

# Plan Endorsement

## Community Visioning Standards

**Community Visioning** is a three part participatory process that engages local residents in developing a consensus on 1) what they want their community to be, 2) where the community seems to be heading and 3) what has to be done to correct that trend to achieve the desired common vision. In most cases this will involve whole communities, but in larger urban areas it will be based on neighborhoods. For Plan Endorsement, municipalities are required to conduct a community visioning process to develop a community vision with a twenty-year planning horizon. The vision shall provide for sustainable growth, recognize fiscal constraints, housing needs and protection of natural, historic and agricultural resources. It shall take into consideration the findings and conclusions of the Municipal Self-Assessment and the State's Opportunities and Constraints Analysis.

To develop a community vision, the municipality, with assistance from the Office of Smart Growth, will hold a series of interactive discussions with its residents and other community stakeholders to identify the community's purpose, core values, and vision of the future, which are then transformed into community goals and an action plan. Approaches to visioning are varied, and should be tailored to the individual community and its circumstances.

**Vision Statement:** The primary product of the visioning process will be a Vision Statement to be approved by the local planning board and adopted by the local governing body. This statement, including suggested implementation strategies, will be submitted as a part of the Plan Endorsement petition. Specific strategies and an action plan will then be developed in cooperation with the Office of Smart Growth and relevant State agencies. The vision will be incorporated into the next master plan update and implementation mechanisms.

**Tools for the Visioning Process:** Broad interactive public participation is essential for the success of the visioning process and for building the necessary support to carry out the vision. For Plan Endorsement, the State Planning Commission requires that municipalities provide a Vision Statement and effective outreach and interactive activities used to develop a Community Vision Statement. The visioning process should engage the public through a variety of tools designed to be as interactive as possible, for example:

- Community surveys/questionnaires
- Community mapping exercises
- Focus groups/public forums
- Study circles
- Workshops
- Community tours
- Newsletters
- Special events

Each outreach tool should be designed to gain a broad public consensus regarding the future of the community. The municipality shall summarize the tools utilized to achieve broad public participation, and submit the summary with the adopted Vision Statement.

**The Visioning Process:** Residents of various ages, ethnic backgrounds, genders, and occupations are brought together in interactive sessions to share ideas. At the request of a municipality, the Office of Smart Growth shall work with the Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee to help get the process started. OSG does not want to do it for you, but rather do it with you if you need our help. The Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee shall engage a facilitator to guide the community through all public workshops and meetings. The facilitator should be a licensed planner or have experience with community visioning processes and concepts. Using the tools listed above, the Advisory Committee shall reach out to the whole community to involve as many residents as possible in the entire process to gain meaningful participation and input from interested parties in the municipality, county or region. Groups that are appropriate to include:

- Neighborhood associations
- Public officials from the governing body, planning board , board of adjustment, board of health, environmental and historic commissions or committees
- Board of Education, parent-teacher associations (PTAs)
- Senior citizen groups
- Community organizations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Businesses/Business Associations
- Private property owners
- Housing and development interests/groups
- Farmers
- Environmental organizations
- Students
- Renters

The Advisory Committee will need to hold as many meetings as necessary and appropriate to arrive at the final Vision. Depending on the issues of the community, between 5 and 10 meetings can be expected. Meetings should also take into account any non-English speaking populations within the community and provide materials written in the native language. At a minimum the Advisory Committee shall:

