



1. INTRODUCTION



An aerial photograph of a town, showing streets, buildings, and trees, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The image is used as a background for the text.

"The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the center of each and every town or city."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

ABOUT ENVISION DAPHNE 2042

Envision Daphne 2042 is a comprehensive plan for the city's long term future growth and development. The plan's intention is to help shape the future of Daphne's economy, development patterns, health, sustainability, resiliency, and overall urban design.

Envision Daphne was commissioned in the fall of 2021. Daphne initiated the planning process in order to create a fresh vision and an updated planning approach for a rapidly growing and changing city. Given that Daphne is the fastest growing city in Alabama, growth has presented itself as one of the most important issues for Daphne's future. Rapid growth is creating an evolving landscape characterized by the conversion of many forest and agricultural areas into new neighborhoods, shopping areas and community facilities.

In addition to growth, Daphne's future challenges include the related aspects of environmental management, creating a balanced mobility network, expansion of city limits, and implementing best development practices and sound community design principles. Envision Daphne 2042 seeks to better understand the impact of these challenges, explore the city's best potential, and establish a plan to manage and guide the future.

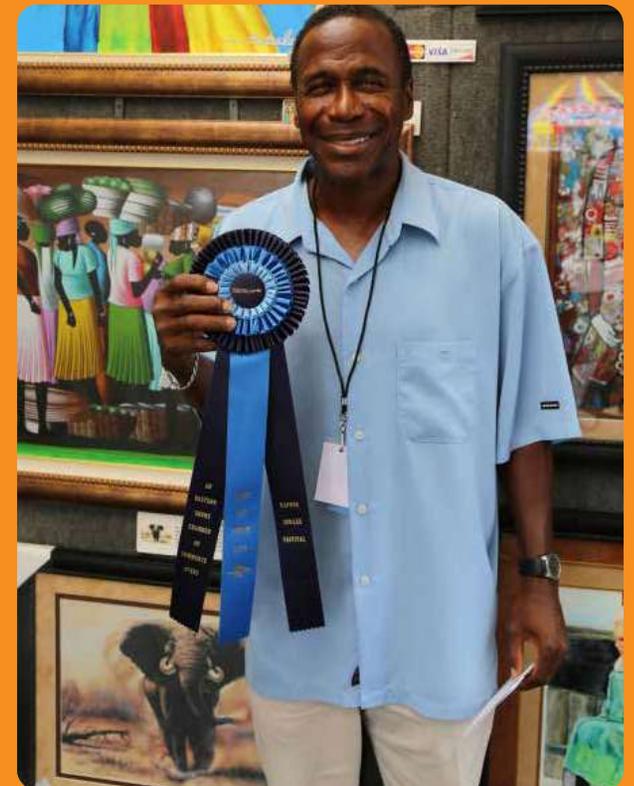
Envision Daphne 2042 reflects the broad community input of thousands of participants and hundreds of hours of in-depth study and discussion. Envision Daphne 2042 establishes a vision for the future and a comprehensive action agenda designed to achieve it.

*Photos from left to right, top to bottom:
Local Playground
Olde Towne Cottage
Jubilee Festival Award Winner*



KEY TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER:

- » *About Envision Daphne 2042*
- » *Alabama Planning Statutory Requirements*
- » *Envision Daphne 2042 Planning Process*
- » *Evolving Planning Practices*
- » *Current Planning in Daphne*



“ *Envision Daphne 2042 establishes a vision of the city within the framework of Alabama planning law and establishes the foundation for implementation through policies, projects and administration.* ”

ALABAMA PLANNING STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Envision Daphne 2042 is created under authority granted to the city under state statute. Alabama empowers all cities to create and adopt plans under Section 11-52-2 of the Alabama Code. Under State law, there are eight classes of cities established based on population as of the 1970 census. Some planning requirements vary by class of city and whether council-manager or strong mayor form of government. However, as a Class 8 City, there are no special requirements for Daphne.

