

REGIONAL PLANNING THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION LEARNING FROM ENVISION UTAH

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In the mid-1990s the Salt Lake City region, an area of 98 municipalities and 1.6 million inhabitants, was on a course of urban sprawl similar to what Oahu has experienced in recent years. Then, in 1997, a public/private coalition known as Envision Utah (www.envisionutah.org) was formed, setting in motion a process that profoundly changed urban growth in the region. Envision Utah's story shows not only that urban growth can be turned in a healthier direction, it also shows how to do it. A full account of the story can be seen at www.ecotippingpoints.org/resources/ETP_Envision-Utah.pdf.

Envision Utah started with a regional visioning and planning process during 1997-1999. The way they did it set the course for success:

- They employed a small professional staff to manage the process.
- They contracted Calthorpe Associates (Berkeley; www.calthorpe.com) and Fregonese-Calthorpe Associates (Portland; www.frego.com) to facilitate. Calthorpe offered a unique map-based workshop process, coupled with Geographic Information System software to generate alternative growth scenarios (including freeway and mass-transit corridors) and rigorously assess the consequences of each scenario with respect to what the region's people wanted for their future.
- They used the workshop process to draw heavily on citizen input, beginning with a broad spectrum of influential citizens from business, government, and public stakeholder groups. They then extended the workshops to thousands of citizens throughout the region. Over the two year planning period, there were several hundred workshops involving a total of 18,000 citizens.

Envision Utah kicked off the planning process in 1997 with an intensive study to clarify what people in the region considered most important for their future. The resulting "values framework" was the driver for everything that followed.

In 1998 the focus shifted to workshops that examined how to accommodate the one million additional inhabitants expected in the region by 2020. There were typically 200 people at each 3-hour workshop, ten people to a table. At each table there was a map and chips representing particular elements of urban growth to be placed on the map. In a progression of workshops over the year, participants used maps and chips to explore different kinds of development, various neighborhood designs, and where they should be located to accommodate the 2020 population. At the end of each workshop, results from each table were shared with other participants and recorded for future use.

Envision Utah used the results from all the workshops to extract four representative scenarios. Scenario A represented "business as usual." Scenario D featured walkable communities with nearly half the development directed into existing urban areas. Scenarios B and C were intermediate. For each scenario, Envision Utah prepared a composite map based on results from

the workshops, showing where each kind of development should be located. They also prepared bar graphs comparing each scenario with respect to “indicators” that connected directly to the public “values framework.” For example, the indicators included quantity of new land development, infrastructure cost, water use, traffic flow, and air pollution. With 47 town meetings and a newspaper supplement that reached 570,000 people, Envision Utah solicited public response to the scenarios and key issues that emerged from the workshops. An informal vote from the public revealed a strong preference for scenarios C and D.

During 1998, there was another round of public workshops to mold the most desired scenarios into a “Quality Growth Strategy.” The Strategy included 47 development goals, each specified with respect to who should be responsible for implementation and how to do it. There were also detailed maps showing where different kinds of urban growth should be located. The Quality Growth Strategy became state law at the end of 1999. Stakeholders from fiscal conservatives to environmentalists supported the Strategy because it addressed common ground of concern to all. The Strategy didn’t dwell on restrictions to growth. Instead, it broadened development choices to allow the kind of growth that people really wanted.

In 2000 Envision Utah followed the planning with a 280-page “toolkit” manual on how to implement the Quality Growth Strategy, conducting training workshops for 5,000 people in both public and private sectors. Following up on delineation of transportation corridors during development of the Strategy, Envision Utah conducted a series of citizen workshops to elaborate the details. Most developers have bought into the new development style, and initiatives on their part have been at the forefront of implementing the Strategy. Particularly notable is Kennecott Land, the largest land owner in the region, which has demonstrated its commitment to developing 90,000 acres during the next several decades in complete accord with the Strategy.