### **Part One - Brainstorming and Initial Draft Vision Statement**

1. Define a “citizen visioning” committee of local stakeholders that have a considerable investment in the community, either through longevity, local business ownership or public involvement. Members of this committee can include, but should not be limited to the elected officials, public volunteers, school officials, religious or cultural heads and local civic organization members. The members of this initial community should be able to attend meetings and volunteer time and effort to the Community Visioning Process.
2. Hold at least one initial facilitated **public workshop** for the “citizen visioning” committee to brainstorm, gather ideas and reach consensus on desirable visions for what the community should be like in 20 years. The public workshop should define the key points on which the remainder of the process should focus.
3. Develop the initial draft Vision Statement based on the results of the first workshop. The Vision Statement, a consensus document, may consist solely of broad communitywide goals, may be enhanced by the addition of measurable objectives for each of the goals, or may be accompanied by a narrative or illustration that creates a picture of the community at the end of the twenty-year plan period. It must reflect the community’s shared concept for growth and development of the

community, including visual representations depicting the desired land use patterns and character of the community over a twenty-year planning horizon. It must also take into consideration economic viability of the vision, the potential for public infrastructure investment and private property interests.

## **Part Two – Public Involvement**

Hold a facilitated **public workshop** with the community to discuss existing trends based on the current master plan, zoning ordinance and development strategies. The public should be allowed to participate and suggest changes to the community. Initial discussion points will be determined, but not limited to, the topics discussed with the “citizen visioning” committee. More than one meeting may be appropriate at this stage so that you have time to discuss each of the topics listed below, as well as to insure that the maximum amount of public involvement is possible. The final outcome of the meetings is to reach consensus on a vision of the community if existing trends are pursued.

Discuss each of the following topics at the public meetings, relevant to your community:

### **Existing Trends**

- The findings and conclusions of the Municipal Self-Assessment and the State Agency Opportunities and Constraints Analysis
- Future growth in the area using population projections from the trend analysis;
- Priorities for economic development
- Preservation of cultural and historic resources
- Preservation of open space, environmentally sensitive lands, and agricultural lands
- Appropriate areas and standards for mixed-use development
- Appropriate areas and standards for high-density commercial and residential development
- Appropriate areas and standards for economic development opportunities and employment centers
- Provisions for a wide variety of housing structure types, occupancy types, and price (for rent & purchase)
- Options for an efficient, interconnected multimodal transportation system; and
- Opportunities to create land use patterns that accommodate the issues listed in the topics above

### **Collective Vision for the Future**

- Incentives for mixed-use development including increased height and intensity standards for buildings that provide residential use in combination with office or commercial space
- Incentives for affordable housing
- Balance increased density with preservation of environs
- Designation of Areas in Need of Redevelopment, CAFRA Coastal Centers, TDR Receiving Areas, Transit Villages, Centers and Critical Environmental Sites
- Creation of a BID, SID or MSNJ designation
- Strategies to provide mobility within the community
- Strategies for providing educational and recreational opportunities
- Strategies to preserve cultural and historic resources
- Strategies to preserve and protect open space and environmentally sensitive lands
- Strategies to encourage a healthy agricultural economy, including innovative planning and development strategies such as transfer of development rights

### **Part Three – Creation of the Vision Statement and Report**

Compile the findings of these workshops identifying what the community will look like if it proceeds under current conditions and how the collective vision differs from trend. These findings may be distributed amongst the “citizens advisory” committee or the public for feedback before revising the draft Vision Statement. Finalize the draft Vision Statement based on these discussions.

Hold two **public hearings** on the final draft Vision Statement, with one of those meetings to be held before the local planning board to approve the draft Vision Statement and one of those meetings to be held before the local governing body to formally adopt the Vision Statement. The public hearings shall be noticed pursuant to the State Planning Rules. In addition, the Advisory Committee shall issue a press release to local newspapers and post notice of the public hearing on the official municipal website (if available) in a conspicuous place at least 10 days in advance of the hearing. All notices shall identify where complete copies of the Municipal Self Assessment, the findings and conclusions of the State agency Opportunities and Constraints Assessment, and the draft Vision can be found.

**Note:** A municipality that has developed a community vision and completed a visioning process after January 1, 2000, which substantially complies with the intent of visioning set forth in this Appendix need only conduct a review of the existing Vision Statement and provide a statement in the Municipal Self-Assessment that demonstrates how the municipality has substantially complied with the visioning standards. The municipality, Office of Smart Growth and relevant state agencies will work to incorporate the goals, policies and objectives of the Vision into the master plan and subsequently adopted land development regulations when developing the MOU and Action Plan.

