

# Using Community Vision and Capacity to Direct Economic Change

Anita R. Brown-Graham and Susan Austin



JACK HAGGERTY

On the one hand, local planning for economic development is nothing new. Numerous localities have gone through countless iterations of planning tools and decades of practice. Yet as late as the 1990s, the economic development efforts in many communities displayed the following weaknesses:

- A dizzying array of initiatives generating significant activity but producing few results
- Several seemingly uncoordinated development groups
- A lack of any clear public mandate on how to prioritize opportunities and allocate investment dollars
- No roadmap to provide benchmarks of progress and therefore no way to

tell whether investments had been successful

Today communities recognize that they need new planning tools to respond adequately to the rapid rates of economic and social change confronting North Carolina in the early twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> As development issues become more complex in substance, context, and political dynamics, public leaders are searching for ways to bring people together to frame a unifying vision for responding to the profound opportunities and threats that abound.<sup>2</sup> Realizing that their communities cannot afford to be constrained by present limitations, these leaders are seeking to redirect economic growth and change in ways that provide coherence while capturing the imagination and priorities of community residents. Increasingly they are

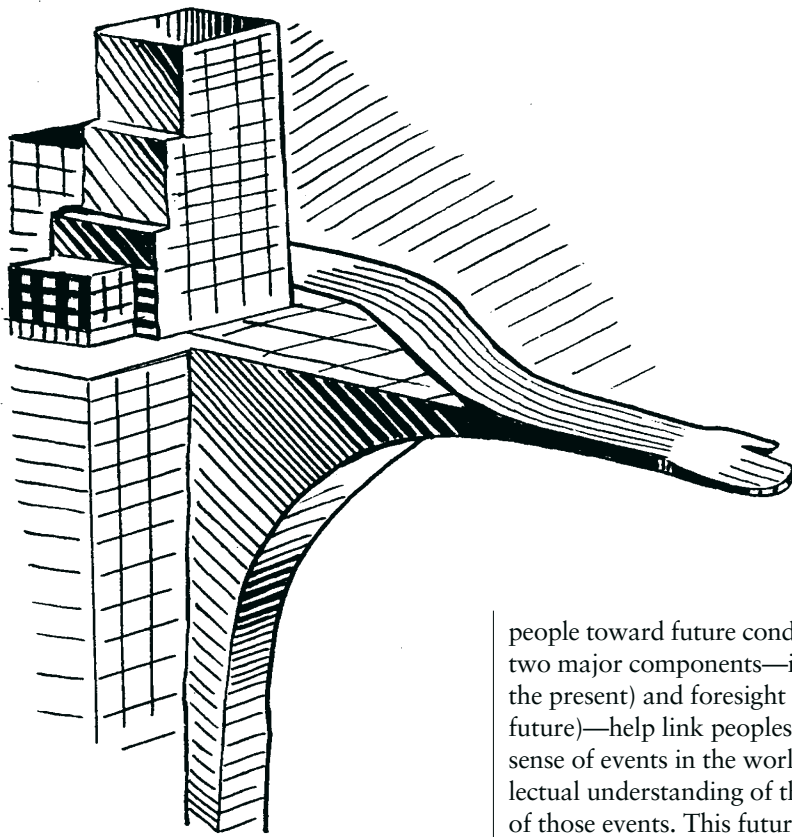
*Community visioning can result in projects such as the Midway Business Center (pictured above). It is an initiative of EmPOWERment, Inc., which helps Alamance, Chatham, and Orange county neighborhoods build leadership and organize for community change.*

turning for help to the planning process, “community strategic visioning.”

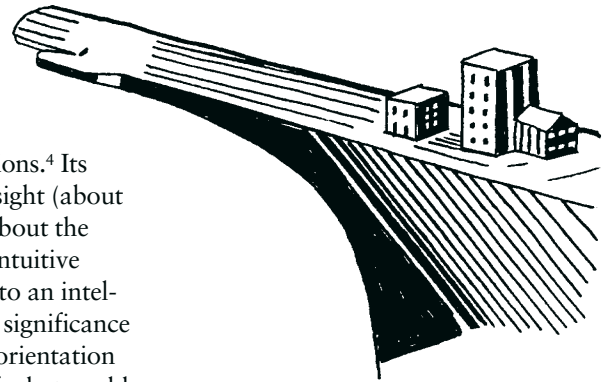
Community strategic visioning asks residents to consider what the community should be at a future date, even

---

*Brown-Graham is a School of Government faculty member specializing in community economic development and public liability. Austin is director of the School's Community Planning Project, specializing in public leadership. Contact them at [brgraham@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:brgraham@iogmail.iog.unc.edu) and [austin@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:austin@iogmail.iog.unc.edu).*



**Community strategic visioning asks residents to consider what the community should be at a future date, even though the resources to make the dream happen might not currently exist.**



DAVID SUTER

though the resources to make the dream happen might not currently exist. Then residents create an action plan to attract needed resources and implement a set of strategies to accomplish their vision. This article explains that, in addition to helping communities attract external resources, strategic visioning helps build within the community resources that are critical to economic development success. These resources are collectively referred to as “community capacity.”

