

1. Steering Committee Meeting Documentation

The results of the January 23, 2003 Steering Committee Meeting are documented verbatim. The Steering Committee reviewed the previous visioning effort Imagine Houston and its relevance today, brainstormed core values and identified critical questions that need to be addressed during the current visioning process. Three main areas were discussed: environment, economy, and community.

Environment

Imagine Houston Summary

Summary does not include major issues

- air quality, water quality, ariells (?), supply of clean water
- transportation alternatives that are less polluting, habitat, conservation education of all environmental issues

Urban Villages – people feel disconnected

- get a unit of neighborhood that people can relate to
- scale is important – too few people represent too many
- physical scale and social scale need to be included

Need Natural Environment Discussion

- Build constituency for its own sake
- Environment is more than a resource
- Missing migratory corridors, wetlands, natural habitats, good to preserve and to have independent use

- Need functional ecosystems/denser cities
- Need large natural, wild areas
- Need connection to major natural areas
- Need to recognize time scale
- Need longer term strategy to preserve proximate natural habitat 100 years from now
- Need to limit development (like Portland)
- Isn't this restricted to City of Houston – Doesn't include Katy Prairie, etc.
- Need to also think about regional environment
- Need to focus on human health & well-being – everything relates – available environment, places
- Green Markets – local producer markets (need these)

Are we safe with our food supply without these [refers to issues listed above].

Re-use of buildings, erosion, improve parks, improve sprawl, waste reduction reduce air pollution so we don't affect other areas

Are plants along the Ship Channel good for Houston – our health, etc. Is it good for the long-term? We need a study that looks at this. Air coming from this is scar/need to evaluate risk/benefit.

Haven't looked at neighborhoods in Houston

Urban Villages lingo doesn't talk about neighborhoods, we need to look at Houston's Villages & preserve them – We don't document that the World Economy benefits are different from Houston Economy – Want to know what taxes are for – i.e. Port of Houston – How is it helping us exactly. Need to see Environment/Economic relationship.

Visions?

- We support what's in here
- Neighborhood Protection/Revitalization is most important – look at fundamentals & Aesthetics

Question

- Neighborhood Revitalization?

Relevant?

- Need super-high density neighborhoods inside city – need to recognize this

Brainstorm Core Values

- Recognize that we are not a vacuum, that we are part of a larger region
- Great culture comes from great cities – need to will this into being
- Better urbanism should be embraced by development
- All key environmental variables should improve over time – need environmental barometer
- Must develop city to be sustainable *major value
- Leave no one behind – e.g. – high density should provide for lower income as well as higher income/environmental justice
- Value the right of future generations to have at least as good of environment
- Social Equity – minimized adverse human impact
- Value Aesthetic Goods – not just economics
- Become native to this place – develop in sync with our environment/realize what we have
- Value history, historical preservation
- Individual responsibility, stewardship, bring in past, present and future generations
- Re-examine the notion that growth is actually good, growth is not necessarily good
- Value right to live in the city w/o a car
- Value synergy – how one thing affects another
- Sustainability impacts education
- Value dialogue of long-range thinking
- Value bayou space

Brainstorm of Critical Questions

- How can values/opinions get into public policy?
- What is the appropriate form of government for 8M people?
- Can we stop freeway/car environment to change to transit?
- Can we get federal \$\$ for transit ins. of highway?
- Is current economic environment holding us back?
- Is petro chem. holding us back?
- Is oil-based eco a long-range eco base for Houston?
- Is petro-chem complex good for Houston – health/economic perspective? If not, how can we transition?
- How do we incorporate sustainability to our public policy, how do we account for externality?
- How do you get private sector to recognize public desires?
- How to obtain accountability from public officials?
- How do we make our waterway system into our transportation system?
- Are we willing to pay for our values?
- Does the broader community share our values?
- What are “our desires?”
- Is what we do consistent with our values?
- Who is Houston? Is it the cultural center of region? What is region without Houston?
- How do we get public officials to not “sell out” from changing opinions because of campaign contributions?
- How do we lock candidates into their campaign promises?
- How do we control our own destiny?

- How do we prevent this city from going into bankruptcy?
- How do we prevent city money from going to county?
- How do we stop expansion around city – stop the flow of people going outside city?
- How do we improve quality of inner-city school districts?
- How do we stop being naive of intentions of people outside of the city?
- How do we stop thinking in terms of us/them? How do we stop thinking in terms of city/state/region?
- How do we become a more unified society?
- How do we attract the creative class?
- How do we create a city so attractive people don't want to live elsewhere?
- How do we become more local? (Have access to local features)?
- How do we get Houston to comply with Clean Air Act?