#### *Helpful Tips:*

**Visioning sessions.** Specific activities should be designed to gain meaningful input from a variety of community members on the topics to be discussed at the visioning workshops. Those activities may include interactive discussion, mapping exercises, and review of photos, illustrations and descriptions of the area. The following is an example of community visioning that satisfies the plan endorsement requirement.

The first workshop:

- Brainstorm ideas and capture them on flip charts or by other means.
- Break into small groups and discuss and record ideas more fully.
- Present small group discussions to the larger group.
- Gather similar ideas together.
- Assign responsibility for gathering additional information needed.
- Determine focus areas to ascertain if environmental, economic, and social attributes are captured.
- Provide volunteers with disposable cameras and ask each to take pictures of five (5) things they like about their community (or other communities) and five things they would like to see improved.

Once the additional information is collected, bring together participants for a second workshop to:

- Present findings
- Develop scenarios for alternative futures
- Produce a pictorial/graphic representation of those alternative futures
- Create the first draft of the vision statement

At the conclusion of the public workshops, the Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee should:

- Circulate the draft vision statement and gather feedback from community members using as many community outreach tools as possible, including for example surveys, press releases, posting on the internet, newsletters, public displays, email distribution, special events and community tours.
- Revise the vision statement based on public comment and circulate it again using similar outreach tools
- Create the final vision statement
- Present to the planning board for approval of the final vision statement at a publicly noticed meeting
- Present to the governing body for formal adoption at a publicly noticed meeting

**Incorporation into the Master Plan.** The Vision Statement, goals and objectives need to be clearly written so that they can be easily incorporated into the master plan. One way to accomplish this is to translate the vision statement into overall guiding principles. For example, your community might place the protection of its downtown as one of its highest priorities. This theme can be considered a guiding principle throughout the plan, as other associated goals, objectives, and recommendations are considered. When articulating the vision statements in your master plan, it is important to stress the guiding principles first. This can be accomplished in the introduction as well as the executive summary. The balance of the vision statements, goals, and objectives can be summarized in the overall vision or general statement section of the master plan. If there is a summary report of the visioning process, this report can be included as an appendix. The vision or general statement section of master plan should include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- an introduction
- an overall description of the visioning process
- the questions and topics discussed
- a description of the level and frequency of public participation
- the main vision statements
- a list of goals and objectives

## Visioning Models

A number of visioning models have been developed in cities and states across the country that can be considered when preparing a vision and resulting master plan. These models tend to vary with regard to how public participation occurs in the visioning process, how and when data is used in the workshops, and the length of time prescribed for conducting the process. Most are geared toward developing a broad community vision and action plan in a relatively short period of time. Below are examples of community visioning models that have been utilized by different types of communities.

### The Charrette

A Charrette is a meeting or series of meetings in which the public is directly involved with forming ideas for the future of the community. Typically focusing on physical design and land use, Charrettes allow for maximum public input, as the participants make decisions regarding on-the-ground changes. The ideas put forth by the public in a Charrette are then synthesized into master plan or zoning updates or become the goals and objectives of a redevelopment or neighborhood plan. These Charrettes are the most detailed pictures of what you want the community to become; it is also the most expensive. It may involve hiring a multi-disciplinary team of architects, landscape architects, transportation engineers, and land use planners. The product would be a visually stunning rendering of what the people have said they want their community to look like.

