

Translating
a Regional
Vision
into Action



N U M B E R 2

Translating a Regional Vision into Action

ULI Land Use Policy Forum

March 8, 2005

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with Victoria R. Wilbur



**Urban Land
Institute**

ABOUT ULI

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute that is supported by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land to enhance the total environment. ULI sponsors education programs and forums to encourage an open, international exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and documents best practices; proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 27,000 members in 80 countries representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines.

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ABOUT ULI COMMUNITY CATALYST REPORTS

ULI is influential in the discussion of important national land use policy issues. To encourage and enrich that dialogue, the Institute holds frequent land use policy forums that bring together prominent experts to discuss topics of interest to the land use and real estate community.

The findings of these forums can guide and enhance ULI's program of work. They can also provide ULI district councils, ULI members, and others addressing land use issues with information that can be used to improve the quality of life at the local level, advance community values, and—in the words of the ULI mission statement—"provide responsible leadership in the use of land to enhance the total environment." *ULI Community Catalyst Reports* are designed to make the findings and recommendations of land use policy forums accessible to and useful for practitioners at the community level, where land use decisions are made and their consequences are most directly felt.

ULI Community Catalyst Reports can be downloaded free of charge from ULI's Web site (www.uli.org) or ordered in bulk at a nominal cost from ULI's bookstore (800-321-5011).

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Introduction

ULI has long been engaged in identifying and promoting best practices in land use and development. Much of this work occurs at the regional scale, whether it is increasing the supply of workforce and affordable housing, revitalizing the urban core or aging inner-ring suburbs, improving the jobs/housing balance, or optimizing the development potential of properties adjacent to transportation. With the support of the ULI Community Outreach Department, ULI district councils are working on these and other issues in their communities.

The Institute recognizes that greater consensus and cooperation are essential, at all levels of government, in order to implement regional policies and practices that will support the economic vitality and livability of our metropolitan regions. For example, in partnership with the MacArthur Foundation, ULI and its four Florida district councils have led a multiyear effort to identify new opportunities for the state of Florida to support and encourage regional cooperation. A statewide committee composed of leaders from the development community, civic and environmental groups, community-based organizations, and the public sector developed a series of specific recommendations to address state-level barriers to regional cooperation.

Over the past 15 years, regional visioning has emerged as an important tool for building regional consensus, especially with respect to growth-related issues. ULI district councils have been involved in a number of regional visioning efforts in various capacities, including the following:

- Sponsoring Reality Check programs in Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; and north Texas to bring diverse regional leaders together to discuss where growth should occur in a region;
- Partnering with councils of government in multiyear transportation and land use planning programs (for example, the Sacramento Blueprint project);

- Providing leadership participation and program support for visioning programs such as Envision Utah, Envision Central Texas, and Chicago Metropolis 2020.

All visioning projects face implementation challenges, including lack of regional institutional support for long-range regional planning; exhaustion of resources and leadership; insufficient political will to move forward; fragmented implementation decision making; and alienated or apathetic citizens. In convening the ULI policy forum on translating a regional vision into action, ULI was seeking recommendations, from those with the most experience in the field, on strengthening the effectiveness of visioning implementation efforts.

At the ULI policy forum, participants examined several case studies and distilled the lessons learned into ten broad principles for visioning implementation success. Specific recommendations were then developed in five topic areas: funding; leadership; tools and technical assistance; communications and media; and documentation and dissemination of best practices. While these recommendations are not exhaustive, they do represent the latest thinking of the experts assembled at the forum and offer a variety of new ideas for visioning implementation practitioners.

Implementing Regional Visions: Principles for Success

From the experience of several regional visioning programs across the United States, ten broad principles for success in regional visioning implementation can be derived.

1. Build on a Firm Foundation

The chances of successfully implementing a vision rest on the groundwork that was laid in the visioning process. Before moving to implementation, it may be necessary to assess the work that was done at the visioning stage and determine whether more work is needed, either to strengthen the consensus that was developed or to sharpen the solutions that were identified. It is also important to ensure that the region was defined properly—that it includes the relevant “problem sheds” and was not arbitrarily limited by jurisdictional or geographic boundaries. In addition, the design of the visioning process should fit the issues in the region, which will vary depending on growth rate, economy, topography, culture, and values. All the important questions should have been addressed: if not, don’t be afraid to tackle them now, before moving toward implementation. To maintain credibility, the visioning process must be authentic and transparent throughout.

2. Set a Clear Context and Framework

There should be broad consensus on the challenges that require implementation of a new vision, whether those challenges are at the level of global competitiveness or neighborhood livability. Begin by identifying funding and leadership that are adequate to the planned scale of the visioning implementation effort. Then find the right scope of issues to address. The effort should be doable: ambitious enough to be exciting, but not overwhelming. Select a time horizon that is long enough to allow the initiative to get out in front of current plans (and for the flaws in those plans to become evident), but that is not so long that stakeholders lose interest in the effort.

