

Shaping the region's future in the 21st century

Welcome to our seventh quarterly update on the regional comprehensive planning process. Since the last edition of Rapport, the 7 Technical Advisory Committees and 13 sub-committees have continued to meet to help develop a vision for the future of the region, explore the impacts on the region of current and anticipated trends, and develop strategic goals to ensure achievement of the envisioned future.



What's New? A Vision for the Future of the East Central Region

Visioning is a process in which the public discusses what type of future it wants to achieve. This article summarizes a year 2030 vision for the region, as developed to date (vision statements for agriculture, public water supply, groundwater, and libraries are in progress). The draft vision is based on the input received at numerous public participation events, such as regional focus groups, public information meetings, and technical advisory committees, and also incorporates the professional contribution of the East Central planning staff.

Five core concepts run through the thematic vision statements that have been developed: choice, economy, equity, environment, and quality. These ideas reflect the beliefs, values, and priorities of people who live in the region and will constitute the foundation of the regional plan. A number of key recurring themes have also emerged that are relevant across all areas of the plan. These include: provision of education/raising public awareness, merits of improved coordination and collaboration, importance of intergovernmental, interagency, and public/private sector cooperation, requirement for better communication, recognition of local responsibility, need for efficient and cost effective service provision, importance of communicating consequences, the value of best practice examples, necessity of exploring alternative and creative funding options, potential of regionalism, need for integrated, proactive, and sustainable planning that takes account of future generations, and the absolute necessity for implementation and monitoring.

Economy

In 2030, the region has diversified employment opportunities including well-paid knowledge-based jobs. The regional economy benefits from advances in research and technology, and supports entrepreneurialism and local business ownership. The region conducts collaborative economic development efforts across jurisdictional boundaries of governments, educational institutions, and other economic development entities. The preservation of natural resource amenities supports tourism opportunities, assists in attracting an educated workforce and enhances the quality of place for residents in the region.

Housing

In 2030, a dynamic housing market fosters community and neighborhood cohesion. Varied types of quality housing are integrated with community facilities and multimodal transportation. This housing market meets the needs of urban and rural households of all types, ages, income, cultures and mobility status.

Transportation

In 2030, an efficient regional transportation network provides options for the mobility needs of all people, goods, and services.

Community Facilities

Efficient, cost effective community facilities are provided, which enhance the quality of life and ensure prosperity and economic stability for all. The emphasis in service provision is on fostering collaboration,

enhancing partnerships, sharing resources and transcending boundaries, as appropriate. In 2030, there are regional opportunities for the sustainable and safe management of solid waste and recycling. The region is served by a variety of well-functioning public and private wastewater treatment systems capable of accommodating future growth, while limiting the inherent conflicts caused by both urban and rural development patterns. Adequate, cost effective, environmentally conscious utility infrastructure exists to support industry and the general population. There are cost effective, efficient, quality, emergency and non-emergency services to ensure public safety. A variety of meaningful educational options and opportunities exist for all students. There is a collaborative regional forum to create and implement a strategic policy framework for the continuum of care for the health and well being of the residents of the region. Through cooperative efforts, park, open space, and recreational facilities and programs are protected and preserved and there are plans for new facilities. There are community facilities which meet the needs of various groups, including youth, elderly, and minorities, in a balanced and financially responsible manner.

Natural Resources

In 2030, the importance of natural resources, including their link to the regional economy, quality of life, and cost effective service provision is recognized. Natural resource planning is sustainable, consistent and coordinated. The region's ecological resources are planned for and protected; there is a strong sense of ecological place. The Winnebago Pool Lakes and the Fox/Wolf River systems are recognized as the backbone of the region's ecological resources. Geologic resources significant from an aesthetic, scientific, cultural, historic, educational, or commercial extraction purpose, have been identified and inventoried, and are preserved and protected to meet the needs of the region. The region has proactively addressed public access, recreation, and trail facilities in order to meet the needs of its citizens; enhance the quality of life and environment; realize tax savings and other economic benefits; and maintain and improve the region's tourism economy. The region is comprised of well-defined urban and rural spaces which improve the individual's perception of 'sense of place', while communities within the region have maintained their individual character. Within the region, surface water resources are planned for in a

comprehensive, watershed-based manner that embraces and encourages the use of 'green infrastructure' concepts. There is proactive protection of natural features that not only contribute to water quality, but also to the long term sustainability and economic benefit of the region.

Cultural Resources

In 2030, the region is recognized as a leader in the state, for preservation of its cultural resources, by providing public access to resource protection tools, and the political advocacy necessary to ensure protection for, and appreciation of, our diverse ethnic heritage.

Land Use

In 2030, efficient regional land use patterns foster healthy communities, individual community identity, and respect the natural environment.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

In 2030, the counties and local units of government within the region work cooperatively with each other and with neighbors outside the region, to coordinate the provision of shared services in a cost effective and efficient manner. Communication between local governments, non profit agencies, and private sector is regular and dynamic. This has enabled a real sense of partnership and synergy to develop, which has enabled the region to effectively address uncertainty and facilitate the resolution of many challenges.

What's Next? - How do we Achieve the Vision?

Staff is currently preparing Milestone Report #2, which focuses on issues/opportunities and a regional vision. The next step will be to determine how to reach our vision. It is inevitable that there will be a number of alternative ways to achieve the envisioned future. We will continue to need your assistance to help determine which path the region should follow and to help us establish specific goals and strategies for action.

What do you think?

If you wish to let us know what you think about this proposed vision or, if you are interested in general information regarding the regional plan, please contact Denise McShane at 920-751-4770, or by e-mail at dmcshane@eastcentralrpc.org.