



Heartland
2050



Vision

A long-term **regional vision** in harmony with our
people

December 2014

places

resources



Heartland 2050 Vision

December 2014

Nearly three years ago, we set out to develop a long-term vision to help our region grow responsibly and together over the next 40 years. Through this inspiring process we've learned a lot about ourselves, uncovered our core values, grappled with our challenges, and considered the best strategies for growth in our rural, suburban and urban communities.

For many, this vision process was the first look at the entire eight-county region as a cohesive region. The Heartland vision is a big step in working together across our region to maintain and improve our quality of life through clearly defined collaborative growth strategies that leverage effective and efficient use of resources.

The surveys conducted for this project confirmed that we enjoy a high quality of life in the Heartland region and are upbeat about the future. A low cost of living, good schools, and a strong sense of community make this metro area a place that residents want to call home. But we also have concerns about ensuring that our neighborhoods and towns are safe, having high quality jobs for ourselves and the next generation, and developing our communities with amenities that are within walking distance or a short drive.

This Vision will guide community leaders, giving them a roadmap and identifying strategies that will help them create the kind of place where our children and grandchildren will want to live and work 40 years from now. It is built on the principles of equity, efficiency, inclusivity, and regional cooperation. **The Vision specifically identifies six goals related to People, Places, and Resources:**

- * Our region will strengthen our robust economy and become a national magnet for a young and highly skilled workforce.**
- * Our region will provide the highest quality education system that educates the workforce of the future.**
- * Our region will be known for healthy living, safe neighborhoods, preservation of arts and culture, and exceptional health care.**
- * Our region will be known for welcoming, connected and lively communities.**
- * Our region will invest in efficient infrastructure that supports economic development, provides more transportation choices and reduces energy consumption.**
- * Our region will value, protect and utilize natural resources to provide access to green space and resilience from natural disasters.**

We are now at the end of the Heartland 2050 visioning process and find ourselves at another beginning. The Heartland Vision provides a blueprint for future action - it proposes a framework for ongoing collaboration to achieve our shared vision. We will get there with the help and participation of individuals, organizations, businesses and leaders, working together to grow our region responsibly.

The work is just beginning and we invite you to join us. We ask communities and organizations to sign the Heartland Regional Compact to show your support and commitment to the Vision's goals. Volunteers are welcome to join an implementation committee, and individuals can stay up to date by signing up at Heartland2050.org for email alerts and newsletters. We look forward to working with you!



Greg Youell
Executive Director, MAPA



Dana Bradford
Steering Committee, Co-Chair



Tom Hanafan
Steering Committee, Co-Chair

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the hundreds of dedicated individuals and organizations who have contributed to make the Heartland Vision a reality.

Steering Committee

Dana Bradford, **Waitt Company** – Committee Co-Chair
Tom Hanafan, **Pottawattamie County** – Committee Co-Chair

Renea Anderson, **Harrison County EDC**
Dr. Kenneth Bird, **Avenue Scholars Foundation**
Mary Ann Borgeson, **Douglas County, Nebraska**
David Brown, **Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce**
Tim Burke, **Omaha Public Power District**
Mike Cassling, **CQence Health Group**
Dick Christie, **Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium**
Barry Cleaveland, **Iowa Transportation Commission**
Sandy Dodge, **NP Dodge Real Estate**
Mark Doyle, **Metropolitan Utilities District**
Todd Foje, **Great Plains Communications**
Mikki Frost, **City of Omaha**
April Gray, **Offutt Air Force Base - 55th Support Group**
Lynn Grobe, **Pottawattamie County, Iowa**
Jim Grotrian, **Metropolitan Community College**
Amy Haase, **Metro Transit Board**
Frank Hayes, **Hayes & Associates, L.L.C.**
Dave Johnson, **Mid-American Energy**
Doug Kindig, **City of La Vista, Nebraska**
Dan Kinney, **Iowa Western Community College**
Ron Kohn, **Mills County, Iowa**
Stuart Krejci, **First National Bank of Wahoo**
Steve Kruger, **Washington County, Nebraska**
Charles D Kuhl, **Offutt Air Force Base - 55th Support Group**
Clark Lauritzen, **First National Bank**
Dave Lutton, **Saunders County, Nebraska**
Bob McCarthy, **McCarthy Construction**
Othello Meadows, **75 North Revitalization, Inc.**
Heath Mello, **Metropolitan Community College**
Jim Peterson, **Cass County, Nebraska**
Vicki Quaites-Ferris, **African American Empowerment Network**
Carolina Quezada, **Latino Center of the Midlands**
BJ Reed, **University of Nebraska at Omaha**
Dick Reiser, **Werner Trucking**
Tom Richards, **Sarpy County, Nebraska**
Daniel Ritter, **Mayor's Youth Leadership Commission**
Rita Sanders, **City of Bellevue, Nebraska**
Clifford Scott, **Omaha Housing Authority**
Randy Scott, **Father Flanagan's Boys' Home (Boys Town)**
Cassie Seagren, **City of Omaha, Mayor's Office**
Sarah Sjolie, **CHI Health**
Bob Smith, **Harrison County, Iowa**
Connie Spellman, **Omaha by Design**
Jerry Standerford, **Sherwood Homes/Lane Bldg. Corp.**
Jean Stothert, **City of Omaha**
Jerry Torczon, **BHI Development Inc.**
Pete Tulipana, **Iowa West Foundation**
Dennis Van Moorlegheem, **Regency Homes Omaha**
Linda Washburn, **Mills County Econ. Development Foundation**

Equity & Engagement Committee Representative Organizations

David Harris – **Committee Chair**
African American Empowerment Network
Boys & Girls Club of Omaha
Business Ethics Alliance
Caring People Sudan
Charles Drew Medical Center
City of Bellevue
City of Council Bluffs
City of Council Bluffs
Coalition for a Strong Nebraska
Council Bluffs School District
Creighton University
Douglas County Health Department
Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership
Family Housing Advisory Services
Girls, Inc
Golden Hills Resource Conservation & Development
Habitat for Humanity Council Bluffs
Habitat for Humanity Omaha
Heartland Family Services
Heartland Workers Center
inCOMMON Community Development
Infinite 8
Iowa Western Community College
Justice for Our Neighbors
Latino Center of the Midlands
Lutheran Family Services
MACCH (Metro Area Continuum of Care for Homeless)
Malcom X Foundation
Midlands Mentorship Partnership
Nebraska Appleseed
No More Empty Pots
Non Profit Association of the Midlands
Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Omaha Community Foundation
Omaha Economic Development Agency
Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance
Omaha Housing Authority
Omaha Metro Transit
Omaha Public Schools
Peter Kiewit Foundation
Pottawattamie County Community Foundation
Project Extra Mile
Sherwood Foundation
University of Nebraska-Omaha
University of Nebraska-Omaha Latin/Latino American Studies
Urban Indian Health Coalition
Urban League of Nebraska
Voices for Children-Nebraska
Western Iowa Development Agency

MAPA Staff

Greg Youell, **Executive Director**
Lynn Dittmer, **Community & Economic Development Manager**
Clint Sloss, **Project Manager**
Jeff Spiehs, **Outreach Coordinator**
Sue Cutsforth, **Communications Coordinator**

MAPA Board of Directors

Ron Kohn, **IA Small Communities/Counties – Board Chair**
Rita Sanders, **City Of Bellevue – Vice Chair**
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Doug Kindig, **NE Small Communities/Counties**
Rich Pahls, **Omaha City Council**
Tom Richards, **Sarpy County**
Jean Stothert, **City of Omaha**
Matt Walsh, **City of Council Bluffs**

Consultant Team

Fregonese Associates
Vireo
ECONorthwest
Emspace Group
Nelson Nygaard
Steve Jensen Consulting
Dialogue Farm

The Heartland 2050 region encompasses the entire Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area, including eight counties, two states and all communities.

By coming together in this regional planning effort, we widen our perspective to see how everyone involved - governments, businesses, and individuals - are part of a larger, interconnected system, where over time, **small actions lead to great impacts.**

The Heartland Vision protects and enhances the **places** we call home, supports the **people** who live here with us and preserves the **resources** that make it unique.



Vision

Heartland
2050 

1 Why is the Heartland Vision Necessary?	1
2 The Visioning Process	11
3 The Heartland Vision.....	25
4 First Steps to Achieving the Vision	45





1

Why is the Heartland Vision Necessary?

When the Heartland is compared to other regions across the country, our region is in an enviable position. Our quality of life is high and backed by strong neighborhoods, a solid economy, and low cost of living. The area is also known as a vibrant place where proactive community members find opportunities to step forward and make change happen in a way that can positively impact the lives of those who surround them. The region also faces serious socio-economic disparities (areas of concentrated poverty and housing segregation) and challenges (projected major demographic shifts) that will test the region's resiliency. Community leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are already taking steps to connect its more vulnerable communities to educational and economic opportunities. **Residents want to ensure that the region continues to thrive; a place where people of all walks of life have the opportunity to live, work, play and contribute.**



1

Accommodating a Growing Population

Our eight-county region is expected to add nearly 400,000 people by 2050. The change will have a measurable impact across the entire metropolitan area, affecting not only the urban areas, but also the suburban and rural communities. This growth will also affect the demographic composition of the region as new residents look for housing, jobs, services, entertainment, ways to be involved and give back, and much more. **Where will we live, work and play? How will we all get around? How will we meet the needs of everyone in our community? And most important, how can we keep the Heartland a place we want to live?**

Determining Where and How We Grow

Together, one of the most pressing questions we must answer is how we will grow and what that look like. With hundreds of thousands of new people and jobs coming to the region, the region will experience major growth in the next 40 years. We have choices about where this growth occurs, and how well it supports our economic competitiveness, resources, quality of life, equitable development and continued affordability.

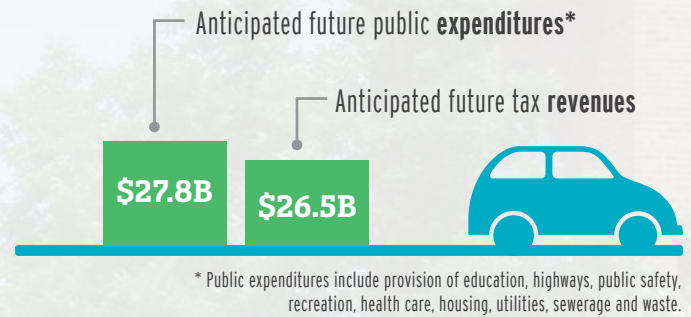
As a region, **should we continue trends of the past, growing mostly outward and converting fields to new residential developments and business parks? Should we encourage more of our growth inward, and invest more in existing communities? Can we do both in a way that improves the quality of life for all residents?**

This central question of how and where we grow is a driving force behind the Heartland 2050 Vision. **We must work together to grow responsibly.**

In times of increasing fiscal strain, continued growth will require leaders to use what we have efficiently and spend public funds wisely. Infill and redevelopment strategies are needed to improve existing communities, and add more jobs, housing, transportation and important services that revitalize existing cities, towns and neighborhoods. Currently, infill development accounts for a smaller share of overall growth in the Heartland region, but in other regions with policies in place to encourage this kind of investment, infill can represent 20-30% of overall growth.

During the past 40 or more years, the region, as a whole, has grown in an auto-centric manner – much like the rest of our metros across the country. This pattern of growth is expensive both for infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) and for governments to provide services like police and fire to relatively fewer residents in areas with low-density development, and low tax revenues to support it. However, looking forward, the region's future infrastructure needs exceed anticipated revenues and the region's sewage treatment systems are already reaching the edges of their service areas. Similarly, many baby boomers are choosing to downsize into smaller houses, townhomes and condos. These trends indicate a significant shift in the Heartland region's development patterns.

If we continue our current patterns of growth, public costs will outpace our region's tax revenues by 2050.



Anticipated Growth in the Heartland Region

	Today	2050	
Population	865,321	1,228,634	+42%
Employment	457,177	638,497	+40%

Source: U.S. Census, Fregonese Associates analysis.

Projected Land Consumption (urbanized acres) in the Heartland Region if Current Development Trends Continue

2010	186,882	
2050	278,357	+49%

Anticipated Population Growth by County

	2010-2050	
Douglas	168,400	+33%
Sarpy	149,000	+94%
Pottawattamie	27,800	+30%
Cass	8,300	+33%
Saunders	4,300	+21%
Washington	8,700	+43%
Harrison	(3,400)	-23%
Mills	350	+2%

Source: MAPA and Woods & Poole.

Should we continue trends of the past, growing mostly outward and converting fields to new residential developments and business parks?

Should we encourage more of our growth inward, and invest more in existing communities?

Can we do both?

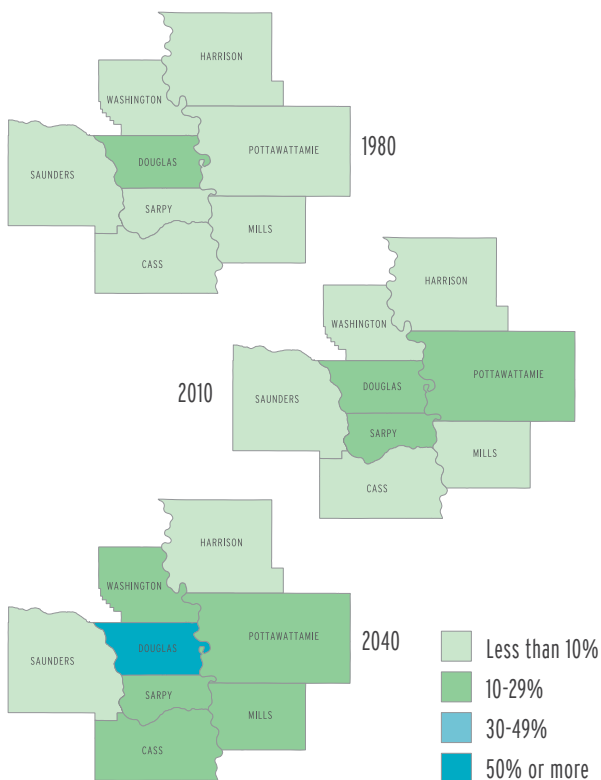
Can we grow in a way that improves the quality of life for all residents?



