



Memorandum

To: Lee's Summit 360° Stakeholders
From: Derek Okubo, National Civic League
Date: October 9, 2008
Re: Last Meeting, Next Meeting

Congratulations on your excellent work this past meeting as we assessed the Civic Infrastructure of Lee's Summit. This meeting of the Civic Index is the most esoteric of all the sessions. To see everyone grasp the concept of civic infrastructure so easily demonstrates that this is truly a high capacity and sophisticated group of participants.

Civic Infrastructure is a term coined by NCL in the 1980's to describe the invisible system that communities utilize to make decisions and solve complex problems. We have found that challenging issues don't stop communities as much as communities stop themselves in how they come together to address those issues. Every community has challenges, which is why NCL differentiates communities by those that "work" and those that "struggle" rather than those that have problems and those that do not. The communities that "work", build, utilize and maintain their civic infrastructures to successfully address community challenges. They have created an effective system of doing business – where the different players share common goals, step into key roles and work together to address the challenge at hand.

The Civic Infrastructure of a community is made up of the different sectors (public, private, and non-profit and residents):

- Sharing a common vision of the future;
- Fulfilling key roles and responsibilities;
- Working together in constructive ways; and
- Building capacity on an ongoing basis.

There are 12 components in the Civic Index. These are the 12 that we feel are the most important and dynamic in the civic infrastructure of a community. None of these components are in a vacuum. They all interrelate with one another in a variety of ways depending on the issue at hand. You will see how the interrelationships emerge in the notes from the small group discussions.

How does this exercise apply to our strategic planning? Conducting this assessment is important because we have to understand the way we currently conduct business versus the way we should to be the most effective. If the way we currently operate is ineffective, our success in addressing any issue will be limited. Therefore, by taking the time to think about how we should be working and incorporate those changes into our plans, we enhance our ability to be more effective in the future. Again, issues don't stop communities as much as communities stop themselves.

I have transcribed the notes from the small group discussions below. Interestingly, the areas most commonly identified for enhancement by small groups were:

- Shared Vision
- Role of Citizens (citizen engagement)
- Bridging Diversity
- Information Sharing

I am in the process of tallying the surveys and I will bring those results to the fourth meeting (due to the large number!).

At our next meeting we will conduct a community scan of Lee's Summit and take our first cut at the Key Performance Areas – those topic areas that we will focus our planning for the remainder of this phase.

Again, good work and we will see you on the 21st!

Civic Index

Small Group Discussion Notes

Note: Small groups were asked to discuss two areas of Lee's Summit's Civic Infrastructure that they felt were in need of enhancement.

Community Vision

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- The community will have a shared vision of what it wants to become
- Our community has a shared vision of what it wants to become
- The majority of residents and community leaders will agree on a shared vision for Lee's Summit and will make positive strides to achieve it
- We will have a long-term strategic plan to achieve our visions
- What happens in our community will be planned and well thought out
- Our community will clearly know what makes it unique
- People will know what the vision is
- Decision makers will be guided by the goals of the vision
- Priorities in funding will be directed toward the vision
- We're starting it by developing a long-term vision, sharing it with the community and getting community feedback.

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Engage people/citizens to become involved
- Starting a dialogue between residents and leaders
- Discuss pros and cons on both sides
- Develop methodologies through comprehensive planning and community-wide collaboration
- Create more local jobs by bringing in more commercial and industrial businesses
- Share current and relevant information
- Offer open forums for discussion
- Offer solutions for compromise
- These kinds of community strategic planning sessions
- Educate and communicate to citizens
- Promote it to others outside this community
- Continue these meetings
- Put communication and feedback methods in place to get the larger community's feedback
- Review of accomplishments and tracking to goals
- More frequent feedback to city leaders

Role of Businesses

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- All three questions on topic should be answered strongly agree
- Non Profit section question 1 would be answered strongly agree

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Ascertain the value to business to be partner
- Articulate and develop atmosphere that encourages participation
- Need separate program strategies for different size businesses with umbrella approach

