

Creative Enterprise - Vision Task Force

Research, significant findings, and recommendations



Vision Task Force Members:

- Co-chairs:
 - Murray Gamble C3 Group
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- Team Members:
 - Greg Barratt Cowan Group
 - Aggie Beynon Harbinger Gallery
 - Doug Craig Mayor, City of Cambridge
 - Michael Duschenes Perimeter Institute
 - Sandra Hanmer Local Health Integration Network
 - David Marskell The Children's Museum
 - Mary Misner Cambridge Galleries

Introductory Remarks from the Vision Task Force Co-chairs:

The Prosperity Council has set an ambitious and vital agenda: to help Waterloo Region describe and define its challenges and opportunities for the years to come and to define an action plan for moving toward those objectives. Conversations with Vision Task Force members, other members of the Prosperity Council and many people from the communities in Waterloo Region have helped us refine our collective thinking on this issue. The following represents an overview of the research and planning that has been undertaken over the past year (September 2008 – September 2009), which we hope reflects the collegial and fervent discussions of the Vision Task Force members.

Ken Coates and Murray Gamble

Framing the Vision:

To embark on the type of a journey needed to determine what Waterloo Region might look like as a world-class destination for creative minds, and what kind of unique concepts and elements will define us, it is important to understand the significant challenges facing Waterloo Region.

The following were identified as **Major Challenges** in the way of achieving regional success:

- Shortcomings of the regional transportation system
- Limits on regional health care
- Attracting and retaining highly qualified workers, particularly in the new economic sectors and young (under 30) people
- Limited funding for arts and cultural activities
- The complexity and diversity of the region – to many groups discussing comparable issues and a general lack of coordination
- Difficulty collaborating, particularly in the arts and culture sector
- Shortcomings in the downtown cores of the three cities
- Weak record of sharing stories, messages and information within the region
- Difficulty (as with all Canadian communities) of adapting to the realities of the new economy, in terms of technology, long hours of work, economic dislocation, global opportunities
- Inability to engage youth in planning for the future
- The prospect of becoming more of a bedroom community for the Greater Toronto Area
- Complex and diverse urban political environment
- Winter – a perennial Canadian challenge made more pressing by the mobility of the modern workforce

Waterloo Region clearly has an impressive track record and can build on a legacy of achievement. The following were identified as **Regional Strengths and Accomplishments**:

- An impressive legacy of entrepreneurship and local leadership
- Post-secondary institutions – University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, Conestoga College
- World class institutions and organizations – Perimeter Institute and the Centre for International Governance Innovation
- Comparatively low cost of living; inexpensive market entry
- Urban diversity – three very different cities, surrounding rural area, proximity to Toronto
- Good track record for volunteerism and philanthropy
- Manageable size
- Growing ethnic and cultural diversity
- Economic stability, even in the face of a gathering economic storm
- Willingness to collaborate and to work together on solving problems
- Lots of brain power – talented people willing to work on common issues
- Ability to move fast – and to bring significant resources – when an opportunity of challenge is clearly articulated

Core Principles:

- The focus must be on building a creative enterprise agenda and a prosperous region
- It is recognized that the key to creating region-wide success rests in the ability to attract, retain and produce talented, engaged, and creative citizens
- Creativity includes a number of key elements, including cultural creativity, entrepreneurship, wellness, and environmental sustainability. The focus is on building a liveable, attractive and prosperous region
- Waterloo Region, at present, is not more than the sum of its parts - it has not yet made the leap into an identifiable, compelling, and constantly improving region
- The vision must combine immediate deliverables, medium-term strategies and a preliminary view of Waterloo Region in fifty years time

Defining Community Sustainability:

The four-pillar model of sustainability depends on four inter-linked dimensions:

- Economic health
- Environmental responsibility
- Social equity
- Cultural vitality

- Sustainable community development is concerned not just with retaining local industries, services and resources, but also with doing so in an environmentally, economically and socially beneficial manner
- It increasingly recognizes the need to incorporate culture and creativity in sustainable plans and strategies
- As culture is more widely integrated into sustainability plans and related policies at all levels of government and in wider governance systems, the necessity of a broad understanding of its role in the community grows

General Goals and Initial Steps:

Waterloo Region aspires to become a region that has a sustained level of economic prosperity, a rich and diverse cultural life, high levels of community engagement, a shared commitment to environmental sustainability, and a reputation for health and wellness. The Vision Task Force recognizes that the following areas are critically important to Waterloo Region's long-term prospects and to the quality of life in the area. The group is not preparing recommendations or suggestions for these areas, but will instead focus on areas more directly tied to the creativity/innovation agenda.