1

Between 2010 and 2040, the number of people of color is projected to double in all parts of our region except for Sarpy County, where it will still increase significantly (48%). In 2040, people of color will be the majority in Douglas County.

% People of Color by County, 1980 to 2040



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Woods & Poole Economics.

Maintaining Quality of Life and Economic Competitiveness for a More Diverse Region

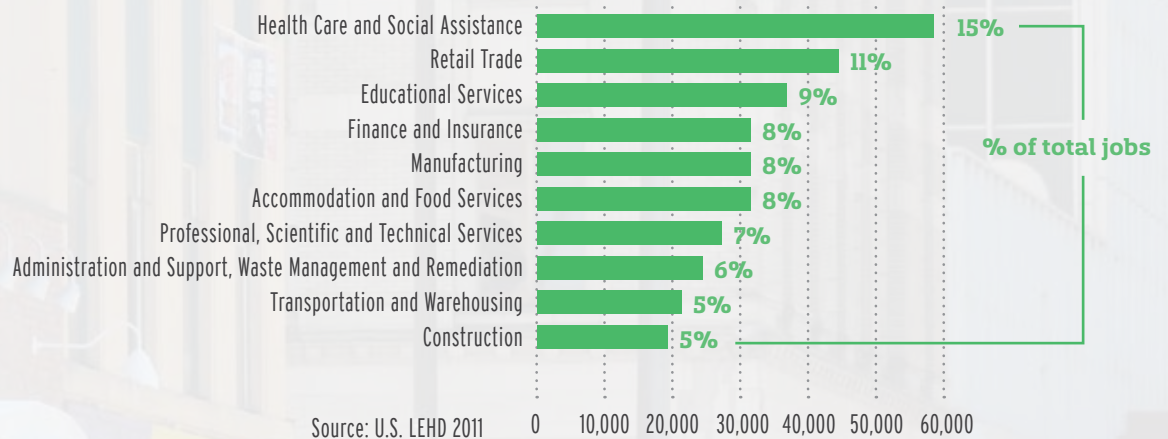
The Heartland region includes an incredible variety of communities, but **we are united by the regional economy, and we all have a stake in our future.** The economy of the greater Omaha-Council Bluffs region is strong and expected to grow substantially, so much that job growth is expected to outpace the workforce. Competition between metro areas to attract and retain a talented workforce and new jobs will only increase in the years to come. Moreover, the anticipated future growth will place unprecedented stress on the ability to provide infrastructure and services and maintain a high quality of life for our families.

While most communities worked hard to promote growth over the past 40 years, the reality is that it will be even harder for many regions to grow over the next 40 years. From 1970 to 2010, growth was largely due to natural growth (higher birth rates than death rates). Due to declining family size and aging of the large “baby boomer” generation, this is not likely to provide the same level of growth.

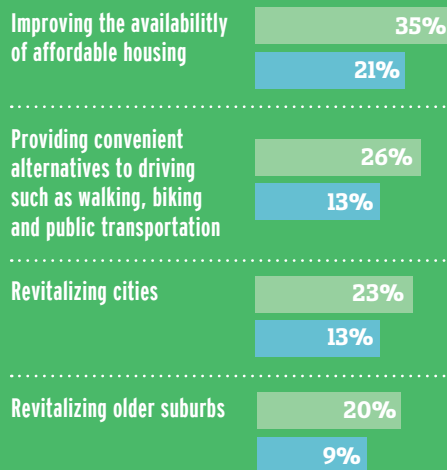
In order to maintain and grow its population base, the region will need to attract substantially more people to the area. To accomplish this, **the region needs to act strategically and make the kinds of investments in infrastructure, services and amenities that support people and businesses, and serve to make the region more attractive to those who considering relocating to the region.** In addition to quality jobs, young people are increasingly attracted to more walkable, vibrant, and affordable neighborhoods. They also makes choices to live in neighborhoods served by convenient transportation options, including transit, where they are close to work and opportunities for recreation, culture and entertainment.

Finally, to secure a prosperous future, **the Heartland needs a growth model that is driven by equity - just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone has access to participate and prosper in the region.** Concerted investments and policies for, and developed from within, communities of color will also be essential to ensure the region’s fastest-growing populations are ready to lead it into the next economy.

Eight County Region Employment Profile

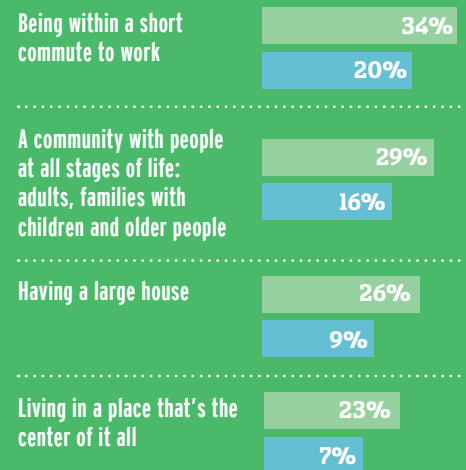


Identified as Extremely High Priorities for State Government



Source: National Association of Realtors 2013 Community Preference Survey

Identified as Important Factors in Deciding Where to Live



Studies indicate that age influences our preferences for public spending, where we live and kinds of housing we choose to live in.

Our region needs to be able to accommodate older generations as well as the younger workforce.



Why is the Heartland Vision Necessary

1

Building an Inclusive Community for the Prosperity of the Region

Many people view a strong economy as the biggest contributor to quality of life. **While we are fortunate to have a strong, diverse regional economy that affords many residents a very high quality of life, significant disparities exist and threaten our future vitality.** Some segments of the population are left out of the current prosperity - and the struggles of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods affect us all.

Low educational attainment and low incomes are most prevalent in the fastest-growing portions of the metro area. And in 2012, the Metropolitan Statistical Area experienced a net loss of over 2,700 college graduates due to outmigration. These trends represent a threat to the continued prosperity of the area, and shows that many are not sharing in the region's overall prosperity.

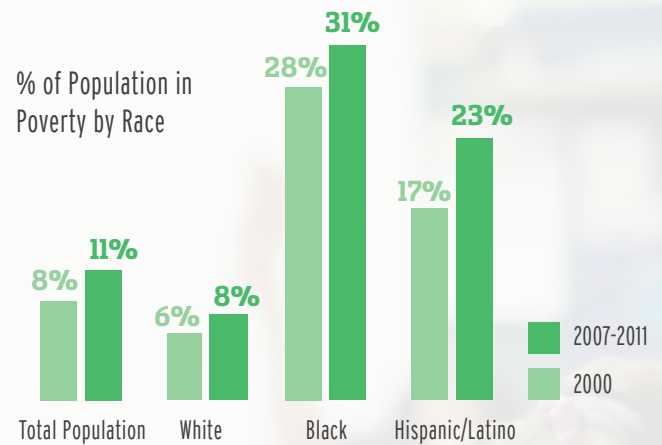
The Heartland region has relatively high levels of segregation and concentrations of poverty for Black and Hispanic or Latino residents. And **even controlling for poverty, these residents have lower access to opportunities to materially improve their quality of life. The neighborhoods with the highest Black, Hispanic or Latino populations generally have lower access to opportunity for jobs, lower labor market engagement and increased potential for exposure to health hazards.** Some of the barriers to desegregation and increasing access to opportunity for these residents, especially people living in poverty, include having quality employment opportunities, access to affordable housing, and other institutional issues such as barriers to lending.

Heartland residents place high value on the strong sense of community, and they want the region to be an inclusive place where there are more opportunities for residents to be actively involved in work and community life. It will be our challenge to grow the region in ways that reverse these trends and make meaningful strides towards eliminating poverty and ensure residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods enjoy the quality of life found in many other areas across our metro.

We must recognize the region's growing, diverse population can be a major economic asset if leaders invest in ensuring all of our residents can access good jobs and contribute their talent and creativity to building a strong economy. Concerted investments and policies for, and developed from within, communities of color will also be essential to ensure the region's fastest-growing populations are ready to lead it into the next economy.

To secure a prosperous future, the region needs to implement a growth model that is driven by equity - just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone has access to participate and prosper in the region.

Poverty levels in the region have increased during the past 10 years, affecting communities of color disproportionately.



Ensuring access to quality schools and jobs will help everyone in our region succeed.

Fair Housing and Equity Assessment

As part of the Heartland 2050 visioning process, a Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA) was conducted to assess current conditions and barriers to fair housing for people of all races and ethnicities at the regional level. FHEA methodologies were developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to better address inequalities based on where people live. The findings are stark:

- * People living in poverty, especially children, have lower access to opportunity than people not in poverty.
- * Black and Hispanic or Latino people, especially children, have lower access to opportunity than whites in all metrics (poverty, school proficiency, labor market engagement, job access, and health hazard exposure).
- * Regardless of income, white people generally live in neighborhoods of higher opportunity.
- * Although some areas of racialized poverty are located near major job centers such as downtown Omaha, the employment opportunities often don't match skills, job experience and educational attainment of residents.



1

Working Together as a Region

The Heartland region is home to over 850,000 people¹, covering two states, eight counties and 4,400 square miles. Our region is geographically diverse, with urban, suburban and rural communities of all sizes, from the city center of Omaha-Council Bluffs to small towns like Oakland and Wahoo. **For many, this visioning process may be the first look at the region as a cohesive, interdependent whole.** The urban core provides the economic engine, with employment centers, vital services, arts, culture and entertainment opportunities, and connections to the nation and beyond via Eppley Airfield. And just the same, the agricultural base of the region is and will continue to be a major pillar of the region's economy and livelihood for many residents. **We need a vision that incorporates strategies for urban, suburban and rural communities, and recognizes our interdependence.**

The Heartland Vision is a big step in working together across our region to maintain and improve our quality of life. The region has a strong track record of successful regional cooperation, including: the Papillion Creek Sewage Treatment system, which has allowed Douglas and Sarpy Counties to manage and encourage contiguous suburban development over the past 40 years; the Metropolitan Utility District (MUD) serving water and natural gas on a regional scale in Douglas, Sarpy and Washington Counties; and the Greater Omaha Chamber's economic development strategy which encompasses most of the region. These diverse examples demonstrate how important coordinated regional

planning and action can be, influencing topics from natural resource management, to ensuring diverse housing options, strengthening economic development, and making key transportation investments, which are some of the topics included in the Heartland Vision.

To collaborate at the regional level, agencies and organizations must work together to increase the collective impact of our many public, nonprofit and private organizations involved in shaping our region.

Collective impact is a model of working together across sectors on complex, large-scale and long-range social issues.

By working together in a structured and coordinated way, we accomplish more together than we can independently.

Successful coordinated regional planning and implementation is characterized by key actions:

- * Create a common agenda or plan
- * Share a measurement system and track indicators of success
- * Work together in mutually reinforcing activities
- * Engage in continuous communication to build trust and relationships
- * Utilize a backbone support organization that coordinates, supports and facilitates the collective process

1 U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census.



Planning for Our Future

In order to grow responsibly, together, we must evaluate where we are today, determine what we want to be in the future, and outline a plan to achieve the future we want for our region. Planning for the future and working toward this shared vision is one way we can protect and enhance our community and quality of life - and ensure that future generations of Heartland residents are able to find opportunity because of our proactive, long-term coordination of people, places and resources. **The potential impacts of the Heartland Vision extend beyond the physical borders of the eight counties. The impact reaches our pocketbooks, jobs, education, and quality of life. Planning for the future allows our communities to be competitive and make an impact at a larger scale regionally, nationally and internationally.**

The three-year development of the Heartland Vision is our eight-county area's first collaborative effort in the long-term process of defining what our region will offer future generations. Many partners, including thousands of community members have worked together to create the Vision. The Vision sets the stage for the direction our community will take over the coming decades. It is a reflection of region-wide values and principles, and outlines meaningful and community-driven goals, implementation strategies and priority actions to get us there.



Thousands of people from around the region shared their voice.





MENU

The planning department type transportation...
...of residential and employment...
...development are a significant source of...
...development are a significant source of...
...development are a significant source of...

Food centers are available because of their mix...
...of uses and commercial street network. Their...
...location with a mix of service businesses and...
...employer readers. Buildings are about the...
...to their service but and not usually mixed uses...
...attractive work development characteristics...
...type also include commercial development such as...
...offices and restaurants.

Many drivers are available because of their mix...
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ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial development is a significant source of...
...of supply-side retail buildings, office space...
...family housing. Land uses are generally...
...and other to parking areas. The...
...commercial centers are...
...of the...
...along major...



2 The Visioning Process

The Heartland Vision was created from beginning to end as a reflection of the needs and desires of the region's residents.

