



Original 1997 Envision Document

The Envision document is the result of a series of community meetings held in 1997, when more than 1,000 area citizens talked about what they want for the future. A 171 diverse volunteer task force took the information and drafted the visions, strategies, community core values and five key benchmarks. On July 27, 1997, area media presented the draft vision document to the public. Organizations and individuals throughout the community reviewed the draft it and provided comments at town meetings in each county. The final, completed document was published by the Mobile Register on February 15, 1998. The following visions and strategies are the direct result of what area citizens said they want to see happen in their community in the next 15 years.

VISION FOR THE MOBILE-BALDWIN COUNTIES REGION

By 2010 we:

- will have a world-class educational community that sustains the life-long needs of our citizens.
- will have a community that is environmentally and economically sustainable while providing opportunity and access for all to education, arts and recreation.
- will produce infrastructure projects that continually improve our quality of life and economic environment.
- will be a competitive region in the global economy by proactively developing and marketing our technological, environmental, educational, human and natural resources.
- will have government of all people, for all people and by all people.
- will have an involved and active citizenry, working for a better today and tomorrow.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our citizens and the community will develop and use these core values as guideposts as we pursue our interdependent visions and strategies. Core values are character traits that guide in daily decisions.

Integrity and Honesty
Faith in God
Trust
Family
Fairness

STAKEHOLDERS SUMMIT

The participants in the Stakeholders Summit on April 24, 1997 selected their Top Ten Priority issues to be addressed in the VISION Process.

Priority Issues Number of Points Addressed In out of possible 100
Education 100
Economic Development 62
Economic Development Quality of Life 56
Quality of Life Crime and Safety 46
Quality of Life Infrastructure 37
Infrastructure Environment 31
Quality of Life Government 26
Government Human/Class/Race Relations 26
Quality of Life Regionalism 19
Government and Community Leadership Social Services 14
Quality of Life

The facilitator used this list during the VISION facilitation process in April and May. These issues are addressed throughout the visions and strategies for the six interdependent foundations required to provide a global competitive advantage for Mobile-Baldwin.

EDUCATION

VISION

We will have a world-class educational community that sustains the life-long needs of our citizens.

STRATEGIES

A. BIRTH TO 6 YEARS

Provide an opportunity for each child to be prepared to enter the kindergarten system ready to learn. Create an environment that encourages the development of quality early-childhood programs that will enhance the social, emotional, physical, as well as mental, growth of all children.

B. K-12 EDUCATION

Expect all students to graduate from high school ready to either go to college, continue training at a two-year college, or go immediately into the workforce. To meet this expectation, ensure that all students meet performance standards before moving to the next grade and ultimately graduating. These performance standards will include the core competencies in reading, writing, math, science, language arts, citizenship, history, as well as the arts, computers, character development and critical thinking skills. Employers will be involved, with educators, in setting the performance standards and creating and continuously evaluating the curriculum.

1. Expect our teachers to meet the highest quality standards, be adaptable to changes in curriculum requirements, proficient in use of technology, and stay current with the advances in their subject matter. Ensure that all teachers are proficient in the subject matter they are teaching.
2. Provide a safe environment for learning. Provide alternative schools, with needed counseling, for disruptive students.
3. Provide site-based management which empowers each school to make decisions based on that school's needs and on input from parents, teachers and employers.
4. Require school systems to prepare their students to be successful citizens and to have the job skills to maintain sustainable family incomes. The curriculum should reflect the integration of workforce skills.
5. Ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities and facilities.
6. Return to neighborhood schools.
7. Provide an annual report card on each school comparing the school's performance to agreed upon performance standards for students and teachers, administration/teacher ratios, per pupil funding, parental evaluation of teachers and school principals, and other criteria indicative of school quality.
8. Consider a voucher system and school choice.
9. Create an environment where citizens feel an ownership of public schools.
10. Raise the mandatory school attendance age to 18, unless already graduated.

11. Evaluate the tenure system's impact on the quality of education.
12. Expand the use of school facilities for after hours community activities.

C. HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Increase the regional focus of our higher education institutions, including (a) higher education involvement in K-12 classrooms, (b) out-reach programs in the community, (c) faster responsiveness to regional occupation shifts, and (d) a partnership in economic development.
2. Reform college-level teacher preparation to make a world-class K-12 school system possible.
3. Focus on higher education research, and develop a national and international reputation.

D. LIFE-LONG LEARNING

1. Maintain a continuous learning program where employers and employees recognize the need for increasing skills to enhance productivity in the workplace. This will include training for specific jobs, technology, management and leadership skills. Provide training programs that will give welfare recipients and displaced workers the opportunity to move back into the work environment.
2. Achieve an annual reduction in adult illiteracy.

E. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

1. Provide the funding necessary to eliminate portable classrooms, air condition all classrooms, upgrade all facilities to acceptable standards that will promote learning, provide the technology and training necessary for competitive education, and add facilities on a timely basis for growth.
2. Encourage parents to provide the support their children require to be successful in the K-12 school system. Identify those children in distress, and if the parents are unable to provide this support, make training opportunities available to these parents. Provide community-based support from churches, synagogues, service clubs, employers, etc. so that each child has at least one adult mentor.
3. Increase per-pupil funding to meet the national average.
4. Maintain partnerships involving higher education, local government and businesses supporting the K-12 school system. Open avenues for business and industry employees to teach in the K-12 system.
5. Recognize that while only 30% of future jobs will require a 4-year college education, all family sustainable income jobs will require a high skill level. Encourage parents, children and administrators to recognize the high quality and pay of many of these jobs and the scarcity of new job entrants to replace retirees and provide for economic growth.

QUALITY OF LIFE

VISION

We will have a safe and healthy community that is environmentally and economically sustainable while providing opportunity and access for all to education, arts and recreation.

STRATEGIES

A. HUMAN, CLASS AND RACE RELATIONS

1. Emphasize our oneness as a community while appreciating and celebrating our cultural differences. We don't want to be divided by categories, such as race.
2. Become a community that refuses to tolerate inappropriate behavior including racism, criminal behavior, and irresponsibility.
3. Ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities and facilities.
4. Provide opportunities for everyone to participate in decision-making and seek common ground on issues.
5. Develop a reputation as a racially-open region with access to economic opportunity for all people.
6. Establish and maintain an attitude of openness without defensive reactions.
7. Provide flexible subdivision regulations and zoning that encourages mixed-use development with broad socio-economic characteristics to promote higher levels of neighbor interaction and reduced automobile traffic.
8. Encourage parents to provide opportunities for their children to have mixed-race friendships.

B. SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Encourage parents to provide the support their children need to grow into successful citizens. Identify those children in distress, and if the parents are unable to provide this support, make training and counseling opportunities available to these parents. Provide community-based support from churches, synagogues, service clubs, employers, etc. so that each child has at least one adult role-model or mentor.
2. Require and fund social service agencies so that they can provide opportunities for their constituents to move up and out of the system. Success criteria for agencies will be changed from how many people are served by the system, to how many are moved up and out of the system.
3. Encourage traditional two parent families and strive for our community to have no unwed pregnancies.
4. Ensure adequate health care for every child.
5. Encourage employers to offer entry-level positions to assist welfare recipients in entering the job market.

6. Provide and fund pre-school, after-school and summer programs for our children.
7. Provide safe, affordable and efficient childcare in a learning environment.
8. Develop a strategic alliance that focuses philanthropic giving and volunteerism on solving our most critical short-term social problems.
9. Enforce an effective statutory rape law.
10. Ensure that senior citizens and the disabled who are not able to provide for themselves are not denied the basic needs of healthcare, food, clothing, and shelter.
11. Provide multi-disciplinary services to child abuse victims to promote the healing process.

