

ALABAMA STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN (SEP)

Project #17: Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Project Description/Summary

- a) This planning project proposes the development of a community-driven comprehensive land use plan for the City of Fairhope to address growth with an emphasis on environmental stewardship and a legal foundation for implementation. Plan development envisions sustainable community growth infused with aspects of green infrastructure.

Activities also include the comprehensive administration of this grant, including, but not limited to, project development and oversight, contracting, and sub-recipient monitoring.

- a. **Need** - Named the “2016 Best Small Town in the South” by Southern Living magazine, one of the “Best Places to Raise a Family” in 2010 by Family Circle magazine, and voted the “Most Business Friendly City in Alabama” in 2013 by the Alabama Policy Institute, the City of Fairhope is one of the most desirable places to live and work in the southeast. The Fairhope community’s small-town coastal ambiance, blended with state-of-the-art residential and community amenities and services, collectively embody the character and charm that make this community highly-desirable and a unique Alabama treasure. Like many actively growing communities, the City of Fairhope is under a tremendous amount of urbanization and development pressure. On a regular basis, new development is being considered and proposed throughout the Fairhope community. New development is a concern for the City of Fairhope, because it places additional pressure, strain, and financial burden on existing community infrastructure and resources (electric, gas, water and wastewater systems, storm water systems, trash collection services, etc.) and can potentially reduce and diminish natural habitats (wetlands, forests, streams, etc.) and their associated ecosystem services and functions (ecotourism opportunities, flood control, water quality improvement, etc.). Furthermore, the antiquated regulatory and planning framework presently guiding the City of Fairhope allows for the intensification of development and urbanization without the need to properly consider the long-term holistic vision of the community and stewardship of natural environments. While urbanization and development are indicators of a strong local economy, without proper holistic planning and forethought for community growth, these activities can have compounding effects that detract from the historic character and ambiance of the community and surrounding natural environments.

The proposed Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan project will allow the City of Fairhope to thoroughly identify, address, and anticipate the issues and concerns about how the community can retain its quality of life, unique coastal character and charm, and natural resources and ecosystems while also supporting economic growth and expansion.

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Failure to develop and implement a comprehensive community-based land use plan for the Fairhope community may result in continued loss and degradation of natural ecosystems within the planning jurisdiction of the City and greater Mobile Bay watershed. At-risk ecosystems include aquatic communities (shorelines, streams, wetlands, floodplains, etc.) and terrestrial communities (hardwood, sandhill, and longleaf pine, etc.). Associated with the loss and degradation of these natural habitats are loss and degradation of their ecosystem functions and services. Increased flooding, sedimentation, pollution, and loss of habitat would culminate from the continued development of streams and associated wetlands and floodplains. Loss of ecosystem services and functions would further increase cost and demand of community infrastructure and resources. Additionally, new development and haphazard growth would add significant and reoccurring financial burdens to the Fairhope community through increased demands for infrastructure and resources. The long-term result of poor land use planning and an insufficient regulatory framework to manage and plan for development would result in the loss of the current and past identity that makes the City of Fairhope a treasured coastal community.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to develop a community-based comprehensive land use plan that recognizes all community concerns and issues and translates this information into a clear framework, plan, and course of action that supports community growth in a responsible, sustainable, and resilient manner. A Fairhope area community-based comprehensive land use plan will recognize the interconnectivity of all community concerns and issues to guide future land use activities and code updates for the purpose of protecting and preserving the culture, heritage, and natural resources within the planning jurisdiction of the City of Fairhope and broader Mobile Bay watershed.

Objectives: The primary objectives of this project are to:

- Develop a community-based plan to manage future growth in the City of Fairhope; and
 - Receive support for codes/regulatory changes to guide land use.
- b. This project is located in the Gulf Coast region and will be implemented in the City of Fairhope in Baldwin County, Alabama.
 - c. This project is anticipated to begin on 7/1/19 and end 12/31/2020 (18 mo.).
 - d. This project will be implemented by the City of Fairhope.
- b) This project will assist in the economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast region, specifically the City of Fairhope, by developing a citizen-based plan to manage future growth and development.

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Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

This activity is located in the Gulf Coast Region and is eligible for Spill Impact Component funding under Category #8 – Planning Assistance (primary). Secondary activities include Category #3 - Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This project is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats;
- Goal 2: Restore Water Quality and Quantity – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine waters;
- Goal 3: Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources;
- Goal 4: Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes; and
- Goal 5: Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

This project supports the following Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Objective 1: Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats – Restore, enhance, and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats. These include barrier islands, beaches, dunes, coastal wetlands, coastal forests, pine savannahs, coastal prairies, submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster reefs, and shallow and deepwater corals.
- Objective 2: Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources – Restore, improve, and protect the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by reducing or treating nutrient and pollutant loading; and improving the management of freshwater flows, discharges to and withdrawals from critical systems;
- Objective 4: Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines – Restore and enhance ecosystem resilience, sustainability, and natural defenses through the restoration of natural coastal, estuarine, and riverine processes, and/or the restoration of natural shorelines; and
- Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience – Build and sustain Gulf Coast communities’ capacity to adapt to short- and long-term natural and man-made hazards, particularly increased flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors. Promote ecosystem restoration that enhances community resilience through the re-establishment of non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding.

Major Milestones

- a) Milestone 1: Procurement

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- b) Milestone 2: Develop a community Facebook page
- c) Milestone 3: Develop and adopt a community-based comprehensive land use plan
- d) Milestone 4: Update community codes

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

The anticipated outcome of the Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan project will be:

- Development of a plan to manage future growth in the City of Fairhope

Table 18. Proposed Projects Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Development of a community-based Comprehensive Land Use plan	Complete community engagement Development of one plan Update City codes and regulations	Development of a plan to guide City planning, decision-making, and development Encourages community engagement	Management of future growth and development Protection of Fairhope's character and environment

Additional success criteria capturing community engagement may be selected at the grant application stage.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Submit results of bid process to ADCNR prior to awarding contracts
- b) Submission of completed Plan to ADCNR
- c) Submission of quarterly and final reports

Best Available Science

A Best Available Science (BAS) review is required for programs and activities that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast. The primary focus of this project is to develop a comprehensive land-use plan to manage future growth; therefore, BAS does not apply.

However, managing future growth should enable the City to better manage storm water runoff, thus enhancing water quality in nearby Mobile Bay. As such, this project is

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consistent with the values and recommendations set forth in the MBNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan 2013-2018, available on the MBNEP [webpage](#).

In addition, this project will use cutting-edge technology and outreach methods throughout the community engagement process. Traditional planning is moving beyond ineffective meeting structures and outreach measures to more open, inclusive, and flexible platforms to gather input and understand the desires of the community. This includes such things as using keypad polling and interactive surveying platforms at open house and town hall meetings and online web outreach presence through web sites, social media accounts, and online polls and questionnaires, etc. This Project will implement these engaging methods into the meeting structures and will also include engaging outreach methods that utilize online forums, mapping platforms, and communication tools.

Budget/Funding

- a) Estimated cost of the project and amount to be requested from Spill Impact Component Funds: \$669,500 (100% - Planning).
- b) No other funding sources are anticipated at this time

Partnerships/Collaboration (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

Leveraged Resources (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

Funds Used As Non-Federal Match (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

Other

Not applicable at this time.

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Figure 17. The Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan will be developed in the City of Fairhope, Alabama.