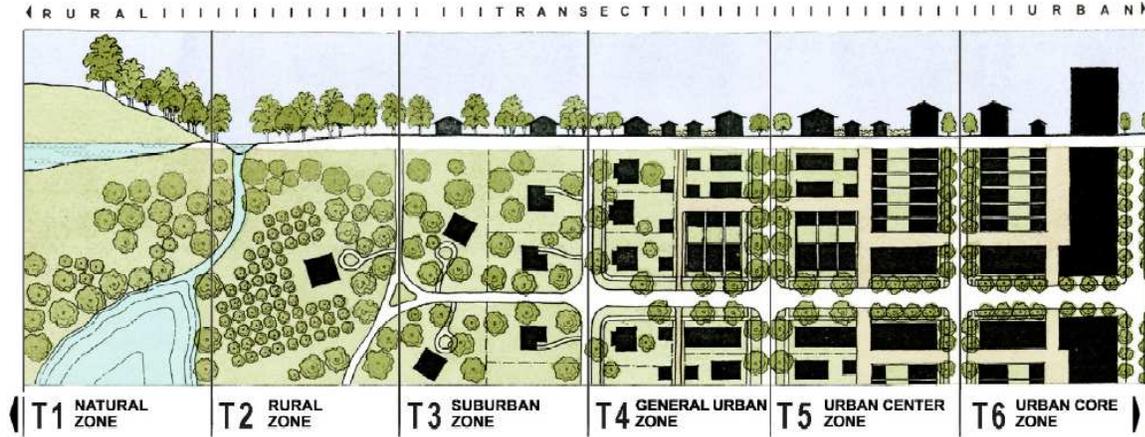
Guides and examples of charrettes are:

National Charrette Institute: <http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/presentations.html>

Charrette Center: <http://www.charrettecenter.net/articles/CitizensareCustomersToo.pdf>

Louisville Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods: <http://louisville.edu/org/sun/planning/char.html>

## The Transect



Courtesy [DPZ & Co](#)

The Transect is a land use planning model that focuses on the ordered progression from rural environs to the urban core. The Transect can be applied to new and existing developments. If applicable to the community (for example, a growing small city surrounded by agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive features), the Transect should be a model incorporated into the visioning process. Using the Transect allows the public a structured method of applying land-use, density and design controls to their community.

Examples of Transect based Plans:

The SmartCode: <http://www.smartcodecentral.org/>

For more info on the Transect: <http://www.dpz.com/transect.aspx>

## Comprehensive Community Visioning: The Oregon Model<sup>1</sup>

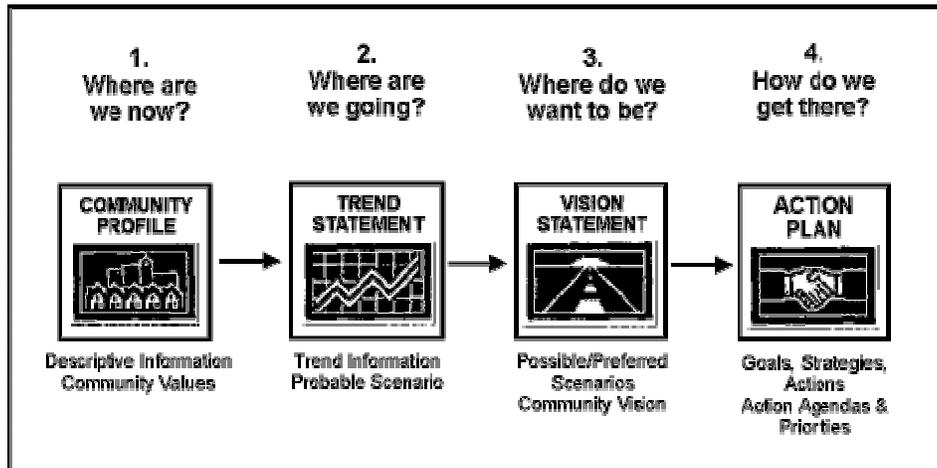
<http://www.design.asu.edu/apa/proceedings97/ames.html>

The Oregon Model for community visioning involves a four-step process. Each step focuses on a driving question, involves different activities, and results in specific products. While all four steps are recommended, a community may choose to follow only some of them or to undertake specific activities at different points in the process. The model allows for these kinds of changes and flexibility. The four steps in the Oregon Model are:

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Steven C. Ames. Excerpted and adapted from "What Is Visioning," A Guide to Community visioning: Hands-On Information for Local Communities, Steven C. Ames, Editor, Oregon Visions Project, Oregon Chapter, American Planning Association. The Oregon Model © 1992, 1995 Steven C. Ames. All rights reserved.