3. Bundle Choices into Scenarios

Only comprehensive scenarios can realistically reflect the interconnectedness of land use, transportation, economic development, and lifestyle choices. The visioning process should use well-designed alternative growth scenarios to clearly portray the choices facing the region and to build consensus for a preferred outcome. When designing scenarios, remember that forecasted population growth is not a variable: it's the given on the basis of which other choices are made. Much of the implementation process will focus on how to translate a preferred scenario into the choices of myriad actors; be flexible, as this is an inherently uneven process.

4. Inclusiveness Is Essential

Ongoing outreach to all major stakeholders is as essential to implementation as it is to the early stages of the visioning process. Take enough time, and keep asking, "Who else should be here?" Adequate upfront investment and ownership cannot be rushed; nor can their importance be overstated. Include even those who may want to subvert the implementation process; they need to be kept at the table long enough for the visioning leadership to figure out how to harness their enlightened self-interest.

Offer tiered levels of leadership and participation to accommodate different types of commitment and to keep work groups from becoming too big and unwieldy. Find leaders who have wide net-

works, and use those networks to reach other networks; push beyond what feels comfortable in order to reach those who need to be involved. Instead of being limited by top-down or bottom-up thinking, imagine expanding circles of influence: within the communities of interest, find people who have contacts with those who need to be participants, and enlist their help in making the circle wider.

5. Leadership Makes Things Happen

Create the leadership group that can lead action on the vision. Don't overlook women. Find a few passionate leaders for key roles, but don't put all your eggs in one basket. Decide if a new organization is needed to be the steward of the vision. Wherever it resides, the visioning implementation organization must be perceived as neutral, and must not carry political baggage.

6. Strive for Consensus, Not Unanimity

A good goal is the consent of 80 to 90 percent of a region's residents. (Consent in this instance means that residents have more of a positive stake in the implementation of the vision than a negative one.) Unanimous support for implementing a vision will never be achieved. Focus on the big picture, and find all the areas where consensus is possible. Resist the tendency to emphasize minor differences: it is a mistake to get bogged down on marginal issues where there are deep divisions.

7. Identify and Speak to Core Values

A regional vision will not be implemented unless it taps into the political energy that originates in a strong sense of shared values and priorities. Therefore, clearly and comprehensively identifying those values and priorities is a critical task for implementation success. All communication about a vision should be based on core values and expressed in terms that reflect the local culture and make a direct connection to the basic aspirations and concerns of people in the region. Avoid using jargon and ambiguous or controversial terms (such as *density* or *sprawl*). Use visual images to build a shared vocabulary of land use and development attributes.

8. Sustain Communication and Education

Ideally, visioning is a process that never really ends: ongoing communication and education are key to sustaining the vision. Leadership cycles are unavoidable; substantial turnover will occur both within the visioning organization and among elected officials, business leaders, and community groups. Therefore, it is critical to provide ongoing opportunities to learn about land use policy models, design techniques, and best development practices. Be sure to take advantage of the many new community visualization techniques that can be used to sell solutions.

9. Decide from the Start How Success Will Be Defined

Set goals upfront and decide how success will be measured, so that you will know when you get there. Remember that some of the most important outcomes of visioning may be hard to measure—for example, the extent to which the public has begun to share in a regional identity. While measurable outcomes and short-term successes are important to building momentum, don't put too much weight on “indicator” projects (such as tons of emissions removed or reductions in vehicle-miles traveled). These measures are often too short-term for the visioning time frame, and focusing on “sticky” indicator disappointments can take energy away from efforts to effect sustained change.

10. Manage Expectations and Celebrate Achievements

Implementing a regional vision takes time. The goal is to catalyze incremental change through-out the region in a variety of ways. This process— building momentum toward a “tipping point”—is the best way to achieve long-term success. Regularly recognize and celebrate the progress that is made along the way, and the people who have made a difference.

Specific Topical Recommendations

In addition to the general principles described in the preceding section, forum participants developed a variety of specific recommendations in five topic areas: funding; leadership; tools and technical assistance; communications and media; and documentation and dissemination of best practices.

Funding

Visioning implementation leaders need to be creative and to think like venture capitalists. The goal is to piece together a financing structure from multiple sources that meets both the expectations of each funding partner and the needs of the visioning implementation program.

Organizations at the Local Level

In a number of regions in the United States, local foundations have been important funding sources for regional visioning efforts. Cultivate the community organizations in your area: know their priorities, and shape funding requests to reflect them. It may also be worth exploring organizations that support social equity, or even the United Way, as potential funders.

To meet staff, data, and analysis needs, tap in-kind resources available from councils of government, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and other regional organizations. Don't overlook in-kind contributions from universities, especially for analytical work. The news media provided free public service announcements for Envision Utah. Partnerships in which local media outlets distribute visioning surveys as newspaper circulars, produce public-interest programming on cable television, and cover visioning events can dramatically expand outreach efforts.