C. DRUG-FREE COMMUNITY

1. Increase drug/alcohol awareness programs in K-12 schools.
2. Provide additional funding for drug/alcohol abuse rehabilitation facilities and programs.
3. Encourage all businesses licensed in the area to have active drug and alcohol abuse programs in place.
4. Implement random drug/alcohol testing policies as normal procedure in all government agencies, schools and colleges.
5. Increase illegal drug/alcohol interdiction efforts by local law enforcement agencies.
6. Increase the penalties for possession and sale of illegal substances.

D. CRIME AND SAFETY

1. Develop a community attitude that expects and demands responsible behavior from each individual and a justice system that supports this attitude with swift and sure justice.
2. Ensure that all our citizens feel safe in all our neighborhoods.
3. Provide uniformed police officers at the southeastern per-capita average and assign them so as to ensure reasonable police response times to emergencies. Strengthen community policing as a crime prevention measure.
4. Expand juvenile detention facilities, the youth center and other treatment facilities to provide an effective deterrent to juvenile crime. Develop programs that ensure a low rate of juvenile violent crime. Enforce consequences for chronically-negligent parents as provided by the law.
5. Keep repeat offenders off the streets. Prosecute violent crime offenses by juveniles in the adult court system.
6. Encourage neighborhood organizations that create good citizenship, including involvement in crime prevention through programs such as community watch efforts and other programs.

7. Increase use of punishment alternatives other than jail time for minor property crimes by juvenile and adult offenders. Require first-time offenders to perform volunteer services and restitution as alternative sentencing.
8. Establish a fund which ensures adequate defense for persons charged in criminal cases who can not afford their own defense.
9. Enforce existing ordinances, such as the litter laws.
10. Strive to eliminate spouse abuse.
11. Encourage community support for the rights of victims of crime.
12. Provide fire-rescue service equitably to all areas to ensure reasonable response time to emergencies.
13. Protect children from molestation, abuse and neglect and bring to swift justice those responsible for committing abuse related offenses.

E. ENVIRONMENT

1. Implement a master plan that includes an effective storm water management program; greenway development and protection; environmental management; compatible land use; and sustainable growth and development.
2. Provide a comprehensive organic and non-organic recycling program throughout the region. Implement a bottle/can return ordinance. Develop an effective home, business and government composting system. Educate people as to their responsibility to reduce, reuse, and recycle.
3. Develop and maintain acceptable standards for clean area waterways and estuaries.
4. Establish automobile safety inspections.
5. Recognize the importance of our natural environment to our quality of life and protect it. Develop and maintain green areas in our parks and throughout the community.
6. Reuse vacant stores for providing childcare, education and library spaces.
7. Develop stringent laws controlling absentee/slum landlords and vigorously enforce them.
8. Encourage industry to continuously improve the air quality of the region.
9. Promote diverse reforestation and use of native plants in landscaping.

F. QUALITY OF LIFE GENERAL

1. Create a community attitude that encourages all citizens to plan for and assume personal responsibility to provide for their basic needs of food, clothing, healthcare and shelter, including their retirement years.
2. Recognize and value the importance of historical downtown areas to our entire region and renovate and restore them.
3. Support the expansion of opportunities in the visual and performing arts and the activities of the area's museums and related cultural organizations. Increase the number of people participating in the arts, museum programs, and cultural activities.
4. Require our K-12 systems to provide each child with opportunities for art education at all grade levels.
5. Build a performing arts center.
6. Provide adequate athletic facilities for all our children throughout the region and facilities to provide rewarding family recreational opportunities.
7. Increase library funding and cooperative efforts to ensure superior access to print materials and interactive electronic media and data.
8. Develop an effective noise ordinance and enforce it.
9. Improve our image of ourselves locally and enhance our image nationally and internationally.

INFRASTRUCTURE

VISION

We will produce infrastructure projects that continually improve our quality of life and economic environment.