### Understanding the Value of Vision

Historian Frederick Polack asked, “Is a nation’s positive image of its future the consequence of its success, or is a nation’s success the consequence of its positive image of the future?”<sup>3</sup> The question can be asked about states and localities as well, and the answer may be found in Polack’s research. After examining the fates of past and present nations, Polack suggested that (1) significant vision precedes significant success; (2) leaders share a compelling image of the future with their followers, and together they strive to make this vision a reality; and (3) a community with vision is enabled, whereas a community without vision is at risk.

What is “vision”? It is perhaps best understood as the instrument that moves

people toward future conditions.<sup>4</sup> Its two major components—insight (about the present) and foresight (about the future)—help link peoples’ intuitive sense of events in the world to an intellectual understanding of the significance of those events. This future orientation is used to create an image of what could and should be. By articulating a shared image of what their community seeks to be, residents can purposefully begin to create the desired future, rather than simply react to prevailing trends and external forces of change. Often adopted as a formal statement in strategic visioning, the vision serves both as a guide to future decisions and actions and as a framework for important public policy choices.<sup>5</sup> It helps keep a community on track by creating a roadmap and milestones to track progress. (For a detailed description of how a community engages in strategic visioning, see the sidebar on page 16.)

As a planning tool, strategic visioning relies on the general promise of visions to claim impressive outcomes. The oft-cited benefits mirror those that “visionary corporations” experience:<sup>6</sup>

- Broad stakeholder involvement
- Assessment of community assets and weaknesses
- Articulation of community values
- Evaluation of current trends and issues affecting the community
- Clarity of shared vision for the community’s future, reached by stakeholder consensus

- A specific action plan with detailed long- and short-term steps necessary to achieve the vision
- A process for ongoing appraisal of the success of the initiative

Less frequently articulated, but important to economic development, is the idea that a community’s experience with strategic visioning both reflects and builds community capacity. This capacity is itself a useful construct for guiding a community’s economic and social change efforts.

In the rhetoric and the activities of strategic visioning, the notion of community capacity building is both explicit and pervasive. Much like strategic visioning, community capacity describes collaborations among individuals, organizations, and social networks within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community.<sup>7</sup> However, achieving the vision requires the creation of substantial capacity to implement an action plan. (For a discussion of implementation as one step in a strategic visioning model, see the sidebar on page 16.) That capacity, in turn, leads to future visions. As strategic management guru Jack

## A Comprehensive Community Visioning Process

Most strategic visioning models for communities are slight variations of what is called the Oregon Model, in acknowledgment of the innovative and widespread use of visioning as a planning tool in that state.<sup>1</sup> This model has been adopted, and adapted, by communities across the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Oregon Model involves a comprehensive five-step process (see the diagram on page 17). Each step focuses on a driving question, involves different activities, and results in specific products. Although all five steps are recommended, a community may choose to follow only some of them or to undertake specific activities at different points in the process. The five questions undergirding the steps are *Where are we now? Where are we going? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? and Are we getting there?*

### Where are we now?

This question involves completing a critical evaluation of the community as it exists in the present. Participants develop a profile of the community's characteristics, such as populations, the local economy and labor force, political and community institutions, transportation, and education resources. As part of the profile, the community assesses its strengths and weaknesses, identifying the assets already in place that it can leverage.

Also during this first step, stakeholders identify the values shared by members of the community. These values may include a desire to maintain a small-town atmosphere over the anonymity that may be a byproduct of extensive growth, and a willingness to expend resources so that all members of the community have equal access to recreational activities or other amenities. Once articulated, the values become key drivers of strategic visioning.

### Where are we going?

In this second step, participants identify significant trends and emerging issues to determine where the community may be headed. The trends and issues may include advances in communication technology, which allow many employees to telecommute, or aging of a large segment of the population, which will require accessible services appropriate to the needs. Once identified, participants develop a picture, or "probable scenario" (and perhaps alternative possible scenarios), describing what

their community will look like if they continue to do things the same way in the future as they have in the past.

### Where do we want to be?

This step is the heart of visioning. On the basis of identified trends and emerging issues, participants craft a vision of what they want their community to become. They incorporate their shared values into this vision. The vision should not be limited by current constraints. This "preferred scenario" is what their community will be if it responds to emerging trends and issues proactively.

### How do we get there?

This is the step at which participants specify what the community must do to achieve its vision. Strategies are identified, responsibilities assigned, and timetables set. Participants are encouraged to develop a matrix to capture the complexity of elements essential to implement their action plan. Elements of the matrix may include committee assignments, resources required, and timelines for completion.

### Are we getting there?

Some well-intentioned planning efforts never come to fruition. For a vision to become a reality, a method of monitoring progress must be adopted. Steven C. Ames, consulting planner and futurist, characterizes the key reasons for this step as follows: "(1) to make the desired change happen, (2) to monitor the community's effectiveness in achieving its vision over time, and (3) to provide a system that will inform the eventual update of its action plan over time and ultimately the renewal of its vision."<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. STEVEN C. AMES, *COMMUNITY VISIONING: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE IN OREGON'S LOCAL COMMUNITIES* (1997), available at <http://asu.edu/caed/proceedings97/ames.html>. The approach directly reflects the collective visioning experiences of local communities in Oregon. Beginning in the 1980s, they realized that they needed an effective way to manage rapid change, develop a shared sense of purpose, chart preferred directions, and foster the leadership needed to act. To help them design such a process, they turned to the Oregon Visions Project, a committee of the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association, which had formed to promote long-range planning in the state.

