The proposed Horizon Plan, representing nearly two years of work by hired consultants and unpaid community volunteers, contains myriad objectives toward which city-parish government will have to work if any serious attempt is made to implement the plan.

“The vision of Horizon Plan is one of realizing the potential of Baton Rouge to become a great city of the New South in the 21st Century,” states one portion of the proposal. “First and foremost, the citizens and leaders of Baton Rouge want a city that is liveable for all its people. Horizon Plan is a bold statement that the citizens want not just a growing city, but a great city; that we are striving for not just a stable economy, but a vital and diverse economy and business climate that offers investment and employment opportunity to all its citizens.”

In short, the multi-faceted proposal recommends the city-parish take steps to make East Baton Rouge Parish the best place to live and work that it can possibly be.

But designing public policies and programs that will achieve the Horizon goals will be a major city-parish government undertaking; implementing some of them will require considerable sums of money from voters; and some of the plans could easily conflict with one another.

For example, Horizon planners urge protection of existing neighborhoods and recreation areas, but they also recommend continued development of Metro Airport — a process bound to adversely impact some existing neighborhoods and recreation areas, including the Baton Rouge Zoo.

The plan seeks to promote, affordable housing, but the urban redevelopment the plan encourages could conceivably destroy much of the city’s existing affordable housing stock.

And while Horizon planners seek to encourage economic development here and streamline regulatory processes that hamper it, the development controls and environmental protection goals also set forth in the plan would impose new limits on general land development and other economic activity within the parish boundaries.

The document is subject to further review and revision by the Horizon Steering Committee — a local citizen panel appointed by the mayor — before it goes to the Planning Commission, and both project coordinator Mike McAnelly and steering committee co-chairman Roger Moser acknowledged when the proposal was unveiled recently that efforts to fine-tune the plan and resolve conflicts could take some time.

From the steering committee it will go to the Planning Commission for further review, public hearings and eventual endorsement in some form. The Metro Council will then repeat the exercise and, at some point, adopt what is intended to be, in part, a legally binding blueprint for the future growth and development of East Baton Rouge Parish.

In its current form, the 276-page document recommends that public infrastructure deficiencies be remedied through a major capital improvement program, with overall planning mechanisms and development controls strengthened, flood plain development strictly regulated and developers paying more for whatever additional service demands their future developments will create.

The plan also recommends the following:
- The value of already developed areas should be protected and enhanced, and new development and redevelopment in the urbanized area should be encouraged.
- A safe, convenient and efficient transportation system — providing not only for private motor vehicles but for car pools,