



MEMORANDUM

To: City Councilors
From: Mayor Joe Peel
Date: January 23, 2013
Re: Update – Vision 2020 Strategic Planning Process

On October 31, 2012, the City embarked on a strategic planning process entitled "Vision 2020: Building a Better Future for All." Vision 2020 is a public/private visioning and goal setting process for our community. This process has been facilitated by Bishop Ernest Sutton and me. The Vision 2020 Steering Committee, consisting of a cross section of our citizens, participated in four meetings, which concluded on January 15, 2013. Nearly 300 people have been involved in this process to date.

Attached, you will find the summary of the Steering Committee's work, which is a synopsis of the four meetings they held as well as the information provided by the various focus groups with which I met. Based on this summary, the Vision 2020 Steering Committee created a Vision Statement, which you will also find attached.

Finally a series of recommendations have been formulated by the committee and a copy is provided herein. These recommendations centered on a two pronged approach in accomplishing the Vision 2020 plan:

1. Economic Development – To create a robust business environment to recruit, welcome and retain businesses to our community, which will provide maximum employment opportunities for our citizens.
2. Community Development – To build stable family structures, which support productive and responsible individuals of all ages.

The next step is to create action teams to implement the critical success factors that have been identified. These action teams are as follows:

There are five related to the area of Economic Development:

- K-12 Education
- Waterfront
- Downtown
- Business Climate
- Economic Development

There are four related to Community Development:

- Championing Diversity
- Building Strong Families
- 0-5 & Pre-K Opportunities
- Youth Job & Entrepreneur Training

Bishop Sutton and I welcome the participation of all persons interested in serving on an action team and look forward to the next steps in the process of the Vision 2020 plan. We ask that we be contacted as soon as possible in order that we will be able to complete the teams' makeup.

This has been a rewarding experience for me personally and I am grateful to everyone who has participated to date. I look forward to continuing this process, which I feel is very important to our City's future.

Summary of Steering Committee's Work

Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County have many strengths upon which to build a better future for all. These strengths are a source of community pride and provide a solid foundation upon which to build an even stronger area in terms of economic development.

Through work by members of the Vision 2020 Steering Committee, participants of twelve focus groups, economic development panel members, and facilitators, the following primary strengths were identified:

- Our friendly, small town feel
- Our improved (and improving) infrastructure
- The power and human capital of our three institutions of higher education
- Our cultural assets -- Museum of the Albemarle, Arts of the Albemarle, the public library and Port Discover
- The potential of our historic heritage
- Our healthcare system – facilities and human capital
- The strength of our agricultural economy
- The beauty and promise of our waterfront
- The United States Coast Guard facility and its human capital
- Our regional airport and burgeoning aviation industry
- Our great racial, ethnic and geographic diversity, which, when embraced and celebrated, will serve as the engine of creativity to move our city and county forward.

Vision 2020 Vision Statement

We see Elizabeth City/Pasquotank County as a place that celebrates its diversity, engages all citizens in its vibrant community and as a place that is heralded by everyone as “The Harbor of Opportunity” as well as “The Harbor of Hospitality”.

We envision:

- Elected officials and citizens working to continue to improve infrastructure, community safety and to beautify our area.
- Business owners and developers saying Elizabeth City is the power house in Northeastern NC – “the place we want to be”.
- Families from all walks of life saying they want to move here to take advantage of our great school system.
- A community that values the health and well-being of its youth by providing them a full range of activities within the community
- Institutions of higher education engaged in partnerships with our school system, non-profits, the business community, healthcare providers and local governments to produce well-trained citizens who speak enthusiastically about their good paying jobs.
- Local governments working in partnership to drive economic development, attract good paying jobs, and celebrating the diversity of our community.
- A community that embraces Coast Guard families and;

We see visitors coming to take advantage of our small town charm, our history and arts communities, our sports venues, our college and university events, and to engage in eco-tourism.

We see a community that truly is a *Community of Choice* for people and businesses from across our country.

Recommendations

The Vision 2020 Steering Committee also recommended the development of a strategic plan to help Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County to become more attractive for economic development. This strategic plan focuses on five areas identified as critical to our economic development success and five areas critical for Community Development. Research and practice have demonstrated that a community's economic success is directly tied to its health and vibrancy. These critical success factors are:

Economic Development

- Improving K-12 education
- Enhancing the waterfront
- Developing a more vibrant downtown
- Improving the Business/Developer Climate in the city and county by streamlining licensing and startup processes
- Strengthening our ties with and building ongoing, positive relationships with our state leadership, the Port of Virginia and area economic development efforts

Community Development

- Championing our diversity and heritage by creating a dynamic partnership among all citizens
- Improving and supporting strong family structures
- Improving 0-5 daycare and Pre-K opportunities
- Comprehensive job and entrepreneur training for youth