2. E-mail from Steven C. Ames to Susan Austin (May 5, 2004).

Koteen writes, "Whatever the vision promises, the capacity to deliver must exist . . ."<sup>8</sup> Without community capacity a strategic visioning process will fail to produce economic changes.

### Developing Climates for Innovation and Renewal

Something causes well-functioning communities to function well. Its proponents contend that community capacity is that

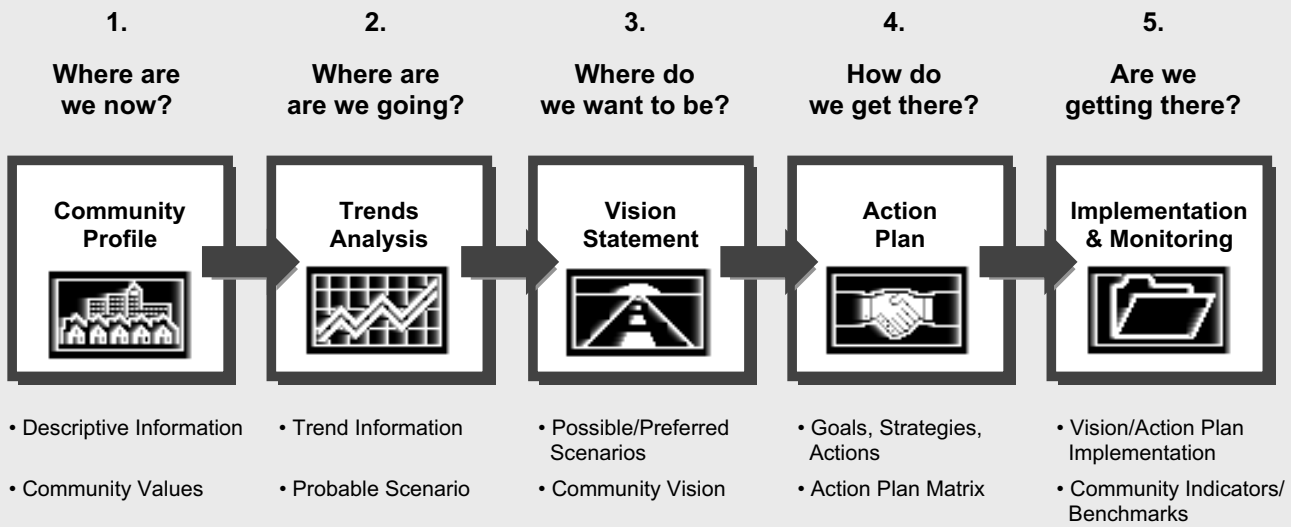
something. Specifically, proponents maintain that differences in community capacity often explain why communities that seem to be similarly situated have such different outcomes in economic development. Frequently credited with allowing community members and organizations to work together to optimize the development and the use of community resources, community capacity determines how effectively a community manages its economic change.<sup>9</sup>

"Community capacity" is "the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing that can be leveraged within a given community to solve the collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community."<sup>10</sup> On the basis of this definition, the benefits of abundant community capacity are intuitive. If economic development depends on a community's preparedness, willingness, and capacity to respond to opportunities



# THE NEW OREGON MODEL

## A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS



© 1992, 1995, 2004 Steven C. Ames, Steven Ames Planning, Portland, Oregon USA

Source: From A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY VISIONING: HANDS-ON INFORMATION FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES (Steven C. Ames ed., Portland, Ore.: Oregon Visions Project, Oregon Chapter American Planning Ass'n, 1993, rev. and updated 1998). Reprinted by permission.

and losses, then communities with greater capacity to mobilize individual, organizational, and social network resources will have better economic development outcomes. In communities that work well, community capacity will be reinforced by the continual interactions of its dimensions. In communities that work less well, leaders may need to facilitate interventions that both increase community capacity overall and achieve specific economic development outcomes. Strategic visioning has become an increasingly popular intervention strategy because it strengthens the capacity of communities to identify priorities and opportunities for positive economic change.

Unfortunately, translating the broad concept of community capacity into specific interventions, such as strategic visioning, is fraught with difficulty. When asked to be specific about the usefulness of community capacity, its proponents sometimes

struggle to articulate a common language. What is "capacity"? How can it be strengthened? What are its components? How can they be recognized? Local leaders will need answers to these questions to assess the success of their interventions.

