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# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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## Building a Vision for Tomorrow

By Lori Garkovich, Ph.D.

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University of Kentucky

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### Why a Community Vision?

The future is something that can be created if communities focus on what they want to happen, not just on what is happening. Successful communities plan for something, rather than plan in reaction to something. Successful communities act to create the future they want rather than simply accept the future that comes.

Effective community leaders don't simply react to the problems of today. Rather, they act to prevent the problems of tomorrow with careful planning for the future that citizens desire. A community visioning process defines the future that a community wants to move toward and gives direction to local planning processes.

The power of a strategic vision is that it is a compelling image of a community's desire for the future. A strategic vision vaults us over the perceived constraints of the current situation into a desired future. A strategic vision is about the character of the community, the values of its citizens, and how these will play out in the way the community is organized, how it functions, and the quality of life it provides to its members.

Ultimately, the content of a strategic vision is not nearly as important as what the process of creating the vision does for the community by bringing residents together to identify what they want their community to have, do, and be.

### Components of a Visioning Process

A good strategic visioning process must:

- ☛ Be grounded in the history and values of the people of the community.

- ☛ Engage the community and connect community members with each other.
- ☛ Stretch citizens beyond their current situation, forcing them to describe what they want the community to become.
- ☛ Is based on the ideas of all community members
- ☛ Maximizes opportunities for community residents to participate in the planning for their future
- ☛ Leads to more effective goal-setting and action planning by the community as a whole and groups and organizations within the community.

### The Goals of a Community Visioning Process

The goals of a community visioning process are:

- ☛ To identify aspects of community life that make it a special place to live and work and therefore, need to be protected or preserved for future generations.
- ☛ To identify aspects of community life or services that if improved or changed would make the community a better place to live and work.
- ☛ To determine what citizens want the community to be like at some point in the future.
- ☛ To identify the actions that need to be taken to reach the vision for tomorrow.