

Community Visioning

The Seminole Vision

Seminole County, Florida

1997 - Year One - Results & Achievements

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Overview

The Seminole Vision process, coordinated by The Greater Seminole County Chamber of Commerce, is a public-private collaborative effort of more than 100 volunteer community leaders. Based on collaboration and partnerships, this effort is committed to the creation of an *intentional future* for Seminole County . . . a future that will lead to the realization of *The Seminole Vision* . . .

*...an innovative and diverse community
dedicated to excellence, prosperity and
quality of life for all.*

Governed by an executive board of community leaders, *The Seminole Vision* process was organized around ten stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups concentrate their efforts around the dimensions of *quality of life* common to almost any community . . . education, transportation, community services, effective government, environment, youth, real estate, business, economic development, recreation, crime, and religion. The ten stakeholder groups defined 31 goals that supported six Community Vision Priorities established by the Executive Board;

- 1) Community Infrastructure and Services
- 2) Economic Development
- 3) Asset and Resource Sharing
- 4) Youth Development
- 5) Education
- 6) Community Involvement

The requirement for each of the 31 goals was simple. Were it not for new and/or expanded partnerships established through *The Seminole Vision* process, the goal could not be accomplished at all, or not accomplished as quickly, fully, or with as broad community support.

Community building is based on a complex set of inter-dependent human and economic variables. No one individual, group or perspective can marshal the necessary energy and resources to make *The Seminole Vision* a reality. For the vision to become reality, individuals and groups that normally do not connect or communicate must be given the opportunity to meet, become acquainted, build trust and understanding, and ultimately develop consensus and commitment toward the accomplishment of goals. Therefore, in evaluating the results of the first year of *The Seminole Vision* it is important to give as much weight to **process achievements** as to **goal achievements**. Without solid process achievements, little of importance can or will be accomplished. We are pleased to report, that in both areas, process and goal achievement, the results of year one are very positive.

Process & Goal Achievements

Process achievements are difficult to measure and quantify; yet difficulty in measurement does not diminish their importance. The initial vision conference in October 1996, attended by 100 community leaders from both the public and private sectors, provided a forum for these leaders to meet, become acquainted and begin a relationship building process. The initial conference led to the creation of a vision statement and the decision to move into a year of goal identification and goal achievement. During this first year, ten separate stakeholder groups regularly met. They identified areas of common concern, prioritized those concerns and developed consensus on goals. Task teams within the stakeholder groups were then formed in order to achieve each goal. Considered together, community trustees contributed an estimated 2,000 - 2,500 hours of volunteer effort this year!

Each of the ten stakeholder groups had different process achievement outcomes. Some groups were well acquainted and needed little time to move to the identification and prioritization of goals. Other groups needed considerable time to organize themselves, build trust and identify areas of common concern. For example, prior to the vision process, the mayors and managers of the seven cities in Seminole County, county commissioners and the county manager did not have a forum for relationship building and issue discussion. As a result of the vision process the mayors, a representative county commissioner and the managers have met regularly throughout the year. They were able to establish and/or strengthen relationships, identify areas of common concern, and resolve potential and real conflict. Additionally, they have begun defining a unified legislative agenda for the coming state legislative session. One tangible outcome of increased elected official cooperation was reported by Orlando Sentinel columnist, Don Boyett. “. . . six of Seminole’s seven mayors - the seventh en route - along with county commissioners, stood in front of the Casselberry police station. They told the press they were speaking as one voice on an important county matter... What goes here? Cooperation, just a few years back, was unheard of ... Now a love fest has overcome the area.”

Process achievements within and between other stakeholder groups included a regular forum for the three competing hospitals in the county to meet in a collaborative environment with each other, the county health department director and EMS director to identify areas of mutual concern. These relationships have set the stage for a newly emerging public-private partnership that intends to address the delivery of primary health care to uninsured and under insured residents of Seminole county.

Finally, community leaders who attended the November 1997 annual vision meeting reported the process has *improved communication, removed boundaries, facilitated cooperation and identified problems and offered solutions*. It has established a *spirit of cooperation*, developed a *forum and a focus for building community consensus*, demonstrated *co-active and pro-active decision-making* and *strengthened a sense of community and partnership* throughout the county.

These results have set the stage for the achievement of tangible goals.

As of November 13, 1997, eight of 31 goals were completed! Fifteen others are “*in progress*” and two had “*just begun*.” For a variety of reasons, both process needs and competing priorities, six of the original 31 goals were not worked on during 1997.

The eight completed goals included;

- 1) One Voice Lobbying of important county issues
- 2) Establishment of a Mayors and Commissioners Discussion Forum

- 3) Regular meetings among the mayors, county commission representation and their respective managers,
- 4) Establishment of a Criminal Justice Coalition,
- 5) Development of a recommended county-wide response to Welfare-to-Work initiative,
- 6) Creation of the Public Education Story: Video - a call for education and private sector partnerships,
- 7) Assisted in securing of state funding for the 46A interchange on I-4,
- 8) Development of a *Declaration of Inter-Dependence Program* - a voluntary program for businesses that will provide a orientation to the community of Seminole County.

Of the fifteen “on-going” goals, several important initiatives should be mentioned:

- 1) Continued encouragement of a County-Wide Perspective in public and private decision-making activities.
- 2) Establishment of more effective crime prevention and intervention initiatives for juveniles.
- 3) Undertaking of a Community Health Indicator “Report Card” and the development of collaborative partnerships and initiatives to address deficiencies noted in the assessment.
- 4) Communicating to decision makers and the general public the positive results of the penny sales tax on the improvement of county arterial roads.
- 5) Creation of a countywide business incentive/investment program for targeted relocating and expanding business.
- 6) Work on establishing a countywide Streamlined Permitting process.
- 7) Establishment of consensus and effort to create a Meeting & Conference Center in Seminole County.
- 8) Connecting and collaborating the services and resources of the religious community with the services and resources of the public and private non-profit human services in the county and the region.

These initiatives, along with the activities that are just beginning and those still on the drawing board represent an ambitious agenda for *The Seminole Vision* process of 1998.

Summary

From an idea birthed 18 months ago by Bob Turk, Seminole County Economic Development Director and Wayne Weinberg, President of The Greater Seminole County Chamber of Commerce, *The Seminole Vision* has continued to “*invented itself.*” Early on a commitment was made that no single organization - not county government - not The Greater Seminole County Chamber - or any parochial perspective would “own” *The Seminole Vision* process.

The energy, wisdom and potential of this unique public-private vision process has been recognized and affirmed. Private sector businesses have provided funding as well as every city and county government has committed time, talent and funding. Over 100 community trustees have volunteered their time and energy to achieve the results reported above.

As year one comes to a close, it is obvious that much was accomplished, but **much more remains to be done if Seminole County is to achieve and sustain the vision.** There is a vibrant commitment among

the community trustees to move forward. There is consensus that it is time to institutionalize the vision process through a more formal organizational structure and continued funding. Finally, there is clear recognition among the trustees and the members of the executive board that the process must be broadened to include more people and more perspectives.

Dr. Burt Bertram was the designer and facilitator of vision process. Wayne Weinberg, President of The Greater Seminole County Chamber of Commerce, was one of the originators of the vision idea.