

A vision is the first step toward understanding the past, recognizing existing circumstances, collectively deciding on a preferred scenario, and setting a course of action for realizing what is envisioned in the future. This Community Vision documents the citizens' expectations for "tomorrow" and forms a framework by which each individual element of this plan follows. It is long-range and intentionally idealistic as a means to stretch the imagination of what is possible. Casting a vision allows the community to come together to decide what it will be like in 20 years, and to put a plan in motion to achieve it..

Beginning in late 2003, the citizens and leaders of Aberdeen began to tackle the difficult question of how best to plan for the long-term future of the community. While the community has had great success in its past and recent history, it is now confronted by a new era and a unique set of circumstances, which creates both opportunities and uncertainties. The decision was made for the community to decide on a course of action that offers the greatest likelihood of continued success. To do so, what is required is a shared vision of the preferred future that can be used to help guide the community and its leaders over the next two decades and beyond.

In response to this need, the City initiated the process of developing the Aberdeen Tomorrow Plan. The plan development process was designed to offer a unique opportunity for residents and community leaders to come together and engage in a dialogue about the future of the

community. The purpose of this process was to create a vision for the future of Aberdeen that reflects the hopes and aspirations of the residents, and is based on a realistic understanding of existing conditions and opportunities facing the community. A clear vision of what the community aspires to achieve is the first step in charting a path to address the complex decisions facing the community in both the near and distant future. Rather than simply reacting to events as they unfold, a shared vision will enable the community to develop a proactive plan for achieving the ideal future that was imagined by the community through this comprehensive planning process.

Overview of the Vision Process

The Aberdeen Tomorrow Plan was a 12-month process involving over 350 residents and community stakeholders who represent the diversity of the community and its leadership. A 17-person Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) led the process, offering their input to ensure the

To have a vision means to look ahead: to imagine the future. The ability to imagine or dream the future – to create in our minds something beyond our present reality – is a distinctly human skill. History has shown that seeing something in the mind's eye is often the first step to actually achieving it.

As used in planning, visioning is a process by which a community envisions its preferred future. It chronicles the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a community and helps citizens agree on what they want their community to become.

-Michael Chandler,
Associate Professor and
Community Planning
Extension Specialist,
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Community Strengths

Residents identified the following assets during their participation in the vision development process:

- ◆ Family oriented
- ◆ Low crime rate
- ◆ Friendly, welcoming people
- ◆ Resilient leadership
- ◆ Proactive government
- ◆ Local entertainment, e.g. community theater, college sports, Storybook Land, etc.
- ◆ Outdoor recreation opportunities such as fishing and hunting
- ◆ Remoteness
- ◆ Regional hub of activity
- ◆ Work ethic
- ◆ Good schools
- ◆ Faith-based community
- ◆ Youth activities
- ◆ Cleanliness
- ◆ Within the Central Time Zone
- ◆ Educated work force
- ◆ Quality park system
- ◆ Historic districts
- ◆ Regional airport
- ◆ Downtown
- ◆ Northern State University and Presentation College
- ◆ Avera Regional Hospital

plan reflects the values and priorities of the community. The CPAC was charged with the responsibility of establishing the community's core values and its expectations for the visioning process.

The first step in the visioning process was to assess where the community had been in the past. This effort involved a review of planning documents and other demographic and socio-economic information, which served as the basis of [Chapter 2, Community Profile](#). The profile offers a glimpse of where Aberdeen has been in the past and where it is today. This analysis set the tone for community discussions and the overall visioning effort.

Stakeholder Interviews - The vision development process consisted of several opportunities designed to generate conversation among citizens regarding their current perceptions, but more importantly, their expectations for the future of Aberdeen. The first opportunity was a series of small group interviews with community stakeholders, which occurred over the course of an entire day. In all, over 60 citizens participated in this process. The purpose of these small group interviews was to solicit the input of local residents concerning common perceptions, issues,

problems, opportunities, constraints, assets, and challenges of the City and its larger planning area. This input was invaluable in understanding the underlying issues and needs of the community, and specifically the values and priorities of those who know best – citizens, advisory board/commission members, neighborhood and civic organizations, community service organizations, business and industry leaders, major landowners and developers, and other community leaders.

The input received through the interview process was used to formulate the Vision and Statement of Goals. In addition, each of the plan elements were specifically crafted to address the issues, problems, and improvement needs that were identified through the interviews, in addition to the input received through the Community Forum and CPAC meetings. Interview participants were encouraged to speak candidly about their concerns as well as their vision for a positive future.

