

Focus on Your Future

**A Strategic Approach to
Community Improvement**

Stakeholders Planning Manual

Oklahoma Community Institute
Oklahoma City, OK
Phone: (405) 208-8882
Fax: (405) 208-8885
okcom@ocionline.org
www.ocionline.org

Copyright © 1997 by Mark Taylor
(MTA)

All rights reserved with the following exception:

Any and all distribution/reproduction rights
of this document in Oklahoma are subject to approval by:
The Oklahoma Community Institute
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction		4
Overview of the Process		5
1. Creating a Shared Vision		7
What are the characteristics of a Vision statement?	7	
What are Core Values?	7	
Worksheet #1 — Creating Your Shared Vision	8	
Worksheet #2 — Drafting Your Community Vision	9	
2. Analyzing the Situation		10
What are the characteristics of an effective Community Assessment?	10	
What are the components of a Community Assessment?	10	
Worksheet #3 — Identifying Gaps/Creative Areas of Tension	11	
3. Creating Goals		12
What are the characteristics of Goals?	12	
Examples of Goals	12	
Worksheet #4 — Drafting Goal Statements	14	
4. Specifying Objectives		15
What are the characteristics of Objectives?	15	
Examples of Objectives	15	
Worksheet #5 — Finding Key Areas of Work	16	
Worksheet #6 — Developing Objectives	17	
5. Defining Action Steps		18
What are some characteristics of Action Steps?	18	
Worksheet #7 — Preliminary Action Planning	19	
Worksheet #8 — Action Planning (part 2)	20	
Appendix	Community Plan Example	21
	• Duncan (Vision)	21
	• Sample Goals & Objectives	22

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries, whole civilizations have simply disappeared from the face of the earth. Why has this happened? Why have entire cultures collapsed? They have done so by failing to respond to the changes in and around them.

“Change is inevitable but desirable change is not a given.”ⁱ

Today, changes are occurring around and within cities, often with unfortunate results. Too often people in a community simply accept these changes, instead of doing something about them. As a result, job opportunities decline, population gets smaller, and families break up as members search for work. And with a decline in the economy comes a drop in the overall quality of life. For as tax revenues decline, social services are cut, the infrastructure deteriorates (everything from streets to library buildings), personal incomes go down, support for education declines, and buildings become vacant.

“Today, community members are more likely to resemble home buyers than home builders. Through taxes, citizens buy services and solutions to problems. They may critique the process and outcome, but few play an active role or take any pride of ownership.”ⁱⁱ

In some cities, however, communities have chosen to create their own future—to design their own destiny. They have chosen not simply to accept change, but to create a vision of what they want their community to be, and then to work toward changing that vision into reality. They clarify values to anchor them to a vision for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren. They create specific goals and objectives, and they develop benchmarks to measure their progress. As a result, everyone in the community can learn how to apply individual strengths in helping to turn vision into reality.

You are about to participate in a process that will show you how these innovative cities have achieved success. When you finish the process, you will be able to help your community and your local economy to apply assets to achieve realistic goals for the future.

It takes work—but it sure beats the alternative.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

What is strategic community planning?

This strategic community planning process is designed to systematically move communities toward their preferred future. In this process, each new activity builds upon all previous ones.

1. **Creating a Shared Vision.** The first step is to create a shared Vision—a clear, vivid description of what you want your community to be without its current barriers, unconfined by the past, and tied to what you hold dear. The Vision is tied to the community's core values.
2. **Analyzing the Current Situation (Community Assessment).** Next you will analyze the current reality. Stakeholders will look at data that describes the educational system's performance, salaries, taxes, and social services and systems. You will look at your assets, strengths, opportunities, problems, threats, and the social networks that exist in your community. This will provide a clear picture of the differences between the Vision and the current reality.
3. **Creating Goals.** Next step is to create the Goals—broad general statements of intent that begin to define the community's direction. They will start the process of resolving the tension that exists between the current reality (Community Assessment) and what you want to become (Vision).
4. **Specifying Objectives.** The Goals will be clarified by specifying the Objectives—more specific ideas about what needs to be done and when it needs to be done.
5. **Developing Action Plans.** Individual action steps that will be used to implement the Objectives will be defined. The best people to head up these Action Steps will be identified, resources will be listed and dates for completion will be set.

After defining Action Steps, a timeline will be prepared to determine when objectives will be completed. This will measure movement toward the goals and the realization of the Vision. This timeline will be made up of all the Action Plans, including the people responsible for each of the actions, the resources required, and the planned completion date of each action.

