

# VISIONING

## DESCRIPTION

A vision is vital to providing direction to the local economic development process. This tool walks participants through the process of establishing the vision for the community, asking participants to imagine the future they'd like to see.

## RATIONALE

- Provides an end goal around which to base the strategic plan
- Captures the strengths and opportunities within the community

## LOGISTICS

- Duration:** 30-60 minutes
- Format:** small workshop activity or icebreaker in large group
- Key Players:** could include: project team, community stakeholders, public
- Resources:** flip chart paper, markers, individual paper and pens; previously created materials if applicable (Key Facts, strategic assessment)

## OUTPUT

A clear and concise statement that communicates the overall desired future of a community and reflects the community's values. The vision can also be used to articulate the community's overall economic goals.

## PROCESS

1. Ask participants to consider the strengths, improvements, opportunities and assets unique to the community (if applicable from previous exercises).
2. Consider as a group what ten years in the future may look like – what could the economic aspects of the community look like? What is different from now? What is similar?
3. After this discussion, ask participants to jot down on individual pieces of paper descriptive words, images or phrases that capture their ideal vision of their community in ten years.
4. Roundtable sharing of words/phrases, with facilitator recording on poster paper.
5. Together, discuss the various words and pull out/circle common or agreed upon phrases.
6. Tying these concepts together in a statement is often best done by a single person (project lead). We recommend ending this part of the meeting here, with final statement crafting to be done by the lead. At this point in the meeting, using the ideas generated for your vision, you may want to move on to [Identifying Strategic Areas](#).
7. Circulate draft vision to the group for input; make changes as necessary but don't dwell on this stage.





## HOW IT FITS

An additional add-on exercise for the visioning exercise is to create a name or title for your plan that reflects the vision. There are a number of ways to do this. One is to ask participants to contribute an appropriate, home-grown name for the strategy before an event or meeting, and then generate additional ideas during the meeting or event. At the end of the session, vote on the name of the plan. Multiple rounds of voting might be needed (by hand or by volume are some ways of voting quickly). Consider offering a prize for the name that gets chosen. This almost always achieves a catchier name and buy-in than the “XXX Town Economic Development Plan.” Alternatively, when words are brainstormed during the process outlined above, also focus as a group on coming up with related and catchy titles for the strategic plan.

Examples:

- “Port of Potential Strategy” - Village of Port Alice
- “Tides of Change” – Cormorant Island Economic Development Strategy
- “Growing Malcolm Island – Our Economic Development Strategy”

## TIPS

- Consider both the overall vision and the “mini visions” in specific areas, as these considerations will help when choosing strategic areas. It’s fine to brainstorm both at once!
- During the visioning process, it is easy to get bogged down with details. Keep the vision short and simple and don’t try to wordsmith in a group setting. The vision from the Official Community Plan or other public processes may also work for or help inform a local economic development process vision.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Bring it online – post on social media or directly on your website to ask community members to indicate where they want to see their community in ten years. You could ask, for example, for members to come up with three words that will describe the future community (though be aware that if it’s on social media it may require some moderation).

It could also be integrated into a community town hall or other meetings – ask attendants to record on a slip of paper a collection of words or a phrase they would use to describe their ideal version of the community in ten years. You could also put raffle-style boxes around town at libraries and other public meeting places.

## CASE STUDY

The City of Colwood is a fast growing city on Vancouver Island, with a population of 16,093 (2011). Colwood’s 5-year Economic Development Strategy was approved in September of 2014. To develop the plan, the process was split into 5 phases; during Phase 4, the city developed a vision for its economic development strategy.

To develop this vision, the economic development strategy drew on the city’s Official Community Plan vision, “Our sustainable community, nestled in a rich networks of hills, creeks, lakes and the sea, is defined by attractive, compact and complete centres connected by multi-modal transportation corridors. Our sustainable community is welcoming and inclusive for all and is planned and designed to support the needs of a diverse and changing population.”

With the input received throughout the strategic planning process, it developed the following vision for its economic development strategy: “Our sustainable community is innovative and forward thinking in its approach to economic development reflecting both the needs of our business community and our desire for a balanced and sustainable approach to growth.”



## EXAMPLES

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“Wellington County will be a collaborative community that protects and enhances its natural and cultural heritage assets while supporting the longer term economic and social prosperity of its residents and business community.”

–Wellington County Economic Development Strategic Plan

“Through coordinated investment, promotion and development, Cormorant Island will build on the existing economy, culture, history and infrastructure by leveraging resource-based, value-added opportunities, seasonal tourism and marine commerce. These efforts will improve the business environment and create a solid base for entrepreneurs and small businesses to succeed, thus improving island vibrancy that will in turn attract new businesses and investment leading to a stronger year-round economy based on community values.” - Tides of Change- Cormorant Island Economic Development Strategy

“Elliot Lake is an affordable community for families of all ages to live, work and grow. We are a resilient, enterprising and self-sustaining community that continues to cherish the amenities at our doorstep and the wilderness in our backyard. Come see what we love.” –Elliot Lake Economic Development and Diversification Strategy

“By 2020 Solomon will:

- Have the VOS [The Village of Solomon] & SNC [Solomon Native Corporation] working together for capacity building and creating new projects.
- Enhance the local economy while staying true to subsistence traditions.
- Empower ourselves and each other as a community to enhance and strengthen our social and economic future.
- Strive for unity.

- Engage and empower our youth to be leaders.
- Utilize our elders and youth to revitalize our culture and traditional values.”

-Village of Solomon Local Economic Development Plan