

Heartland 2060: Start-Up Activities: Phase 1

June 2008 Meeting Summary

Overview

The fifth Leadership Team meeting of the Heartland 2060 regional visioning initiative was hosted by the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC) on June 25, 2008 at the Sebring Ag-Civic Center.

The meeting was attended by approximately 35 public, private, civic organization, and community representatives. Pat Steed, Director of the CFRPC, began the meeting with a description of the process timeline and a review of the key issues identified in the previous meeting. Shannon Brett, of the CFRPC, announced the creation of Heartland 2060 graphical logos to help begin a public communications and branding campaign.

The purpose of this Leadership Team meeting was to review the trends and conditions of the two remaining issue areas and identify key elements and issues the visioning process should address. The prior meeting covered the *Environment and Natural Resources* and *Education, Workforce, and Economic Development* sections, while *Community Resources* and *Transportation and Land Use* issue areas were reviewed during this meeting. Evan Enarson-Hering of Cambridge Systematics, Inc. began the *Community Resources* presentation with a brief profile of the region's healthcare facilities and community health indicators, while Shannon Brett followed with a description of the region's cultural and community assets. Pat Steed presented *Transportation and Land Use* by discussing the relationship of these issues, key transportation infrastructure, travel conditions and performance, current land uses within the region, and potential future development patterns. Following the presentation of these regional profiles, participants divided into three breakout groups and identified key themes within each issue area that the regional vision could address.

The next meeting of the Leadership Team has been tentatively scheduled for October 15th at a location to be determined.

II. Public Relations: Heartland 2060 Logos

A local graphic arts firm was tasked with designing potential logos for the Heartland 2060 effort and three options were presented at this meeting. Participants voted for their favorite option and at the end of the meeting the logo below was selected as the overwhelming favorite. The RPC will continue to work with the vendor to refine the graphic based on participant comments and the final version will appear on future communications.



III. Regional Issue Area Profiles

To provide a framework for regional leadership, to guide stakeholder involvement, and to address the region's most significant issues, four task forces will be created to explore the issue areas of 1) *Environment and Natural Resources*, 2) *Education, Workforce, and Economic Development*, 3) *Transportation and Land Use*, and 4) *Community Resources*. A preliminary regional profile has been drafted that explores the current conditions, future trends, and opportunities facing the Heartland over the next 50 years. This draft profile will provide a starting point for the work of each task force.

This meeting's presentations covered the remaining two issue areas and group discussion was held to approach significant issues from a regional perspective. The goal of this discussion was to identify the key elements and issues the visioning process and the Issue Area Task Forces should address. A second goal was to identify further data collection and issue analysis in the next phase of the process.

The draft regional issue area profiles and preliminary data are included in the April and June Leadership Team PowerPoint presentations available at www.cfrpc.org or www.heartland2060.org. Below is a brief summary of what was covered in these presentations.

3) Community Resources

During previous meetings, the Leadership Team group identified the two most pressing areas of opportunity within the area of community resources as regional healthcare and regional community and cultural amenities. Other significant issues such as affordable housing and intergovernmental coordination will be addressed by other task forces or as cross-cutting issues. Using available state and local data sources, this profile assessed the region's healthcare facilities, provided a snapshot of basic community health indicators, and described preliminary access to care data. The presentation also provided summary data and examples of some of the region's community, cultural, and historic resources.

With further analysis and regional input, this information will be used to explore some of the significant issues and driving questions related to the following key questions:

- How do we promote healthy communities?
- How do we improve access and quality of healthcare?
- How can we maintain existing strong sense of community?
- How can we maintain rural character with access to urban amenities?
- How do we expand cultural opportunities to support retention of youth?

4) Transportation and Land Use

This issue area profile explored the relationship between transportation and land use planning and the benefits of improved coordination. Using available data, the region's basic transportation network, travel conditions and performance, and future transportation needs were described.

The land use portion of this issue area identified the primary land uses within the region, and explored potential future regional population trends and development patterns.

With further analysis and regional input, this information will be used to explore the significant issues and driving questions related to the following key questions:

- How do we coordinate transportation and land use decision-making?
- How do we plan for future multimodal transportation systems to facilitate movement of people and goods?
- How do we coordinate future transportation investment with development of other infrastructure?
- How can we reduce impacts of transportation and development on environment, energy, and water?
- How do we plan for transportation systems that support sustainable communities?