To accomplish each of these steps in the planning process, you will be working individually and in small groups, utilizing worksheets provided in this manual.

What is the reason for Strategic Community Planning?

Now more than ever, communities are forced to find new and creative ways to meet the challenges before them. Citizens are deciding that they want to be more involved in designing the direction in which their community will move. In many communities, citizens are joining together and creating a shared **VISION** of what they want their community to be.

Visions provide hope. Visions provide direction. An effective, inclusive collaborative visioning and planning effort can help to transform skeptics into citizens who believe their efforts will

make a difference. Citizens who believe their efforts can make a difference **WILL** create results that **DO** make a difference.

Community planning is an inclusive process that brings together people from all walks of life—representatives from each geographical section of the community, and individuals representing many diverse ideas about the community. Together, they share their vision about how their community can be improved to build a legacy for their children.

“As citizens and leaders, we must recognize that while our organizations, schools, churches and hospitals are separate institutions pursuing separate agendas, they are interrelated parts of a single community united in the visions of providing for the well-being of all its citizens. Building healthier communities means building stronger, more positive relationships among all constituents that cross racial, geographic, interest group and ideological lines.”ⁱⁱⁱ

We’re not just about creating a **plan**. We’re about creating an opportunity for positive **change**.

1. CREATING A SHARED VISION

A Vision is a clear and vivid image of what you want your community to look like. A Vision statement puts the community's shared Vision into words. A quality Vision statement is clear, desirable, and inspirational to the majority of the community's citizens. Good Vision statements arrange words so they create mental images that you can almost see, touch and smell. The clearer the image, the more compelling it is to those who read and hear it.

What are the characteristics of a Vision statement?

The Vision statement should:

- describe the future in terms of the quality of life indicators that you feel are most important,
- reflect the most successful communities or local economies that are similar to yours,
- be bold, audacious and yet realistic,
- not be based on the current reality and its limitations and barriers,
- be written in the present tense, as though it has already been achieved, and
- create a mental picture that will inspire people from across the spectrum of diversity.

What are Core Values?

Core Values are the basic moral and ethical beliefs of a person or social group. Because individuals have emotional attachments to them, Core Values influence their actions. They are the guiding principles for the community planning process. They:

- represent beliefs of the planning community,
- foster trust and teamwork, and
- can be visibly demonstrated.

How are a community's Core Values identified?

Core values are reflected in your shared community Vision. They are based on beliefs that will endure over time. They can be tested against the code of conduct needed in the community to reach the vision. Core values will make you feel proud when you read or state them.

Directions for Worksheet #1 – Creating Your Shared Vision

Picture the community you would like yours to become in the 10 – 15 years. What do you want to be, to be known as? Review the following examples and then in the space below, write down five – seven descriptive statements of the community you see.

Worksheet #1 – Creating Your Shared Vision

Examples:

- *A school system that is envied throughout the state*
- *Lowest crime rate in the state*
- *Leadership that is informed and committed to citizen concerns*
- *Known for supporting the entrepreneurial spirit*
- *Job opportunities with above average salaries*
- *Beautifully landscaped parks and walking trails*
- *Strong, healthy families*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Share your list with others at your table. As a group select the five (5) key phrases that you all agree are the most important descriptions of the community you want to be in 15 years. Write these five descriptive phrases on five individual 6x8 post-it notes.

Select a spokesperson to share your work with the rest of the group. When called on, post the notes and report to the group.

Directions for Worksheet #2 - Drafting Your Community Vision

With the ideas that have been assigned to your table, draft a detailed narrative of the vision they represent in the following space. It should be written in the present tense, as though it has already been achieved. It should create a mental picture that will inspire others.

Worksheet #2– Drafting Your Community Vision

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Share your ideas with others at the table. As a group, write a draft vision component (3 – 4 lines) that you agree is the most inclusive and representative of all of your ideas. Write it on a poster sheet and be prepared to share it with the rest of the group.

Testing the vision:

When all the vision statements are complete, use the following questions to determine if you are committed to what has been written.

1. How do you feel when you read it?
2. Do you feel as if you can “own” it?
3. If not, how would it have to change for you to feel a sense of ownership?
4. Do you think it is a meaningful vision?
5. If not, how would it have to change to be meaningful to you?

