

Heartland 2060: Getting Started

January 2008 Meeting Summary

Overview

The second Leadership Team meeting of the Heartland 2060 regional visioning initiative was hosted by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) on January 30, 2008 at the Sebring Civic Center. The meeting was attended by more than 60 public, private, civic organization, and community representatives. Pat Steed, Director of the CFRPC began the meeting with a review of the visioning process and its purpose and provided a look back at the November 2007 meeting. John Kaliski, Chris Porter, and Evan Enarson-Hering of Cambridge Systematics, Inc. followed with a presentation summarizing state initiatives on regional visioning, including the work of the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida. This was followed by an overview of the proposed work plan and leadership approach to the Heartland 2060 regional visioning process.

The second half of the meeting was devoted to breakout sessions with participants being asked to refine and prioritize the Heartland's core values, based on the initial list of values developed at the November meeting. In addition, four groups were assigned issue areas and asked to brainstorm key people or organizations that should be invited to participate in the corresponding issue task forces or other aspects of the regional visioning effort.

State Initiatives

In 2005, the Legislature created the 15-member Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida, to provide counsel to the state on growth issues. Its members include elected state and local officials and environmental and business leaders. Among the Commission's guiding principles for achieving sustainability are regional visioning and intergovernmental coordination. In 2007, the Commission released several reports supporting regional visioning efforts and providing potential state guidance; these include, "*Engaging the Future through a State-Sponsored Regional Visioning Initiative*" and "*A Coordinated, Statewide Regional Visioning Approach for Florida*". The recommendations and findings from these reports were discussed, along with the potential implication of state action for the Heartland 2060 Vision.

Meeting participants responded that we must ensure that this remains a regional grassroots effort, *assisted* with state resources, but not *guided* or determined from the top down.

Proposed Approach to Visioning Process

Cambridge Systematics presented a proposed timeline, workplan, and leadership structure for the Heartland 2060 effort. The presentation is posted online at www.cfrpc.org or www.heartland2060.com.

Organizational Leadership

The *Heartland 2060 Leadership Team* is defined as the ad-hoc group that met in September and November of 2007 and was present at this meeting. The Leadership Team will continue to meet approximately quarterly to advise and direct the visioning process. Many of its members may also become involved in supporting the activities of the issue task forces.

From this larger group the *Heartland 2060 Steering Committee* will become the primary, formal operational body for the visioning process. This group will comprise a committed group of leaders representing the public, private, and civic sectors. The proposed membership of this body is to include one County Commissioner from each of the seven counties, one at-large representative from each county (either government, business, or community leaders), and the chairs of each of the issue task forces. The membership of this group would include the Director of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and state and regional agencies represented in ex-officio positions.

Meeting participants affirmed that linking the issue task forces with the Steering Committee will be vital to connecting efforts and sharing information. In addition, participants stressed that the at-large and issue task force members should be balanced to best represent different sectors (government, business, community).

Proposed Work Plan

The draft work plan and overall project outline were also introduced. The process is to take place in three phases over two years, and will encompass the following elements.

Phase I: Getting Started

- Plan and formally initiate the regional visioning process
- Develop regional profile and baseline conditions

Phase II: Visioning

- Obtain citizen and partner input
- Develop and assess alternative regional futures
- Identify issues and potential solutions

Phase III: Implementation

- Develop action plan
- Implement key priorities
- Measure progress and refine strategies

Heartland Core Values

Participants in the November 2007 Leadership Team meeting created an initial brainstorm of the Heartland's core values. The complete listing of potential core values is available in the

November 2007 summary document and in the January 2008 presentation available online at www.cfrpc.org.

From this list, participants in the current meeting were asked to individually select what they felt to be the five most important value statements. Working in four breakout groups, participants then reviewed their collective rankings and engaged in dialogue until consensus was formed on the five values that they felt most closely defined the region. In some cases, these were combinations of the value statements from the previous meeting. The consensus priority values for each group are presented below.