Comprehensive Plan Components

Under Alabama planning law, a city's planning commission is charged with making “careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the municipality and with due regard to its relation to neighboring territory”. In so doing, the law states that plans shall provide recommendations for the general location, character, and extent of the following elements of the community:

- Streets, viaducts, subways, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, boulevards, and parkways
- Playgrounds, squares, and parks
- Aviation fields and other public ways, grounds and open spaces
- General location of public buildings and other public property
- General location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power, and other purposes
- Removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use, or extension of any of the foregoing ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, military installations, property, utilities, or terminals
- A zoning plan for the control of the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises

The Planning Commission

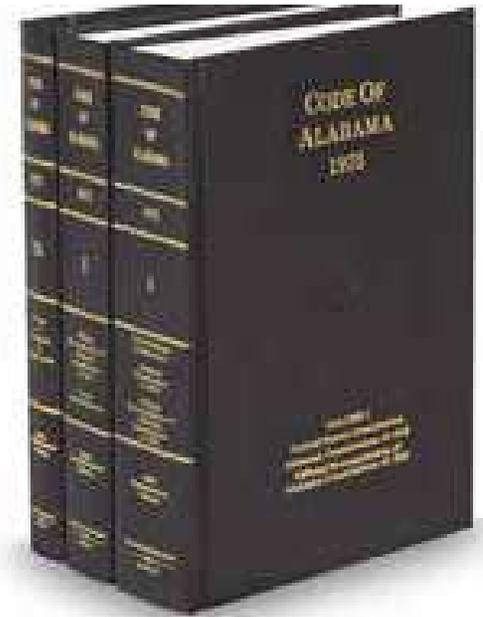
A city's planning commission is empowered to carry out the plan making process. Under Alabama law, planning commissions are composed of nine members and include:

- The mayor or the mayor's appointee
- An administrative official of the city selected by the mayor
- A member of council selected by the council serving ex officio
- 6 members appointed by the mayor, if the mayor is elected

Appointed members are to serve six years except the ex-officio member who serves his or her term. Members may be removed for inefficiency, neglect, or malfeasance. Planning commissions must hold at least one regular meeting a month.

Comprehensive Plan Adoption and Effect

Once developed, a plan must be adopted in order to be official. Alabama Code, Section 11-52-8 references the adoption of a “master plan” which serves as the basis for comprehensive planning. Comprehensive plans are to be adopted by the planning commission rather than the City Council, although it is common for councils to officially endorse comprehensive plans. The planning commission is empowered to adopt the plan in parts or in whole, and to amend it at will. After adoption, the plan is intended to guide community development decisions for both the public and private sectors. A plan's primary influence on private investment is to serve as the basis for development policies and codes, primarily zoning. Influence on public investment occurs as recommendations are implemented through public development projects. In the case of public investment, Alabama planning law in Section 11-52-11 requires that “Whenever the commission shall have adopted the master plan of the municipality or of one or more major sections or districts thereof, no street, square, park, or other public way, ground or open space or public building or structure or public utility, whether publicly or privately owned, shall be constructed or authorized in the municipality or in such planned section and district until the location, character, and extent thereof shall have been submitted to and approved by the commission...” However, a city council has the final authority over such projects.



ENVISION DAPHNE 2042 PLANNING PROCESS

The comprehensive city planning process is an intensive effort completed over an extended period of time. The best processes allow for many voices and perspectives on the future of the city to be heard. This extended process is carried out in phases which typically consist of the following:

1. The study and analysis of existing conditions as a basis for assessing future conditions
2. The creation of a future community development vision
3. The development of a plan addressing current conditions and future aspirations
4. A program of implementation.

These steps can be summarized under the headings of discovery, direction, design, and implementation.

The discovery process is phase one in the city planning process. Discovery involves the investigation and analysis of objective community development data to understand existing community dynamics that are at work in the community and the processes of change that are occurring.

Phase two is the phase of direction. Activity in this phase develops overall long term community vision, values, and goals. The development of vision, values and goals is based on the analysis produced in discovery. An essential additional component is intentional, broad and thorough community engagement. This engagement typically poses questions to the community such as:

- *Where and how will growth occur in the future?*
- *How can neighborhoods be preserved or redeveloped?*
- *What mobility improvements are needed?*
- *What are priority development needs?*
- *How will the local economy be developed?*
- *How will the local environment be managed and protected?*

The outcome of an effective direction phase is the identification of long-term planning vision and values for achieving a better community. Approaches for developing vision during the engagement process include planning workshops, focus groups sessions, and citizen surveys. Each of these methods was used in Envision Daphne 2042 and each is more fully described in later sections.