### Characterizing Community Capacity

Clearly a focus on community capacity in economic development leads away from simple evaluations of the production of outputs, such as the number of jobs created, to more complicated considerations of the functioning of the community. The attempts to be specific about the concept of community capacity vary in focus. Robert Chaskin, a notable scholar on the matter, says some attempts "focus largely on organizations, others on individuals, others

on affective connections and shared values, and still others on processes of participation and engagement." However, Chaskin also notes that, taken together, the varied attempts suggest some agreement on the following factors: (1) resources (ranging from the skills of individuals to the strengths of organizations), (2) networks of relationships, (3) leadership, and (4) support for some kind of mechanisms for or process of participation by community members in collective action and problem-solving.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of those common factors, Chaskin has created a model for analyzing community capacity. A description of it follows, with modifications to address more directly the benefits of community capacity to economic development.

Community capacity is exemplified by a set of core characteristics:

- **Sense of community**, reflected by the degree of connectedness among members and the recognition of commonality of circumstances, including collectively held values and vision. This sense of community allows people to come together in ways that support a common good.

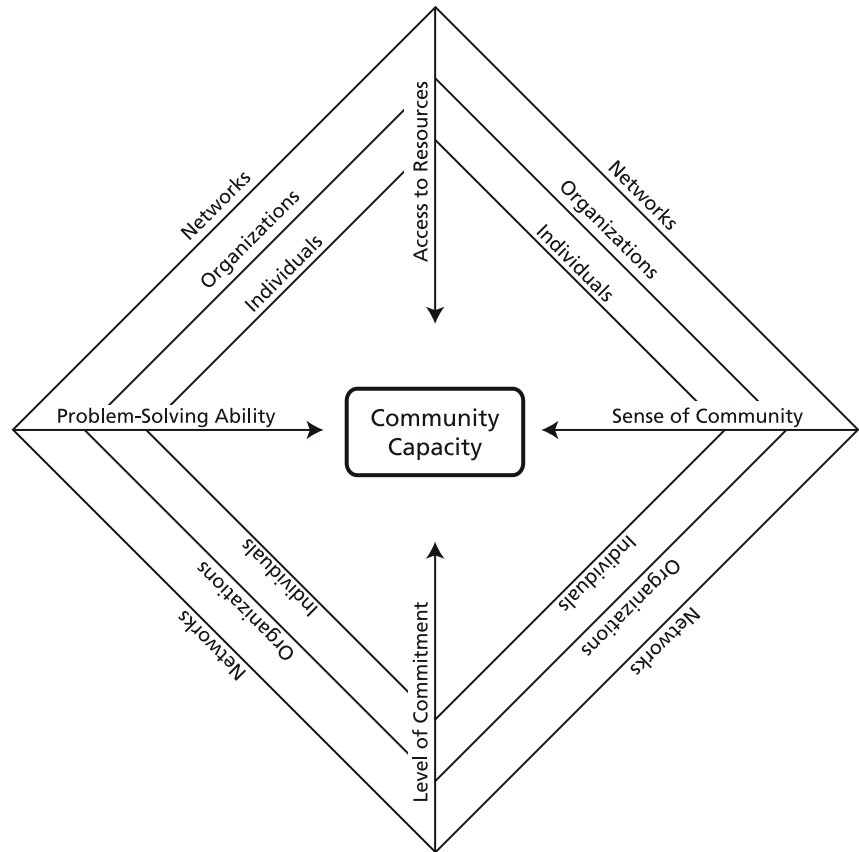
**If economic development depends on a community's preparedness, willingness, and capacity to respond to opportunities and losses, then communities with greater capacity to mobilize individual, organizational, and social network resources will have better economic development outcomes.**

- **Level of commitment**, or the responsibility that individuals, groups, or organizations take for what happens in the community. Level of commitment is reflected both in the existence of community members who see themselves as stakeholders in the collective well-being of the community and in the willingness of these members to participate actively in the stakeholder role.
- **Ability of the community to solve problems** by translating its commitment into action. A community may identify and address problems or pursue collective goals through formal or informal means, spontaneously or through planned action.
- **Level of access to economic, human, physical, and political resources** within and beyond the community's boundaries. Communities with abundant capacity can garner resources and have some ability to influence policies that directly affect their development.

The core characteristics of community capacity may be engaged through some combination of three levels of social connectedness:

- **Individual level**, or the skills, knowledge, and resources of individual residents in the community and their participation in activity to improve the community. Such “human capital” contributes to community capacity as a collective resource and through specific individuals. Leadership applies particular aspects of human capital when individual community members act as change agents to mobilize others and catalyze action.
- **Organizational level**, or the ability of organizations (such as schools, local businesses, development organizations, and banks) to carry out their functions responsively, effectively, and efficiently as part of the larger system and economic development processes. The value of these organizations to community capacity goes beyond an accounting of production outputs, such as the number of loans a bank makes, to include

Figure 1. **Interactions of Core Characteristics and Levels of Community Capacity**



Source: Developed by Anita R. Brown-Graham.

issues of constituent representation, political influence, and ability to engage in useful interorganizational relationships.

- **Network level**, or patterns of relationships among individuals and organizations. This infrastructure of useful relationships provides a context of trust and support and represents access to a resource known as “social capital.” Social capital is realized through relationships, as compared with physical capital, which takes observable material form, and human capital, which rests in skills and knowledge acquired by an individual.

(For a diagram of the interaction between the core characteristics and the levels of social connectedness, see Figure 1.)

