

**Houston General Plan
Steering Committee Meeting 8.28.14**

Comments on draft vision

What form should the vision take?

- Use present tense
- Like the present tense, thinks we can keep the 2040 reference;
- Remove date and “will feature” from intro → “Houston will continue to be”
 - Suggests we have not yet achieved these things
 - “Is” and “will improve” should be used to highlight the good things we are already doing and emphasize continued growth
- Human element is lost in the vision
- Using “we” implies a personalization to the plan; the residents of Houston
- Likes the “we” – “we live in a place...”
- The “Citizen” is not in there, it’s all about the place. The citizen should be able to read it and see themselves.
- Be concise. This needs additional descriptors and to be condensed.
- Concise vision statements are attractive/effective
 - Haven’t had a plan, so we need more elaborate, but could condense
- Vision statements should be more concise. Condense it a bit.
- Shorter, more accessible statements. Everyone must be able to read this plan.
- Should be shorter and more accessible to public
- Shorten it.
- Vision statements should be more concise. Condense it a bit.
- Should be shorter and more Houstonian.
- We need simpler lines that distill a vision of broader scope
- Mention strengths and opportunities to evolve
- Two questions to ask: 1. Where are we going? 2. How do we do that?
- “We want to say where we’re going, then explain how we’ll get there. (vacation analogy)
- People should be able to understand what a statement means.
- More thematic bullet points
- Make elements more thematic
- Provide tools to allow effective implementation
- Needs to connect all elements together

Ideas and themes that should be included

- Houston Advanced Research Plan 1998 – “A Vision for the Houston Region”
- Bay Estuary Plan
- Port and Gulf inclusion?
- Missing “walkable”

- Regional leadership could be addressed
- Technology/civic engagement aspects missing
- Have we overlooked a need to focus on technology?
- Economic disparities/level of poverty is especially high/troubling in Houston
- Addressing poverty
- Concept of equity is missing – People ought to have a shot to make it. First point could help address it.
- How do we fit in minimizing poverty?
- Poverty and its strain on the entire economy and city
- “Creative spirit” should be incorporated into vision
- Collaboration and coordination should be addressed → central theme
- Public and private
- Start talking about the economy we want to move toward → one that will help achieve all of the goals
- Can we be more specific about what types of economies we are talking about?
- We want a growing business climate. Who would be against that? We need to diversify our business and technological base.
- How well are we providing educational opportunities? Where is the topic of education? Focus on economic resilience at a personal level, not simply at an industry level.
- We need to be more explicit of the economic climate we want to have?
- How well are we providing educational opportunities? Where is the topic of education?
- Education is the #1 issue;
- Healthcare access
- Walkability isn’t addressed in the vision?
 - Number 1 as per the Blue Print plan
 - Klineburg survey shows demand for more walkability on account of changing demographics
- Promoting a civic vitality in voting and engagement
- regional leadership for the city of Houston
- Collaboration and coordination among departments and agencies is lacking
- Why not use “Citizen’s Vision for Houston”
- It may be seen as an endorsement
- What are our other biggest issues? Strengths?
- Tie-in to the Arts & Culture plan, needs to mention the “creative spirit” of Houston.
- Address a resilient system in Houston to help people in need. Not just natural disasters. Include healthcare.
- There is nothing about technology or civic vitality / engagement

Vision should be specific to Houston

- Many cities share the same values- how do we separate ourselves?
- Must be reflective of Houston
- Houston is a “special” city → is there a way to set us apart from the utopian view?
 - What is really important to OUR city?
 - What can inspire/energize toward better outcomes?
- Diversified/innovative economy → more specific to Houston
- Educational opportunities important for Houston
 - Measurement important (for each “goal/vision”)
- A lot on the list are reflective of Houston
 - Diverse city is one that the city is proud of
- How does a utopian goal that applies to any other city help Houston?
 - Like Dallas’ specific aspirations
 - What’s important about our City?
 - Needs to facilitate achieving better outcomes – diversifying economy, innovative economy
- Houston needs to be felt on paper. Our list should be descriptive of our current local conditions, and also where we want to go.

Suggestions

- “Citizens’ Vision” could work as a guide for revision
 - “we” → put people first
- Does a date need to be had? It may help move along our vision.
- People must be featured. There needs to be a personification to the plan. How will it affect people?
- The vision is utopian. It can be applied to any city.
- What are Houston’s specific aspirations? What really is important here?
- We need this plan for implementation, not simply aspiration.
- We must state where we are now as a city.
- The plan is supposed to be about continually improving
- Thousands of people worked on Citizens Congress vision – why not use that vision?
 - Opposition to some of the wording and the implication of an endorsement exists.
- There is a reason for the date (2040) → guides the process forward

General comments

- Smaller houses that are more connected to area are becoming more attractive to citizens
 - Could be a changing demographic/family structure
- Houston provides a “safety net”/resiliency for community, especially the poorer populations
 - Healthcare accessibility
- Concept of equity is a rising issue → “opportunity”
- Make sure prosperity rises to combat poverty levels or vice versa
- This is about the citizenry: What do they want?

- Draft comes across as only aspirational
- A lot of overlap with previous citizen findings
- This doesn't apply to all cities.
- A level of clarity in the vision is an absolute must.
- While Houston is already many of the things listed, it needs to strive to retain it;
- Distill it down. Blueprints vision covers all of it.
- There seems to be overlap of issues that were presented in 2003
- When there's more prosperity, we can all benefit
- We have to address what people want within the vision statement
- Pay attention to the analytics when analyzing all the visions. What effect does the geographic scope of the plan have?

Do we need goals that support a high-level vision?

- Yes → need goals, strategies to achieve them, and metrics to evaluate effectiveness
- Yes → need clarity; need more definition in our goals/vision
- Bring draft goals to public
- Can we provide strategies for each? Should we condense/eliminate some to be more effective?
- Keep implementation stage in mind
- There is a difference between creating visions and defining strategies.
- Can we realistically have strategies for each of these visions? How do you plan for wise government?
- What tools are there going to be to support this vision?
- What are the measures that will align with these? #2 is the key.

Ideas for Improving the Process

- Previous plans were quite representative
 - Why not use something that has already been vetted?
- "Squeaky wheel" issue with stakeholder groups
- Previous plans don't necessarily represent the majority of the population
- Systematic random sampling
- It's the City's responsibility to have an equitable approach and make people feel involved.
- Method in determining strategies should be able to allow for different priorities from different groups
 - Should be equitable

How do we increase/diversify participation?

- People must be "buying in from the beginning"
- For a plan to be owned, it must include community support and outreach

- How to engage the under 25 age group. We need to include the people the plan will actually affect the most.
- Should be an intentional outreach
- Start outreach earlier in the process to better prepare public for participation
- Incorporate as much public participation into the process
- Citizens have a right to be involved in the process
 - Be careful not to jump into implementation before involving the public
- Media partners
- Schools → reach different age group, but also learn more about communities
- schools are a more honest representation of what the neighborhood looks like.
- We need more public outreach. Especially with schools. Plan for the people that will be alive in 2040.
- Sports events
- Mobile devices/technology
- Ethnic media sources
- Steering Committee sphere of influence
- Electronic game for younger groups
 - Use something they are already using/working with
- Provide more data/methodology to public
- We must communicate information at its earliest point
- The radio was helpful with his online survey. Different programs appeal to different ethnic groups.