Role of Non-Profits

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- Provide non-profit facilities for individuals with (diverse) special needs
- Create an atmosphere of community betterment above and beyond what the city government or individuals can do on their own
- Everyone knows what's available in the community
- Non-profits collaborate and share resources

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Identify need, provide financial funding for facilities and programming
- Create a central organization to coordinate individual activities and projects of existing non-profit organizations
- Improve leadership training programs to bring in more participants of non-profit organizations
- Expand Lee's Summit's reach to businesses outside the Lee's Summit area who employ Lee's Summit residents
- Clearinghouse of opportunity
- Central organizations to coordinate – United Way/Community Foundation or Chamber
- Strengthen ministerial alliance

Citizen Engagement

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- Citizens will feel participating matters and will be committed to addressing issues

- Citizens will be involved in community activities and continue to have qualified people running for public office
- People would be aware of their options for participation
- Conscious informed decisions are able to be made
- Greater feeling of connectivity of residents
- Many of our citizens work outside of Lee's Summit and when they return we're looking for them to be engaged in our local government, neighborhood associations and other civic participatory events
- Generational lessons shared – i.e., front porch vs. back porch mentality
- Homeowners Association communication and leadership development
- There will be more attendance at community events, meetings, government engagement
- There will be a more integrated system of disseminating information to citizens
- Connect new families/new movers into the community
- We will have a full cross section of citizens actively participating in all levels of our community
- Citizens will be informed
- Citizens will be energized
- Citizens will engage in leadership/volunteer opportunities/elected office
- Personal interaction with those involved

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Public information and questions and answer sessions
- More people think their input matters
- Encourage a stronger networking among individual subdivisions
- Create a network of subdivision trustees
- Strong media – newspaper coverage of local events; better coverage of government activities, schools, non-profit work
- Local radio station
- Improved community television channel
- Intra and Internet services
- Direct messaging via email, community TV channel, variety of formats
- Education of our educators and students at our K through 12 levels, but as important, engage our community colleges and higher education facilities – UCM, Baker, etc.
- Involve the citizens of John Knox Village for their expertise and experience. Keep them engaged.
- Better "marketing" campaign for community information portal
- Once cross-media initiative for communicating same message
- Find ways to connect individuals to community at times other than when they have a specific need or are seeking information
- Promote community non-profit activities and opportunities to participate

- Develop “hot list” of church, school, HOA, business leaders that can be called upon to address a common goal
- Improve dissemination of information
- Education of residents
- Improve the involvement of the “bedroom” citizen
- Lose the rooftop mentality
- Take ownership of the community
- Consolidate/bring together the regions of Lee’s Summit

Diversity

Describe what would be happening when Lee’s Summit is excelling in this area:

- Celebrate and embracing differences
 - Festivals (MLKs, Longview College world...)
 - Ethnic restaurants
 - Discussion forums
- Citywide diversity events involving schools, churches, ethnicities, governments
- Education about culture
- “Diversity” within educational system especially within the “professional roles” not just among race, but gender too. When this is happening then we will attract diverse business, talent and provide global talent to be competitive
- Demographic of elected officials more closely reflects demographic of Lee’s Summit. More open exchange with surrounding communities.
- All the services, activities, and opportunities are available to all groups of diversity thus encouraging and facilitating participation and community involvement
- You feel welcomed as an individual
- You feel valued that your opinions different or not, matter.
- You also have a group of others in the community that you belong to that share and celebrate your beliefs and values
- Local government is promoting the community to establish diversity

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Lees Summit will celebrate cultural diversity in neighborhoods
- Multi-cultural events, educational activities and entertainment
- Increasing multi-cultural events, especially arts and music
- Diversity of home prices (for all incomes)
- Identify types of diversity to promote appropriate events for celebration then financially support the cultural arts organizations hosting events
- Initiative or proclamation from government or HR Commission to put it out there as something that will happen

