
VISION AUGUSTA! QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

About Augusta's Visioning Process

Q: What is community "visioning"?

A: Visioning is a planning process that can help a community create a shared vision for its future.

Q: What is a vision?

A: Think of a vision as a community's preferred "destination" - where it would like to be in the long-term future.

Q: Why should Augusta undertake a visioning process?

A: Visioning allows citizens to come together to discuss significant trends and issues affecting our community in a collaborative, proactive way. By focusing on the future, community members can often find common ground for shared goals. Working "backward" from these goals, Augusta community members can develop new ideas and approaches for addressing challenges and solving problems. Visioning does not replace traditional forms of planning and decision-making, but it can make these activities better informed, more strategic and effective.

Q: What is an action plan? How does it differ from a vision?

A: If a vision is Augusta's preferred destination, think of a vision action plan as its "road map" - how it plans to get there. An action plan is a strategic guide to achieving Augusta's vision in the near term (e.g., 1-5 years). Visioning and action planning are usually undertaken as part of the same process.

Q: How are a vision and accompanying action plan used?

A: To foster a shared sense of direction for the Augusta area; to better manage community growth and change; to guide local government planning and decision-making; to inspire and motivate community involvement and action. And more.

Q: Does visioning really make a difference? Does anything result from visioning?

A: There are many examples of successful community visioning projects. The most successful visioning projects can foster major changes in a community; other projects may make a number of smaller but very meaningful differences. Often, the process of visioning - how Augusta community members come together to create its vision - can be as valuable as the vision itself.

Q: What makes a visioning process succeed?

A: There are several key factors that will help ensure the success of a visioning project: (1) sponsorship by major community institutions; (2) support from local leaders; (3) clearly defined objectives and outcomes; (4) a design that addresses community needs and resources; (5) strong community awareness and participation; and (6) follow-through.

Q: Is a vision created by consensus or voting - or both?

A: Creating a shared vision is usually accomplished by working through a variety of means to promote community consensus. Voting can be a helpful tool in visioning - to get a sense of priorities, for example, but consensus plays a more central role. It's possible that a local government might end up voting on the adoption of the community's vision. Still, if Augusta's vision has been developed through an open, participatory process, such a vote will often affirm what the community has "decided" through consensus.

Q: Can Augusta look at a number of possible futures before creating its vision?

A: Yes. In creating a vision, citizens may examine "alternative scenarios" to weigh and consider the potential impact of alternative futures on the community. This may be useful in communities facing overriding choices and trade-offs. Most communities use a more simplified version of scenarios in visioning, and every community ultimately converges on a "preferred scenario" - Augusta's vision for the future.

Q: How will Augusta ensure that its vision is actually implemented?

A: There are many possible responses to this question, but there is one simple answer: persistent, dedicated, committed action. The biggest criticism of visioning is that it does not lead to results. When visioning fails, it is often because a community did not plan to implement its vision once it was created. Follow-through is critical in achieving a vision over time.