IV. Discussion Groups

Following the regional information presentations, meeting participants split into three groups to discuss and develop the charges and driving research questions for the Task Forces to explore. Two groups discussed transportation and land use, and one group discussed community resources. These groups discussed the following questions:

- What issues should each of the Issue Area Task Forces explore? (Current issues versus 50-year issues)
- What specific issues should be excluded from the vision?
- What key pieces of information do we need to move forward?
- Have we identified all key stakeholders for the Issue Area Task Forces?

These groups were asked to identify the top regional priority issues to be addressed in the visioning process. A summary of the breakout group discussions within each issue area is presented on the following page.

	Community Resources	Transportation and Land Use	
		Group 1	Group 2
Key regional long-term issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve access to health care throughout the region 2. Expand healthcare network and clusters 3. Market cultural amenities within and outside the region 4. Determine communities' future identity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan for east-west and north-south corridors to support economic development and multi-modal mobility needs 2. Coordinate land use and conservation planning with corridor planning 3. Enhance regional/ interregional freight connectivity - rail, truck, connections to ports and airports 4. Enhance regional passenger transit connections (bus and/or rail) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and plan for future multimodal transportation corridors 2. Provide transportation system to support economic development goals 3. Making transportation and land use decisions that support sustainable urban and rural communities
Key current and future issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access is both a short and long-term issue - Recruit health professionals and clusters - Community development key to economic growth - Cultural amenities essential to retaining youth - Regional and inter-regional communication of events needed - Communities must choose own future identity - Cycle of opportunity should be examined, from pre-natal care, early literacy, through education, and retirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate all aspects of new corridors (access, environment, economics, land use) - Goods movement through truck, rail, and port connections - Regional Greenprint (science-based) - Limited north-south routes in region - system vulnerable due to lack of redundancy - No public transportation outside of Polk County - Transit development plan for region - Wildlife corridors and crossings in region - Potential for rail corridors in region - Bus service along U.S. 27 corridor - Plan for sustainability of existing communities and new towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corridor planning (connectivity to external markets and within the region, multi-modal options, public transit connectivity) - Plan, protect, and provide access to public lands (e.g., recreation, community resources) - Coordinate land use and transportation with economic development as economic engine - Achieve higher density in urbanized areas to reduce 'rural sprawl' - Agriculture as "working" open space - Create "live-work" communities - Plan for best location of undesirable land uses - Plan for freight villages/inland ports/transit villages
Issues to be excluded	Not discussed, but issues will generally be regional in nature		
Further information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on juvenile detention and crime statistics - Access to healthcare data by geographic and socioeconomic vulnerable populations - Research incentives for healthcare professionals and opportunities to build health clusters in region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Future transportation options - Detailed land conservation inventory, including Century Commission's Critical Lands/Waters Identification Project - Hurricane evacuation routes - Assessment of regional long-range transportation plans - Regional trails networks - Updated travel characteristics data 	

Significant Long-Term Priority Issues: Community Resources

- **Healthcare**

- The region's health industry provides an opportunity for economic development as existing healthcare clusters could be expanded. However, recruiting and retaining health providers and related jobs often requires a vibrant community life which the region lacks, so the region has tended to struggle in attracting professionals—a cycle that can be addressed.
- Access to healthcare will remain an issue now and in the future and more information should be collected on geographic and socioeconomic barriers to access. Long-term this issue will become increasingly important and must be addressed.
- Promoting healthy communities requires examining and improving health and education opportunities throughout the cycle of life—from pre-natal care to early literacy to public school to higher education to jobs with health benefits to retirement and senior care.

- **Community and Cultural Amenities**

- There is a greater need for regional cooperation and information sharing about regional events, cultural and historic places, and visitor attractions. A regional body could market these amenities to the region and outside the region.
- Communities may plan for their future identities in order to preserve historic, rural settings and cultural gems while adapting to the needs of an expanding population by becoming denser and offering greater entertainment amenities.

Significant Long-Term Priority Issues: Transportation and Land Use

- **Transportation and Land Use**

Interregional connectivity. There is a need for corridor improvements to improve east-west connections to the coasts, as well as expand north-south connectivity, in order to support economic development goals, anchor future land development, and enhance emergency evacuation routes. Corridors should serve multi-modal needs such as highway, rail, and, where appropriate, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian, as well as serving as utilities and telecommunications connections. The region should have transportation access that enables it to better market its goods and services in surrounding regions and more ably competing as a business location.