State Government

Federal transportation planning funds are allocated through state departments of transportation (DOTs) and passed on to MPOs. Nationwide, roughly \$500 million in state planning and research (SPR) funds are allocated in this way every year. The Federal Highway Administration is working with state DOTs to support scenario planning that integrates land use and transportation planning, and SPR funds can be used for visioning implementation activities that meet this objective. While these monies are used primarily to support routine MPO activities, there is a real opportunity to build multiagency partnerships and orient visioning implementation planning to take advantage of these federal funds.

Potential Federal Funding

Forum participants believe that there is the potential for a White House summit or commission that would focus on regional economies as the functional level of economic competitiveness in the new global economy. Such a program could

focus on strategies for enhancing the attractiveness, vitality, and competitiveness of regions through efficient infrastructure investment, integration of long-range land use and transportation planning, provision of balanced and affordable housing opportunities, and other activities. Such a high-level effort could result in new federal funding opportunities for both regional planning and implementation.

Private Sector

Consistent with their desire to build consensus on where development should occur, organizations of homebuilders have expressed an interest in supporting regional visioning exercises in several areas of the country. It seems likely that this interest could be expanded to include support for visioning implementation activities. Banks, both through their foundations and their Community Reinvestment Act activities, are potential funders, as are economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, utility companies, and

regional news organizations. The tourism industry also has an interest in healthy and attractive regions and could be another funding source. For example, if the connection between regional economic growth and tourism can be documented, bed taxes could be directed toward organizations that sponsor projects involving planning for growth.

Foundations

The foundation community has provided substantial funding for many visioning projects and should never be overlooked as a financial partner. Understanding the connection between the benefits of regional visioning and the mission of a foundation is the key to success in forming such a partnership. Beyond those foundations that fund environmental, transportation, or land use projects, good candidates include community foundations, and those that seek to improve social equity, economic competitiveness, and overall quality of life.

Leadership

To be effective, visioning efforts need to be led by an organization that is perceived as credible and neutral. Leaders within the organization must be drawn from all sectors (environmental, business, community, government, and academia) to ensure balance and effectiveness. Beginning at the start of the visioning project, leaders should be identified who will be needed to follow through on implementation.

In multiphase initiatives, succession planning is critical to engineering successful transitions; the roles and responsibilities that are needed at one phase may differ from those needed at later phases. In particular, those who can effectively lead the development of a vision are usually not the same people who can lead the implementation effort. As the visioning process moves toward the implementation phase, significant

planning may be necessary to ensure that the board of the visioning organization includes more implementers. It may be helpful to think of the leadership pool as being divided into platoons that bring different strengths to the process. Representation from each platoon is needed at each phase, but the mix and balance may change over time.

Fundraising leadership—particularly the ability to sustain multiyear funding commitments—is always needed. Fundraising is especially critical as the visioning program moves into the implementation phase, and as governmental participants move from being cheerleaders or observers to being the objects of implementation strategies.

Leaders who are passionate about the visioning initiative are also important in selling the effort to participants and contributors. The leadership group should also include key followers—those who may not be passionate about visioning but who can be persuaded to step forward to lead specific elements of the implementation effort.

“Rolodex” leaders constitute another leadership platoon. Because these leaders are so well con-

nected to varied and interlocking networks, they can be particularly effective in communicating the progress of the visioning effort and in recruiting new participants.

Sustained visioning programs are leadership intensive and can be very demanding, especially if leadership responsibility is too concentrated.

It is important to reenergize the leadership team by finding ways to recognize leaders and to celebrate accomplishments. Bringing emerging leaders into the effort is also important to sustain the vitality of the leadership over the long haul.

Reaching beyond a region’s geographic boundaries for infusions of talent, advice, and support can also help to inspire and reinvigorate a leadership team.

Tools and Technical Assistance

ULI’s experience in convening multistakeholder groups, and its reputation for providing unbiased information on land use policy and real estate development practices, makes it an ideal organization to identify and disseminate a variety of regional visioning tools.

These tools would consist primarily of case studies that would (1) identify best practices and lessons learned and (2) document the impacts of visioning on each region. ULI could also provide a list of resources for obtaining more information on visioning. Finally, ULI could catalogue the various visioning approaches in use, develop typologies of approaches, and describe the factors that lead to success with each approach. Some of the elements of the visioning process that should be analyzed include the following:

- The purpose and goals of the vision;
- The organizing principles that guide the visioning process;
- The leadership structure;
- The tools used for civic engagement;
- The size of the budget and the sources of funding;
- The communications tools used;

- Any reassessment and redirection techniques used to make midcourse corrections in the visioning process;
- Implementation strategies and techniques.

The explosion of computer-based visualization tools, Internet gaming techniques, and instant feedback mechanisms (such as keypad polling), has created a need for a “how-to” book explaining how to apply these tools to public engagement processes such as regional visioning. A ULI publication on this topic could be developed in partnership with the American Planning Association, universities, councils of government, or other organizations, and would have a broad audience of planners, developers, and others who need to effectively use these tools to garner community input on plans, projects, or visions.

