

Kingsport

VI. Analysis of Past Visioning Efforts

Prepared by:



With:

Community Associates, Inc.

Karen Hundt, AICP

and

Kathleen L. B. Beine, MD

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CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Summary of Past Visioning Efforts	1
Vision 2017: A Call to Action	1
Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Attracting & Retaining Young Adults	2
All-America City	2
Model City Coalition: Downtown Kingsport Gateways / City Development Plan	3
Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Improving Our Community Through Citizen Participation in Determining Our Future	4
STAND Youth Conference	5
Focus on the Future: 2001-2005 – Priorities for Greater Kingsport	5
Mayor’s Green Summit	6
Vision 2025: Communities Connected	6
Kingsport Tomorrow Community Progress Report	7
Other Visioning Efforts	8
Conclusions	8

Summary of Past Visioning Efforts

Since 1990 there have been at least ten major visioning efforts in Kingsport to solicit the public's views on how to make Kingsport a better community. During this fifteen year period, the greatest amount of visioning activity occurred between 1998 and 2002. While there have been multiple sponsoring organizations involved, Kingsport Tomorrow, with support from the City of Kingsport, has often led the charge. The key visioning efforts since 1990 have included the following:

- Vision 2017: A Call to Action (Kingsport Tomorrow – 1990)
- Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Attracting & Retaining Young Adults (Kingsport Tomorrow – 1998)
- All-America City Award (Tri-Cities TN/VA Regional Partnership - 1999)
- Model City Coalition: Downtown Kingsport & Gateways Plan (Model City Coalition – 1999)
- Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Improving Our Community Through Citizen Participation in Determining Our Future (Kingsport Tomorrow – 1999)
- STAND Youth Conference (Kingsport Tomorrow – 2000)
- Focus on the Future: 2001-2005 - Priorities for Greater Kingsport (Kingsport Tomorrow – 2000)
- Mayor's Green Summit (City of Kingsport – 2001)
- Vision 2025: Communities Connected (Tri-Cities TN / VA Regional Partnership – 2001-2002)
- Kingsport Tomorrow Community Progress Report (2003)

Below is an overview of each visioning effort, starting with the earliest and ending with the most recent. It is noteworthy that the Visual Image Study (VIS) project, which was initiated in 2000. The VIS project was a major visioning effort entailing numerous surveys and focus group meetings whereby participants rated 222 photographic images representing a variety of community

planning issues. Because of the importance and magnitude of this project, it is addressed in a separate section in order to provide an appropriate level of detail.

Vision 2017: A Call to Action

- Time-Frame:* Initiated in 1990 / Revised in 1996 as “Kingsport Tomorrow: Revisit the Vision”
- Sponsor:* Kingsport Tomorrow
- Purpose:* To gather public input on priorities and approaches to enhancing all major aspects of life in Kingsport, and to share ideas and reach consensus on what Kingsport should be by 2017, the City's 100th birthday.
- Issues:* The final document is organized around the following five issues: people, places, play, jobs and government. Citizens generated 1,752 specific ideas from which 27 goals emerged.
- Approach:* Surveys, forums – including 22 town meetings, and the creation of task forces to create the document sections
- # Respondents:* 2,000+ citizens

This very detailed document is organized around a series of specific questions posed by Kingsport Tomorrow that are answered with bullet-pointed responses. Each of the five issue categories features five or six key ideas to be pursued, as summarized below:

- *People:* student centered schools; linking business and education; model community for senior citizens; public transportation system; responsiveness to family/social issues; “electronic village” for public involvement; drug-free community
- *Places:* environmental conservation and waste treatment system; model of environmental excellence; preserve and

develop downtown linking it to gateways; master plan for zoning and development; beautiful and barrier-free community

- *Play:* network of sidewalks, bikeways, greenbelts, parks and trails; planning, preservation, acquisition, and development of natural areas; multi-use recreation and sports centers; multi-use facility for entertainment, recreation, education and arts; full-service civic sports arena
- *Jobs:* expand regional economy; attract diverse high-quality jobs; project positive image and high quality of life; economic and cultural opportunities for young adults, regional convention center; world-class and affordable wellness and health care system; improved roads/highways access
- *Government:* high level of citizen involvement; responsive government; strong leadership and broad citizen participation in government; orderly, mutually acceptable and beneficial annexation process; potential consolidation of government services and school systems; effective services delivery; orderly annexation plan

Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Attracting & Retaining Young Adults

Time-Frame: 1998
Sponsor: Kingsport Tomorrow
Purpose: To address the need to attract and retain young adults in Kingsport as a component of the “Vision 2017” effort
Issues: Focused on attracting and retaining young adults in the community, but also linked to broader quality of life issues
Approach: Written survey
Respondents: 600 people

This one-and-a-half page survey solicits both information about the respondents and their opinions of Kingsport, including how it compares with other communities. Participants were asked to rank the following: level of importance of education, job offerings, entertainment, career advancement, cost of living, and cultural and recreational offerings.