The planning process coordinated input and feedback from the Heartland 2050 committees, research teams and the general public - ensuring opportunities at every level for everyone, even our most underrepresented populations, to contribute to this important discourse. It's important for all of us to be involved in setting the path for our shared future. Engagement also ensures public support and momentum for making the Vision a reality. Specific tools and resources were developed to engage the public, and to harness regional leadership and expertise to inform the process.



Public Engagement

Committees

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee has been the primary decision-making body for the effort. It was supported in its decision-making role by community workshops and focus groups and a set of stakeholder committees organized around relatable themes: **people** (human capital); **resources** (natural capital); and **places** (built capital). Committee members represent a broad span of industry and community groups, including universities and community colleges, finance, transportation, public health, utilities, elected officials, developers, and minority groups.



Research Teams: Steering Committee members were organized into research teams including education, economic development, agriculture, transportation, utilities, health issues, land use and natural resources, demographics, mobility, housing and the built environment. The teams produced in-depth research and reporting for use during the development of regional land use scenarios and growth strategies.

Equity and Engagement Committee (EEC): Steering Committee members also participated and worked in coordination with the Heartland 2050 EEC. As a decision-making body, the EEC was responsible for quality assurance and coordination of the public outreach and engagement activities for Heartland 2050.

The EEC's working definition of equity states that "all individuals and communities have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to attain their full potential." Under the theme of "lifting everyone to prosperity; providing a hand up, versus handouts down," the EEC focused its efforts on developing priority equity-related goals, strategies and action steps for key equity topics. Topics included health and food systems, economic development and employment, education, community and neighborhood development, housing, transportation, civic engagement, and immigrant integration.

Visioning Committees: Visioning Committees occupied the middle ground between the organizational and content-generating elements of Heartland 2050. Committees were formed around broad and relatable themes (Transportation and Infrastructure, Housing and Development, Resources, Economic Development, Education, Health and Safety) and were comprised of individuals and organizations representing the spectrum of expertise, community type, sector, and position on the value chain (e.g. producer, consumer).

Three rounds of meetings were held with more than 100 people participating in each session. They served as forums for discussion, interpretation and networking. Ultimately, the Vision Committees were responsible for crafting the outcomes, strategies and draft action steps (elements of the Heartland 2050 Action Plan). Their recommendations were the outcomes of thorough analysis and detailed discussions about the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Similar committees will continue as part of implementation.



2

Outreach

Values Baseline Research: Baseline research was used to identify the core values, concerns and outlooks unique to our region. The team surveyed a representative sample of Heartland residents from all eight counties and across the spectrum of age, race, ethnicity, income and educational attainment.

Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA):

Based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) methodology for information gathering and analysis, the FHEA report and mapping conducted as part of Heartland 2050 provided regional leaders with information needed to understand where concentrated poverty and segregation exist, and to understand the barriers to fair housing and access to opportunity experienced by some segments of the community. As part of this process, a task force of EEC stakeholders and housing experts developed strategies to address the structural causes of inequality.

Outreach Coordinator: In an effort to sustain meaningful public engagement, Heartland 2050 established a community outreach coordinator to regularly manage stakeholder interactions, establish new stakeholder contacts, and continually build and rebuild relationships with community members and groups on behalf of the planning effort. **Throughout the 15 months of outreach, the team met with 175 community groups; hosted 25 visioning workshops, 10 values forums and 19 open houses; attended six county fairs and 11 farmers markets; and engaged and listened to nearly 4,000 people.**

Regional and Small Area Workshops: More than 600 Heartland residents from all counties participated in a series of hands-on visioning workshops to create their own scenarios for the future of the region. Workshops were conducted at

Throughout the 15 months of outreach, the Heartland 2050 team engaged and listened to nearly 4,000 people.

the regional and neighborhood scale and offered members of the public an opportunity to collaborate with committee and research team members to determine how and where we should grow. The activities allowed members of the public to act as planners, grapple with potential tradeoffs and solve problems using future land use scenarios. Input recorded on the maps and as part of the discussions helped shape the test scenarios and the final vision.

Sarpy Growth Summit: The Sarpy Growth Summit considered growth throughout the county and set the stage for further discussions about such issues as sanitary sewer service, roadway improvements, economic development and growth. Over 20 staff and leaders representing all Sarpy County communities were present.

Shape Our Future Survey: The Shape Our Future campaign launched online and as part of a series of open houses around the region. Participants were asked to weigh in on the scenarios, identify their top concerns and indicate preferences for public spending. This feedback was used to help refine and finalize the Vision goals, strategies and actions.

Strategy Survey: Following the work by the Vision Committees, the strategies were tested with the public using a brief statistically significant telephone survey conducted by a research firm to determine which approaches were more or less favored.

2



Core Values Baseline Research

Gathering a snapshot of the region's core values was an important starting point in the Heartland Vision planning process. By asking residents to identify the most important factors of our region's quality of life, today and in the future, we gain tremendous insight into the core values that affect our happiness and satisfaction. **What do we love about the region? What are the biggest threats to our current and future happiness? How do we feel about the future?**

This information helps us understand what aspects need safe guarding to make our region and our communities even better. It also provides a way to gauge the success of the vision, its goals and strategies. **Together, with the results of other public and stakeholder involvement activities, this research helped to shape the goals of the Heartland Vision.**

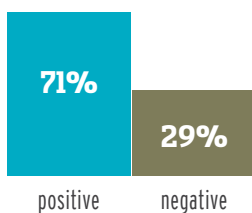
* The core values survey was conducted using a diverse and statistically representative sample of the region's residents, including people across the age, income, race, ethnicity and geographic spread.

As a region, we are very positive about the future.

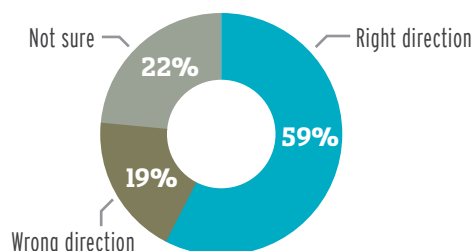
Heartland residents have a high quality of life and a positive outlook. In fact, researchers stated that the only other region reporting a quality of life this high was San Diego. Residents view their quality of life in the region as improved over five years ago and continuing to improve within the next five years. About three in four anticipate quality of life increasing for future generations. Similarly, a majority (59%) feel Omaha-Council Bluffs is headed in the right direction compared with only one in five who feel it is on the wrong track. When it comes to the economy, area residents are also optimistic. Only 5% say the economy is weak and over half (60%) feel it is improving.

Quality of Life Today and in the Future

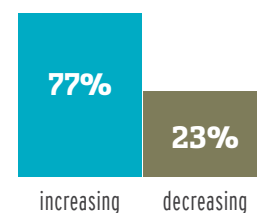
Quality of Life in the Region
positives vs. negatives



Direction of Their Own Community



Quality of Life in the Future





The key values to protect and promote are derived from the low cost of living and affordability that our residents currently enjoy.

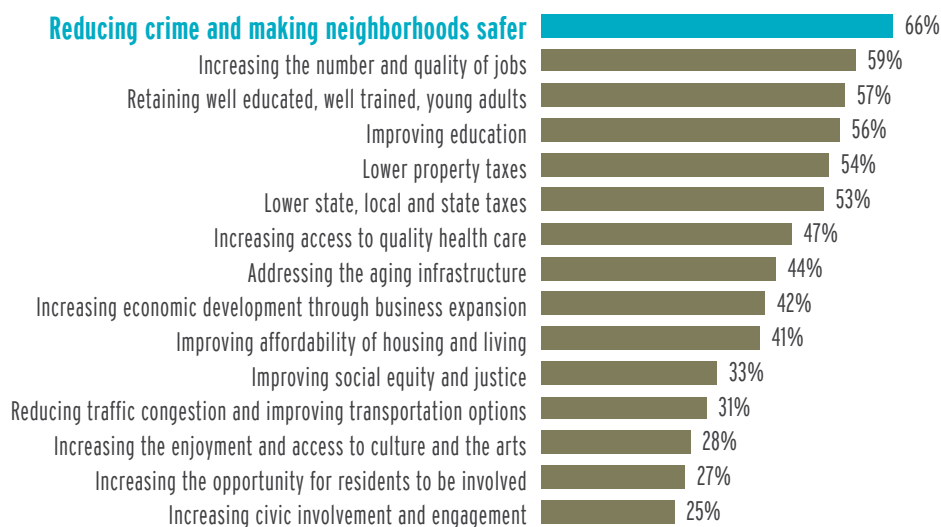
2

When asked about important issues that affect quality of life, economic well-being and safety concerns rise to the top of the list.

Quality jobs, retaining and attracting young people, and improving education are at the top of the list of quality of life factors. Crime, high taxes and income inequality stand out as negatives to be addressed. Low cost of living or affordability is the leading positive aspect of living in the region, and it contributes to a sense of happiness and less stress about basic needs.

Challenges to Our Quality of Life

Most Important Issues in the Region Affecting Quality of Life



Percentages represent the proportion of people who consider that factor to have the most significant impact on their personal quality of life. This is only a partial listing.



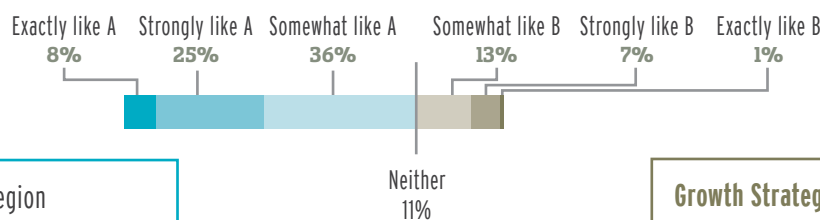
The Visioning Process

We favor growth focused in existing areas.

We prefer growth strategies focused on managing growth, centralizing jobs and shopping close to homes, encouraging a range of housing options and infusing existing cities and towns. We also believe making improvements to existing infrastructure and communities is important for future growth in the region. When posed with two different scenarios for future growth, three times as many residents (69%) prefer encouraging new growth in existing areas over directing new growth into outlying areas. Infill is most strongly embraced by 18-34 year-old residents, 74% preferring development in existing areas. This is an important regional strategy for attracting young people who want to live and work in a well-planned, walkable community.

Strategies for Growth

Agreement with Growth Strategy A or Growth Strategy B



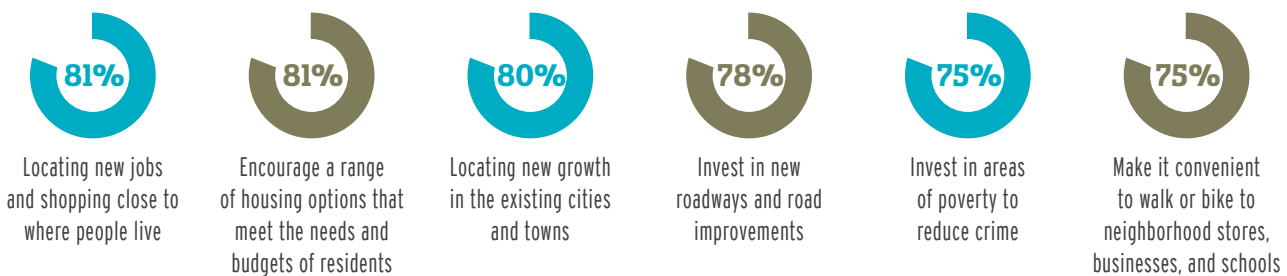
Growth Strategy A: The region should begin focusing new growth and development in the **urban center, existing towns, and in parts of the city that need to be revitalized or redeveloped.**

69%
Agree with A

21%
Agree with B

Growth Strategy B: The region should begin focusing new growth and development across the region into **new areas and communities** where there hasn't been much development before.

Agreement with Growth Strategies: Top Six Rated





We believe that transportation funds should be invested wisely.

While most agree that investing in regional transportation is important, a majority (79%) believe funds allocated for public transportation should be kept the same or increased somewhat. The support for maintaining or slightly increasing spending on public transportation may seem to contradict overall concerns about high taxes, but these responses revealed that people are willing to pay a little more for services they value.

Transportation Investments

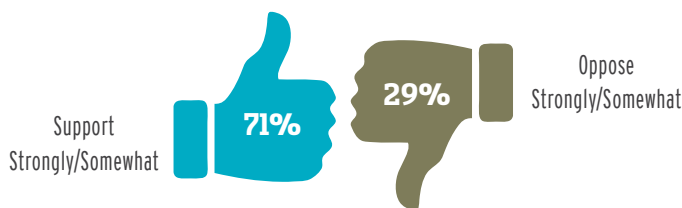


"Investing in regional transportation is an important priority for our region."

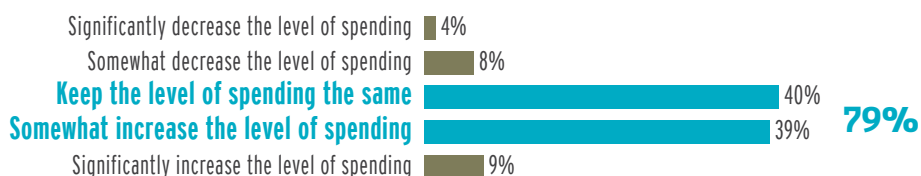
82%

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

Support or Oppose Allocation of Local Tax Dollars Toward Public Transportation Services



Level of Spending that Should Be Allocated for Public Transportation Services



We want to address poverty and promote equity for all of our residents.