ULI should also explore taking the UrbanPlan high school curriculum module from the project level to a regional scale, as a tool for training a broad audience of all ages in regional thinking.¹ The use of active learning tools can be quite a powerful experience for adults as well as for young people. It may be that with enhanced support—for example, a training manual and how-to guide that would make the program simpler and less expensive to plan and to undertake—the ULI Reality Check program offered by the Los

Angeles; Washington, D.C.; and North Texas district councils can serve this purpose.²

Some communities have created a long-range plan or vision but have not done the necessary outreach to build consensus for implementation. There may be a need for ULI to convene practitioners to develop techniques for testing or updating a plan or vision. Such strategies would allow communities to engage residents and move the work forward, toward implementation, without going back to square one of the visioning process.

One of the major challenges inherent in visioning projects is the constant turnover of elected officials, nonprofit leaders, business leaders, and others. Turnover makes it essential to offer ongoing education and training programs for regional leaders. The Alliance for Regional Stewardship, a national peer-to-peer learning network of regional leaders, is doing good work in this area, training and educating leaders in consensus building and collaboration skills that can be used over the long term. This work should be supported by foundations and government agencies so that it can be continued. It is worth noting, however, that training in leadership skills should be conducted somewhat differently for the civic, business, and public sectors because each sector has a different cultural context and different leadership training needs.

1. The UrbanPlan program is a guided simulation of a development problem in which students analyze and role-play all aspects of the development process and work in teams to propose solutions to the problem.

2. In the Reality Check exercise, diverse stakeholders from throughout a region are grouped around maps of the region. Using chips, Legos, or other physical markers to represent increments of growth, the participants allocate the forecasted growth in jobs and housing for the next 20+ years to specific locations within the region.

There is also a gap at the level of graduate education: there are no formal education programs for future regional leaders. Perhaps an effort should be made to develop a regional leadership concentration within a public policy or planning school.

Finally, it would be valuable to catalog the available models of regional governmental organizations, creating “templates” for alternative regional government structures. There are a variety of good models of regional governance, but there is no one central clearinghouse that offers information on these models and on the lessons that have been learned from each.

Communications and Media

Visioning communications strategies should focus on three basic questions: Why are we visioning? What is the vision? What is the strategy for implementing this vision? Effective communications “keep it simple” and use repetition to reinforce important messages.

As in all communications efforts, it is important to know the target audience. Because of the breadth and diversity of the stakeholder groups involved in visioning, it is often necessary to tailor communications by age, gender, ethnicity, primary language, or economic status. For example, to reach people in their 50s—who may feel that they did visioning 20 years ago and that nothing much changed—the message may need to focus on why visioning is being done now and how implementation will be handled. Similarly, recently arrived immigrants, in addition to needing communication in languages other than English, may need communication that focuses on why their perspective is valuable to the process and why they have a stake in the outcome.

The single most important step in developing a visioning communications strategy is a thorough values assessment that captures the language, priorities, and attitudes that various stakeholders bring to growth and development issues. Carefully distilling these values is critical to developing communications that will engage and resonate with stakeholders. For example, if “more time with family” emerges as an important value, then it will be more effective to discuss the benefits of new transit service in terms of cutting commuting time than in terms of reducing vehicle-miles traveled.

Don’t rush the values-assessment process. Give a wide range of participants an opportunity to explore their concerns and aspirations in depth—and when analyzing their input, resist drilling down to conclusions too quickly. Nuances gleaned through this process can guide communications

decisions for years to come, dramatically increasing the prospects of successful implementation. Thorough, sophisticated professional assistance with this task is well worth the cost.

A shared regional vocabulary for the discussion of growth and development issues is another important product of the visioning process that will continue to pay dividends throughout implementation. For example, gentrification is loaded with exclusionary associations; in Latino communities in Los Angeles, substituting “hentrification,” with its Spanish allusion to “bringing people back,” helped change the tone of discussions of this issue.

Storytelling is always a vital part of a communications strategy, especially when it comes to success stories that provide models and encouragement for the way ahead. Storytelling is an especially effective way to reach those who may have become cynical (“Visioning is fine but nothing is really going to change”). Stories of surprising and substantial implementation outcomes are an important resource for all those engaged in visioning projects.

It is also important to tap into the concerns and aspirations of a region by taking the time to develop and refine a “rallying cry” that can be used to galvanize action and prod reluctant leaders to get on board. Being clear and concise about why implementing a vision is critical to achieving success as a region can be a very powerful communications tool.

Ensuring that the media are engaged in and educated about the vision is critical. The work of Envision Utah is an excellent model in this regard: the goal there was not just to garner good media coverage but to draw local media companies to actively participate in the visioning effort. Founding chair Robert Grow suggests that members of the visioning steering committee meet every year with the editorial board of every relevant media outlet in the region. If possible, publishers of major newspapers and owners of local television and radio stations should be included as participants and leaders in the visioning effort. As always, it pays to make it easy for reporters to get the story right.