Heartland 2060 Core Value Statements	
<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban and rural lifestyle • Sense of community • Stewardship of natural resources • Respect for agriculture and rural economy • Plan for growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship of resources and values • Planning before growth • Education and future for children • Respect for agriculture • Water protection
<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • Ethics and morals • Stewardship of natural resources • Education and future for children • Smart, sustainable growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for sustainable growth • Stewardship and natural preservation • Water protection • Respect for agriculture • Appreciation for open space

From this exercise, some commonality of the region’s core values emerged. The input provided here will form the basis of value statements for the region and will be used to provide input into the direction of the regional vision. Draft regional value statements, paraphrased from meeting participants’ contributions, are provided below and will be validated at future workshops.

Heartland Value Statements

Stewardship of natural resources: We desire to be responsible stewards of our community resources and values and to do so by protecting water sources, managing lands for conservation, and using natural resources sustainably so that these regional assets may be enjoyed by future generations. Our open spaces, public lands, and water resources are appreciated by some for the recreational opportunities provided, and by others for the sake of open space.

Plan for sustainable growth: We will anticipate development and grow in a sustainable manner that is appropriate for our region and that reinforces the spirit of the Heartland. This advance planning can not be either “smart growth”, as defined in professional terminology, or simply “planned growth”, not based on sustainable principles. Instead, we will engage in growth leadership and advance planning so that our future growth sustains Heartland values.

Respect for agriculture: We recognize that a defining aspect of the Heartland is its heritage and economic base in agricultural industries. These activities have supported the rural economy of the region. While some agricultural land may be developed, a significant agricultural base for the region should be preserved.

Future for children: We need to expand both educational and economic opportunities so that each successive generation is able to return or to stay in the region because great schools, jobs, and cultural opportunities are available. Educational opportunities in the form of early literacy, high school graduation, adult learning, and advanced degrees are vital for advancement and the employment opportunities of adult residents and the region's youths. Economic opportunities include the chance to grow our small businesses, diversify our economy, and provide self-sufficient jobs with benefits.

Sense of community: We appreciate that our region's existing strong sense of community and values are linked to our physical surroundings and we will maintain those connections. Our small, accessible communities provide for urban amenities while preserving rural lifestyles. Heartland communities embody family, ethical, moral and faith-based values, and our residents honor fairness, honesty, and sincerity, while continuing to display hard work and entrepreneurship.

Water protection: We must ensure that water remains available for the region's immediate needs and future growth. Future growth and limited water supplies will necessitate reducing our reliance on groundwater and requires coordinated planning for future water use and alternative water sources.

Identification of Task Force Key Participants

Meeting attendees self-selected into one of four groups that were each tasked with identifying key players for the issue task forces and the general visioning effort. The four groups were 1) Transportation and Land Use, 2) Education, Workforce, and Economic Development, 3) Community Infrastructure and Public Involvement, and 4) Environment and Natural Resources. From discussions during the previous meeting, it was suggested the task forces should have equitable representation from government, business, and community sectors. Public involvement was included to generate ideas of contacts for any upcoming citizen engagement efforts.

Two groups suggested name changes for their respective task forces. The "Education" and "Economic Development" task forces previously suggested could be combined into one group tasked with exploring the linkages between education, workforce development, and economic development. This task force might be known as the "Education, Workforce, and Economic Development" task force. The "Community Infrastructure" issue task force may be renamed "Community Resources" to better represent that the focus of this group will not be just on bricks and mortar. Defining the scope and scale of the issues this task force will review will be critical.

The ideas generated for key players will be compiled and sent for review to meeting participants. The Central Florida Regional Planning Council will take the lead in contacting and recruiting membership for issue task forces.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The meeting adjourned with a brief question and answer period and discussion of next steps for this leadership team. Questions addressed to Pat Steed included:

- How we would ensure that the vision is implemented?

We will be thinking about implementation steps at the forefront and throughout the process and will be developing specific commitments before the end of the process. This will not simply be a plan on a shelf somewhere, but a regional action plan.

- How we would ensure coordination of overlapping regional visioning efforts?

Coordination with neighboring and overlapping regions will be critical. One strategy will be to encourage joint, coordinated participation among neighboring efforts.

- How would the visioning effort relate to current and proposed development projects?

We need to begin thinking long-term and remember that this process is about leaving a legacy for our children. While we can't put current development projects on hold, we can look at current and future issues simultaneously. For example, we can use the visioning exercise to provide real-time input into projects currently going through the review and approval process.

The next meeting of this Leadership Team was tentatively proposed for March 19th, 2008 at the Sebring Civic Center. (Please note this meeting is being rescheduled).