### Designing Strategic Visioning to Build Community Capacity

Strategic visioning initiatives should be designed to do more than achieve tangible results. They should be de-

signed to acknowledge a deeper connection among citizens, civic leaders, and the community for the purpose of using strategic visioning to increase community capacity. The following discussion of ways to generate community capacity through strategic visioning is based on (1) Chaskin’s model of community capacity, (2) case study data derived from the authors’ work on strategic visioning initiatives in North Carolina communities, (3) documentary data from additional initiatives and organizations engaged in efforts to build community capacity, and (4) a review of the existing literature.

### Sense of Community

Defining community is difficult these days. People live and work in differing jurisdictions, and the economy pays little attention to local political boundaries. In such circumstances, economic development planners cannot afford to be overly focused on people and information internal to a locality. “Regional and local leadership—shared across the civic, business and government sectors

by people willing to cross the old and familiar boundaries—is more critical than ever.”<sup>12</sup> In considering how to approach external stakeholders for support in planning a strategic visioning process, local leaders should not be excessively wary. People do not want to say that they work or live in a community without a vision of what it wants to be. A commonality of circumstances, even across jurisdictional boundaries, allows people to come together in ways that support the common good. (For an example of multijurisdictional strategic visioning, see the sidebar on this page.)

### **Level of Commitment**

Strategic visioning depends on people willing both to define and to support the public interest. Although strategic visioning always begins with a small, dedicated group of civic leaders who initiate and facilitate it, even that group should include representation from major sectors of the community, such as business, local government, human services, education, health care, community-based development organizations, and civic organizations. Perhaps the most important task for this planning group is to identify and invite others to participate in the effort. This may not always be a simple task. Civic responsibilities may fall low on the personal list of priorities for many people. Moreover, some stakeholders may not trust the motives of the people and organizations initiating the process. Building trust (a critical part of the process) will add time to the front end of the project. (For an example of a representative planning group that facilitated a strategic visioning effort, see the sidebar on page 20.)

### **Ability of the Community to Solve Problems**

For strategic visioning to work well, it must not be captured by either special or shallow interests. In addition to showing broad citizen engagement, the process should reflect careful citizen deliberation and respect for expertise. Experts can be particularly useful in helping the participants avoid “analysis paralysis.” Overwhelmed by the complexity of issues, civic leaders may fall prey to overload. Thus, experts on strategic visioning or the people

## ***An Example of Strategic Visioning: The Outer Banks of North Carolina***

The region of the state known as the Outer Banks is a beach resort community heavily reliant on seasonal tourism for its economic well-being. It has experienced steady growth over the past twenty years. This growth has affected every facet of community life.

Beginning in 2000, the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce noted a rise in concern about quality of life in the responses to its annual Membership Opinion polls.<sup>1</sup> Respondents worried that growth-related problems, left unaddressed, would damage the very qualities that made the Outer Banks a desirable vacation destination. This concern that the community might “kill the goose that laid the golden egg” was the impetus for the initial phase of a community strategic visioning project.

In early 2001 the Chamber of Commerce contacted the Institute of Government for assistance in crafting a strategic visioning process. Together they applied for a grant from the Outer Banks Community Foundation to fund the first phase of the initiative. In addition to awarding a grant, the foundation joined the initiative as a partner.

Phase 1, begun in November 2001, involved the use of individual and small-group interviews to gather a range of information necessary to determine whether there was community-wide interest in pursuing the project. A preliminary report on the data was submitted to the Chamber of Commerce and the foundation in May 2002, and a comprehensive report was delivered in July 2003.<sup>2</sup> Both organizations now are reviewing the information to determine how they want to proceed.

The Outer Banks Quality of Life Initiative is an excellent example of strategic visioning across private and nonprofit sectors, as well as political jurisdictions. People interviewed for the initial phase included stakeholders from forty-nine business, civic, government, and nonprofit organizations; three counties; and six municipalities. With rare exceptions those interviewed were concerned about preserving their quality of life and interested in participating in the next phase of strategic visioning.

—Susan Austin

### **Notes**

1. Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, 2000, 2001, and 2002 Membership Opinion polls. Handouts distributed at the chamber’s annual “Viewpoint” Legislative Breakfast programs.
2. For more information about the report, contact Susan Austin, e-mail [austin@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:austin@iogmail.iog.unc.edu).

who have organized the strategic visioning often must help participants determine what information they actually need for better deliberation and understanding.

### **Level of Access to Economic, Human, Physical, and Political Resources**

Different communities have different strengths on which to draw when pursuing an economic development strategy. However, communities do not have to reinvent the wheel for solutions. They can learn much from observing what others have done and then analyzing, adopting, and adapting the most promising initiatives to fit their community’s unique circumstances. By

assessing the strategies of comparable communities, a community often can harness its own resources more strategically.