A series of open-ended questions were posed to each small group, including the following:

1. What do you consider to be the greatest assets of living and working in Aberdeen?



2. What are the downsides, if any, to living and working in Aberdeen?
3. What are the most important issues facing Aberdeen today as well as what the community may confront in the future?
4. What do you envision Aberdeen being and looking like in 20 years? What is your vision?
5. What are the “barriers” or obstacles to progress for the City?
6. What do you consider to be the highest priority improvement needs and/or projects over the next 0-10 years, and then longer term?
7. How might the City develop in a better and more fiscally responsible manner in the future?
8. In what ways could the City be more supportive of business growth and retention?
9. Where do you see the greatest potential for improving the appearance and image of the community? Where are good and not-so-good examples of quality development?

Community Forum - Another principal event of the visioning process was a Community Forum, which consisted of a three-hour evening event held at the conference center of the Best

Western Ramkota Hotel. During this forum, residents from throughout the community were invited to come together to identify their concerns for the future and to explore possibilities for making Aberdeen a better place to live, work, and play. The meeting began with a presentation entitled, “Envisioning Our Future,” which explained the role of the Comprehensive Plan in guiding the community’s important decisions as to how, when and where it grows. After the presentation, the large assembly of citizens attended a series of small group discussions focused on each of the plan elements, including: land use and community character, transportation, economic development, and quality of life (the latter entailing parks and recreation, community appearance, and other relevant topics).

In each of the discussion areas, participants expressed their thoughts and ideas concerning the future of the community. The community dialogue was recorded and the information compiled, together with the earlier interview input, to help create the Aberdeen Tomorrow Plan.

Envisioning the Future

During the key person and stakeholder interviews, participants were asked to use a

Community Challenges

Along with the strengths of Aberdeen, residents identified what they felt to be the most significant challenges confronting the community, including:

- ◆ Climate
- ◆ Becoming a retirement community with fixed incomes
- ◆ Lack of entertainment options for young adults
- ◆ Loss of young residents to larger cities
- ◆ Remote location
- ◆ Lack of options for shopping
- ◆ Property maintenance
- ◆ Property signage
- ◆ Loss of population
- ◆ Appearance of gateways and corridors
- ◆ Lower wages
- ◆ Aging infrastructure
- ◆ Resistance to change
- ◆ Affordable housing options
- ◆ No technical trade school
- ◆ Lack of primary jobs
- ◆ Lack of support for retail businesses
- ◆ Lack of growth policies
- ◆ Outdated ordinances

single word (and in some cases more than one) to describe their vision of Aberdeen in 20 years. The words used to describe their vision of the future served as the basis of this plan effort, ensuring their incorporation in the development of the goals and objectives, and particularly in the plan’s action recommendations. The descriptive vision of Aberdeen in the Year 2025 includes the following core values:

- Growth
- Out-of-the box
- Exciting
- Youthful
- Outstanding
- Cultural
- Refurbished
- Friendly
- Safe
- Award-winning
- Energetic
- Vibrant
- Clean
- Comfortable
- Secure
- Progressive
- Proactive
- Leader
- Developable
- Opportunity
- Attractive
- Regional center

The above words chronicle the aspirations of this community, which is the first step in achieving the overall vision.

Vision and Mission Statements

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) was tasked with developing the overall vision and mission statements for the Comprehensive Plan. These statements are an important part of the vision since

they express the community’s core values and what the ultimate outcome is expected to be. In creating these statements, each member of the committee assembled their ideas of what they would like to see the community accomplish in the coming years. The collection of ideas was then merged together to form an overall vision and statement as to the City’s intended mission.

A vision statement identifies where the community intends to be in the future or where it should be to best meet the needs of its residents. A vision incorporates a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the community and uses this understanding to move it toward a greater purpose. A vision describes the community’s preferred future. The overall vision of Aberdeen is as follows:

Our Vision: By the Year 2025, Aberdeen will have strengthened its position as a regional “Hub City,” providing citizens with ample economic opportunities, quality health care services, exemplary educational opportunities for life-long learning, plentiful cultural and entertainment activities, retail diversity, and a lifestyle second to none.

A vision without a plan is just a dream. A plan without a vision is just drudgery. But a vision with a plan can change the world.