The top ten ideas offered by respondents for attracting and retaining young adults. They are listed in descending order of response strength, with number 1 being the most frequently cited response:

1. More / better restaurants
2. More / better entertainment (concerts, nightclubs, comedy clubs, etc.)
3. More / better recreation, parks and bike trails
4. More / better shopping opportunities
5. Better paying jobs
6. More cultural events
7. More / better movie theaters
8. Museums
9. Performance center for concerts
10. Center for youth and teens (including recreational opportunities)

All-America City Award

Time-Frame: 1999
Sponsor: Tri-Cities TN/VA Regional Partnership
Purpose: To attain national recognition for regional cooperation and a uniquely high quality of life.
Issues: Theme of “Regional Strength – Community Pride,” included regional cooperation, cultural heritage, and involvement of youth.
Approach: Using the 1999 competition to win the All-America City award as an initial uniting cause, the Tri-Cities

have since used it as a springboard for on-going regional visioning and marketing.

Respondents: 43 municipalities, 13 counties, 2 states

After several years of individual communities unsuccessfully competing for this award, the region banded together for the competition with 43 municipalities, 13 counties, two states and 650,000 people. Three projects were featured: the Youth Empowerment Summit, the Preservation of Cultural Heritage through the National Storytelling Festival, and the Birthplace of Country Music. Afterwards, the group conducted a visioning process and identified eight focus areas:

- Promotion / Marketing
- Regional Planning
- Grassroots Involvement
- Environment
- Culture and Heritage
- Education
- Economic Development
- All-America City Organization / Administration

Model City Coalition: Downtown Kingsport Gateways / City Development Plan

Time-Frame: 1999

Sponsor: Model City Coalition

Purpose: To provide short-term activities and projects with a long-term plan for future plans to revitalize the downtown area and those gateways leading to the downtown, making it a viable place to work, live, shop and entertain.

Issues: The plan addresses a broad range of issues, including gateways, streetscapes, public spaces,

access, parking, existing buildings and new development.

Approach: The plan was prepared by a multi-disciplinary consulting team led by McCarty Holsaple McCarty, Ross Fowler, and Economic Research Associates. Its preparation involved several presentations and meetings to gather public input.

The plan includes three primary objectives, as follows:

- Connect Downtown Kingsport with the rest of Kingsport
- Provide an attractive place to be
- Create a 24-hour-a-day critical mass of people

In general, it is a well-balanced plan that combines strong urban design with solid economic grounding. This included an action-based strategic plan to guide Kingsport in taking steps to simultaneously improve the gateways and portals, enhance the current downtown streetscape, and generate new development activity. While the ambitious landscaping proposals may be costly to maintain, they appear to be consistent with the community's visioning process results. It is important to establish a plan for maintenance as part of landscaping design and upkeep. Among the plan's key recommendations are the following:

Gateways / Corridors

- General Recommendations – improve/control: signage, landscaping, lighting, outdoor storage, litter
- Wilcox Drive Gateway Corridor Recommendations – improve corridor streetscape
- Stone Drive Gateway Corridor Recommendations – improve streetscape, roadway improvements

The Public Realm

- Return Broad Street to Nolen Plan configuration
- Restore Cement Hill
- Establish the Nolen Square

- Develop Center and Main
- Develop Main Street Park
- Enlarge Glen Bruce Park
- Develop Justice Plaza

Private Development Components

This portion of the plan recommends a wide variety of development types, including corporate offices, a wellness center, townhouses, a performing arts center, an industrial heritage center, retail and entertainment uses, and a branch of Northeast State Technical Community College. It also includes an examination of economic feasibility for each development component.

Five short-term priority projects were recommended: downtown townhouses; 10,000 sq. ft. of new retail and entertainment; Broad Street streetscape improvements; Main Street Park and Gardens; and a comprehensive directional signage program. A strong emphasis was the need for implementation in order to succeed with redevelopment and revitalization of the “Heart of Kingsport.”