### **Individual Level**

Strategic visioning is rarely easy. Indeed, bringing people together in an atmosphere of support to solve community problems systematically has been likened to “teaching dinosaurs to do ballet.”<sup>13</sup> Differences are bound to arise, sometimes with great intensity. For the process to benefit from the skills, knowledge, and resources of individual residents, it must be open to airing those differences. Building community capacity does not require the elimination of di-

## *An Example of Strategic Visioning: Burke County, North Carolina*

In April 1997 a *Reader's Digest* poll named Burke County, in western North Carolina, one of the top ten places in America to raise a family. Despite this distinction, an ample workforce, a desirable location, a highly rated public school system, and transportation strengths, Burke County faced a severe economic downturn in recent years for several reasons. First, the area depends heavily on manufacturing and production, two sectors that have recorded tremendous job losses as a result of productivity improvements and firms relocating to foreign markets. Second, the county also suffers from an inadequately educated workforce: in 2000, for example, 40 percent of residents over age 35 did not have a high school diploma, and 7 percent of youngsters in grades 7–12 dropped out each year.<sup>1</sup> This education deficiency and the county's proximity to counties that are more metropolitan make attracting new industry difficult.

In May 2001 a motivated group of approximately 30 Burke County residents sought to respond to these economic challenges. The group hoped to bring to economic development the same vision and commitment that a previous community collaboration, Continuing Burke's Vision, had brought to human services. The group named itself Partners for Economic Growth and began designing an inclusive, comprehensive economic development process with the assistance of the Institute of Government.<sup>2</sup>

The group held an Economic Development Summit in April 2002 to collect thoughtful options for development, gather information regarding the state of the workforce, compile a comprehensive list of resources, develop consensus to support the options, and promote understanding of the interdependence between a regional and a local economic community. The summit attracted 240 community residents. Ninety agreed to join the work of the group. The original 30 Partners for Economic Growth members now serve as the steering committee for the larger group of 120. This larger group is divided into subcommittees that focus on education, workforce development, entrepreneurship/small business, technology, community services, heritage preservation, existing industry, industrial site development, and communications.

In addition to having representation from county and municipal governments, public education, private industry, and small business, Partners for Economic Growth enjoys

the participation of several leaders in human services. The group includes the director of the local Smart Start agency, the director of the public library system, the director of the local Employment Security Commission, and a local minister from the historically underrepresented portion of the county. The involvement of these people and the populations they represent is unusual for economic development task forces. Their participation in Burke County has enabled the group to design projects targeted at the county's low-income families.

One example is the Eastern Burke Alliance, which seeks to address the poverty in the eastern section of the county by providing specialized courses and support services so that low-income individuals can become better educated and earn higher wages. The program targets unemployed and underemployed people from both the native and Hmong communities in eastern Burke County.<sup>3</sup>

The alliance is using a Duke Endowment Rural Carolinas grant to provide a variety of courses and career counseling, as well as child care. The courses are being offered by a partnership consisting of Hildebran Elementary School, Hildebran United Methodist Church, Western Piedmont Community College, and the Town of Hildebran. The course-work focuses on computer and Internet skills, budgeting, entrepreneurship, and basic math, reading, and writing skills.

—Anita Brown-Graham and Emily Williamson

*Williamson is a member of Partners for Economic Growth and a graduate of the School of Government's Master of Public Administration Program.*

### Notes

1. The data for 2000 (the year before Burke County took action) were obtained from a database maintained by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. They are no longer available online. For current data, see North Carolina Dep't of Commerce, Economic Dev. Info. Syst., County Profiles, Burke County, available at <http://cmedis.commerce.state.nc.us/countyprofiles/profile.cfm>.

2. LESLIE ANDERSON ET AL., A REPORT OF THE FORMATION, PURPOSE, AND EXPANSION OF THE BURKE COUNTY PARTNERS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH (Chapel Hill: Institute of Gov't, Univ. of N.C. at Chapel Hill, July 11, 2002).

3. Hmong are from a variety of Asian countries. Most in the United States are from Laos.

versity. To the contrary, the process welcomes other points of view, embraces opposites, and seeks greater clarity in decision making through the understanding of all sides of every issue.<sup>14</sup>

### Organizational Level

Businesses are not shy about articulating their desire to locate in communities that can provide an attractive quality of

life to their employees. Quality-of-life issues, such as the eminence of educational institutions, the availability of good health care services, good air and water quality, the availability of parks and open spaces, and the preservation of natural amenities, are growing in their importance to economic development. Consequently no one organization or sector can shape the multitude of

community characteristics that determine quality of life.

Rarely can today's problems be solved by, or a successful plan be implemented by, only members of the private sector, or only members of the governmental sector. To the contrary, community capacity at the organizational level requires the ability to engage in useful interorganizational relationships. "The



successful communities of the 2000's will be those that find ways for business, government, and non-profits to work together with citizens to help a community reach its collective goals and meet its common challenges."<sup>15</sup>

### Network Level

Ultimately, strategic visioning is about developing the social relationships needed to achieve desired goals. Communities in North Carolina are seeking to respond to economic changes through strategic visioning because they believe that "if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the

shared concerns of the . . . community."<sup>16</sup> Leaders in these communities recognize that when collaboration succeeds, new networks and norms for working together are established, and the primary focus of community work shifts from parochial interests to the broader concerns of the community. However, for

**Quality-of-life issues, such as the eminence of educational institutions, the availability of good health care services, good air and water quality, the availability of parks and open spaces, and the preservation of natural amenities, are growing in their importance to economic development.**

collaborations to succeed, attention to internal group dynamics is critical, for the visioning group often involves members with a history of conflict, misunderstandings, benign neglect of one another, or little experience working together.