Free communications through the media can be a valuable in-kind contribution to implementation. Every January, Envision Utah runs a half-hour documentary on the focus of implementation efforts for the coming year. Since ad revenues are at their lowest in January, donating broadcast time to Envision Utah involves the loss of relatively little revenue, while Envision Utah gains a valuable public education opportunity.

Paid advertisements are also important elements of a comprehensive communications strategy. Tying advertisements closely to the values identified in the values-assessment process, and using the “shared regional language” that has been developed, will increase public understanding of planning concepts and terminology and maximize the effectiveness of the advertisements. Of course, ads should be placed in appropriate media to ensure that various target audiences are reached.

Documentation and Dissemination of Best Practices

In addition to the ULI resources discussed earlier in this report, a sponsored Web site that would serve as an official archive of all visioning efforts would be a helpful resource. The Web site should draw from as many regional visioning projects as possible, and should include reports, newsletters, plans, workshop write-ups, surveys, polling questions, and communications strategies and tools.

There is also a potential role for an umbrella organization—a regional visioning coalition—that would include the 40 to 50 existing visioning organizations, plus sponsors and practitioners. This organization could sponsor the Web site and other information-sharing mechanisms to advance visioning practice. “Building This Nation for the Next Generation” could be used as a tag line for the group; potential projects might include a national training workshop, a certification program, and a national speakers bureau.

Finally, a summit of the 20 or so national organizations that have an interest in regional visioning would help to coordinate the contributions that each organization can make to the field of regional visioning implementation. These organizations include ULI, the National Association of Home Builders, the American Planning Association, the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, Smart Growth America, funders, think tanks, and academic institutions.

Case Studies

Regional visioning practice has evolved to the point where there is now a track record of implementation efforts in a number of communities. Lessons learned from these experiences can inform the efforts of regions that have undergone a visioning development process more recently.

Envision Utah

Envision Utah, often regarded as the premier model of successful regional visioning implementation in the United States, is a public/private partnership formed in 1997 to study the long-term effects of growth in the Wasatch Valley. The process included five years of research, public involvement, and analysis of alternative growth scenarios, all of which led to the development of the Quality Growth Strategy. This strategy is focused on preserving critical lands, promoting water conservation and clean air, improving regionwide transportation systems, and providing housing options. The mission of Envision Utah is to keep Utah beautiful, prosperous, and neighborly.

Robert Grow credits the implementation success of Envision Utah to three factors: inclusiveness, values, and communication. First and most

important, from the start of the process Envision Utah brought all those people to the table who would need to play a role in implementing the vision. Inclusive stakeholder planning is essential: omitting any key stakeholders can result in a missed opportunity to implement the vision. Among the stakeholder groups that must be adequately represented are the following:

- *Business leaders.* Often these are the more conservative stakeholders; they may also have the political clout that is essential for legislative implementation.
- *Developers.* They are the ones who build what the vision calls for.
- *Utilities companies.* They provide the infrastructure.

Broad-based public input is a hallmark of the Envision Utah process.



- *Local government.* It plans and zones the land.
- *State government.* In many states, legislation has to be changed at the state level in order to implement better growth strategies.
- *Conservation and citizens' groups.* If substantial consensus is not reached, environmental groups are the most likely to sue.
- *Religious leaders.* They are major opinion leaders in the community.
- *Educators.* As old schools become run down and new schools are built farther away from the urban core, educational institutions often become the victims of sprawl; serving sprawling communities is an expensive proposition for school districts. Educators are also important visioning stakeholders because educational quality is a primary driver of individual locational decisions—and is thus a key variable affecting the region's ability to implement its growth vision.
- *Media.* The media can provide opportunities for public education.

The second critical element of Envision Utah's success was that the initiative was values based. By identifying widely shared values, Envision Utah created the common ground that kept people working together throughout the process. From the beginning, Envision Utah's leaders reached out, seeking input on what was most important to citizens; the leaders then determined how to accomplish the goals that were identified. The resulting vision was not simply a growth map for the region but a group of develop-

ment strategies with a broad base of support. Envision Utah found that regional visioning is about satisfying the market and removing barriers to the desired choices.

In Utah, the values analysis showed that personal safety and security was the number-one citizen concern. The next major priority was community enrichment, including where people recreate and where schools are located. Maximizing personal time and lifestyle opportunities were next on the list. Traffic congestion was another priority, both because it reduces time with family and because it interferes with mobility, and thereby prevents residents from taking advantage of employment and entertainment opportunities. The values analysis provided a road map for how to communicate about the regional choices facing residents.

Effective, ongoing communication is the final key to Envision Utah's success. Leaders discuss issues so that the public can relate to them, and citizens feel included. But because the Envision Utah process is ongoing, keeping people engaged and informed over time can be challenging. The initiative relies on a variety of communications strategies, including newspaper inserts, public service announcements, and an educational program aired during January (when free programming has the least impact on advertising revenues for the station donating the broadcast time).