Kingsport Tomorrow Survey: Improving Our Community Through Citizen Participation in Determining Our Future

Time-Frame: June – August, 1999
Sponsor: Kingsport Tomorrow
Purpose: To gather ideas and concerns about community priorities for the next three to five years
Issues: Limited specifically to job opportunities, arts, recreation, education and general community quality of life
Approach: Entailed a telephone survey of citizens within the greater Kingsport community

Respondents: 433 people

This survey consisted of six questions. The survey results are summarized below in descending order, with the highest level of satisfaction being listed first (lowest number) and the lowest level of satisfaction being listed last (highest number):

1. Neighborhoods and development (highest satisfaction)
2. Education
3. Arts and recreation
4. Job opportunities (lowest satisfaction)

Evaluating the results based upon demographic categories revealed that the overall satisfaction level was higher for older survey respondents than for younger respondents. The open-ended questions resulted in a total of 1,134 specific ideas for improving Kingsport. The most frequently suggested physical planning improvements were the installation of more sidewalks, more landscaping, road maintenance, more parks, and the installation of sewers. A significant number of respondents also expressed concerns regarding the need for more businesses, industrial development and recruitment. Additionally, many expressed the desire for more cultural and recreational opportunities and facilities.

STAND Youth Conference

Time-Frame: May 2000
Sponsor: Kingsport Tomorrow
Purpose: To identify ways to enhance Kingsport for a higher quality of life for the city’s youth

Issues: A broad variety of issues related to quality of life for Kingsport’s youth, such as recreation, education, employment and activities

Approach: A single conference was held in which the participants were split up into three break-out groups to brainstorm ideas for enhancing the community

Respondents: 60 teens

Asked the question “What would make this a better community?,” a total of 41 ideas were generated, and the following top 12 answers were given in descending order of priorities (1 is highest, 12 is lowest):

1. Youth-operated teen center / coffee house
2. Improvements to downtown, parks and economic development
3. Self-defense classes for teens
4. Teen newspaper
5. Peer counseling (teen pregnancy, teen parents, substance abuse)
6. Events encouraging youth involvement
7. Academic funding
8. More recreational and cultural activities
9. Coordination among community events
10. Representation on the BMA and BOE
11. Moral / character education for young children
12. Violence summit

Focus on the Future: 2001-2005 - Priorities for Greater Kingsport

Time-Frame: June – December, 2000
Sponsor: Kingsport Tomorrow

Purpose: To identify community-wide priorities from among the “Vision 2017” goals

Issues: Broad community issues beyond physical planning issues

Approach: Focus group meetings, a printed and internet survey, and a public forum

Respondents: 452

The five projects and initiatives that resulted from this visioning project included the following:

- Diversify the economic base
- Ensure balanced growth / development with the preservation of natural resources and natural areas
- Raise the education level for youth and adults
- Vision for County and Region (“regionalism”), incorporating vision for Greater Kingsport
- Develop and maintain a high quality of life

It is noteworthy that the goals related to “quality of life” served as an umbrella for a variety of issues, including health, arts, recreation and human services. The survey results were quantified to determine the public’s priorities based upon their opinions on which goals were “high priority,” “medium priority,” and “low priority.” Among the many goals resulting from this visioning process, the top three priorities were: 1) Diversify the economic base, 2) Expand infrastructure for information technology, and 3) Raise the education level for youth and adults.

Mayor’s Green Summit

Time-Frame: November 2001
Sponsor: City of Kingsport

Purpose: To develop a comprehensive, coordinated beautification plan utilizing resources and partnerships.

Issues: To enhance the natural beauty of the Tri-Cities.

Approach: A two-day summit was held with a landscape architect as the facilitator, presentations, and break-out groups with brain-storming sessions.

Respondents: 80

Ideas and concepts were ranked. From this four top priorities emerged:

1. Creation of quality standards for new development and redevelopment
2. Preserve Bay Mountain viewshed and habitat
3. Reorganize / reevaluate City structure and develop a master plan to coordinate green programs
4. Completion / planning for a greenbelt and “spurs”

Vision 2025: Communities Connected

Time-Frame: Fall of 2001 – Fall of 2002

Sponsor: Tri-Cities TN / VA Regional Partnership

Purpose: To forge a unified vision for improving all key aspects of life in the Tri-Cities region.

Issues: The five key areas of focus included: people, places, play, jobs, and government.

Approach: The approach included the training of numerous volunteers to conduct 39 public meetings to gather input. An internet website served as another means of soliciting input. A series of “vision statements” were then prepared, and the public was allowed to vote on their priorities.