Envision Utah continues to assist municipalities with the ongoing process of implementing the Strategy, and many municipalities utilize map-based citizen workshops to do it. Most development is now “filling in” instead of sprawling out, and most agricultural land and other open space remains intact. The Strategy has substantially reduced local energy consumption and infrastructure costs and improved the region’s competitive position for federal infrastructure dollars. Light rail has become a routine part of the transit scene. Ridership is now three times originally expected, and more lines are added every year.

Other metropolitan regions have embarked on this process with comparable success, and so can Honolulu. Experience with the process, from workshops to media publicity, the technical capacity for scenario mapping and indicator assessment, and the speed of doing it all have come a long way since Envision Utah’s pioneering effort in the late 1990s. A report from the Austin region – www.ecotippingpoints.org/resources/ETP_Envision-Central-Texas.pdf, pages 58-81 (Appendix IV) – provides an impressive illustration of what is possible when comparing growth scenarios with regard to indicators such as public and private transportation costs, traffic flow, commuter travel time, fuel consumption, air quality, public costs for new infrastructure (e.g., roads, water supply, sewage), water consumption, urban watershed runoff, loss of agricultural land, green space, and affordable housing.

Calthorpe Associates and/or Fregonese-Calthorpe Associates could conduct a scoping process for \$20,000-50,000. Scoping would include:

- Assembly and assessment of existing information to be used for the subsequent workshop/planning process, as well as assessment of government and stakeholder capacities for the process.
- An initial workshop for about 200 key local people to demonstrate how the process works and how it would be applied on Oahu.
- Presentation of possible structures for the planning process and how much they would cost.

The planning process itself would take 18-24 months. The total cost would be \$500,000-2,000,000 depending on the scale of public involvement, the scope of scenario development and assessment, and the extent of social infrastructure and capacity development for follow through. Much of the expense during the planning process would be subcontracts to local firms for key elements of the process.

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Below is a scoping proposal sent to me by Joe DiStefano of Calthorpe Associates (Berkeley) in June 2007:

**OAHU ISLAND-WIDE PLANNING
PROPOSAL FOR PRE-PROCESS SCOPE OF SERVICES**

This proposal describes the tasks associated with a preliminary/reconnaissance phase of a regional planning effort for the island of Oahu. This “pre-process” work is intended to assess tools and databases available for a comprehensive region-wide effort, develop an understanding of completed and ongoing projects and processes, and draft a scope of work and potential budget for a full regional planning process.

As part of this pre-process, we can also explore potential financing mechanisms and strategies for an Oahu regional process. It is expected that pre-process work would be closely coordinated with and reviewed by Sea Grant, the University of Hawaii, and its partner organizations. The pre-process is estimated to take 4 months to complete, while a full regional planning process would range from 18 months to 2 years in total duration. Pre-process tasks and deliverables are as follows:

1. **Create a Steering/Advisory Committee:** A steering committee with representatives from appropriate institutions and agencies will be formed to support, review, and comment on the progress of this effort. This could include representatives from Sea Grant, the University of Hawaii, the City and County of Honolulu, key business leaders, state government representatives, and others as appropriate. Technical and policy staff should be included. A project manager should be appointed to head this group. To ensure continuity, it is hoped that this team will be maintained throughout the pre-process.

Deliverables: List of key stakeholder groups and organizations and creation of a regional process steering/advisory committee.

2. **Assess the Current Status of Policy and Practice:** There are many existing policies and governmental entities which would ultimately be integrated into a regional planning effort. This task would canvas a list of potential “stakeholders” and summarize their relevant policies and practices. Considerations for and the procedures of these varied stakeholders would help to shape the creation of the island-wide planning process. Specific recommendations of roles for the various entities will be identified. In addition, the impact of existing policies will be considered in shaping the process.

Deliverables: Memorandum summarizing major planning efforts in the region, including key policies and governmental entities.