- **Economic Prosperity:** Waterloo Region needs to take major steps to ensure that it remains economically prosperous in the competitive and fast-changing global economy. This region has adapted to dramatic changes in the past, but rarely have these shifts come as quickly and as strongly. While the high technology successes of recent years are to be celebrated, attention needs to be paid to the development of a solid and diverse base for the economy.
- **Diverse Cultural Life:** The region requires a strong cultural life - both in terms of direct participation and audience participation - and needs a vibrant, sustainable and creative set of institutions to meet this need.
- **Building Community Engagement:** Waterloo Region has a large and growing newcomer population, including many people from outside Canada. Community engagement must include the incorporation and integration of ethnic residents in the life of Waterloo Region.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** It is imperative that Waterloo Region seek to become a showpiece for environmental sustainability and sensitivity. There is little doubt but that environmental concerns will dominate community planning in the coming years.
- **A Focus on Health and Wellness:** The growing diversity of Waterloo Region – more seniors, a changing ethnic composition, and fast changing demands for the improvement of health services – have challenged the area's health facilities. Waterloo Region needs to continue its emphasis on modernizing health services while emphasizing the need to enhance wellness and to encourage greater engagement in recreation and healthy living activities.

First Steps and Major Initiatives:

Waterloo Region will have to take many steps to reach the general goals outlined above. Moreover, these goals and targets are closely interconnected. Economic prosperity makes it possible to invest in wellness and improved urban infrastructure. Cultural strength and vitality helps attract and retain top people. An improved environmental situation can enhance community engagement and build a strong sense of place. All elements connect, directly or indirectly, to the others.

Developing the Vision:

Waterloo Region has to start somewhere and has to move quickly to demonstrate to the communities and the region as a whole that the Prosperity Council exercise has had a clear and positive impact. To this end, it is important to note that our region has already achieved reasonable success in each of the four pillars of sustainability. But we have not committed the same level of resources and attention to the arts and culture sector as some of the others.

Therefore, the Vision Task Force recommends that the near-term focus of the agenda be leveraged towards the arts, culture, heritage sector, and presents the following as first stage ideas/themes for implementation. The point here is not that these ideas are the only ones worthy of assessment and action; rather it is that Waterloo Region has to take substantial and decisive steps to establish the right trajectory for the coming years.

Five key themes:

- ***Sustainability for creative organizations and individuals, for example:***
 - Guaranteed base funding for creative community
 - Support and resources for artists and arts workers
 - Sharing resources in a coordinated effort
- ***Leveraging collaboration within the creative sector (and with other sectors), for example:***
 - Establishment of an organization to enable the arts community, to look out for the care and concern of the creative sector (both not-for-profit and for-profit creative industries) and to ensure a collaborative approach
- ***Communication and marketing, for example:***
 - Collaborate with Tourism to creatively brand the Region to ensure a comprehensive impression for the creative sector/creative enterprise which associates a certain quality or characteristic to brand this community as unique/special
 - Design and implement a marketing plan - a process by which the relationship between the creative sector and their audience is understood
 - Create a strong digital presence and develop a central information source
- ***Education and community engagement, for example:***
 - Engage children/youth to promote cultural understanding, social development, community awareness, self expression and academic achievement to youth through the arts
 - Engage government
 - Broaden and engage our multicultural audience
 - Seek out opportunities/programs to promote right-brain thinking - a community of right brain thinkers with a focus on aesthetics, big picture ideas, patterns and creativity is critical to future business success. Right brain thinking is essential to shape future community leaders in design thinking and strategy
- ***Bold and undiscovered ideas, for example:***
 - Build venture capital funding that primarily invests financial capital in high potential creative initiatives/artists/arts organizations
 - Encourage experimentation - bold, persistent experimentation needs to exist in all mediums within the creative sector. Encouragement to take a method – try it – if it fails, try again
 - Multiple creative sector venues on the Grand River
 - Investigate bold opportunities/initiatives that will shine a global spotlight on the region which in turn will bring significant attention to our creative sector, such as: an institute for ambitious creative research; a world renowned “game-changing” exhibition; leading edge international festivals etc.

Vision – Key Concepts:

The following key concepts were deemed vital for a creative Waterloo Region:

- Must be a “made in Waterloo Region” solution
- Shouldn’t be a copy of other “creative communities”
- Long-term vision must be broad and emphasize creativity and innovation across all sectors of the community
- Also requires a short-term focus on actionable items (quick wins) that help build momentum
- Need to develop a framework or infrastructure that will support the development and implementation of the Vision over many years.

An Overall Vision:

To create a world-leading environment that:

Transforms the human experience · Makes Waterloo Region one of the most attractive and compelling places on the planet · Fosters artistic creativity · Supports constant innovation in commerce and technology · Fosters cultural understanding · Produces an unparalleled quality of life!

The Waterloo Region Environment:

Is loved by its residents · Attracts the best and the brightest creative minds in all fields from across the globe · Transcends political or geographical boundaries · Embraces bold and constant transformation · Has a strong focus on the future!

This successful human environment fosters and promotes Cultural, Economic, Environmental, and Social wellbeing for all of its constituents

Conclusion - Implementing the Vision:

The Creative Enterprise Vision Task Force would like to recommend that:

- Need to have a strategic review of conditions on a regular basis (i.e. every 3 years)
- A stronger youth voice be at the table in the future

The five key themes and the overall vision, developed by the Vision Task Force, have been delivered to the Structure Task Force and the Resources Task Force for their deliberations on how to best implement and resource the overall vision.