STRATEGIES

A. TRANSPORTATION

1. Provide regional mass transit that supports community needs and has a dedicated source of funding.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of a Mobile-Baldwin-Pensacola regional airport.
3. Have strategies in place to expand the Alabama State Docks as business needs dictate.
4. Establish intermodal cooperation and promotion among our air, rail, water and road components.
5. Construct the roads and bridges as outlined in the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission thoroughfare plan.
6. Develop one-stop centers for government services and provide transportation stops at those centers.
7. Find an effective use for the former Navy Homeport facility.
8. Establish a Causeway authority for Baldwin and Mobile Counties.
9. Maintain an aggressive waterway management system.
10. Improve our air quality by using alternative energy for buses and other motor vehicles.
11. Accelerate paving of dirt roads.
12. Rebuild Airport Blvd. as an interstate quality road.

B. UTILITIES

1. Implement a county-wide/regional water supply and waste water collection and treatment plan.
2. Encourage a transition to underground utilities.
3. Protect our drinking water resources through watershed protection and ground water withdrawal regulation.
4. Provide an effective storm water management program which protects our receiving water.
5. Develop utility corridors.

6. Eliminate septic tanks where sewer service is available.
7. Establish a regional solid waste disposal authority.

C. HOUSING

1. Provide affordable housing on a regional basis.
2. Address the problem of slum and absentee landlords.
3. Enforce minimum standards for rental housing.

D. GENERAL

1. Balance and prioritize regional investment in infrastructure including upgrading our K-12 education; improving air, rail, roads and bus transportation; and the State Docks facilities.
2. Establish county-wide land use planning and zoning in a regional context.
3. Provide access to the "information highway" for business, education, government and citizens.
4. Provide the funding necessary to eliminate portable classrooms, air condition all classrooms, upgrade all facilities to acceptable standards, provide the technology and training necessary for competitive education, and add facilities on a timely basis for growth.
5. Establish a comprehensive recycling program.
6. Invest public dollars to purchase waterfront land and develop it for public use on an aggressive basis.
7. Enhance recreational opportunities and access to them.
8. Protect our streams, wetlands and green areas.
9. Develop eco-tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION

We will be a competitive region in the global economy by proactively developing and marketing our technological, environmental, educational, human and natural resources.

STRATEGIES

1. Maintain well-funded and proactive regional economic development programs to create full-time, value-added jobs with benefits, balanced between expansion and retention of existing business, creation of new business enterprises and recruitment of new businesses from outside our area, consistent with our Quality of Life strategies.
2. Provide a business-friendly environment that encourages the development and growth of our business community and its ability to provide high-paying family-sustaining jobs. This will include providing competitive incentives, tort reform, elimination of lawsuit abuse, infrastructure development and competitive land use planning that provides an opportunity for productivity increases above the U.S. average.
3. Develop an effective partnership among the K-12 systems, community colleges and employers to provide school-to-work programs that ensure a continuous annual supply of employees ready to go to work. The school-to-work model will be centered in high school academies, joint high school/community college training, and off-campus internships.
4. Promote tourism vigorously as a means of providing tax funds, business profits, value-added jobs and an opportunity to expose our region to potential self-supporting retirees and business relocaters. Provide the infrastructure development required for continuous tourism growth, and extend the tourist season and length of visit in the region.
5. Expand the Alabama State Docks container and intermodal capability and provide additional opportunities for our region to interact in the governance of the Docks. Capture the potential of the Tenn-Tom waterway and the former Navy Homeport property.
6. Establish public-private efforts to attract and retain corporate headquarters and regional operations.
7. Expand Mobile's international activities and enlarge our export economy.
8. Encourage a strong work ethic where individuals understand their personal responsibilities in improving and sustaining productivity that will increase earnings and reduce poverty.
9. Develop seed capital, venture capital and working capital required for entrepreneurial and minority business development. Provide a supportive environment for technology-driven, high potential start-ups. Include courses in entrepreneurship and the free enterprise system in all school and college curricula. Teach our citizens to be job and wealth creators, not just employees.

