

Charting the Future of Our Community

Where We Want To Be

PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Charting the Future of Our Community is a strategic visioning process designed to help communities plan for and control their future. It uses the broad diversity of viewpoints in a community to discover a common vision for the future, and to develop a plan of action to achieve that community vision. The *Charting* program is facilitated at the local level by trained facilitators (typically Penn State Cooperative Extension staff) and involves 25 to 40 participants (reflecting the wide range of and often conflicting perspectives in the community) in a series of four three-hour meetings.

This workbook is one of a series used to facilitate the *Charting* process. The workbooks include:

Charting Workbook 1: Setting Our Course

Charting Workbook 2: Where We Are

Charting Workbook 3: Where We Want to Be

Charting Workbook 4: Making the Trip

For more information, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county, or visit the Penn State Cooperative Extension Charting Web site at <http://visioning.aers.psu.edu>

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The Charting program was adapted from "Mapping the Future of Your Community," which was developed by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.

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INTRODUCTION

After taking a realistic look at where your community is now, in *Charting Workbook 2*, it is time to think about where you want your community to be in the future.

Think about the *big picture*, about what would be ideal for your community in the long term. Be creative. Dream. At this stage, don't worry about whether any of your ideas are feasible or realistic, or how they might be achieved. That comes later, when we discuss "How do we get there?" in *Charting Workbook 4* and make plans for achieving the goals.

The steps for determining where you want your community to be include:

1. Think individually or in small groups about your goals for improving the quality of life, and what you would like to see included in the community vision.
2. Develop goals that you think would move the community closer to your vision.
3. Share your vision and goals with other *Charting* participants in small groups, then identify common goals.
4. Share goals with the entire *Charting* group and identify 5 to 10 priorities among them.
5. Work among two or three volunteers to create a rough draft of a vision, based on the notes from each small group and the prioritization of the entire group.
6. Review the draft community vision among the entire group and make revisions and improvements.

As you think about your own vision for the community's long-term future, you may want to consider the following questions:

- How would you want your grandchildren to describe the community?
- What cultural, natural, and other resources are unique to our community and deserve protection?
- What quality of life will our community have?
- What will our economy be like?
- What types of jobs will be available?
- How will the community's government function?
- How will government, business, and nonprofit sectors work together?
- What kind of leadership will the community have?
- How will decisions be made? Who will hold power to influence these decisions?
- How will controversies be handled? Will the voices of citizens with diverse views be considered?
- How will we teach and promote civic responsibility?
- How will the community's schools function? What knowledge and skills will graduates have? Will schools promote community involvement?
- How will youth be involved in the community? What activities will be available to them?
- How will the elderly be involved in the community? What activities will be available to them?
- What kinds of health care and human services will be available?
- What will be the appearance of the community's business district? Residential areas?
- How will natural resources be managed?
- What will be the prevalence of crime in the community? How safe will it be to walk alone at night?
- What will be the availability of child care?
- How will the community deal with ethnic diversity?
- What will be the condition of the community's roads? How much traffic will there be?
- Will citizens be actively involved in community projects?
- What will the community's principle values be?
- What kinds of civic organizations will the community have, and what will they do?
- What kinds of community festivals and other events will be held?
- What kind of housing will be available to citizens?

Creating a Strategic Vision

A vision provides a picture of your community in the future. It may use words, drawings, maps, or other items to describe this desired future. The entire community should share the vision, so that all feel that they “own” it and can focus their actions toward achieving it. With a clear vision for where the community is headed, citizens are able to create plans and focus their time and effort on achieving this vision.

A community vision is created using the information generated in the “Where We Want To Be” discussion. The vision then helps guide the planning that takes place in “Making the Trip” (in *Charting Workbook 4*). A small group of people usually takes the information from the earlier sessions to create a draft vision statement, and then shares it with the larger group of *Charting* participants for their feedback, reworking, and approval.

“Vision without action is merely a dream.
Action without vision merely passes time.
Vision with action can change the world.”
—Joel Barker

To create a community’s strategic vision, it is essential to:

- think positively about the long-term future and not be limited to the current economic, environmental, social, cultural, and political reality.
- aim high. Base the vision on high standards. Identify what you and other citizens truly want rather than what you’re willing to tolerate.

The vision should:

- use positive, present-tense language that is easily understood by all.
- provide a feeling of the community’s unique qualities.
- encourage commitment by the entire community.
- be inspiring, exciting, and motivating.
- have clear visual descriptions.
- clearly define the geographic area included.

And the High-Priority Goals Are...

Each small group will now share its goals with the entire *Charting* group. You will think about all the ideas, and identify the top 5 to 10 priorities for the next 5 to 15 years.

Charting Our Community's Future participants agree that the following 5 to 10 long-range goals are of a high priority for improving our community's quality of life:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

How Do You Know If You Have a “Real” Vision Statement?

Consider the following criteria when writing your vision statement:

1. Did you develop the statement by reflecting about your particular community, its potentials, its strengths, and what it can mean to the quality of life in the future?
2. Is the statement somehow distinctive from those of other communities or organizations?
3. Does the vision statement include various parts of our community—economic, social, educational, and others—and describe what will take place in the future and with whom?
4. Does the vision statement, though written in present tense, transport you into the future and describe a desired destination?
5. Is the vision statement specific enough to provide direction for making decisions, lead to particular strategies, and offer new opportunities to engage more people in the development process?
6. Does the vision statement avoid generalities that could make it ambiguous or meaningless?
7. Is the vision statement challenging and exciting? Does it stir your blood, engage your spirit, and motivate you to join with others to take action?
8. When you show it to people who live or work elsewhere, do they get excited and talk about wanting to learn more about the community?

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