*Below: Drone view of Olde Towne
Right: Planning Process Diagram*



Phase three of the planning process is design. The design phase centers on the creation of the plan itself and is rooted in the results of the prior two phases. Creation of the plan involves developing narrative, graphic illustrations, and mapping that specifically convey the plan's vision to a general time horizon of 20 years.

In addition to the required elements listed earlier, Envision Daphne 2042 addresses other important components of the city's future. These include neighborhood design, community character, future expansion, and economic development.

The final two phases of the planning process focus on implementation and follow-up. Implementation requires the creation of achievable strategies aimed at producing intended results of the plan. Strategies will typically address development policies, public and private project investments, and methods of administration or management. Zoning is one of the most fundamental aspects of plan implementation.

Implementation may also include projects involving the investment of public funds in support of, and in coordination with, private sector efforts that align with community priorities. Capital improvement programming, for example, can provide clear and systematic guidance for public investments, eliminating the pitfalls of haphazard budgeting without a clear goal or conflicting with public priorities. Other initiatives may involve incentives to achieve development goals.





CONTINUALLY EVOLVING PLANNING PRACTICES

Plans require the development of extensive data sets including information on population, economics, environment, mobility and development patterns. In the not distant past, this information was not readily accessible. Now, however, overwhelming volumes of data are electronically available from State and Federal sources, government agencies, and private sources. This data is frequently organized and packaged in ways that render previous methods of detailed data reproduction obsolete. Where pages of data once provided a substantial amount of plan content, this data can now be summarized and primary sources cited.

Similar conditions exist regarding mapping in the planning process. Internet-based services such as Google Earth, Apple, Bing Maps, and a variety of online geographic information systems are readily accessible. These services make geographic-based inquiry into a community convenient and simple. Because of this, energy and effort may now be concentrated on mapping and analysis in support of a community's planning vision and policy. For Envision Daphne 2042, data has been reviewed and analyzed according to the process outlines. Significant focus has been placed on the establishment of Daphne's development vision and goals, and the corresponding provisions for implementation.

A comprehensive plan should not be a static summary of a community's past trends or a catalog of existing conditions. A plan should serve as a dynamic guide to a desired future. This desire for forward momentum is captured in Envision Daphne 2042, and

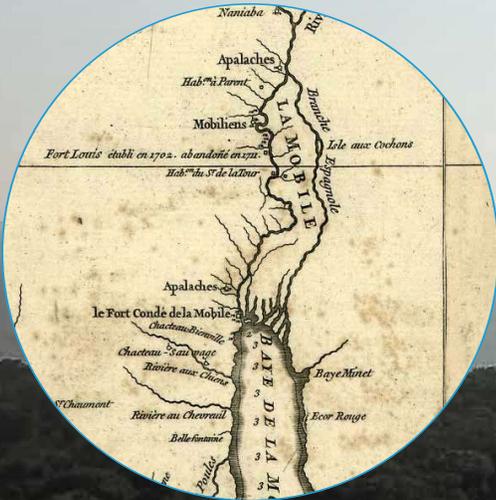
the plan establishes the foundation for community transformation through design, development policy and project initiatives.

CURRENT AND PAST PLANNING IN DAPHNE

Daphne's last comprehensive city plan was adopted in 2003 and was conducted by the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission. This 2003 plan provided the foundation for the adoption and administration of the city's current zoning code. Envision Daphne 2042 builds on this planning effort.

While the comprehensive plan is foundational, other important plans and studies have been completed that have influenced development conditions in Daphne. These plans are listed and described in the table on the opposite pages. Where appropriate, the influence of these plans has been summarized and elements carried forward in Envision Daphne 2042.

Daily planning administration in Daphne is conducted by the Department of Community Development which is responsible for administering all development regulations and serves as staff to the Daphne Planning Commission. Daphne is a member of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission and the Eastern Shore MPO which provides planning support services for Daphne.



Left Upper and Lower:
Historic maps of Mobile Bay
Below:
Sunset on Mobile Bay