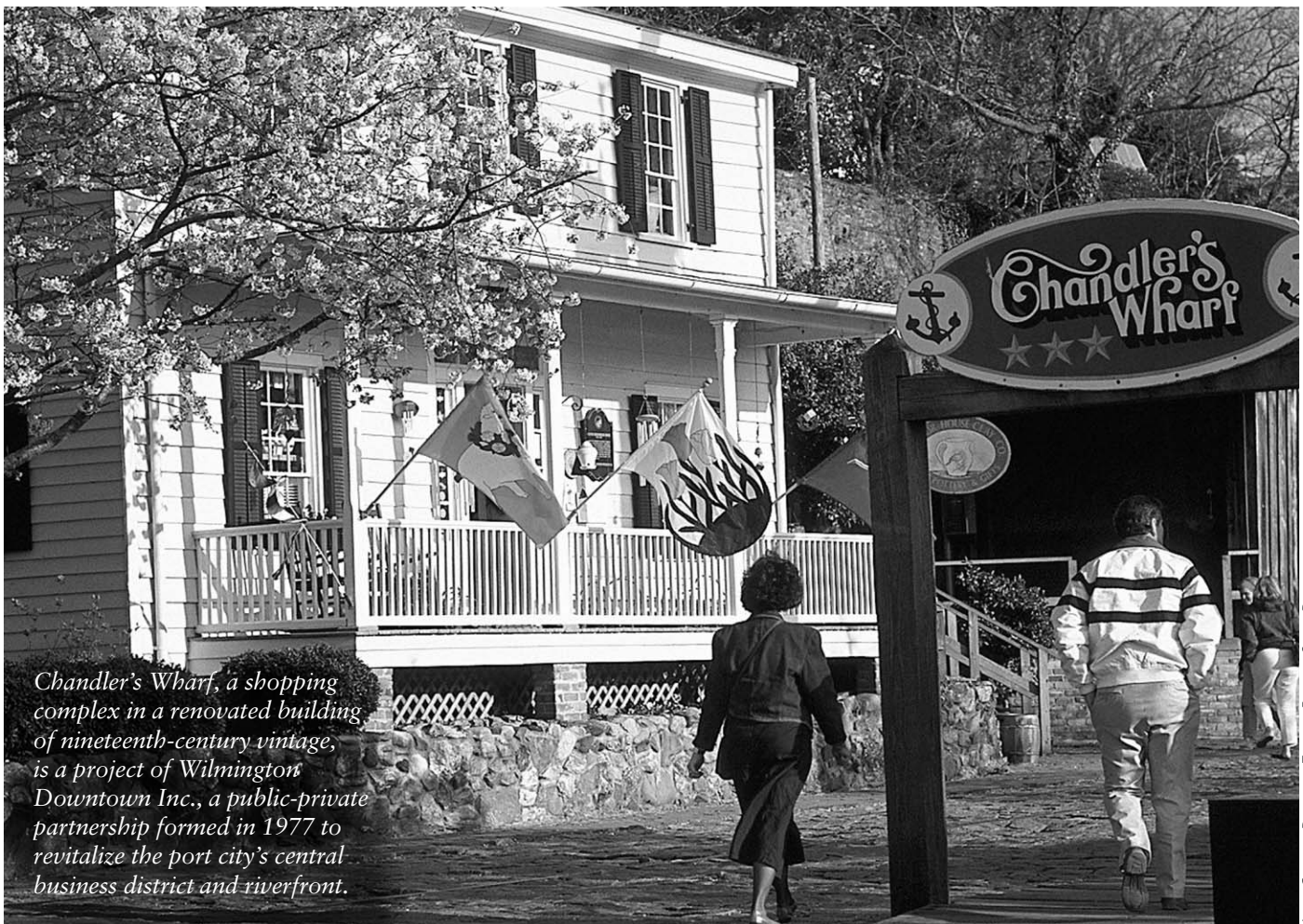
In the context of strategic visioning, every economic development success created by the collaborative effort will make it easier to mobilize peo-

ple and other resources to deal with future opportunities and threats. As David Whyte points out in his commentary on corporate America,

*Most paths . . . take the form of an iterative equation, an equation where the values and events it produces are continually fed back into the equation again and again, influencing any future values it may throw out. Every action, then, no matter how small, influences every future action, no matter how large.<sup>17</sup>*

### Conclusion

Today, people frequently use the words "turbulent" and "chaotic" to describe the state's highly charged economic environment. Ambiguity and uncertainty have risen dramatically. Lingering behind the leading edge of economic changes has proved dire for many of North Carolina's communities. For



*Chandler's Wharf, a shopping complex in a renovated building of nineteenth-century vintage, is a project of Wilmington Downtown Inc., a public-private partnership formed in 1977 to revitalize the port city's central business district and riverfront.*

NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF TOURISM, FILM AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

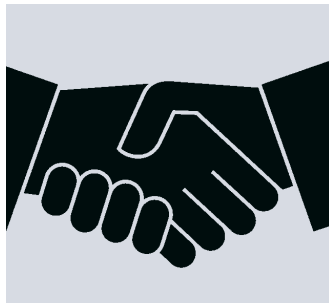


these communities, an understanding of the connections between strategic visioning and community capacity for economic development must be premised on an appreciation for the struggle between the accelerating transitions taking place in the economy and the diminishing resources available to help communities adapt to the resulting disruptions.