Thanks to a visioning process that is inclusive, values based, and communications intensive, Envision Utah has created a quality growth strategy that enjoys broad support. The state now has a long-range transportation plan that

envision a balanced, intermodal transportation system that will be integrated with local land use planning. Major cities are changing their land use plans to maximize the development opportunities created by investments in the transportation system, and mayors involved in the process are adding more public transportation to their systems.

Other lessons learned from Envision Utah include the following:

- Provide the public with clear choices;
- Tap into the unique history and culture of the community;
- Build consensus for a common future by identifying widely held, deeply set values, desires, and aspirations: tap into people's hearts *and* their heads;
- Develop goals and implementation strategies to achieve the public vision.

Visioning Implementation in Large, Complex Regions

The purpose of regional visioning is to bring about growth and change. Regional visioning differs from planning in that it creates a common understanding of the place the region is becoming, and allows the public to create its own scenarios in an open and collaborative process. Visioning allows leaders to take untested ideas, model them, and analyze the impacts, often with unexpected results. Successful large-scale regional visions create many new regional thinkers and turn plans into action. Chicago and Los Angeles have successfully tackled the challenges of building a regional vision in a large and diverse area.

Chicago Metropolis 2020: Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago Metropolis 2020 Plan was created by the Commercial Club of Chicago, a membership organization of powerful business and civic leaders founded in 1877. The Commercial Club is perhaps best known for having hired Daniel Burnham to create the Chicago Plan of 1909. But, nearly 100 years later, no new vision for the region existed—a situation

that the Commercial Club decided to address by creating Chicago Metropolis 2020. The purpose of Chicago Metropolis 2020 was to study the issues and challenges facing Chicago; the culmination of the effort was *Chicago Metropolis 2020: Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century*, a report that outlines strategies for attracting needed investment and creating new jobs for the region.

Today, the Chicago region encompasses 4,000 square miles (10,360 square kilometers), 8 million people, and 280 local governments. Chicago Metropolis 2020 used the Envision Utah process as a model but added an analysis that created a regional plan. The Chicago Metropolis 2020 Plan seeks to optimize growth patterns in ways that will be both feasible and market compatible. To implement the vision, leaders identified key large-scale program areas in which to move forward; two such areas are (1) the completion of a detailed assessment of regional housing needs and (2) land use planning for freight transportation centers.

Chicago has a high rate of homeownership: 68 percent. But there is a widespread prejudice against approving the construction of new rental housing: in the past 20 years, only 2 percent of new housing construction has been rental. As a result, Chicago had some of the highest rates of overcrowding in the country. An analysis that compared forecast housing supply and demand to existing zoning regulations indicated that overcrowding—and a sizable deficit in workforce housing—would continue. In 2002, Chicago Metropolis 2020 issued the 40-Point Workforce Housing Action Agenda, which defines specific actions that will be needed at all levels of government, as well as in the business community, to address the shortage of workforce housing.

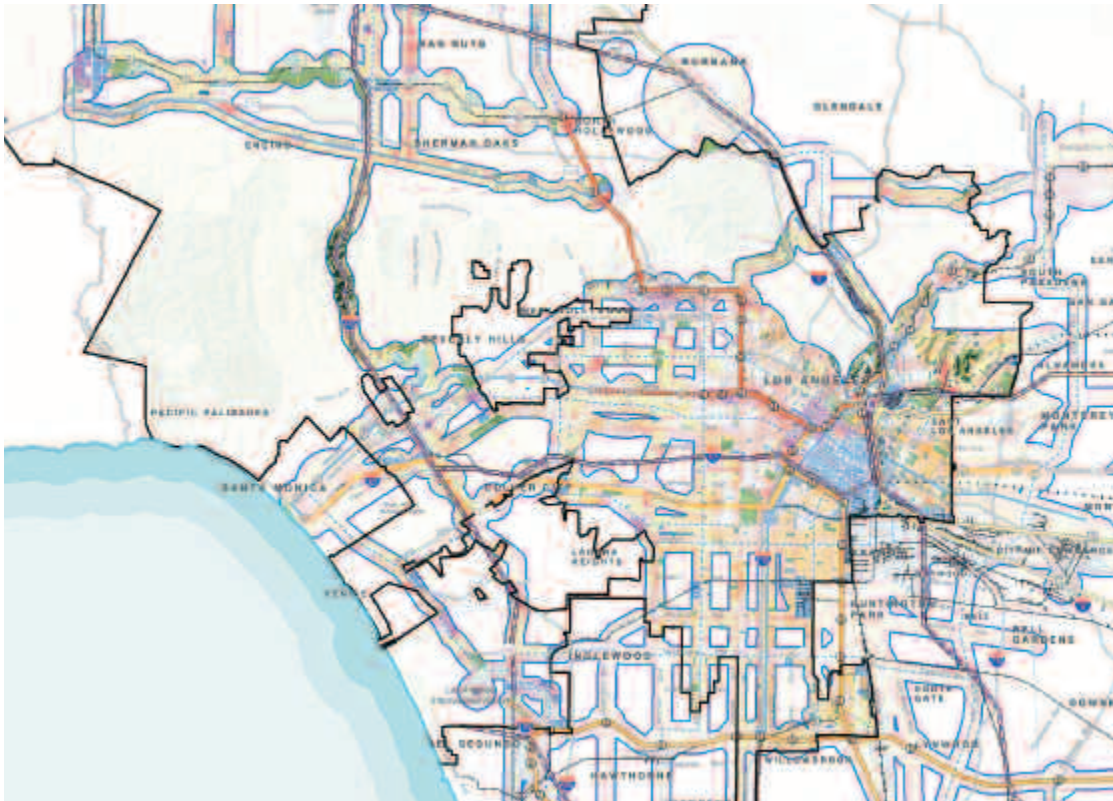
The Chicago region has more than 100,000 acres (40,470 hectares) of industrial land, about 29,000 acres (11,735 hectares) of which can be

