

Step 2: Develop a Shared Community Vision

Public participation is particularly critical when developing the vision that describes the future of your community. While visioning can sound like something “fluffy,” — or a step you can skip — it is an essential component of every municipal plan. The plans that take root and are valued are always built on a shared vision of the future. Communicating an image of the future that speaks to what the community values and wants to change entails listening closely to others and appreciating their hopes and needs. The processes of enlisting others to envision exciting possibilities allows you to identify the issues the community cares about most, and not only builds consensus for a shared vision of the future, but also helps you pin down implementation actions and community priorities.

“It’s about discovering what your community cares about — its shared values — and building a vision for the future based on those shared values. Activities in this phase focus on bringing a broad mix of people into the process to help identify these values. Telling personal stories about local experiences is a key engagement strategy in this phase, bringing people together and helping them to find common ground.”

Community Heart & Soul Field Guide, Orton Family Foundation

Identify What to Maintain, Evolve and Transform

As counterintuitive as it might seem, the best way to lead people into the future is to discuss places in town they know and like today. Often, when you get a group of people talking about the places that matter to them, differences are set aside in favor of shared goals. However, simply stating shared goals is not particularly helpful to a land use visioning process because they are not linked to the places a community cherishes as is, or would like to improve. Mapping places the community wants to (1) maintain, (2) evolve, and (3) transform is a great way to engage stakeholders in the process. This approach helps identify the degree of change a community would like to see and focuses attention on where and what needs more detailed discussion, planning, or targeted investment.



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