

Vision 2030: Building North Carolina, one hometown at a time

The League's member cities and towns have completed a process to establish a future vision of how cities and towns will operate in 2030. From this expansive process, stakeholders identified a list of Disruptive Trends affecting cities and towns, followed by 10 Strategic Challenges facing cities and towns all across North Carolina. Based upon those findings, the League's Board of Directors agreed upon and prioritized six operating principles, guideposts of where cities and towns should be by 2030.

Why did we invest in a visioning process?

North Carolina is changing rapidly, and the roles, responsibilities, and scope of authority of cities and towns has been redefined for us. In the midst of all this change, the essential question is "where do cities and towns want to be by 2030?"

- Trending demographics
 - migration from other states and nations
- Urbanization patterns
 - growth of cities generally
 - rapidly growing large metro areas
 - Raleigh region: #1 fastest growing in US: 47.8% since 2000; 1.2 mill total
 - Charlotte region: #5 fastest growing in US: 32.8% since 2000; 2.3 mill total
 - population decline in much of the state
 - 49 of 100 counties have lost population since 2010
- Changing perspective of government among voters
- Changing economic forces - less agriculture and manufacturing; more diversified economy, requiring different investments by cities and towns
- Significant impact of General Assembly actions on cities over the past 6-8 years
 - revenues - privilege license, property tax carve outs, builders' inventory
 - authority - all sorts of changes
 - annexation - limiting growth potential of cities to absorb urbanizing areas

About the Process

The process was initiated by the League Board of Directors in August of 2014 in partnership with the UNC School of Government, and formally launched at the League's annual conference, "CityVision 2014: Charting Our Tomorrow," in October of 2014. Then League President Wall appointed a diverse subcommittee of the League Board to guide the process, working directly with the School of Government staff to take the project to its conclusion. To ensure the process would be outward facing, expansive, inclusive, and transparent, the project was structured to include input from a wide group of participants, including elected and appointed municipal officials, county officials, the business

community, General Assembly members, League staff, the Boards of Trustees of the insurance pools, and a range of other interested parties.

Task force members included:

- Mayor Jody McLeod, Clayton
- Council Member Jennifer Robinson, Cary
- Clerk Melissa Adams, Hope Mills
- Council Member Denise Adams, Winston-Salem
- Human Resources Director Eleanor Green, Apex
- City Attorney Patrick Baker, Durham

Disruptive Trends

After the discovery phase took place, five disruptive trends were identified, laying the groundwork and providing the framework for the resulting 2030 vision. Areas where North Carolina local governments will likely experience disruptive change include:

1. Shifting political landscapes
2. Changing demographics
3. Changing economics
4. Deteriorating infrastructure
5. Growing technology

10 Key Challenges

Following the identification of disruptive trends facing our cities and towns, participants then acknowledged several key challenges that local governments experience.

1. Citizens do not understand the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, expect more for less, and are reluctant to support increased taxes or fees.
2. State legislators are restricting the authority and resources of municipalities, are unaware of or unconcerned about the consequences of their actions at the local level, and view municipalities as another special interest group instead of representatives of the people and the public's interest.
3. Patterns of population growth in North Carolina will continue, leading to strong population growth in urban areas and decline in rural areas. The divisions between urban and rural communities and between richer and poorer communities are growing.
4. Significant demographic changes (race, age, place of origin) will lead to shifts in the culture of some towns and cities in North Carolina.

5. The future of many rural and smaller communities as viable economic enterprises and service providers is in jeopardy.
6. Municipal-county and regional collaboration in service delivery is essential to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, but in many places inter-local working relationships are strained or non-existent.
7. Throughout the state, there exist cohorts of municipalities that share common interests and needs but that, for the most part, are unrepresented as a group.
8. Financial support from federal and state sources will continue to decline even as local needs grow.
9. Future support from the federal and state governments is unlikely to help address the enormous costs for infrastructure repair and upgrades needed due to years of deferred maintenance.
10. Technology has the potential to improve service delivery and citizen engagement but also presents challenges for municipalities.

Six Operating Principles

To address each of the challenges discovered in the outreach stage, the League's Board of Directors agreed on and prioritized six operating principles, guideposts of where cities and towns should be by 2030. They are:

1. Municipal governments exercise greater control over their revenues, structures, and functions.
2. Municipalities demonstrate the value they add to the community's quality of life.
3. Technology is widely used for service delivery, citizen engagement, and economic development.
4. Municipalities widely practice productive partnerships with counties, other governments, and the private sector.
5. Urban and rural municipalities routinely work together for economic success.
6. Municipalities are able to quickly adapt to cultural and demographic changes in their communities.

Five Planning Pillars

Now that the NCLM Board of Directors, led by its Strategic Visioning Task Force, has established and adopted its Vision 2030, we are at the place to answer the question, “How can the League help NC municipal governments reach their BEST future?” At the most basic level, to become a transformative organization for the fulfillment of Vision 2030, the League must execute in these four strategic areas:

1. Reaching and Empowering North Carolina Citizens
2. Expanding Effectiveness and Value of Membership Services
3. Improving NCLM Political Positioning and Influence
4. Bolstering Leadership Development of City Officials
5. Building the League into a great place to work that is cohesive and highly efficient.

It is upon these strategic planning pillars that the components of a much larger plan will be developed by the League staff, with Board input-- starting today, and moving into 2016 and beyond.

Implementation

To get us started in serving cities and towns at a level and in a way to enable them to achieve Vision 2030, our organization must be prepared to:

- Operate a state of the art communication machine and information dispatch service
- Develop a strong, diverse, and well organized political network – including citizens
- Grow and advance municipal leaders from all across North Carolina
- Provide a new array of cost-saving, municipal-specific services
- Serve as a trusted ally and provider of expert technical assistance
- Convene units of government and the private sector, to tackle tough issues

The League is confident that the plan we build now will support cities and towns in meaningful ways far into the future, and push us to the next level of achievement for the betterment of local communities and where cities and towns will be by 2030.