considered “freight oriented.” Freight makes up approximately 25 percent of the regional economy, and this land is important not just to the region but to the smooth functioning of the state and national economies. Nevertheless, by the 1990s, there was no plan to optimize the usefulness of this land. Meanwhile, Chicago faced growth pressures and needed to tap into this land for development. *The Metropolis Freight Plan: Delivering the Goods*, a report undertaken by Chicago Metropolis 2020, reflects the results of a multiyear study examining the connection between land use and the use of freight for transporting goods. The report makes a series of recommendations on how to plan for and invest in freight systems and land use improvements.

Well-planned industrial land uses that support the extensive freight facilities in the Chicago region are an important outcome of the Chicago Metropolis 2020 project.



RON SCHRAMM PHOTOGRAPHY



The Compass Project mapped in detail the 2 percent of the Los Angeles region's land in which more intensive redevelopment will yield significant transportation and environmental benefits.

The Compass Project: Los Angeles, California

Southern California encompasses 35,000 square miles (90,650 square kilometers). It is home to more than 17 million people and is expected to have at least 6 million more residents by 2030. Using Envision Utah as a model, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the largest regional government in the country, undertook the Compass Project to create a regional vision for Los Angeles.

The result of the Compass analysis is known as the 2% Strategy, in recognition of the fact that only 2 percent of the land use in the region had to change substantially for the entire region to reap the resulting transportation and environmental benefits. For example, SCAG staff projected that (1) \$200 billion in transportation improvements over

the next 25 years would reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) by about 6 million miles (9.7 million kilometers) per day, and that (2) land use changes on 2 percent of the region's lands would have twice as much impact, reducing VMT by an additional 12 million miles (19.3 million kilometers). Land use changes were projected to yield similarly high benefits in the case of traffic delays and air quality (including making it possible for the region to achieve conformity with national standards for air quality). The 2% Strategy calls for concentrating mixed-use development near transportation corridors, transit stations, and regional centers. The strategy has achieved significant local support and will be incorporated into the regional transportation plan by 2010.

The "2% areas" have been mapped, and SCAG leaders are now working with municipalities to demonstrate the benefits of implementing this

regional vision at the local level. Using visualization tools based on geographic information systems, SCAG can demonstrate how “2% areas” in each municipality would look under different development scenarios: what the current zoning allows, how much revenue will accrue to local governments through different types of development, and what the return on investment to project proponents would be. Local governments

that complete station-area corridor plans consistent with the 2% Strategy are eligible for technical assistance from SCAG, and for preferential treatment for transportation improvement projects in the regional long-range transportation plan. SCAG has also created a mechanism to benchmark progress and track success in implementing the vision.

Visioning Implementation in Medium-Sized and Smaller Regions

All successful regional visions result in the following:

- The ability to focus growth where growth is most appropriate;
- The ability to connect growth with transit and infrastructure investment;
- Predictable, balanced land use regulations that create a level playing field for developers and encourage the development of more vibrant communities;
- Sufficient resources to support economic development, infrastructure investment, and environmental protection.

These visioning implementation goals can be achieved in smaller regions where visioning budgets are more limited.

Vision 2000: Chattanooga, Tennessee

Chattanooga, Tennessee, is an early example of how significantly a region can be changed by the implementation of a regional vision. The visioning process began in 1984 and resulted in the implementation of 232 specific initiatives over a nine-year period, a quick turnaround by most standards. Over the same period, Chattanooga gained approximately \$2 billion in new investments for projects and initiatives identified by the visioning process. Chattanooga is thus well regarded as a model of visioning and implementation.

The Vision 2000 project resulted in investments that dramatically changed Chattanooga’s riverfront and downtown.