3. **Assess Existing GIS Databases and Tools:** As much of the mapping and analysis for this process will be completed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, it is important to fully assess and understand existing data sources, the scope and detail level of existing data, and the work already completed utilizing existing data sources. It is assumed that much of the information and GIS data required for a regional process may already be available. We will assess the varied databases of the many entities that make up the regional study area, including the Hawaii Statewide GIS Program, regional entities such as OahuMPO, the City/County of Honolulu, federal agencies, and other organizations.

This task will also include a study of sea rise and sea level, storm, and flood hazard modeling in Hawaii and the potential for integrating hazard modeling and/or sea level change into the regional planning process. Climate change and energy-related modeling will also be explored, and specific actors and potential regional partners identified.

Deliverables: Memorandum summarizing available data and related resources and those that need to be developed or acquired for a regional process. The memorandum would also identify the potential for hazard, climate change, and other modeling based on existing systems or regional projects, as well as the potential to develop new methods or models.

4. **Assess the Availability of Demographic and Economic Data and Projections:** A critical data requirement for regional planning processes is a projection of future population and employment, as well as the profile of future residential and commercial development. This projection must take reliable, consistent existing conditions data as its starting point. This task will assess the availability of these existing conditions data and projections, and the consistency of the data across the region. If necessary, we will outline a demographic and economic projection task to be included in the scope of work.

Deliverables: Memorandum summarizing the state of demographic and economic data and forecasts in the region, including an assessment of data and other requirements for population, household, and job forecasting.

5. **Assess the Adequacy of Regional Traffic Model(s):** Traffic and transportation modeling is an essential and significant component of the island-wide planning process. Regional transportation models, typically housed within state entities and/or within Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), are not always capable of accurately reflecting travel behavior and transportation impacts of various land use and infrastructure development scenarios. This task will include reviewing the existing OahuMPO traffic model to assess their

automobile and non-automobile modal split-modeling capacity and land-use sensitivity, as well as developing recommendations for model enhancements. Suggestions will be integrated into the overall project scope of work developed as part of this pre-process phase.

Deliverables: Memorandum summarizing the regional transportation model for Oahu, as well as recommendations for model enhancements and tasks to be included in the regional scope of work to address modeling needs.

6. **Develop Preliminary Regional Indicators:** One of the key elements of a regional process is modeling and measuring the key impacts or consequences of different growth or development scenarios. The consulting team will work with the steering/advisory committee and other regional stakeholders to identify a catalog of potential regional indicators that would be modeled as part of an island-wide regional planning process. Such indicators can measure a wide variety of outcomes, including land consumption, impact on sensitive lands, congestion and roadway impacts, transit ridership, auto emissions, housing choice, density, and regional and local infrastructure costs. They can also include impacts related to greenhouse gas emissions, public health consequences, sea level and climate change, energy use and expenditure, and storm and flood impacts. This task will work to develop a preliminary list of indicators and begin to assess data and other needs associated with modeling such indicators.

Deliverables: Memorandum summarizing potential indicators, including data needs and other modeling resources/partners required to model or measure such indicators.

7. **Develop a Scope of Work for an Oahu Regional Planning Process:** This task represents a core deliverable of the pre-process, and involves the development of a comprehensive scope of work for an Oahu regional planning process. The process will incorporate many elements, including development of background information, community outreach and citizen participation techniques, scenario planning efforts, technical analysis of alternatives, and development of implementation tools. This task will outline a draft process for the steering committee to review. Upon feedback and review the consultants will finalize the scope of work.

Deliverables: Scope of work for regional process, including all tasks and associated deliverables.

8. **Develop a Budget and Timeline:** An approximate cost for the process detailed in the scope of work will be developed, along with a timeline for the overall project and its phases. A list of key sub-consultant categories will be identified (i.e. transportation modeling, public outreach), with approximate budgets for their participation.

Deliverables: Estimated budget and timeline for regional process scope developed in Task 7.

9. **Explore Financing Mechanisms and Potential Funding Sources:** Calthorpe Associates will work with the steering/advisory committee to identify potential funding sources and financing mechanisms for a regional planning process.

Deliverables: Work with the steering committee to identify potential federal, state, and foundation funding sources.