In focus group responses, leaders emphasized that poverty is the dominant and systemic issue, with crime as an outcome; **to overcome crime we must address its roots and ensure everyone has access to opportunities** for education, jobs, quality housing and safe, healthy neighborhoods with strong support from families and communities.



2

"Shape Our Future" Scenario Survey

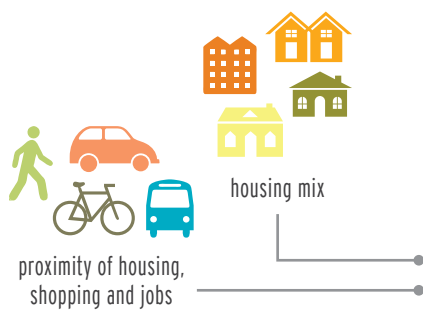
Another key part of the planning process took place in the spring of 2014 when the Shape Our Future campaign launched online and as part of a series of open houses around the region. The campaign featured four scenarios and a selection of potential regional priorities and strategies. Using the online survey tool or by filling out paper surveys, participants could weigh in on the four scenarios,

identify their top concerns for the region, and indicate preferences for public spending. **Nearly a thousand people responded to the survey. This feedback was used to help create a refined Vision Scenario and guide the development of the Vision goals, strategies and actions.**

Scenarios for the Heartland 2050 Vision

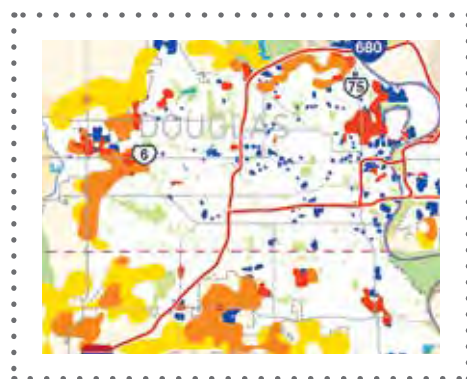
Scenarios Tell Us Potential Stories About the Future

Scenarios are map-based representations of varying development patterns, housing options and job locations played out over the next 40 years. In essence, the scenarios show us how land use decisions impact where we live, work and play—and how we get around. **The resulting information gathered from each growth scenario gives us a better idea of the impacts of these decisions over the long term on our region's people, places and resources.**



Various Development Patterns

Scenarios are driven by data and forecasts that reflect several different possibilities for how current trends could play out in the future.



Resulting Scenario Map

The various development patterns result in land uses - such as low-, medium- and high-density residential, employment and commercial/retail centers - unique to each scenario.

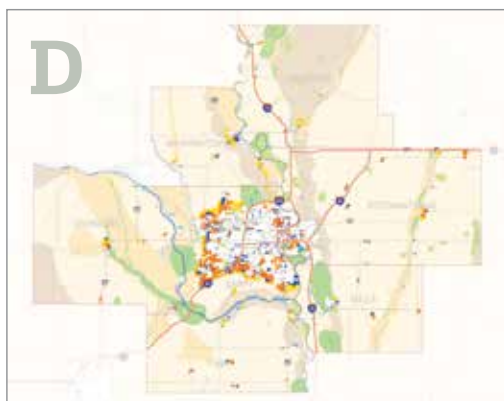
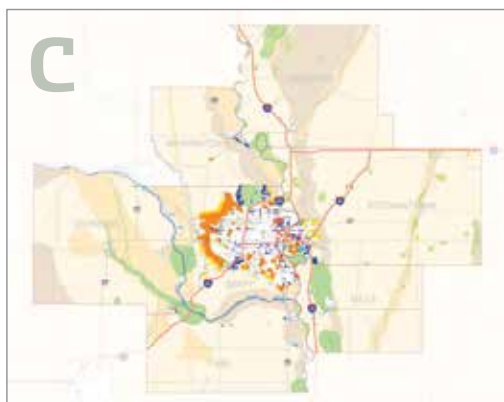
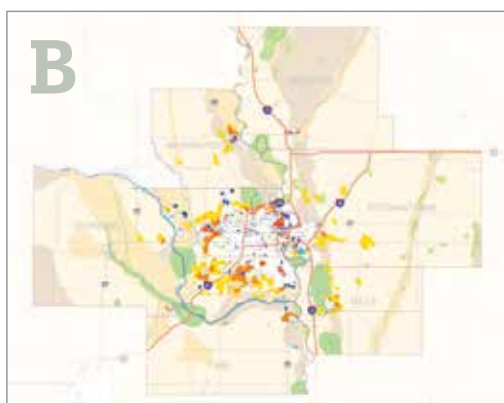
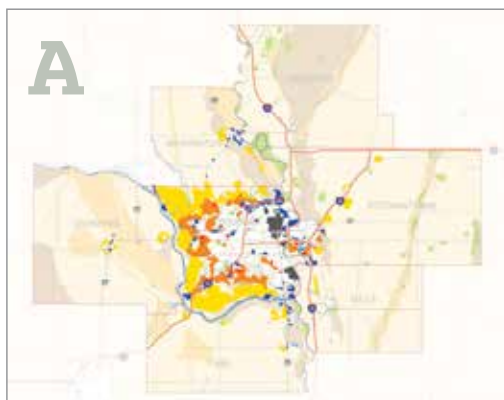


Resulting Information (indicators)

Each scenario's performance can be calculated and used for comparison, such as resources used, proximity to jobs, time spent driving, housing match, tax cost and revenues.



2



Life in Scenario A: Trend

In Scenario A, we will continue to grow and decline much the same as we have in the recent past. Areas of the urban core will continue to lose population as quality desirable housing options and employment opportunities remain scarce. Westward expansion continues in Douglas and Sarpy counties where new development is affordable. Most new development in these areas focuses on single-family subdivisions. Existing sewage treatment systems reach capacity resulting in more large-lot (acreage) single-family homes than today.

Life in Scenario B: Workshop Feedback

In scenario B, which is based on workshop input, we grow both “inward” as core areas of Omaha and Council Bluffs redevelop, and “outward” with continued suburban expansion to the west and south. The highest density occurs in central Omaha and Council Bluffs. New townhomes and mix-use developments appear in central Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie counties, giving residents more desirable and affordable housing options. However, similar to Scenario A, there is a shortage of small-lot, single-family homes.

Life in Scenario C: Concentrated Growth

In Scenario C, population and employment growth are focused in the core, revitalizing North, South and Midtown Omaha and Council Bluffs. Sarpy County and western Douglas County also see some moderate growth making maximum use of existing sewer service. People who want to live downtown have more affordable and higher end housing options, including mixed-use developments, apartments and townhomes. Increases in transit ridership decrease the amount of time people spend in the car.

Life in Scenario D: Distributed Growth

In Scenario D, new employment growth is focused near existing urban, suburban and rural communities throughout the region making it easier for people to work closer to where they live. Infill and redevelopment give people more housing options that they can afford and bring destinations closer together, helping to build walkable communities and thriving main streets across the region.



2

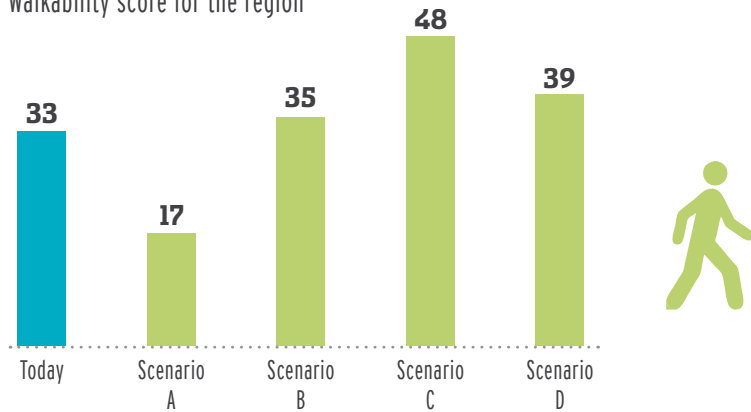
Scenario Indicators for People, Places and Resources