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A mission is a general statement of the vision in word form. It is important to have a rich representation of the community's vision in all senses so the mission statement may be crafted in a manner that allows all persons to derive meaning from it, yet be precise enough to guide them towards achieving it. It is a statement of the role, or purpose, by which the community intends to serve its residents. It describes what the community does, who it serves, and what makes it unique. Aberdeen's mission statement is as follows:

Our Mission: The City of Aberdeen will continue to invest in its infrastructure, including long-term adequate provision of public facilities and services. The integrity of neighborhoods will be sustained through replacement of aging infrastructure, rehabilitation of "tired" structures, and empowerment of residents. There will be reinvestment in historic sites, districts and structures, which represent a proud heritage and serve as points of interests for tourists. The tax base will be stabilized and strengthened by helping business grow, adapting to new economies and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit. The quality of life will be further enhanced with a first-class park and recreation system. There will

be heightened attention to preserving the environment. Aberdeen will be a community with a charming character, rich in history, culture, and family values.

A Glimpse of Our Future

Based upon our core values and overall vision and mission statements, a snapshot of our future would look like this:

- ★ **Our economy** is economically diverse and stable. There are plentiful employment opportunities for our youth and for all residents as they mature in their careers. The existing businesses are actively supported while we continue to foster entrepreneurial business development and attract state-of-the-art companies that complement our local resources. Our workforce is well-educated and highly trained, made possible by strategic partnerships forged with the Aberdeen School District, Presentation College, Northern State University, and our recently attracted technical trade school. We have added value to our industries making them more productive and profitable for their entrepreneurs, as well as for the economic strength of the community and region. Aberdeen has enlarged its

Building on Our Assets



Economic Opportunities



Quality Health Care



Exemplary Education



Culture and Entertainment



Livable Neighborhoods

Building on Our Assets



Sustainable Environment



Vibrant Downtown



Historic Preservation



Youthful Activities



Responsive Government

regional presence by capturing a more significant share of spending and by diversifying our retail market base. Tourism helps to strengthen our local tax base through increased visits to our museum and other historical sites, a lengthened hunting season made possible by private game reserves, and a proactive advertising campaign to market Storybook Land and our many community events and activities.

★ **Our pattern of development** has adhered to the Future Community Character Plan and followed the policies and principles set forth in the Aberdeen Tomorrow Plan. We have guided development inward, focusing on the undeveloped areas that could be provided with urban services most readily and efficiently. The fence line growth boundary worked effectively to prevent a haphazard and outward sprawling growth that would have been costly and blurred the boundaries between the urban and rural areas. Our emphasis on redevelopment and infill has improved property values, allowed adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized properties, and re-established the integrity of

the older areas. Downtown has benefited from the blending of uses (incorporating residential use above the first floor), mixed use development on properties previously used for surface parking, redevelopment of inappropriate uses, and continued aesthetic enhancement of the whole downtown district.

★ **Our neighborhoods** continue to be one of our greatest assets. We have reinvested in “tired” neighborhood areas and older housing structures returning them to quality living environments. Housing prices are now within reach of our residents as we have created a variety of housing choices through innovative subdivision design. Our children are able to afford first homes, growing families are able to add-on to their homes or construct new houses to meet their changing needs, and seniors have a variety of living options. The housing types that are available accommodate a multitude of lifestyles and family structures, many of them near our places of work, shop, and play. Neighborhoods now have vast open spaces integrated into them, which creates character, conserves the environment, and preserves our highly valued small-town atmosphere. Even



though new development has mixed uses and is more compact and efficient in the use of land and services, they are even more pleasant and successful as a result of good design. Each neighborhood is walkable as a result of an interconnected system of sidewalks and community trails, which provide connections to neighborhood parks, places of work, and other community gathering areas.

★ **Our infrastructure system** has been planned to accommodate growth, providing adequate facilities and services for new development. The extension of infrastructure has been timed and sequenced to ensure that we grow in a fiscally responsible manner thereby leading rather than following development. The transportation system has improved local and regional mobility, including not only a continued investment in roadways, but also through the expansion of air service at the regional airport, re-introduction of rail transportation, increased utilization of the public transit system, and much improved walking environments. We have continuously improved

the water and wastewater systems to meet Federal guidelines and to provide the necessary operating capacities to serve expanded and new industries. The treatment plants have state-of-the-art technologies allowing us to closely monitor their performance and to make timely adjustments to maintain their operating efficiencies. The infrastructure system is a testament to this community's commitment to economic development, which has provided us with a competitive advantage over less prepared communities.

★ **Our park and recreation system** is simply second to none. We continued to invest in new community park facilities ensuring that they are conveniently accessible for all persons and offer the types of facilities and activities to meet the diverse needs of our citizens and visitors. We are partnered with the development community in the provision of neighborhood parks that provide close-to-home spaces and facilities for both children and adults. They have been designed with the individual neighborhoods in mind, including assurance of their compatibility with nearby homes. The trail system has

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible."