Economy

Imagine Houston Summary

Does have relevance – need to add

- arts and entertainment are core
- address youth population, entrepreneurship, empowerment, future leaders – development kids and young adults, spend time to invest in youth mentorship

Need focus on sustainable industries, bring computers that can provide green opportunities

Respect and awareness of Houston's History

Focus on cleaning up city rather than image

Recognize relationships between environment, jobs, links among housing, economic development, land use, security – all within economy

Change: trying to create an environment with economic opportunity

Economic performance and bond ratings: ensure that city's financial management economy is not Houston's Bond Rtg. problem. How it is operated and managed is the problem. Create an environment/quality of life to improve bond rating – need quality of government and planning. "95%" of population don't make this connection – need education.

Missing: creativity – need to be known as a place of new ideas – physical, educational, social.

Growth of Hispanic population – immigrants largest ethnic group in future, need to provide education/training to improve as citizens with buying power.

Stumbling block – if we can make schools best in county people will flock to city.

Look at existing state of the youth and state of the schools. Look at reality vs. image. How are we marketing & promoting?

Work done to help implement imaging Houston vision statements?

- core industries that lag – biotechnology. However technology continues to develop in universities but we aren't translating to business sector.

Obstacle: Houston isn't collaborative/partnership city. Encourage partnerships among business entities, universities, community-based organizations.

Imagine Houston discusses large scale/global development – refocus on community economic development (CED). Look at numbers in social compact – examples of trade outside of typical marketplace.

Brainstorm Core Values

More sensitivity to hardcore unemployed

Currently a high value on independence (+ or - ?) hinders us from getting things accomplished but we are proud of some of our individual/independent efforts. Independence taken to an extreme has a downside (any value will have a downside).

Houston does embrace creativity.
Value and esteem diversity

Educated citizens

Safe and secure neighborhoods

Community cohesion – connectedness, inner loop vs. outer loop, rich vs. poor, sprawl hinders unity.

Reclaim AAA Bond rating.

Interdependence and individual rights to co-exist, find a balance, remember that we're not isolated from each other.

Brainstorm of Critical Questions

- Can you have competitive petro-chem industry and clean environment?
- What does city have to attract high-tech professions?
- How do we change viewpoints to be homegrown?
- How do we make macro-econ trickle down to neighborhood level? True trickle down effect?
- How does Houston grow as a region and emphasize cooperation not competition?
- In interest of economics are we willing to police ourselves? Are we willing to force political will to be regulated in certain areas for positive economic change? (look at MA & CA).
- Does low cost of living (marketed as major Houston advantage) offer a decent standard of living for all? Does low cost lower our standards of living?
- How do we maintain current character or image with lofty goals? How do we maintain characteristics unique to Houston?
- How do we balance impact of macro-econ swings on economy?
- How ensure health community? Environment, health, prosperity.
- Will Houston have zoning?
- How expand can industries luxand?? energy? Need new industries.
- Import/export? With largest port why can't we bring distributors to Houston? (Take away from CA – we are more centrally located.)
- How do we take advantage of diverse population to being in international trade?
- Can we be an international trade city without expanding our ports?
- Will we conquer our mobility issues? Creativity? Innovatively? Consider sustainability and smart growth? How will we invest in transportation? – Will we have money left to invest in schools/people?
- How do we continue economic growth/expansion without destroying our history and cultural fabric of our community?
- What policies need to be in place to foster leadership/stewardship?
- How do we look at both dominant model and homegrown model? How do we balance/implement the two?
- How do we shift paradigm to where there is a balance between community minded economic model and corporate/global model?

Community

Imagine Houston - Are these issues still valid?