- Nurture the % of community that we have by having representation
- Get involvement from current population
- Cultivate the community that we have to keep the talent
- Communicate and talk about the need
- More multi-cultural festivals or events
- Define who we are
- More opportunities for citizen gatherings like these
- Acceptance of differences
- Improvement of cultural development and expansion
- Find an avenue to encourage diverse participation
- Stimulate local government and other community entities (MCC, UCM churches and other non-profits) to bring diversity to the forefront of the community through more than just open door policies, but actual outreach, promotion and development of connections

Information Sharing

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- All media of Lee's Summit will be regionally recognized for quality and fair coverage
- The community is well informed of plans and goals of the governing body
- The majority of residents are informed about current city issues and plans
- Connect bridge-made of info to connect Lee's Summit on the web like Facebook, etc.
- All citizens are aware of the various methods of civic education and choose their own preference
- Information passed on to citizens is responsible, unbiased and truthful
- Greater number of involved community members, more volunteering
- Increased community involvement
- Increased citizen engagement
- We get a higher degree of volunteerism, citizen involvement, more effective government and better informed citizenry
- Financial resources will be used effectively if we maximize regional solutions for mass transit, storm water, drinking water, sanitary sewers, storm water, solid waste, greenways

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- A city will use multi-media approach to communicate
- Build citizen support one at a time
- Develop methods of communications to insure average Lee's Summit residents are educated and informed – or as at a minimum have the opportunity to access the information
- Regular newsletters
- Resident forums

- Web Site = easy to access and understand (layman's terms)
- Establish a standard of reporting the facts and make sure all citizens know how to access the information
- Improve media outlets across all demographics
- Target demographics-identify and determine best medium to communicate
- Continue cable access, quarterly newsletters, continue the strategic planning process on a regular basis
- Encourage more email communication from council members and mayor to residents
- Use water/sewer bill for communication staffers
- Increase public awareness of current cross jurisdictional activities
- Identify areas that might benefit from additional regional consideration

Crossing Jurisdictional Lines

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- See neighbors as partners
- Sharing financial and other resources
- Multi-jurisdictional development (i.e., light rail, recreational facilities)
- Helping other communities by sharing our strengths = leadership, contacts, experience
- Example: KCK/Wyandotte County/State of Kansas = Helping coordinate non-profits to build houses/rehabilitation
- Our city leaders would be communicating with surrounding areas to collaborate on development so that resources could be shared and redundancy could be reduced.
- Amenities of each city could be cross-promoted and regional support would be created to service citizens
- Good coordination with neighboring communities

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Coordinate non-profits
- Community leaders capable of crossing lines and helping
- Regional council participation with KCMO, Independence, Raytown, etc.
- Stimulate local leaders to collaborate and work together with other cities leaders in a collegial manner with the expectation that their outcomes would need to support each city's endeavors
- Work with other communities to reach common goals
- Work with other communities to provide opportunities not available in Lee's Summit

Educating Citizens

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- More participation from more people prior to an issue coming before the city council
- People will not rely on possibly skewed opinions of the media or individuals who receive a great deal of media attention
- People will form their opinions and make decisions based on hearing both sides of a major issue

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Use the internet more efficiently in promoting open meetings on major issues
- Broadcast planning and zoning committee meetings
- Form an HOA advocacy group
- District meetings for each district

Reaching Consensus

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- The community will be more proactive in critical facilities that help the city grow, such as roads and sewers
- Still deficient in public transportation

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Plans to get ahead of problems and to keep them prioritized appropriately

Ongoing Learning

Describe what would be happening when Lee's Summit is excelling in this area:

- Longer term planning of infrastructure, development rather than appearing to be piecemeal. (Hospital/Saddlebrook/one way streets)
- Past experiences are quantitative, evaluated in order to learn for future development

Describe what we need to do to get to that state of excellence:

- Go back and study the past decisions, how they were done, if they were good
- Develop criteria on how to measure performance in future