Strategic visioning is not easy, and given the time and the energy required for a useful process, it may not be the right planning tool for all communities. Some will shy away from it, arguing that they are so overwhelmed by current plant closures or other immediate problems that they are unable to find the time or the energy for anything that sounds like “more planning.” Others may lack an understanding of how effective visions drive a community, or they may have had experiences with unproductive planning processes. For those that accept that strategic visioning is a critical force in reshaping their future, however, the return on the investment of time and energy should include a greater ability to deploy resources to harness economic prosperity.

## Notes

1. Several significant trends are shaking up the status quo: the devolution of responsibilities from the federal government to state and local governments (John E. Peterson, *The Fiscal Face of Devolution*, GOVERNING MAGAZINE, Feb. 1999, at 100); sharp increases in



**Ultimately, strategic visioning is about developing the social relationships needed to achieve desired goals.**

the costs of Medicaid (Penelope Lemov, *Easing the Pain*, GOVERNING MAGAZINE, May 2003, at 58); homeland security (Anya Sostek, *Orange Crush*, GOVERNING MAGAZINE, Aug. 2003, at 18); and the desire of businesses to locate in communities that can provide an attractive quality of life to their employees. In many instances the devolution of responsibilities from the federal level to state and local levels has not been accompanied by adequate federal funding to carry out those responsibilities (Donald F. Kettl, *Mandates*

*Forever*, GOVERNING MAGAZINE, Aug. 2003, at 12). These “unfunded mandates,” coupled with the rising costs of Medicaid and homeland security, have strained state and local revenues, draining resources that may have previously been used to promote economic development or provide other programs.

2. See DAVID D. CHRISLIP & CARL E. LARSON, *COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP* 23 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994) (pointing out the inaccuracy of saying that public issues of the past were not complex, but suggesting that the full complexity of the issues may not have been understood or recognized).

3. FREDERICK POLACK, *THE IMAGE OF THE FUTURE* 24 (Elise Boulding trans. & abridger, Amsterdam, Neth.: Elsevier Scientific Publ'g, 1973).

4. WARREN G. BENNIS & BERT NANUS, *LEADERS: STRATEGIES FOR TAKING CHARGE* (2d ed., New York: Harper Business, 1997).

5. STEVEN AMES, *WHY VISIONING? CHARTING A COURSE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY* (Portland, Ore.: Steven Ames Planning, 2001), available at [www.communityvisioning.com/whyvisioning/](http://www.communityvisioning.com/whyvisioning/).

6. Like many other community planning tools, strategic visioning began in corporations. Management authors Stephen Covey and Keith Gullede write of vision, “It is the

written expression of the organizations’ very identity. It becomes the organization’s governing constitution, its supreme law, the standard by which all behavior is judged. It is the source of ultimate principles and values, direction and purpose, which guide the development and consistency of strategy, tactics, systems, policy, procedure, and decision making . . .” Stephen R. Covey & Keith Gullede, *Principled Centered Leadership*, JOURNAL FOR QUALITY AND PARTICIPATION, July/Aug. 1992, at 70, 76.

7. ROBERT J. CHASKIN ET AL., *BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY* 7 (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 2001).

8. JACK KOTEEN, *STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS: MANAGING PUBLIC CONCERNS IN AN ERA OF LIMITS* 60 (2d ed., Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).

9. COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING, (Raleigh: Family and Consumer Sciences, N.C. State Univ., 2003), available at [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/agents/cap.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/agents/cap.pdf) (last visited Apr. 9, 2004).

10. CHASKIN ET AL., *BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY*, at 7.

11. Robert J. Chaskin, *Building Community Capacity; A Definitional Framework and Case Studies for a Comprehensive Community Initiative*, 36 URBAN AFFAIRS 291, 292–93 (2001).

12. NEAL PEIRCE & CURTIS JOHNSON, *BOUNDARY CROSSERS: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR A GLOBAL AGE* 8 (College Park, Md.: Academy of Leadership Press, 1997).

13. W. DeBevoise, *Collaboration: Some Principles of Bridgework*, 44 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP no. 2, at 9, 12 (1986).

14. M. SCOTT PECK, *THE DIFFERENT DRUM: COMMUNITY MAKING AND PEACE* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

15. NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE, *THE COMMUNITY VISIONING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING HANDBOOK* 4 (Denver: National Civic League Press, 2000).

16. CHRISLIP & LARSON, *COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP*, at 14.

17. DAVID WHYTE, *THE HEART AROUSED: POETRY AND PRESERVATION OF THE SOUL IN CORPORATE AMERICA* 28 (New York: Doubleday, 2002).