People

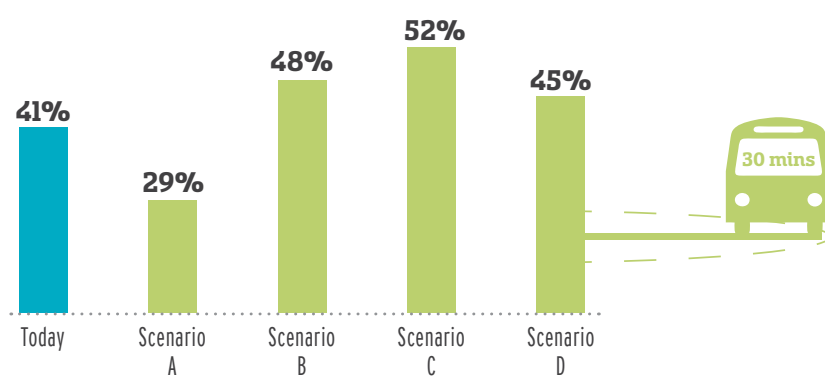
Healthy Places

Walkability score for the region



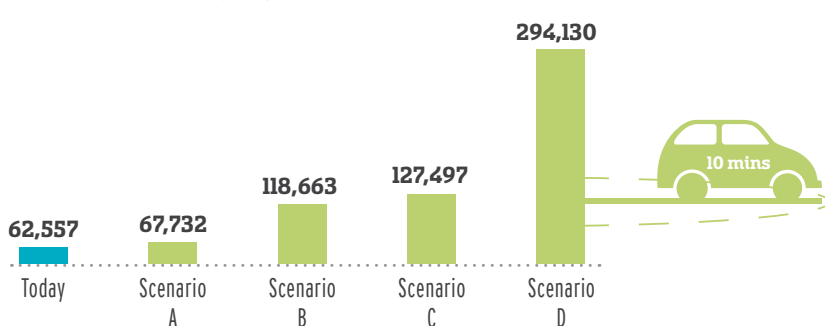
Equitable Access to Jobs

% of jobs accessible to disadvantaged residents via a 30-minute transit trip



Convenient Daily Destinations

Jobs, services and shopping within a 10-minute drive

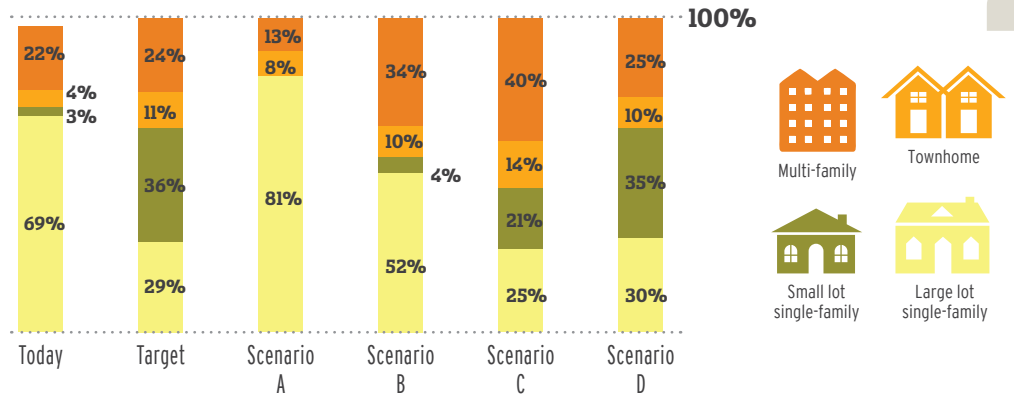




Places

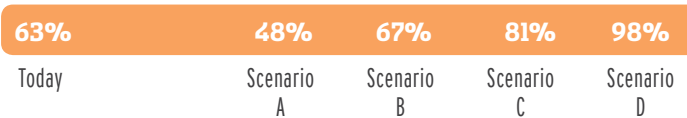
Balanced Housing

Housing mix by type



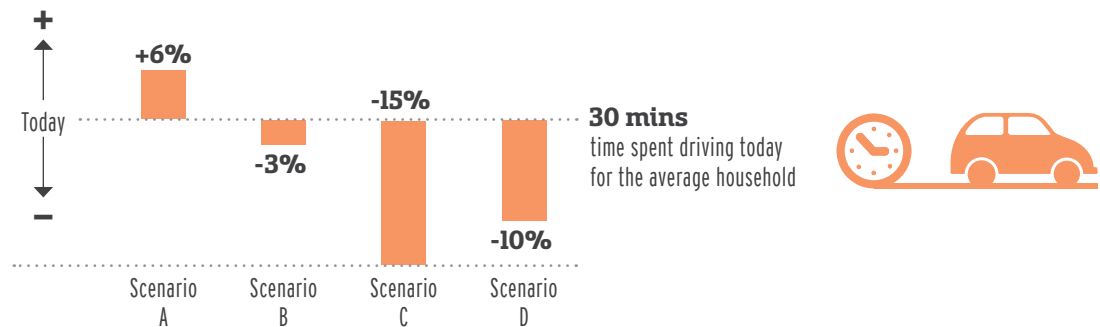
Housing Match

How well housing options match the preferences and income of residents



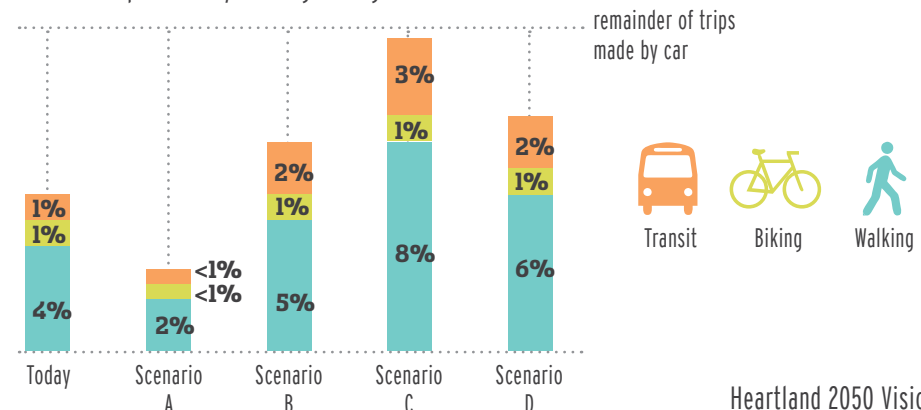
Time Spent Driving Compared to Today

% change in the time spent driving for the average household



Active Transportation

% of all trips made by walking, biking and transit

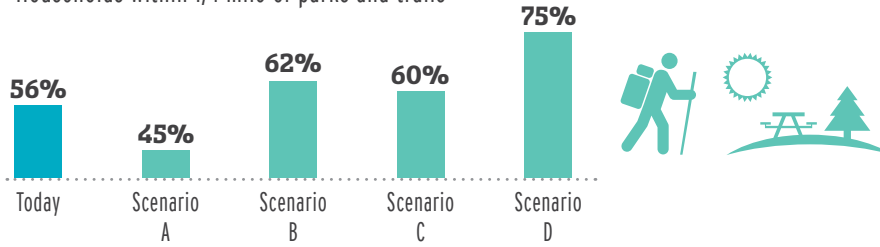




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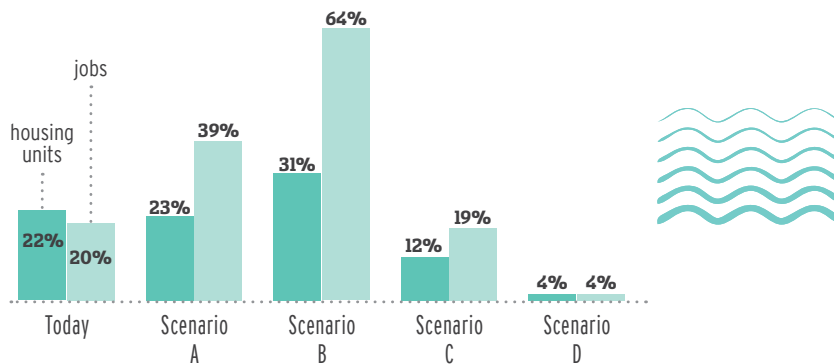
Access to Nature

Households within 1/4 mile of parks and trails



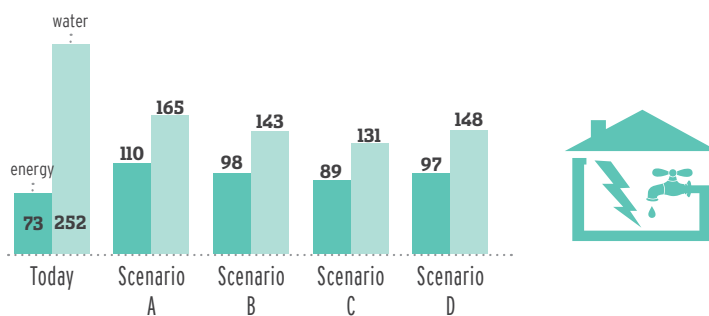
Flood Protection

% of jobs and housing units in floodplains or stream setbacks



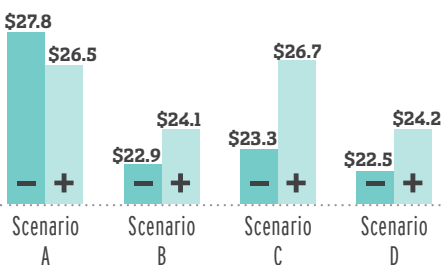
Energy and Water Efficiency

Household energy use (million BTU/year) and internal water consumption (gal/day)

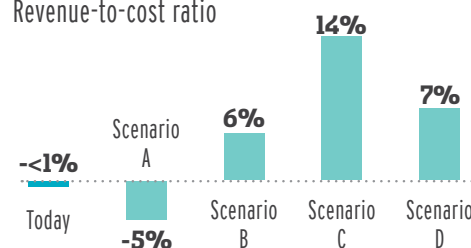


Efficient Use of Public Funds

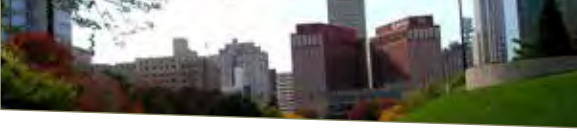
Total expenditures (billions) / total revenues (billions)



Revenue-to-cost ratio



Resources



2

Shape Our Future Survey Results

No scenario met all of the priorities of the participants. However, **Scenarios C and D were most popular, and reflect the region's desires for growth and investments that are managed, well-planned and enhance existing communities.** These scenarios inform the Heartland 2050 Vision Scenario presented in Chapter Three.

Step 1: Survey participants were asked to rank their top five regional priorities in order of importance. The regional priorities correspond to the scenario indicators, providing a way to compare the scenarios based on participants' favored priorities.

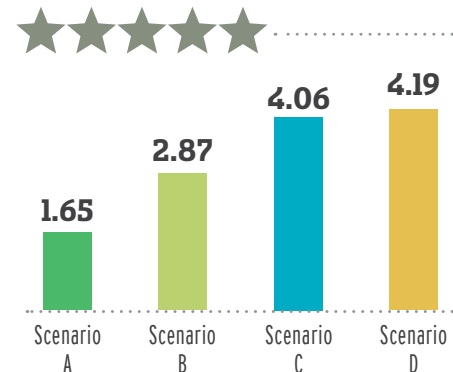
Step 2: On a scale of 0 to 5 stars, survey participants were asked to rate each scenario based on how well it met their vision for the future of the Heartland region.

Step 3: Participants ranked 15 possible strategies that could be implemented in the Heartland region. Each strategy relates to one of the three topic areas: **People, Places or Resources.**

Regional Priorities Rankings

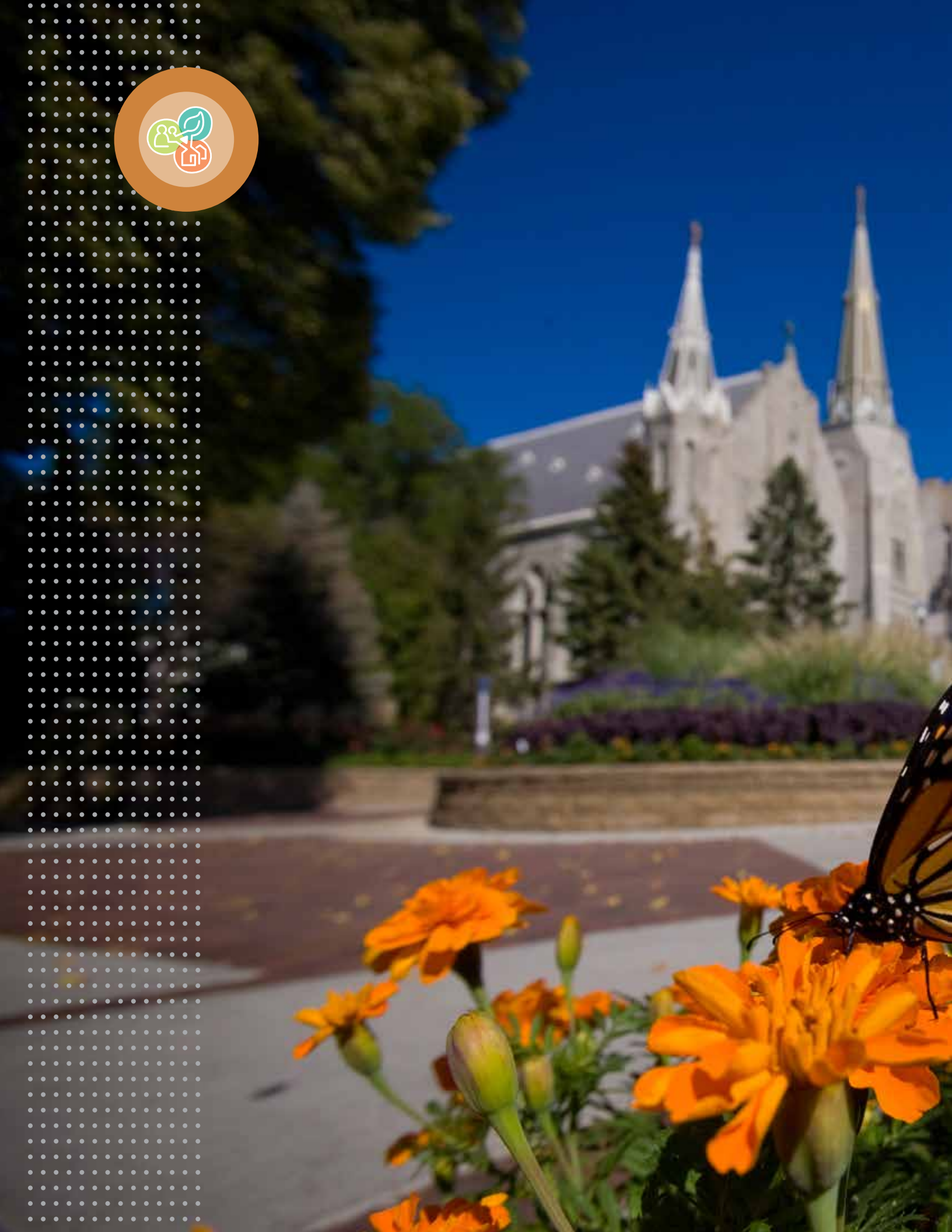
- #1 Efficient use of tax dollars
- #2 Active transportation
- #3 Equitable access to jobs
- #4 Healthy places
- #5 Water and energy efficiency
- #6 Convenient daily destinations
- #7 Balanced housing
- #8 Flood protection
- #9 Access to nature
- #10 Time spent driving

Scenario Ratings



Strategies Rankings

- #1 Make the Omaha-Council Bluffs region a place that attracts and retains young talent and new business. **PEOPLE**
- #2 Invest in renewable sources of energy. **RESOURCES**
- #3 Make it easier to get around by walking, biking and transit. **PLACES**
- #4 Work to reduce crime and alleviate poverty. **PEOPLE**
- #5 Promote development on vacant and underutilized land in existing cities and towns. **PLACES**
- #6 Improve transit to link hospitals, universities, major employers and strengthen connections between parts of the region. **PLACES**
- #7 Create a regional park and trail system to improve access to recreation and natural areas. **RESOURCES**
- #8 Provide opportunities for the growing Latino and immigrant communities in our region. **PEOPLE**
- #9 Maintain water quality through protecting water sources and expanding our regional water system. **RESOURCES**
- #10 Expand existing universities and focus on urban technical centers around research institutions. **PEOPLE**
- #11 Commit to provide a wide range of housing types affordable to residents. **PLACES**
- #12 Shift funding sources to reduce property tax burden. **RESOURCES**
- #13 Maintain and preserve agricultural lands and rural lifestyle. **RESOURCES**
- #14 Focus transportation spending on creating new roads and maintaining existing ones. **PLACES**
- #15 Expand levees and limit growth in flood-prone areas to reduce damage and protect wildlife and habitat. **RESOURCES**



A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a yellow flower in the lower-left foreground. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings under a clear blue sky.

3

The Heartland 2050 Vision

At the center of the Heartland Vision are six goals that capture the hopes and aspirations for our region's future. These six goals span all aspects of life, from economic prosperity, to health, safety and education, to the neighborhoods where we live, the ways we get around, and the natural places and resources that sustain us. **These goals will serve as a guide for our actions and public policy making, and will support collaboration among the individuals and organizations working to improve the quality of life for all Heartland residents.**



The Heartland 2050 Vision

3

Setting a Course for the Heartland Vision

Ensuring that the Vision reflects the voice of our residents, now and into the future, is critical - but how do we go about doing it?

Core Values of Heartland Residents

Starting with the research and input compiled at the beginning of the planning process, the Steering Committee refined a list of core values to serve the vision and its implementation activities moving forward. These elements have been identified as the most important to our future happiness. Working together, we will strive to protect and preserve these values to make our communities stronger.

- * Retain a high quality of life
- * Maintain affordable and fair housing
- * Use public resources efficiently for low taxes
- * Enhance safety, reduce crime and eliminate poverty
- * Attract good quality jobs
- * Attract and retain young professionals
- * Maintain excellent educational opportunities
- * Ensure high quality health care
- * Maintain our strong network of neighborhoods and communities
- * Retain Midwestern values that make our region inclusive, family-friendly, welcoming and accessible
- * Expand and enhance transportation choices
- * Plan for sustainable and economically resilient future

Guiding Principles for the Vision

Along with the core values, a set of guiding principles were also created through the work of the Steering and Stakeholder Committees, and the Equity and Engagement Committee. The Guiding Principles go beyond the core values and create overarching themes or principles used to guide the vision goals, and the strategies and actions included in the Heartland 2050 Action Plan.

Equity – All individuals, regardless of ability, and communities within the region will have full and equal access to the opportunities that enable them to attain their full potential.

Efficiency – Public infrastructure and services will be provided efficiently and cost-effectively.