2. ANALYZING THE SITUATION

A Community Assessment is essential to the community planning process. It provides an objective look at your planning community. It provides a snapshot of the community performance and resources on a broad range of issues. A clear vision and a clear picture of the community's current reality create what is called a creative tension. This is key in producing the energy and sustained enthusiasm for the pursuit of the vision.

What are the characteristics of an effective Community Assessment?

A Community Assessment. . .

- provides an accurate picture of where the community stands today by looking internally and externally,
- provides information on the gap between current reality and the vision created,
- gives a baseline for measuring improvement,
- provides data required to prioritize the issues,
- provides the basis for current and future research,
- identifies additional information needs,
- uses a variety of sources, and
- identifies the planning community's strengths, opportunities, problems and threats.

What are the components of a Community Assessment?

- **Community Profile** - A look at the condition of our schools, businesses and jobs as well as data on the health of the community
- **Localized Research** - Investigation into activities that are specific to our community and the unique data that is requested for the planning effort
- **TOPS** – Analysis of threats, opportunities, problems, strengths
- **Resource Mapping** - Identification of the assets (individuals, community, organizations, institutions and physical) that exist in the community
- **Civic Index** – Assessment of civic infrastructure, such as, volunteerism, citizen engagement, community leadership and community pride

In Worksheet #3, you will identify gaps/areas of creative tension between the Vision and the current reality in your community as defined in the Community Assessment.

Directions for Worksheet #3 — Identifying Areas of Tension between Vision and Current Reality

Review the Vision statement, and compare it with the research information. Identify and define areas where there is a clear gap or area of creative tension between the Vision and the current reality. Look for negative trends that need to be changed. Write your priorities on Worksheet #3.

After you have filled out Worksheet #3 individually, work with your group to determine what you agree are the 4 most critical areas that need to be addressed by the community. Write each item on a separate 6x8 post-it note.

Worksheet #3 — Identifying Areas of Gaps/Tension between Vision Statement and Community Assessment

Make copies of this worksheet as needed.

Vision Statement	Gap(s)/Area of creative tension
<p><i>Example:</i> Our community is a leader in the state for its high level of youth volunteerism with many of our most successful programs being created by and for our youth. Parental support and involvement is high.</p>	<p>A. <u>Research shows we rank in the top 10% in child abuse per capita.</u></p> <p>B. <u>We are in the top 9 counties in divorce rates.</u></p> <p>C. <u>We have the third largest number of single-parent families in the region.</u></p>
<p># _____</p>	<p>A. _____ _____</p> <p>B. _____ _____</p> <p>C. _____ _____</p>

3. CREATING GOALS

Goals are general statements of direction toward the Vision. They are the first step in closing the gap between the community's current reality and the Vision Statement. They are the priority areas that the group feels are most critical to address at this time. They reflect efforts to bend negative trends that appear in the Community Assessment. Goals are the first steps, the foundation, the starting points on the journey toward the Vision.

In formulating goals, three to five critical areas will be identified where efforts and resources should be focused in order to achieve the vision. Later, these goals will be clarified as Objectives and Action Plans are developed. With this step the stakeholders begin a trail of logic that explains how actions are leading the community closer to its Vision. This is the first step in writing a successful plan that will lead to sustainable change for the community.

What are the Characteristics of Goals?

- Clearly state the major areas of focus in efforts toward the Vision, such as:
 - *the economy*
 - *education*
 - *physical infrastructure*
 - *social services*
 - *business climate*
 - *community appearance*
- Identify what is needed to close the gaps – change the trends
- Realistic in relationship to Vision
- Consistent with the Core Values
- Supported by Community Assessment
- Contribute to reaching the Vision
- Define an 'end state,' such as:
 - *to be a great place to start a business*
 - *to be unsurpassed quality in our services*
 - *to be recognized nationally for our support of businesses*

Goals should **not**:

- be time-bound,
- direct resources, or
- describe specifics that will be accomplished, such as:
 - *Add 3 new businesses in FY 09*
 - *Improve 2 community services.*

What Are Some Examples of Goals?

- To be a magnet to high-tech employers
- To be a great place to live

- To be a national leader in entrepreneur start ups based on population
- To have a nationally recognized educational system
- To be environmentally responsible
- To have a pro-business climate
- To benefit fully from our diversity
- To have a sound infrastructure
- To be recognized for our volunteerism
- To be debt free
- To have a diversified and complimentary industry base
- To be know as a community that cares
- To have the lowest unemployment in the state
- To have a Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) in the upper 25% of the nation

In Worksheet #4, you will draft a goal that will help address the existing reality in order to reach your Vision.