Participants said that future corridor planning processes should:

- a. Integrate local input with the results of the Century Commission's CLIP work and other "greenprinting" initiatives to identify must save areas, including conservation lands as well as wildlife corridors.
- b. Coordinate with economic development partners and land use plans to identify areas that will be targeted as economic centers or new residential centers.
- c. Plan for connections from major corridors to regional and local roads that serve smaller communities.
- d. Assume new corridors are both multimodal and multi-use, including co-location with utility lines, telecommunications lines, and other linear infrastructure.

Integration of transportation, land use, and conservation planning. Planning for future transportation corridors must consider the land use and economic development impacts of regional corridors. The region can plan for increasing density of existing communities, creating new centers, and maintaining the rural character and quality of life of other parts of the region, while moving forward with key transportation improvements. Particular considerations include right-of-way preservation, appropriate locations for development, preserving critical land for conservation, and minimizing the environmental impacts of future development and infrastructure (habitat connectivity, water quality, etc.) A regional “greenprint” process will be useful to guide future conservation and development planning.

Multimodal issues - freight. Future transportation systems should be multimodal, including strategies such as improved rail routes and/or truck-only lanes. The region’s transportation system should provide connectivity to key freight destinations, including ports, airports, and intermodal facilities, both inside and outside the region (e.g., Miami). The region also should explore opportunities to develop freight and distribution centers that can serve both the Heartland and surrounding coastal region, and connect to other states through reliable rail and truck service.

Multimodal issues - passenger. Currently, there is limited public transit service and it is not planned from a regional perspective. Improved public transit service and expanded bus and/or rail connections are needed to connect major centers inside the region as well as externally. The region could develop a regional transit development plan that identifies short-term limited needs, as well as larger longer-term needs. Funding sources need to be identified as well as a mechanism for regional administration and coordination. The region’s 12 public airports and 63 private airfields are an important but underutilized resource, and the region should continue efforts to attract commercial air passenger service, expand air cargo operations, and position underutilized air fields for emerging opportunities related to very-light jets and other next-generation air travel. The region could expand opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian transportation in activity centers as well as on regional trails.

Economic development. A regional development strategy should seek to understand transportation requirements of growth industries (natural resources, logistics & distribution, health care, and emerging industries like clean energy and life sciences) as well as potential locations and then develop the infrastructure to support regional growth. Planning must also recognize that there is a role for ‘NIMBY’ industries not wanted or unable to find available land on the coast - e.g., distribution, power plants, or landfills. The region should neither rule out these industries nor respond to every potential opportunity in these industries; rather, the region should carefully consider potential opportunities by planning for and locating appropriate sites with access to needed labor and infrastructure, developing value-added elements of these industries, and planning buffers from residential and other incompatible development.

Land use planning: Regional efforts could emphasize “town planning” for both new and existing centers, including better coordination of transportation, land use, and economic development decisions.

- a. Market forces will determine the future of the agricultural industry, but the region must conserve these lands as working open spaces and carefully consider the loss of agricultural lands to development decisions that are not planned long-term.

- b. Planning should expand, and enhance access to, regional and local resources, including parks, recreational, cultural, and historic amenities.
- c. Sustainable urban centers can attract services employment if effort is made to achieve critical mass and supporting infrastructure is in place. The region can promote its communities as places where people can live, work, and shop in close proximity. Dense, vibrant communities, including transit village concepts, should be an explicit part of planning, economic development, and transportation strategies.

V. Next steps

Originally scheduled for a two-year implementation timeline, the Heartland 2060 visioning process will be extended to allow for further fundraising and expanded leadership and stakeholder development activities through 2008 and 2009. A final workplan and scope and schedule of activities will be developed and the RPC will continue soliciting financial contributions from regional and state sources.

- The next meeting of the Heartland 2060 Leadership Team is scheduled for October 15, 2008, at the Sebring Ag-Civic Center.
- Beginning in the late summer and fall of 2008 the project team will recruit membership for the Issue Area Task Forces. The Education, Workforce, and Economic Development Task Force is scheduled to meet September 24th and December 3rd, 2008. The first meeting of the Environment and Natural Resources Task Force is scheduled for November 19, 2008. All meetings are preliminarily scheduled at the Sebring Ag-Civic Center.