Inclusivity – Decision making and the implementation of solutions in the region will be done in a way that ensures that all of the region's residents have an opportunity to participate in the process, implementation and evaluation.

Local Control/Regional Benefit – It is critical that cities and counties within the region maintain local control over their communities while also working collectively together to ensure that local decisions enhance rather than adversely affect other neighborhoods, communities or the region as a whole.



3

The Vision Goals

Using the Values and Guiding Principles as a framework, the Visioning Committee established six Vision goals to improve our quality of life and create a long-term, regional vision in harmony with our **people, places and resources**.



1. Economic Development

Together, our region will strengthen its robust economy to encourage business expansion, job training and growth, and become a national magnet for a young and highly skilled workforce.

2. Education

Together, our region will have the highest quality education system that educates the work force of the future.

3. Health and Safety

Together, our region will be noted for its healthy living, safe neighborhoods, preservation of arts and culture, and exceptional healthcare providers.



People

4. Housing and Development

Together, our region will be known for welcoming, connected and lively communities that offer residents a range of housing choices and locations.

5. Infrastructure

Together, our region's investments will develop efficient infrastructure that supports economic development, provides more transportation choices, and reduces energy consumption.



Places

6. Natural Resources

Together, our region values, protects and utilizes our natural features and systems to provide access to open space and resiliency from natural disasters.



Resources



GOAL

Together, our region will strengthen its robust economy to encourage business expansion, job training and growth, and become a national magnet for a young and highly skilled workforce.



Economic Development

We want our children and grandchildren to have the opportunity to stay in the Heartland region and enjoy the same low cost of living, high quality of services, and strong economy that the majority of people enjoy today. Throughout the region, but especially in areas suffering from inequality and marginalization, we want to see quality skills training programs and incentives, employment growth and support for jobs that are either close to where people live or accessible by transit.

Addressing job inequality and attracting and retaining the next generation of skilled workers to the region is paramount to the long-term economic success of the place we call home. To meet this goal, advancing equity should be a driving force to strengthen the region's economic growth and competitiveness. This includes prioritizing regional investments in quality education and workforce development, housing, transit, and revitalization in key neighborhoods. Local governments should support emerging business sectors including infrastructure, transportation, health care, medical research, agriculture and food processing, military, insurance, and finance.

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

Achieving this goal will result in the region's lower income residents gaining greater access to education and training opportunities targeted at future job growth industries. These residents will be better equipped to secure positions with opportunities for advancement and increasing incomes which allow for an improved quality of life. More jobs will also be nearer to neighborhoods so that residents can spend less of their time travelling to work and more time taking care of themselves with friends and family.

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Conduct regional infrastructure assessments and capital improvements planning.
- Identify developable land in urban, suburban and rural areas as part of a regional land use assessment. Include these development sites in land acquisition plans.
- Create a research and investment fund with goals or targets for all geographic areas.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

Step-up Omaha!

Providing young adults with job opportunities

The City of Omaha has collaborated with 20 community partners and over 100 work-sites to expand the region's largest youth employment program. Over the past seven years, the initiative has connected over 3,000 youth and young adults, primarily low income and from distressed neighborhoods, with employment opportunities.

Community College Innovation

Technology programs for future growth

The Metropolitan Community College (MCC) and Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) are both dedicated to providing a highly skilled workforce to meet the future needs of our region. MCC is under construction for a \$90 million Center for Advanced and Emerging Technology and a Construction Education Center while IWCC recently completed their \$15 million state-of-the-art Engineering Technology Center to house all robotics and engineering programs.

Blair Cargill Campus

Since 1993 Cargill and their strategic partners have invested nearly \$2 billion in Blair and employed thousands of metro residents. Our region's strong agricultural assets, competitive utility rates, transportation infrastructure and a quality workforce is what drew Cargill to our region and continues to make the Omaha metro a low-risk location for additional investment in new product lines and partners.

"I grew up poor. We often had no lights, gas, water, nor food. But through community organizations, I received the knowledge of how to live a structured life which has helped me to succeed as a mother, a student, and business owner."

~ Omaha, NE (age 27)



GOAL 2

Together, our region will have the highest quality education system that educates the work force of the future.



Education

We want all residents living in the Heartland to have access to high-quality education that prepares individuals with the skills needed to participate in a growing and changing economy and attracts potential employers to a well-trained workforce. Expanding educational opportunities from a comprehensive 'cradle to career' strategy, including early childhood development, through higher education and career entry will not only boost our region's economic competitiveness, but it will also contribute to residents' capacity to participate in civic and political discourse as diversity increases.

Our region's shared future depends on reducing the achievement gap in educational attainment. Focusing on post-secondary education that grows the appropriate skills will ensure a wide variety of options for Heartland residents.

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

Educational opportunities and outcomes are the same for all residents across the region. All residents, including lower income and disadvantaged populations, graduate at the same rate as the rest of the population, and have the support foundations in place needed to be successful in an educational environment. As low income and disadvantaged youth age, they see a clear path to obtaining post-secondary education, training and satisfying employment.

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Create a variety of apprenticeship, job training and entrepreneurship programs.
- Create a research and investment fund with goals or targets for all geographic areas.
- Create entrepreneurship and worker mentorship programs that pair entrepreneurs and individuals.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC)

[Educational Collaboration Across the Region](#)

Collaboration among educators is nothing new in our metro. The Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC) is a collaborative organization that brings together educators from across the metropolitan Omaha/Council Bluffs area. This consortium is a catalyst for identifying high priority issues common to member organizations and addressing a variety of issues from curriculum and instruction to human resources and finance through joint task forces and projects.

North Omaha Cradle to Career & Village Zone

[New methods with proven results](#)

This innovative education strategy has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a highly recommended initiative. Over 40 collaborative organizations have focused and aligned programs and efforts including equitable distribution of resources, teacher effectiveness, family and community engagement, early childhood education, after school programs, Saturday academies, violence prevention, mentoring, summer employment, school-based health, college prep and support services.

This model is being considered for replication in other parts of the region as it directly relates to equity, inclusiveness and improving efficiencies and effectiveness.



GOAL 3

Together, our region will be noted for its healthy living, safe neighborhoods and exceptional healthcare providers.



Health and Safety

For residents in the Heartland region, our quality of life greatly depends on the places we live, whether we feel safe and secure, and having convenient options for a healthy lifestyle. We want to promote active lifestyles and have nearby options for quality health care services. In addition to accessible, quality primary healthcare, it is important that the region create exceptional healthcare facilities for research and advanced level of services and implement policies that address lingering health disparities among low-income residents and communities.

As our region grows, we must develop new neighborhoods and revitalize existing ones to create places that are safe, active, healthy and desirable for our residents.

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

The region will have a healthier population. For example, the disproportionately high levels of obesity and diabetes in low income neighborhoods will be reduced.

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Create model design standards and templates for healthy walkable neighborhoods.
- Integrate green space and trails that connect people, destinations and natural habitats across the region.
- Incorporate agriculture advocacy and training organizations, urban agriculture, health departments and advocacy groups, social welfare agencies and charities, businesses (food production and distribution), and educational institutions to address food security and “food deserts” wherever they occur.
- Identify opportunities to locate health care facilities or provide mobile services in underserved communities in all geographic settings.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

Live Well Omaha and Live Well Council Bluffs

[Health consortium](#)

The consortium members of Live Well Omaha and Live Well Council Bluffs recognize that community health needs are not divided by a bridge or a river. One initiative that these two groups have collaborated on is the expansion of Omaha B-Cycle, which recently introduced its first five stations in Council Bluffs as well as adding 14 stations to the existing Omaha network for a grand total of 31 stations in the metro. The name of the bike-sharing program has also be changed to Heartland B-Cycle to reflect its connection to the entire region, and not one city.

Eppley Cancer Center @ UNMC

[Capital investments in new treatment facilities](#)

The Eppley Cancer Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) is in the process of completing a \$350 million campus expansion that will enhance existing cancer research and treatment capabilities with state-of-the-art facilities that will draw both

patients and new faculty to the University. With these improvements the Eppley Cancer Center will be provided with an opportunity to apply for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Comprehensive Cancer Center designation only given to the top 30 cancer centers in the United States.

Missouri Valley's Memorial Hospital Relocation

[Planning for the future of rural healthcare](#)

Since 1958 Memorial Hospital has stood as a beacon for rural healthcare services as well as the largest job generator in Harrison county. In its fourth year recognized as Top 100 Critical Access Hospital, CHI Health looks to continue this trend with the construction of a new 62,000 sq ft facility that will provide greater functional flow, more efficient staff utilization and the flexibility to choose options that best fit the changing environment of healthcare.



GOAL

4

Together, our region will be known for welcoming, connected and lively communities that offer residents a range of housing choices and locations.



Housing and Development

Strong communities and neighborhoods are vital to people living in the Heartland and contribute to the quality of life we enjoy. People want a variety of housing options, both in the city as well as our suburban and rural communities, that meet the needs and preferences of the whole community. People want to be able to bike and walk to neighborhood stores, businesses and schools so they can be less dependent on cars and cultivate healthy lifestyles. Heartland residents are concerned about high taxes, environmental issues, housing segregation and areas of concentrated poverty, and want to see well-designed growth that make the most efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure and public monies.

As our region grows, new homes, employment areas and places to shop should be encouraged to locate in areas that are already developed in both smaller towns and larger cities, while ensuring that new development on the edge of the region is contiguous, well-planned, efficient, and affordable. This can be accomplished by revitalizing existing and creating new “town center” developments or “main streets” that include a mix of housing sizes and types while providing amenities to accommodate families as well as our growing baby boomer population.

"The community is like an extended family. Most of my basic physical needs are here without having to travel to a metro area for many things."

~ Malvern, IA (age 67)

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

All residents, including low income and disadvantaged residents, will be able to walk to the places where they shop for groceries and access services. Their children will have safe routes to ride their bikes to school. Families are able to live close to one another, even as our population ages.

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Implement neighborhood revitalization programs, multimodal transportation improvements, financial incentives, and other elements of successful neighborhoods to encourage infill development.
- Encourage higher density residential, commercial and industrial corridors and nodes in suburban areas that help provide affordable housing choices and can be more easily served with transit.
- Identify barriers to fair housing along with practices, policies, and ordinances that are appropriate for urban, suburban and rural communities.
- Work to ensure that immigrant and refugee services and communications are provided or accessible across diverse geographic communities.
- Develop model ordinance provisions for urban, suburban and rural development that can be used to encourage infill development and reduce complexity for new suburban development.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

North Omaha Village Revitalization Plan

[A public-private partnership for quality housing](#)

Facilitated by the Empowerment Network, Omaha Economic Development Corporation and ABC Alliance, this holistic plan was unanimously approved by the Omaha City Council. The work has been a catalyst for new plans and developments including 75 North Revitalization, Prospect Village neighborhood project, Highlander, the Village at 24th and Lake, North 24th/Cuming and Malcolm X/Adams Park. The vision is producing the rebuilding of mixed-income, mixed use neighborhoods by incorporating best practices in equity, engagement, inclusiveness, employment, education, housing, health, public safety, and arts and culture.

Vision 84

[La Vista's Visionary Long-Range Plan](#)

La Vista's long-range planning process for the 84th Street corridor calls for the creation of a true downtown

incorporating the corridor's distinct identity with a vibrant mix of land uses, a sense of community and a high quality of life for all residents. In May 2014, the city passed a ballot measure for an additional 1/2 cent sales tax that will provide approximately \$1.1 million annually designated for the redevelopment of the 84th Street corridor.

The Sawyer Building

[A new mixed-use development in downtown Council Bluffs](#)

A new infill project located in Council Bluffs, The Sawyer Building includes prime first floor commercial space with 26 urban apartments above and ten townhomes along Pierce Street. The Sawyer Building will offer market-rate and affordable units, featuring sustainable stormwater management infrastructure, on-site parking, and a high quality mixed-use urban environment.



Together, our region's investments will develop efficient infrastructure that supports economic development, provides more transportation choices, and reduces energy consumption.



Infrastructure

We want our leaders to make fiscally sound investments in the transportation system, utilities, renewable energy and new technology to support prosperity for all residents. We want to ensure that existing roads, highways and transit systems are properly maintained, improved, and implemented in a fair and equitable manner. We also want more options for getting around the region, like expanded bike and pedestrian facilities and new forms of transit, coordinating with Metro's transit system improvements already underway.

The transportation sector (rail and truck logistics) is a major part of our region's economy and regional investments that balance new transportation options, advance workforce development for disadvantaged neighborhoods, and support existing networks are needed. New sites for industrial development will benefit from access to highway, rail, freight and air transportation. The US 34/Plattview Road corridor which recently opened a new \$100+ million bridge across the Missouri River is an example of how new industrial development can be linked to existing highways. Other investments in infrastructure, such as broadband, will also support our communities and workforce.

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

Residents in rural areas will be able to take public transportation to visit medical facilities in urban centers. High quality water and sewer services are provided throughout the region and costs are maintained or reduced because of regional coordination.

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Work to incorporate urban, suburban and rural transportation, utility and economic development needs into capital improvements and multimodal transportation plans.
- Ensure that needed regional connections among geographically diverse communities are planned and programmed.
- Include cross-section of urban, suburban, and rural members in the Infrastructure Implementation Committee and relevant initiatives; including municipal and private service providers, utilities, and rural districts; municipal and county planning, community development and public works departments.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

Iowa West Foundation's CITIES

[A program for rural infrastructure](#)

The primary purpose of the Iowa West Foundation's CITIES program is to provide a funding mechanism, to be leveraged by other community resources, to support infrastructure/public facilities, beautification, and housing (non-profit or governmental) improvements throughout rural Pottawattamie County. By leveraging local money with CITIES funds, these communities can maintain reasonable utility and property tax rates without sacrificing quality essential service provision. Nearly \$5 million has been granted to rural Pottawattamie Communities through this fund since 2005.