Directions for Worksheet #4 — Drafting Goal Statements

Review the information in the previous pages about Goals, including the examples. Review the area of tension that has been assigned to your table and ask yourself what needs to be done to address this issue. As a group, draft a goal that states the direction you believe the community needs to pursue. (*Note: Starting your draft goal with: “To be...” or “To have...” might make this easier.*) When complete, put it on a 6x8 post-it.

Worksheet #4 — Drafting Goal Statements

Workspace:

4. SPECIFYING OBJECTIVES

Objectives are statements describing *what* must be done and *when* it will be done as you work toward accomplishing your goals. Objectives are measurable and time-bound.

What are the characteristics of Objectives?

Objectives should:

- be demanding,
- be measurable,
- be consistent with the Vision,
- be incremental steps towards the accomplishment of a Goal,
- be capable of being broken down into interim check points or milestones,
- be built on existing strengths,
- manage or minimize weaknesses, and
- take advantage of assets.

Objectives should **not**:

- deploy resources or describe how the Objective will be accomplished (e.g., build a youth center, expand the wastewater treatment facility, build a special facility for industry).

What are Some Examples of Objectives?

- Company relocation inquiries up 30% in 2 years
- Drop unemployment to 4% by Jan. 2009
- Reduce school drop out rate to 5% by 2010
- Expand the number of jobs in existing business by 10% by 2009
- Have the infrastructure to handle our planned economic growth by 2010
- Have 20% of our citizens volunteer for a project by 06/08
- Have the state's lowest crime rate within two years
- Have a base of 100 people trained in leadership skills by July of 2010
- Have three additional cultural programs for youth in place by 2008
- Have a plan for our future that evolves with our needs that is evaluated and updated annually.
- Be recognized as having the state's top workforce development programs by 2010

To generate appropriate objectives, you will be assisted by two new Worksheets. In Worksheet #5, you will define key areas of work needed to accomplish a goal. In Worksheet #6, you will draft some objectives for achieving a particular goal.

Directions for Worksheet #5 — Finding Key Areas of Work

Look over the Goal that has been assigned to your table. What are the most significant areas of work that will need to be addressed to accomplish this goal? Refer to the Community Assessment to help with this process. Record your ideas on Worksheet #5.

Next, share your top two ideas with the group at your table. After discussion, write down the Key Areas that your group agrees are important and record on 6x8 post-it notes.

Worksheet #5 — Finding Key Areas of Work

Example:

Goal	# ____	<u>Create a pro-business climate</u>
------	--------	--------------------------------------

Key Areas of Work

- A. community relations
- B. trained workforce
- C. good infrastructure
- D. business support systems

Goal	# ____	
------	--------	--

Key Areas of Work

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

Directions for Worksheet #6 — Developing Objectives

With the Key Areas of Work assigned to your table, write some possible objectives on Worksheet #6. Remember: They should be measurable, observable, and time-bound. Share your best idea with the group at your table. After a discussion, write down the draft objectives that your group agrees to on a 6x8 post-it note. (Be sure to write down the appropriate Goal name and Objective number on each post-it.)

Worksheet #6 — Developing Objectives

Example:

Goal	# ____	<u>Create a pro-business climate</u>
------	--------	--------------------------------------

Key Areas of Work

- A. community relations
- B. trained workforce
- C. good infrastructure
- D. business support systems

Draft Objectives

- 1. Create 5 new programs to support business by 6/2010
- 2. Gain statewide recognition for our workforce development program by 9/2009.

Goal	# ____	
------	--------	--

Key Areas of Work

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

Draft Objectives

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

5. DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS

Nothing loses steam faster than a process with a lot of talk and no action. Action plans are the vehicle for assigning accountability and responsibility for making things happen. They are specific as to who is going to do what by when. Action Steps are individual tasks that we undertake to reach our Objectives. A complete Action Plan defines the task, who will be responsible, and when it will be accomplished. This is the key step to making this community plan a plan of action!

Action Plans:

- provide clarity to our process,
- sequence our work towards our desired future,
- allow stakeholders to see where they can assist,
- provide a monitoring trail, and
- provide an opportunity for recognition.

What Are Some Characteristics of Action Steps?

Action Steps characteristically. . .

- define a specific task or block of tasks,
- are tied to a completion date,
- define who is responsible (community members and stakeholders will be assigned or will volunteer to assist in these tasks),
- are sequenced,
- are complimentary with actions from other Objectives,
- define our deployment of resources, and
- require resources to be carried out.

