created that can be retrieved and printed for convenient reference.

Conclusion

In the mid-1990s the Parishwide GIS Program was established for disseminating land use information, and for the development of applications that can assist with objective decision-making. The Planning Advisor is a prime example of a computer application that assists in making sound planning decision. It does not eliminate the human factors which are necessary, but at minimum it does ensure that each application is evaluated consistently.

The Planning Advisor is a unique, cutting-edge, innovative computer application which joins various types of technology into one Web-based user interface. The Parishwide GIS data drives much of the analysis and scoring as well as all map production. The link with the Application Tracking System brings together a database containing all land development applications that have been processed since 2007. All scoring criteria and business rules are stored in Microsoft Office Excel worksheets. This allows an administrator to easily make updates that are necessary to maintain the application. The City-Parish Intranet Web server hosts the application protecting the Planning Advisor from hacking and unauthorized release of sensitive information. Only Planning Commission and Information Services Department employees have access privileges to open the user interface.

For more information contact:

City-Parish Planning Commission
1755 Florida Street, Third Floor
P.O. Box 1471
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Telephone: (225) 389-3144 Fax: (225) 389-5342
Office Hours: 8 a.m.—5 p.m. M-F
Email: planning@brgov.com
Web page: <http://www.brgov.com/dept/planning>