# THE OREGON MODEL

## A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS



**Step One: Profiling the Community.** The first step is to profile the community as it exists in the present. This involves identifying and describing key characteristics of the area, such as geography, natural resources, population, demographics, the local economy and labor force, political and community institutions, housing, transportation, education resources, and cultural and recreational resources. An assessment of community strengths and weaknesses is prepared. This step also typically includes the development of a statement of community values that articulates core beliefs shared by community members.

- **Driving question:** "Where are we now?"
- **Activities:** Research and data collection, compilation and analysis. If a values statement is developed, additional activities such as a community survey, community meetings, etc., may be required.
- **Products:** Community profile, strength and weaknesses assessment, values statement.

**Step Two: Analyzing the Trends.** The second step is to determine where the community is headed if current trends and activities continue. It involves analyzing research to determine current and projected trends, and their potential impact on the community. A "probable scenario," describing what the community will look like at some point in the future if it stays on its current course, may be developed. (As discussed later, additional "possible scenarios" also may be developed.)

- **Driving question:** "Where are we going?"
- **Activities:** Determination of current and projected trends, assessment of their future impact. Creation of a probable scenario (or alternative possible scenarios) through a taskforce, work groups, community meetings and brainstorming sessions, or other means.
- **Products:** Trend Statement, probable scenario, additional possible scenarios.

**Step Three: Creating the Vision.** The next step involves the actual creation of a vision for the future, describing what the community seeks to become. Based on identified community values, a "preferred scenario" is developed to describe what the community will look like if it responds to emerging trends and issues in a proactive manner. Ultimately, the community's formal vision statement is based on this scenario.

- **Driving question:** "Where do we want to be?"
- **Activities:** Creation of a preferred scenario and final vision statement through task forces, work groups, community meetings, brainstorming session, or other means.
- **Products:** Preferred scenario, vision statement.

**Step Four: Developing an Action Plan.** Once the vision has been created, a strategic action plan to achieve it can be developed. The action plan should be as specific as possible, including actions to be taken, assignment of responsibilities, timelines, costs, opportunities and constraints, and more.

- **Driving question:** "How do we get there?"
- **Activities:** Identification of goals, strategies, action, implementation agendas and priorities through a task force, work groups, or stakeholder meetings. The action plan may also be linked to the development of a community benchmarking system to measure progress in achieving community goals.
- **Product:** Implementation plans for short- and long-term goals.

## Sample Visions

1. Pinelands Excellence Program – Egg Harbor Township  
<http://www.state.nj.us/pinelands/landuse/speproj/pre-bid.pdf>
2. Waco, Texas, community visioning. Many voices, One Vision.  
<http://www.communityvisioningproject.org/>
3. Sample Vision Statement: Oakland, California

### The Vision for Oakland

In the year 2015, Oakland will be a safe, health, and vital city offering a high quality of life through:

- a dynamic economy that taps into Oakland's great economic potential and capitalizes on its physical and cultural assets;
- clean and attractive neighborhoods rich in character and diversity, each with its own distinctive identity, yet well integrated into a cohesive urban fabric;
- a diverse and vibrant downtown with around-the-clock activity;
- an active and accessible waterfront that is linked to downtown and the neighborhoods, and that promotes Oakland's position as a leading United States port and primary regional and international airport;
- an efficient transportation system that serves the needs of all its citizens and that promotes Oakland's primacy as a transportation hub connecting the Bay Area with the Pacific Rim and the rest of the United States; and
- awareness and enjoyment of Oakland's magnificent physical setting – hills, views, water estuary – in every district and neighborhood.