Heartland Connections

[A regional transit study + a new bus rapid transit line](#)

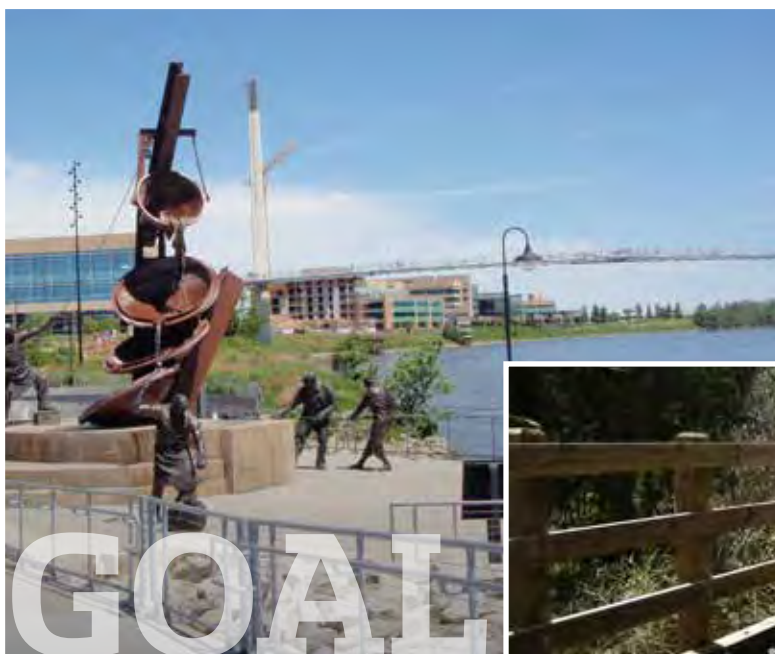
Heartland Connections - a component of Heartland 2050 - identifies a vision for transit and active transportation in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Heartland Connections includes travel market analysis, transit service planning and a financial analysis, along with input from stakeholders, elected officials and other community leaders.

Omaha Metro Transit Authority submitted an application and was awarded a TIGER grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to design and build the Dodge Corridor BRT line. This project is the first major outcome taken directly from the Heartland Connections project and will be the metro's leap into enhanced transit services.

OPPD Future Power-Generation Plan

[Changing the way we provide power to the future](#)

OPPD recently led a comprehensive stakeholder process to gauge public opinion toward future planning. Based on that input, OPPD approved a plan that will enable OPPD to comply with government regulations to reduce future greenhouse gas emissions at its existing power plants, while preserving the district's ability to meet future demand for electricity.



GOAL 6

Together, our region values, protects and utilizes our natural features and systems to provide access to green space and resilience from natural disasters.



Natural Resources

Our region benefits from its proximity to productive and valuable farmland, clean air and high-quality water sources, and good access to green space and parks. The Loess Hills region of Iowa is also geologically significant, featuring unusually deep deposits of glacial silt and home to many of the largest prairie remnants of the state. Maintaining these features, including access to fresh, locally grown foods and preservation of pristine landscapes for future generations is important. Taking advantage of new opportunities to invest in and expand our renewable energy sources, providing a new economic base for our region, is also highly desired.

In the future, the impact of natural disasters will be mitigated by limiting development in floodplains such as the Missouri and Platte River floodplains and careful stormwater management in other flood prone areas.

Expanding the wealth of existing recreational trails and green spaces will create a connected green network of recreational opportunities and provide places for healthy, active recreation. Just as important are the connections between these natural areas, which creates a connected green network of recreational opportunities.

How can our work to achieve this goal increase equity in the region?

People in all areas of the region are able to walk or bike to enjoy nature. They are able to get quickly to parks and trails to exercise.

"I live here for the diversity of people and culture. It is the only place in Nebraska where you can get both of those things. I also like the ability to experience nature through hiking, biking and other outdoor activities."

~ Omaha, NE (age 49)

How might this goal be achieved in urban, rural and suburban communities?

- Ensure that the nature preserves, parks, greenways and trails connect all areas of the region and provide meaningful transportation options, particularly in areas of poverty and racial concentration.
- Incorporate municipal and rural utility systems and districts, private utility companies, and local and county public works and health departments, in the Resources Implementation Committee and relevant initiatives.

What is being done in the region today to meet this goal?

County Trails Plan

[Regional trails integration across the Missouri River](#)

Regional trails and greenways are already taking shape, with more connections in the works. Highly popular trails flank the Missouri river in Iowa and Nebraska; and regional trails traverse Omaha, Council Bluffs, Sarpy and Mills Counties. Pottawattamie County is implementing its new trails master plan, Mills County completed its own plan recently, and Sarpy County is following suit. MAPA's Heartland Connections bicycle corridor plan is identifying corridors in the urban area of Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Sarpy County. The Lewis and Clark network will extend into Harrison County, and additional linkages to Cass and Washington Counties are in the works.

With additional cooperation, coordination and funding these efforts can be stitched together and extended to additional communities, creating a comprehensive and unified Heartland regional trail and greenway system.

Levee Funding and Expansion

[Regional infrastructure planning](#)

Although most levees withstood the historic 2011 flood, many miles of levees have not been federally certified, which threatens the ability to safely develop near the river, including Offutt Air Force Base, the region's largest employer. Communities will need to work regionally to address this issue and fortify levees. The 2014 Nebraska Legislature provided funding for the Water Sustainability Fund that is anticipated to fund levee construction in the metro area.



The Vision Scenario represents a future where we have taken steps to reach the Heartland Vision Goals. It was created using the best ideas from public and stakeholder input.

The Vision Scenario

What is the Vision Scenario and how will it be used?

The Vision Scenario is an illustration of our region's future, as shaped by Heartland 2050 participants and stakeholders. The Vision Map depicts how various key elements – such as well-planned suburban development, reinvestment in existing cities, towns, neighborhoods and main streets, and a revitalized and vibrant urban core – will function.

This map is a conceptual document, with no force of law or regulatory function. Instead, it provides ideas, direction and focus for crafting land use and transportation policies and choosing strategic public investments that support the vision goals. It is the starting point for a region-wide discussion about the projects, investments and implementation steps that will allow us to achieve the Heartland Vision.

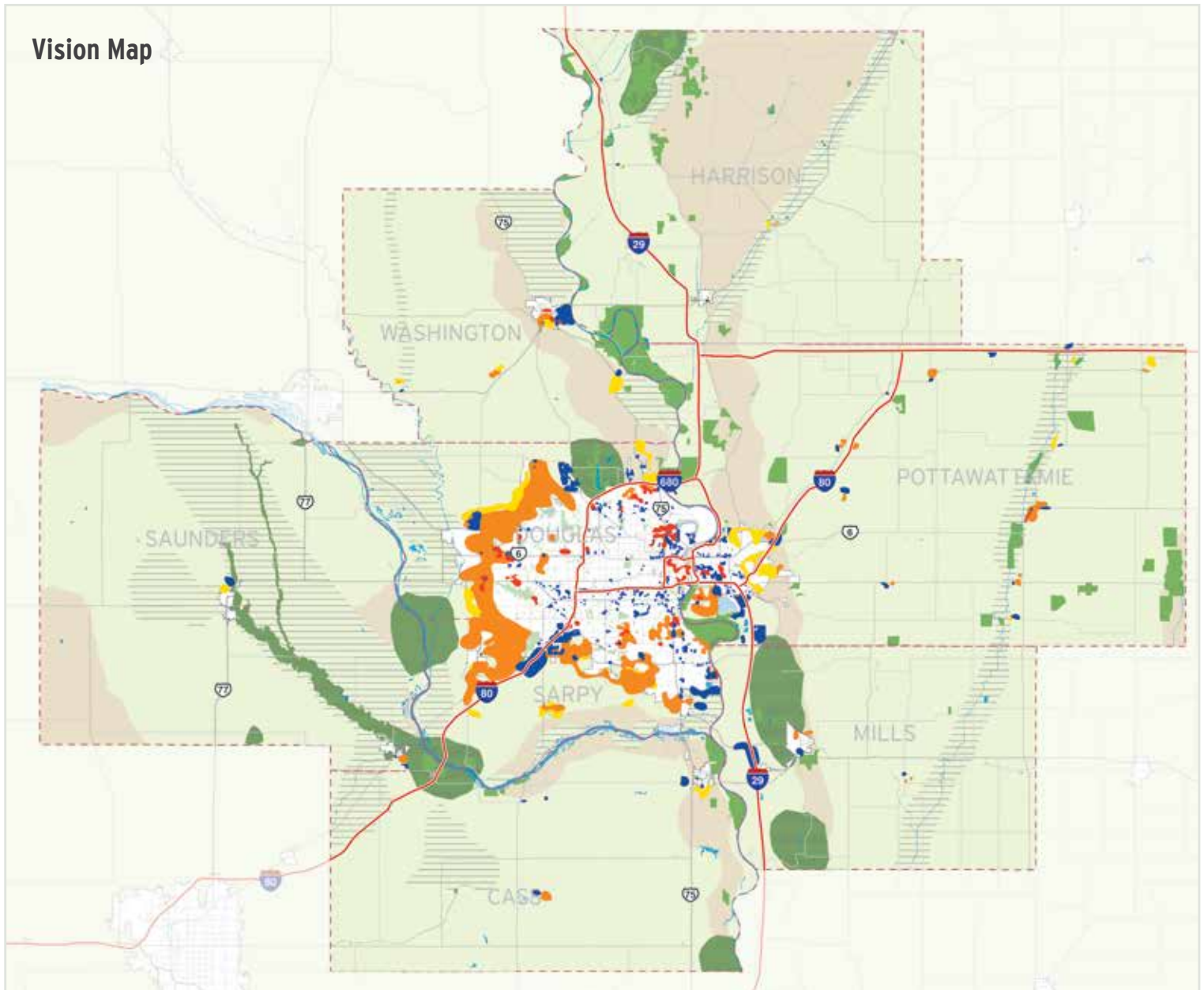
How was the Vision Scenario developed?

This Vision Scenario development relied on the guiding principles, values, and extensive public input gathered during the Heartland visioning process and through the hands-on workshops and the Shape Our Future scenario survey.

The Scenario embodies the values and goals expressed by Heartland residents by helping to keep existing schools and neighborhoods strong, using taxpayer funds wisely to maintain the region's low cost of living, providing high mobility and new transportation options such as transit, as well as access to nature and recreation opportunities. The Vision Scenario strikes a balance between Scenario C: Concentrated Growth and Scenario D: Distributed Growth, locating mixed use development in the urban core and suburban nodes as well as in smaller cities and towns across the region. The Vision Scenario incorporates unique strategies for rural areas, suburban areas, town centers and the urban core. Finally, the map was further refined using feedback from local and county staff.



Vision Map



Low Density

New neighborhoods of single-family homes on larger lots, found in smaller cities and towns.

Medium Density

A mix of new investment in existing neighborhoods and development of new walkable neighborhoods, with single family homes on smaller lots, townhomes, apartments and condos.

High Density

A mix of small-lot, single-family homes, townhomes, apartments, condos and mixed-use buildings, found in town centers and along mixed-use corridors.

Employment Area

New office, retail and industrial job growth.

Existing Park

Nature and recreation areas.

Potential Park

Opportune areas to expand existing parks and create new ones.

Farmland

Current land utilized for agricultural use.

Prime Farmland

Federally designated prime farmland (USDA-NRCS).

Conservation Area

Designated by University of Nebraska Gap Analysis, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA, and FEMA.

County Boundary

Urbanized Area



3

Comparing the Vision Scenario to Scenario A: Trend

Vision Scenario

The Vision Scenario represents a future where we have taken steps to reach the Heartland Vision Goals. We have expanded housing options available in cities, towns, suburbs and rural areas. Increased infill development is encouraged. Suburban development is contiguous, well-planned and designed to make efficient use of existing and planned public infrastructure and services. In rural areas town centers are revitalized and new development is located adjacent to existing neighborhoods. A greater mix of uses means homes are closer to the places people want and need to go.

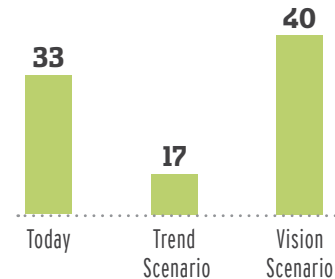
Trend Scenario

The Trend Scenario, represents a future where we continue to grow and decline much the same as we have in the past. Areas of the urban core will continue to lose population as quality desirable housing options and employment opportunities remain scarce. Westward expansion continues in Douglas and Sarpy counties where new development is affordable. Most new development in these areas focuses on single-family subdivisions. Existing sewage treatment systems reach capacity resulting in more large-lot (acreage) single-family homes than today.

Note: Both the Vision and Trend Scenarios reflect the same number of new housing units and new jobs, but are set apart by development patterns that distribute growth uniquely.