Directions for Worksheet #8 — Action Planning – Part 2

With the preliminary work done in the last session, complete the following worksheet responding to these questions:

1. What are our actions/programs/strategies?
2. What resources do we have / do we need?
3. Break this down to specific tasks needed, with an assigned responsibility for each task and a timeframe for completion

Worksheet #8 – Action Planning – Part 2

Goal: _____

Objective: _____

Action/Program/ Strategy	Resources H=have N=need	Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Target date of completion

Duncan “3D”
Dream Duncan’s Destiny

City Government

Welcome to Duncan – a well-planned community with ample, beautiful, clean parks, quality streets and water, and an infrastructure that supports future housing development. Our city officials are known for being accessible and approachable to all citizens. Our city government is pro-growth and embraces changes that will improve life in Duncan.

Education

Duncan’s school system boasts state-of-the-art technology in its classrooms, which produces students who are prepared for college curriculum and have test scores in the top five percent in the nation. Our new school facilities attract families and businesses and create an environment of top learning potential. Duncan Public Schools are committed to developing well-rounded students in academics, athletics, and culture.

Drug-free Community

We live in a safe, drug-free community with the lowest crime rate in the state. Our youth are happy, bright, creative, and motivated, and our workers are focused and productive. Duncan residents are known for working diligently with the police and fire professionals to improve public safety. Our families feel safe and secure, and our community has a strong sense of character, trust, and inclusiveness.

Health

Duncan is an educated population that has access to prevention, maintenance, and treatment programs available to all citizens. These programs rival those considered the best in the nation.

Facilities & Activities for Everyone

We are a community with activities that are inclusive of all citizens. Our facilities, activities, and programs are recognized in national publications and mirrored by other communities while remaining affordable, accessible, and supported by public transportation. Our well-maintained neighborhood parks offer many activities as well. Information on community activities is provided each month in utility bills.

Social Values

Duncan continues to maintain the lowest divorce rate in the state. We have mentoring programs that promote intergenerational relationships and interaction. Those who are in need can get help: physical, emotional, spiritual. Duncan is also recognized for having the lowest teen pregnancy rate in the nation.

Tourism (Destination Duncan)

People from across the nation know Duncan to be an entertaining city with a unique western atmosphere. We offer 4-star hotels, destination restaurants featured in national publications, museums, and events that bringing tourist from around the world!

Economic Development

Duncan has a diverse economy. New industry has led to retail growth and population increase. The increased tax base has funded top-quality schools and a city whose streets are the best in the state. Our community’s emphasis on local business and industry has created a vibrant community where locals have little excuse to leave; offering a small-town life with a big town feel. Duncan has become the choice city in Oklahoma.

Sample Goals and Objectives

Economic Development Goal – To create a positive climate for commercial development. (Newcastle)

Objective #1 - Increase sales tax 50% within 5 years.

Objective #2 – Increase trained workforce by 10% annually.

Education Goal – To have a national recognized education system. (Noble)

Objective #1 – Increase Parent/Teacher Conference rate by 10% annually.

Objective #2 – Reduce college remediation by 5% annually.

Objective #3 – Increase API by 7% annually.

Infrastructure Goal – To have an infrastructure to support and adapt to current and future growth. (Newcastle)

Objective #1 – To have a sewer system in place by 2012 to handle existing and future development.

Objective #2 – To have a primary water system in place by 2010 to handle existing and future development.

Objective #3 – All new and existing public roads paved by 2015.

Health Goal – To be a well-informed and healthy community for all ages. (Duncan)

Objective #1 – Begin city-wide walking, jogging, biking trail by 2008 and complete the first four phases by 2020.

Objective #2 – Reduce obesity of youth by two percent annually for five years.

Objective #3 – Reduce adult obesity by two percent annually for five years.

Objective #4 – Expand access to healthcare by ten percent annually for next five years.

Housing Goal – To have housing available in diverse neighborhoods. (Shattuck)

Objective #1 – To renovate existing properties by October 2002.

Objective #2 – To have new constructions in place by end of 2002.

Objective #3 – Clarify, refine and enforce zoning requirements by end of 2002.

Objective #4 – Build 5 homes a year in established neighborhoods from 2002.

ⁱ Source: Trendbenders published by Health Research & Educational Trust

ⁱⁱ Source: Trendbenders

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: Facilitating Community Change published by Community Initiatives