ED MCMANON

Vision 2000 was brought about by a diverse group of citizens who wanted to develop a better way to make decisions and to create a shared vision for the region's future. Instead of relying on a top-down or bottom-up approach, visioning leaders used a "center-out" approach, an ever-expanding effort to engage a wide range of stakeholders. The focus was not on fixing problems but on identifying both the positive and negative aspects of the community and exploring possibilities for the future. Instead of narrowing the scope of discussion to a few priorities, visioning leaders chose to put every issue on the table and encouraged community residents to talk about all of them. This approach yielded a broad agenda supported by passionate, interested people who could effect change.

Aside from the physical results of Chattanooga's visioning effort, the process forever changed the spirit of the community, creating positive energy and a sense of empowerment. In addition, many of the people who served on task forces went on to become community leaders.



Chattanooga's commitment to preserving its historic buildings is evident in the "before" and "after" pictures of a downtown restoration project.



Region 2020: Birmingham, Alabama

Another example of successful visioning implementation is the citizen-driven visioning effort undertaken in the Birmingham, Alabama, region. Birmingham is a diverse area and a greatly divided region, with rural/urban and big town/small town dichotomies, and underlying racial tensions. Throughout the region are areas of explosive growth.

The regional visioning effort was started by about a dozen leaders who saw the need for regional solutions. Very quickly, thanks to a center-out approach to stakeholder involvement, what started as a handful of participants became a regional growth alliance involving thousands of people.

The results of the visioning process are referred to as the "Three P's": place, people, and prosperity. The initiative had three key characteristics:

- The visioning effort did not start with an agenda but with a blank slate.
- Visioning leaders made a profound commitment to geographical and demographic inclusiveness.
- Although the effort was citizen driven, roundtables with elected officials were held early in the process, to ensure government involvement.

Additional Observations

Gianni Longo

ACP Visioning and Planning

Regional decision making is undergoing a profound, albeit slow, change. The adversarial model of interaction between business, government, and civic organizations is giving way to more creative, flexible, multifaceted problem solving that is driven by passion, knowledge, and greater recognition of the fact that the regional level is the appropriate scale to address many issues.

Implementation of a regional agenda is best achieved through transparency and accountability, which build trust and legitimacy among all players. Implementation starts on day one of a regional visioning effort and should not be an afterthought. Implementation considerations should inform the composition of leadership groups, the scope of the vision, and funding goals.

Implementation is often about removing obstacles and circumventing gatekeepers. The best way to deal with road blockers and gatekeepers—local officials, entrenched bureaucrats, single-issue experts, NIMBY interests, and advocates of “silver-bullet solutions”—is to include them.

Inclusiveness is not an option. It applies to the involvement of participants as well as to the scope of the vision. Inclusiveness with regard to participants allows new regional leaders to be identified and ensures that all interests are represented in the vision. Inclusiveness with regard to scope makes it possible to integrate issues and solutions in ways that move beyond professional boundaries.

It is essential to learn to work with, trust, and integrate both intuitive and informed knowledge and to accept the notion that existing trends are not immutable destiny: a new vision can change the way a community grows and evolves.

Place matters. Residents develop a profound bond with the geography, people, and culture of the place where they have chosen to live. They also want to protect the investments they have made in their businesses, homes, and families. The love of place is a deep motivational factor and a source of leadership and stewardship for regional visioning programs.

John Parr

Alliance for Regional Stewardship

First and foremost, visioning efforts should not be considered planning initiatives but campaigns for change. Ultimately, successful visions require significant change in the way large numbers of people think about their regions and in how they act in their everyday lives. They might begin to use alternative modes of transportation. They might begin to realize how important it is to have housing choices to accommodate all stages of the human life cycle. They might understand the necessity for increasing the availability of affordable housing in their neighborhoods. Visioning is a campaign to analyze and influence individual choices on a large scale, and this requires the kind of focused and sophisticated marketing of ideas that is more typical of political campaigns than of planning initiatives.

Although all regions are unique, they are not fundamentally different in the challenges they face in forming a regional vision. Each region must focus on those strengths that make it unique and on the aspirations of the people who live and work there. In all regions across the country, there are typically four simultaneous conversations being held about challenges for the future. People are talking about economic factors and about generating meaningful jobs. They are discussing social inclusion and how to build trust

and relationships. There is a conversation about creating livable communities that will attract investment and skilled workers, so that the region can be competitive in a global economy. And there is a conversation about creating a governing structure that makes decisions efficiently and collaboratively to achieve the desired results. Effective visioning integrates these four conversations and builds trust as stakeholders take risks together to implement the vision.

In the past, much change was initiated through a top-down process, whereby experts and opinion leaders arrived at a solution and publicized the new approach. Today, peer-to-peer networking is more often the avenue of innovation. ULI is a good example of an organization that can be an effective catalyst for change because of the trust and communication that are built through member exchanges. Through research and sharing of best practices among its members, and in partnership with other organizations, ULI can capture success stories and develop handbooks and tool kits to help practitioners and communities implement new practices. Such resources open the door to regional visioning for communities that might not otherwise have the tools necessary to initiate change.

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