Respondents: 1,008 people in 53 communities in 17 counties and 2 states

During the first few months of 2002, over thirty community meetings were held throughout the region to enable citizens to share their ideas and help develop a regional vision. A total of 7,355 ideas were generated. The resulting “Vision 2025 Executive Summary” contains the five topics of People, Places, Play, Jobs and Government. Within each topic, the goals are listed in their order of priority as identified by the public:

People

1. Develop High Levels of Achievement and Motivation through Superior Educational Opportunities for All
2. Sustain a Strong Sense of Community and Service to Others
3. Empower Youth to be Healthy, Responsible, and Productive Members of our Community
4. Enjoy Optimal Health and Wellness through Affordable and Accessible Services
5. Foster Spirituality and Strong Faith
6. Provide Supportive Programs that Empower Individuals and Nurture Families to be Self-Sufficient
7. Recognize and Nurture Leadership throughout our Diverse Communities
8. Value Senior Adults and Support a High Quality of Life for them
9. Appreciate and Celebrate Human Diversity
10. Have Safe and Affordable Housing

Places

1. We Balance Economic and Environmental Concerns to Protect our Natural Resources
2. We Value and Preserve Our History and Heritage
3. We Control Growth and Development through Community Planning, Zoning and Redevelopment
4. Utilities and Infrastructure Serve the Needs of People and Business Throughout the Region
5. We Maintain and Revitalize our Downtown Areas
6. Public and Private Transportation Enables People to Travel Safely, Quickly, and Cost-Effectively without Damage to our Environment

Play

1. Trails and Parks that Link us with Natural and Historical Treasures
2. Family-oriented Recreation Events, Programs, Facilities and Activities
3. Varied Shopping, Dining and Entertainment Opportunities
4. Participation, Appreciation and Support for Arts
5. Celebration of a Rich and Diverse Cultural Heritage
6. Opportunities for Participation in Sports at All Levels (Youth, Adult, Collegiate and Professional)

Jobs

1. A Wide Variety of High-Quality Jobs matching all levels of skill, interest, age and income
2. A united effort to enhance Economic Development throughout our Region
3. Preparation for Work and Career through Quality Education and Training
4. State-of-the-Art Technologies Sustaining Economic Vitality
5. Secure and Stable Employment that Fosters and Rewards a Strong Work Ethic
6. A Regional Tourism Industry that Protects our Environment
7. Attractive Work Environments that are Family-Friendly

Government

1. Integrates both Local and Regional Planning for Proactive Growth and Development
2. Values Informed Citizens Participating in Community Decision-Making
3. Provides Adequate Funding for Community Services through a Fair and Equitable Process
4. Consolidates Entities and Services for Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness
5. Promotes Coordination, Collaboration and Sharing of Resources through Collaborative Partnerships

6. Ensures Personal and Public Safety
7. Preserves Individual Freedom and Responsibility by Restricting only when necessary

Kingsport Tomorrow Community Progress Report

Time-Frame: August 2003

Sponsor: Kingsport Tomorrow

Purpose: To highlight accomplishments over the past few years

Issues: Technology, transit, health care, recreation and open space, economic development, and quality of life

Approach: This report summarizes the positive results of various visioning processes.

This report reiterates the community's identified key goals of exceptional schools, superior quality of life, job growth, recreational and cultural programs, and regional cooperation. It also lists the top ten accomplishments that are checked off of the "to do list." Those achievements include the following:

1. Regional Center for Applied Technology (RCAT)
2. Kingsport Area Transit System (KATS)
3. Friends in Need Health Center
4. Greenbelt Park
5. MeadowView Conference Resort and Convention Center
6. Hunter Wright Stadium
7. Riverview Employment Office
8. Jalisa Ferguson Memorial Playground
9. Kingsport Community Foundation
10. Tri-Cities, TN / VA, 1999 All-American City

Other Visioning Efforts

In addition to the major visioning efforts summarized above, there have been other related activities conducted on a smaller scale. For example, the Kingsport Economic Development Partnership hosts an annual meeting in June that addresses some of the same issues that the key visioning efforts have addressed, particularly issues related to job creation, education and training, and quality of life.

The monumental Visual Image Survey (VIS), which was initiated in 2000 and is still being analyzed, is being addressed separately because of its importance to this project. Whether they are major visioning projects extending over a year, or individual one or two-day events, all of these efforts combine to add to the collective vision for the betterment of Kingsport.

Conclusions

Over the past fifteen years, Kingsport has engaged in an ongoing community visioning process that far exceeds that of most communities. Not only have numerous organizations and individuals been actively involved – including thousands of citizens, but a wide variety of visioning techniques have been employed. Regardless of the specific visioning efforts and sponsors, many of the same themes and objectives continue to consistently emerge, as follows:

- More sidewalks
- More landscaping and environmental protection
- More recreational opportunities
- More job opportunities
- More opportunities for youth
- More to attract and retain young adults
- More downtown revitalization
- Less signage and overhead wires
- Improved education and health care

- Enhanced overall quality of life

The next vital step of this extensive visioning and consensus building is to transform the collective community vision into public policies, public initiatives, and private sector support in order to achieve tangible results on all of these important fronts.