10. Recognize the interdependence of the six foundations: education, quality of life, infrastructure, economic development, government and community leadership, in creating the Mobile area product to be marketed internally and externally.
11. Strengthen the public-private partnership that leverages the economic development opportunities created by the Mobile-Baldwin County, Pensacola and Pascagoula region.
12. Recognize and use arts, culture and diversity as economic development competitive advantages.
13. Capture more of the economic spin-off of royalty and lease payments from offshore oil and gas development of Mobile and Baldwin Counties.
14. Provide an effective and efficient connection between Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines for tourist and business development.
15. Infuse our entire community including homes, workplaces and schools with a high technology attitude.
16. Complete String of Pearls II for Downtown and MLK Redevelopment areas.

GOVERNMENT

VISION

We will have government of all people, for all people and by all people.

STRATEGIES

1. Cause the enactment of the strongest possible "home rule" legislation that provides for local decisions to be made by local officials in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, rather than by the State Legislature in Montgomery.
2. Continue to coordinate and consolidate service delivery among government entities throughout Mobile and Baldwin Counties. Expect government to plan for the long term and to strategically meet the basic needs (public education, public safety, public works and public welfare) of our citizens with the highest quality of service delivered at the lowest cost. Make the maximum use of technology to improve services while lowering cost. Develop strong public-private partnerships that facilitate higher quality government services.
3. Revise and update the Alabama State Constitution.
4. Hold both elected and staff government officials accountable for adopting Envision Mobile-Baldwin and its strategies, developing action steps for implementation of specific strategies, and benchmarks to measure the progress on those strategies.
5. Remove the Alabama House and Senate rules that allow one local delegation member to prevent the consideration of a local bill unless three-fourths of the members of the local delegation vote to consider the bill.
6. Create an annual federal and state legislative agenda allowing Mobile and Baldwin Counties to interact with Montgomery and Washington, D.C. with one voice.
7. Develop a tax structure that is reasonable, fair and provides the competitive environment that allows our community to make our shared vision and strategies a reality.
8. Create a high degree of trust between government and citizens.
9. Provide an orderly and timely opportunity for public input in decision-making processes throughout deliberation on each issue. This process will include effective and state-of-the-art methods of continuous communication between government and citizens.
10. Privatize all government services which can be more efficiently and effectively delivered by the private sector.
11. Position our counties and cities to maximize the opportunity of receiving federal dollars at the local level in block grants. With local control of block grant funds, expect more effective service delivery that provides more services for fewer dollars.
12. Expect each individual citizen to be responsible for increasing his/her own productivity and the outcome of any choices and actions he/she may take.

13. Expect government to think and plan regionally and act locally with efficiency and effectiveness.
14. Develop and enforce a conflict-of-interest law that precludes elected and appointed officials from having the appearance of a conflict-of-interest.
15. Make government information more accessible and provide an ombudsman to facilitate access.
16. Increase the number of citizens registered to vote and voting.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

VISION

We will have an involved and active citizenry, working for a better today and tomorrow.

STRATEGIES

1. Create a community where people from a broad spectrum of the community are encouraged to provide leadership and where the community is open and receptive to people who make themselves available to assume leadership roles. Expand dramatically the number of volunteers who are active in our community.
2. Create a network of grassroots neighborhood and religious organizations that develop their own agenda to improve the quality of life of their neighborhoods. These organizations will proactively assist in providing opportunities for their citizens and help make Envision Mobile-Baldwin a reality. Government will create the atmosphere for these organizations to thrive and grow.
3. Provide community leadership and develop the resources to make Envision Mobile-Baldwin a reality.
4. Encourage employers to provide opportunities and time for their employees to participate in community civic affairs and school activities.
5. Encourage organizations to diversify their boards to be representative of our community.
6. Expect businesses with headquarters outside our region to be involved in community affairs.
7. Encourage our key leaders to take their turn in providing government leadership by accepting board appointments and running for elective office. Support these leaders during their term of office as they inevitably experience the conflicts and challenges of making difficult decisions in the best interest of the community at large.
8. Learn from the mistakes of the past and focus on the opportunities of the future.
9. Encourage the business community to provide the leadership for cooperation between Baldwin and Mobile Counties.
10. Develop a regional leadership training program.