- Absolutely – needs in education still exist, teachers, counselors, for Houston still valid.
- Educ Excellence – has to be still valid, can't led education decline.
- Yes, excellent schools.
- Separate category early education – pre-school.
- Education important for educated workforce.
- Need to address immigrant issue – they are part of our community.
- Start early with education. Address kids at early age physically and mentally.
- Even before Head Start. Parents key component.
- After-school programs important too.
- Parents & classes important too.
- We need commitment to make it happen.
- Need to educate existing parents. Responsibility of local media/radio. Tell them to go back to school.
- Education – a lifelong process.
- Without good education – people don't want to live here.
- Example of someone from El Salvador found English classes too expensive. Would like to see intensive English classes like swim classes at Y.
- Would like private school quality in public schools every child deserves quality.
- In some communities, education is not enough if not healthy. Component of education is health. Pre-natal care.
- HISD is recognized as premiere urban school system – evolved over time.
- Children should be on top of agenda. Children are at risk. We are not taking care of our children. We have failed our children. Face reality. We must change within ourselves.
- Charter schools should work with HISD. Teyano Center, English classes, GED, etc.
- Children don't vote so can't press for public money.
- Education needs to be broad, not just reading and writing and arithmetic. Teach human behavior to improve quality of life.
- Broaden education to teach human behavior. Parents job but they haven't had training. Teach kids – sibling rivalry, family relationships.
- Expand definition of education.
- City lacks basic city services.
- Want to have education.
- Prejudice and discrimination, still exists but getting better.
- Stumble because lack of community advocacy skills. City fails as civic citizens working together.
- Education needs to be as showy as arts and teens.
- Education excellence.
- Not there yet.
- Come a long way.
- Agree need to keep working towards goal.

What is major stumbling block?

- Parents ultimately responsible. We can help but parent is ultimately responsible. Salaries for teachers need to be competitive.
- We work as silos, HISD, college charter. We do not work together to leverage resources.
- Media and commitment – we support teams but we as a community don't really care. Isolated [] – neighborhood. Don't get it.
- Marketing would help with negative image of being smart. Need to pump up academic excellence. Focus on educational accomplishments and kids on TV and in media.

Are we healthy?

- Not enough.
- More paid police officers.
- How to get rid of undesirable aspects – teach citizens. Find way to teach civic clubs – how to deal with and get rid of bad influences in community. Crack h = people in danger. Undesirable properties lead to undesirable activities. Teach community how to help police get rid of. We have some fear in ourselves – don't want police to come to our house.
- Need for greater voter participation.
- Doesn't agree with first two paragraphs.
- How do we deal with truants. Preventative measures good.

Healthcare

- Healthcare – this statement needs to go further. Access to primary care.
- No transportation in some areas to healthcare. Need for regular van service to elderly and children. Have wealth of medical services.
- Transportation – look at as important part of. We are so spread out.
- We can do better. Use our great medical center to serve all of Houston. Feds think we all have access but we don't.
- New item: terrorism. Is Houston ready for crisis – smallpox?

Brainstorm Core Values

- Embracing diversity (not capitalizing on diversity).
- Cooperation and collaboration.
- Quality of life – clean air, green space.
- Is Houston willing to do what it takes to get to our vision?
- Commitment – willingness to pay.
- Accountability
- Family – need to take care of families and take care of many issues.
- Family needs to be strong so city strong so state can be strong. Teach family how to interact within.
- A lot of good things in Houston. Pride we should concentrate on good.
- Many in Houston are single – so lack community. We need to value individuals who do not have families.
- Define family and community – one in same.
- Need increased opportunities for social interaction. City needs to be filled with trees and shade and benches. They are lacking at the moment.
- Individuals are generous but public not generous.

Brainstorm of Critical Questions

- Are we committed?
- Are we willing to pay for these goals?
- Do we have discipline?
- Are those of us who can, willing to pay for those who can't? Need to tap money and resources.
- What's our reward for doing this? Need an answer.
- How to make an investment where get something out of investment for city.
- Need a dialogue about how to make life flow smoothly. Fast buck city.
- Challenge – Mutual respect.

What other issues

- Mass transit.
- Flooding.
- Affordable housing.
- Air quality.
- Access to info.

- Cultural resources.
- Affordable childcare.
- Attractive streetscape.
- Cultural exchange and understanding.
- Groom people to be good public servants.
- Vision should be from people. Leaders need to recognize elected to implement community's vision.
- Exercise right to vote.
- How to re-engage youth in public service/public policy.
- After-school care.
- Senior centers.
- Parklands/recreational programs.
- Delivery of basic services.
- Need to leap ahead of daily. Get people to buy into image.
- Stumbling block – immigration. Costs money to educate. Need to bring under control. Pick – close border and price will double for goods/services. Need to make an educated choice. Find the balance.
- We're in trouble – we are a target for terrorism. Need to look at terrorism as a reality. Spend time learning about why terrorists hate us. Media – one point of view. Need to educate ourselves about the world.

Combined list of all Critical Questions

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