- Walt Disney

"To change and to change for the better are two different things."

- German Proverb

"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community."

-Anthony J. D'Angelo

"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

-Margaret Mead

"Progress lies not in enhancing what is, but in advancing toward what will be."

- Kahlil Gibran

"There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Dreams are the touchstones of our character."

-Henry David Thoreau

"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is to try to please everyone."

-Bill Cosby



The community's vision includes as an essential component the continued development and enhancement of public parks, open spaces and trails.

been continuously developed and improved, which now provides off-street connections to each and every park, school, and neighborhood throughout the community. Parks help to form an identity for each neighborhood and for the community as a whole. They contribute to quality of life and to the character of our community.

- ★ **Our environment** has been protected and conserved. We now have a healthy and vibrant community with well-preserved open space, agricultural lands, and rural areas. We have protected the areas along Moccasin Creek and within the flood prone areas, which have become

focal points of the community. They have been integrated into neighborhoods and public spaces, making efficient use of natural resources for drainage purposes while serving as amenities. A preserve system has effectively protected native plants and animals that were being driven from the urban landscape. Parks, open spaces, and recreational lands reflect the native habitats of the area, which are frequented by native birds and other animal species. The ecology of The Great Plains has been retained such that it is of great interest for eco-tourists now drawing visitors to the area for this purpose alone.

- ★ **Our character and appearance**, 20 years after the formation of our vision and the development of the Aberdeen Tomorrow Plan, is now recognized throughout the state and nation for its unique identity. First and foremost, a priority emphasis on the appearance of gateways and corridors had a dramatic effect on the image of the community. Our gateways are denoted by significant entry features, extensive landscaping, roadway enhancements, and improved controls of the abutting land uses. We have elevated the awareness of aesthetics in the design of the roadway environs



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by incorporating more green space within the right-of-way, creating landscaped boulevards as arterial roadways, upgrading the standards of roadway signage and lighting, investing in the appearance of bridges and structures, and simply better managing the visual appeal of public spaces. Through updated land use regulations, development adjacent to the corridors, within special districts, and throughout the community exhibit a character that better reflects the community's expectations.

Statement of Goals

The input received from the community through the stakeholder interviews, community forum, and CPAC meetings was used in formulating the goals for each of the plan elements. For each goal, there are supportive objectives and action recommendations to guide the City's decisions and efforts toward attainment of the overall Community Vision. For more information about each of the goals and their objectives, refer to the applicable chapter of this plan.

The statements of goals for each component of the plan are as follows:



The character and appearance of Aberdeen is of priority to the community as a means to establish a unique identity and to leave a lasting impression.

Land Use

- ◆ Compatible future land use planning to prevent undesirable encroachment of neighborhoods and sensitive areas
- ◆ Stabilization of "tired" neighborhoods, rehabilitation and revitalization, and provision of quality, affordable housing
- ◆ Downtown as a vibrant center of business and community activity
- ◆ An attractive, highly livable community with a preserved, small-town character and unique identity
- ◆ Policies, regulations, incentives, and processes that consistently represent the vision and desired character of the community

Transportation

- ◆ Regional and statewide transportation facilities that provide improved access to the community
- ◆ A local transportation network that allows safe and efficient movement of people and goods
- ◆ Alternative modes of transportation to improve city-wide and regional mobility
- ◆ Transportation improvements that are sensitive to the environment and enhance community character

Economic Development

- ◆ An enhanced quality of life that adds to the attractiveness of Aberdeen as a place to live and work

- ◆ An economic development program that facilitates business start-ups, fosters expansion of existing businesses, and attracts new employers that contribute positively to the tax base
- ◆ A highly qualified, skilled and educated labor force that meets the employment needs of local businesses
- ◆ Aberdeen as a destination for tourists and visitors interested in our history, culture, entertainment venues, and lifestyle.
- ◆ A variety of affordable (at all income levels) housing options that is available to new and current residents
- ◆ Provision of information and effective marketing of Aberdeen

Parks and Recreation

- ◆ Conservation of natural resources through parkland acquisition, open space preservation, and environmentally sensitive planning
- ◆ A balanced and wide variety of public parks, recreational areas, and open space in near proximity to all residents
- ◆ An interconnected system of trails and bikeways providing community connectivity
- ◆ Cooperative agreements and coordinated efforts with other governmental jurisdictions,



A variety of housing types to accommodate different lifestyles and family structures is an integral part of our future neighborhood development.



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educational bodies, and
private sector entities

Community Appearance

- ◆ To be completed

Growth Capacity

- ◆ To be completed