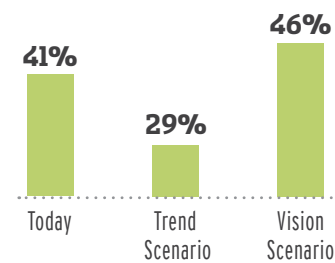
Healthy Places

Walkability score for the region



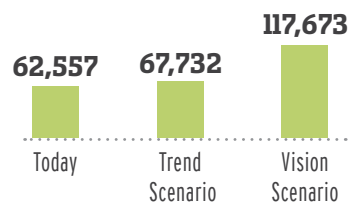
Equitable Access to Jobs

% of jobs accessible to disadvantaged residents via a 30-minute transit trip



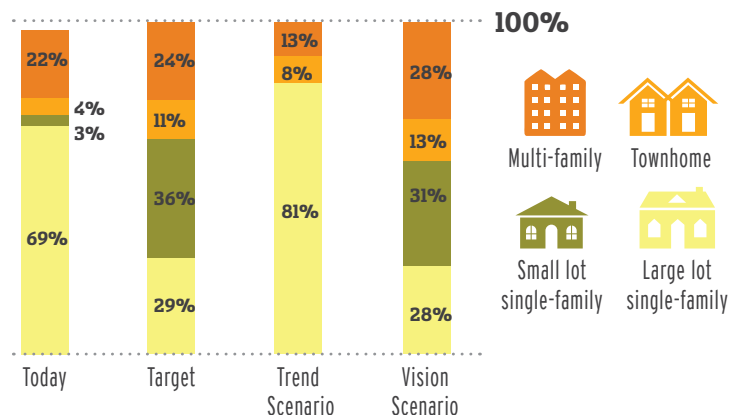
Convenient Daily Destinations

Jobs, services and shopping within a 10-minute drive



Balanced Housing

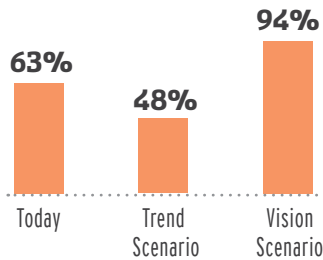
Housing mix by type





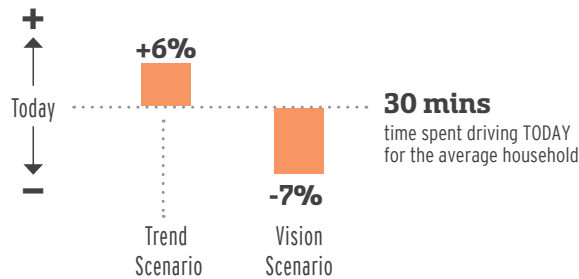
Housing Match

How well housing options match the preferences and income of residents



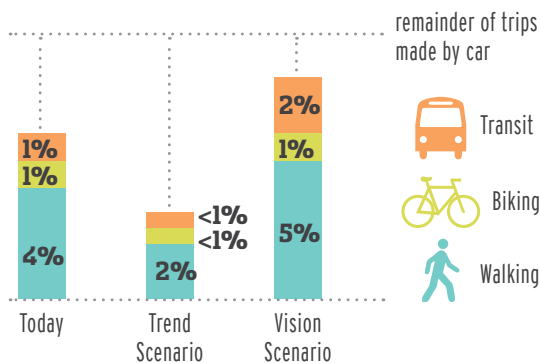
Time Spent Driving Compared to Today

% change in the time spent driving for the average household



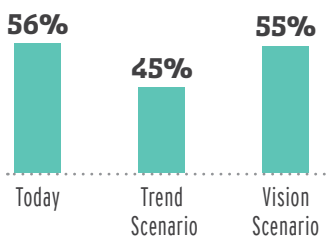
Active Transportation

% of all trips made by walking, biking and transit



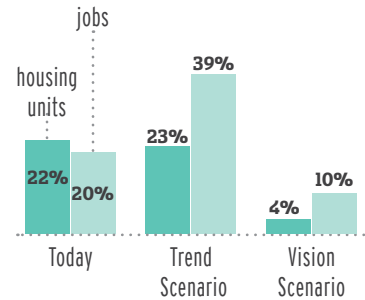
Access to Nature

Households within 1/4 mile of parks and trails



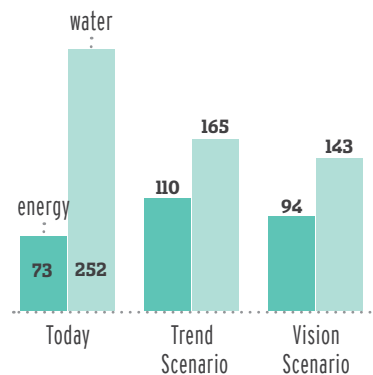
Flood Protection

% of jobs and housing units in floodplains or stream setbacks



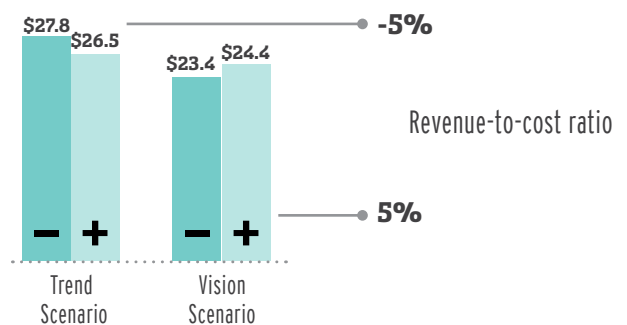
Energy and Water Efficiency

Household energy use (million BTU/year) and internal water consumption (gal/day)



Efficient Use of Public Funds

Total expenditures (billions) / total revenues (billions)





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4

First Steps to Achieving the Vision

From the beginning of the visioning process, participants asked “How will we achieve the desired outcomes?” This chapter discusses the framework needed to address how we move the region towards the vision, and lays out a framework to begin implementation. Creating an implementation framework enables stakeholders and citizens to imagine and act on a variety of ways to move towards the Heartland Vision. **With the common set of principles and goals for the future, the stakeholders can move beyond asking “What do we want?” and begin answering “How do we get there?”**



4

How is the Vision Implemented?

For the most part, the Heartland Vision will be implemented voluntarily by governmental and business leaders and will take place at the rural, suburban and urban levels through actions that contribute meaningfully to achieving the Heartland Vision goals. While all parts of the region strive for the same shared goals and outcomes, the location and character of each area will influence the methods to achieve those outcomes. Therefore, the common, driving factor for success needs to be the dedication and coordination of all parties involved.

The Framework for Continued Dedication, Coordination and Support

Implementation of a regional plan takes the coordination and commitment of local, county, regional and state leaders, as well as nonprofit and business representatives. **While large-scale shifts cannot be achieved through the action of any one town, city or county, the collective impact of all of the region's entities working together will create desired change.** The proposed framework describes how Heartland 2050 and its partners will work together to achieve our vision.

Support the Heartland Vision

All parts of the region embrace the shared vision and work to accomplish the goals and outcomes in their day-to-day decision making. Strategies and actions are incorporated into organizational strategic plans.

FIRST STEPS: Sign the Heartland Regional Compact, signaling agreement with the Heartland Vision, goals, outcomes, and principles and a commitment to work together to achieve the vision.

Create a Monitoring System

Tracking the region's progress using common benchmark indicators allows for continuous movement towards the vision. The tracking, or monitoring, system described in this chapter establishes common indicators that partner agencies and organizations embrace and report on, as part of their accountability to achieving the regional vision. MAPA provides a regular reporting process to measure the region's progress.

FIRST STEPS: Implementation Committees convened around each goal will develop a set of common indicators to track.

Heartland Regional Compact

The Heartland Vision Regional Compact was endorsed by the Heartland 2050 Steering Committee and is the pledge of regional public and private stakeholders to continue working together to address the key issues facing the Omaha-Council Bluff region. Signees of the Heartland Compact agree to support the values, principles, goals and implementation of the Heartland Vision. For organizations such as local governments, agencies, businesses and non-profits, signing the Compact also is a commitment to:

- * Continue to work together to achieve the Vision
- * Coordinate and cooperate with other jurisdictions
- * Assign staff and elected officials to committees
- * Participate in Implementation Committees
- * Participate in semi-annual Heartland Implementation Summits

A copy of the Heartland Compact can be found online:
www.Heartland2050.org



4

Outline and Coordinate Strategic Actions - Heartland 2050 Action Plan

Stakeholders from agencies and organizations across the region coordinate their activities to support the Heartland 2050 Action Plan - which is updated annually to ensure that desired results are clear and mutually actionable. Through this coordination, results across the region are maximized, and the shifts resulting from the Heartland 2050 vision are visible, with increased impact resulting from the coordinated results.

FIRST STEPS: Implementation Committees convening around each goal will review, refine and move forward the Heartland Vision strategies and actions, monitor and support implementation actions, identify opportunities for and barriers to cooperation, and assist in measuring progress, based on a common set of indicators and monitoring system. Local governments, agencies, and organizations are encouraged to participate in the Committees by attending meetings and providing staff, information, resources and, to the extent possible, financial support.

Maintain Continuous Coordination and Communication throughout the Region

Participants from all agencies and organizations continue to participate in regular structured implementation meetings to maintain motivation and movement towards achieving the Heartland 2050 Vision.

FIRST STEPS: MAPA, the Executive Committee and the Implementation Committees will establish communication channels to enable seamless regional coordination.

Enlist Backbone Support

MAPA is dedicated to leading and orchestrating the fulfillment of the Heartland Vision and providing ongoing support during its implementation. MAPA has a funded and dedicated staff to guide strategies and actions for implementation, support aligned activities, establish shared measurement practices, communicate with the public, advance policy, and mobilize resources.

FIRST STEPS: MAPA will serve in this role and work closely with the Executive and Implementation Committees to support their work.

Continued Community Engagement

MAPA will work with the Equity and Engagement Committee (EEC) to reach out to all residents of the region including traditionally disenfranchised populations to ensure that they are included in the implementation of the Heartland 2050 Vision. MAPA will continue to support community outreach efforts and work to build leadership capacity in minority communities to carry out the strategies and actions identified in the Action Plan.

FIRST STEPS: MAPA will again invite a broad cross-section of organizations serving under-represented and disenfranchised groups to become members of the EEC and support their work. Individual EEC members will also be asked to act as liaisons to the Executive and Implementation Committees by attending their meetings.



4

The First Year: Organizational Convening and Capacity Building

Activities in the first year of implementation will involve creating and organizing the committees, identifying and prioritizing actions and supporting efforts already working to implement the vision.

Activities are in order of priority and general timing.

1. Establish an Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will be comprised of a MAPA Board member, committee chairs from each of the Implementation Committees, representatives of urban, suburban and rural communities, a representative from the Equity and Engagement Committee, and a representative from philanthropy and will oversee the preparation and execution of a work plan for the first year of implementation.

2. Convene Six Implementation Committees

MAPA will convene and staff six Implementation Committees to address each of the Heartland Vision goals. Initially, Implementation Committees will:

- Create a committee work plan
- Carry out semi-annual committee meetings
- Chairs will serve as liaisons from the Implementation Committee to the Heartland Executive Committee
- Prepare semi-annual committee reports
- Review, refine and support implementation strategies and actions
- Provide progress reports on work related to strategies and actions identified in Vision
- Serve as liaisons between committee and organization they represent

3. Reestablish an Equity and Engagement Committee

An Equity and Engagement Committee will be established made up of a broad cross-section of organizations in the region who work with under-represented populations. The work of the Committee will be supported by MAPA staff.



4. Establish a Monitoring System

A system to establish performance measures can be used to understand the region's progress in implementing goals and strategies. This is similar to the set of benchmark criteria (indicators) used to evaluate each of the scenarios, but instead, these performance measures are used to measure current characteristics. Performance measures will be identified, responsibilities for measurement clarified, and a process developed to compile and disseminate results on a regular basis. Measuring progress should also identify a mechanism for long-term accountability.



4

Suggested indicators to track:

- Scenario Indicators
- Number of new business starts
- Number of minority/women/veteran owned businesses
- New mixed use developments, infill development and redevelopment as percentage of all new development
- New housing starts/permit data
- Educational attainment
- In-migration and out-migration, especially of recent college graduates
- Income and poverty (by race and geography)

5. Roll Out a Near-Term Action Plan - Heartland 2050 Action Plan

Based on the Heartland Vision strategies and actions, and refined by the work of the Implementation Committees, the Action Plan will highlight strategic, near-term implementation steps that can be undertaken quickly to move the Vision forward. The Heartland 2050 Action Plan will identify ongoing and emerging programs that support the Vision, the actions that individuals and agencies will take, as well as actions to maintain the momentum of the visioning process.

6. Celebrate Progress and Major Milestones

Concise, informative annual reports should be a priority to share the progress made each year toward achieving the Heartland Vision. The annual report should be released each year at a year-end Heartland 2050 Implementation Summit. It should include performance measures, celebrate the region's successes, and provide for the periodical revision of strategies and actions. This should also include a citizen education program to promote the Vision goals in a way that residents and stakeholders can embrace and support implementation measures. This program will build widespread support and understanding of the issues facing the region and the positive outcomes of supporting the Heartland Vision.

The Role of Philanthropy

The philanthropic community helps improve the daily lives of many in the Heartland. The role that philanthropy plays in the success of the Heartland can not be understated. Foundations offer an opportunity to bridge multiple sectors- business, public, nonprofit, academic to ensure regional cooperation, analysis of information, mutually agreed upon points of measurement, and a data driven approach to solving the problems of our region. In a unified fashion, the philanthropic community can help make continued improvement in our citizens day to day quality of life and their long term trajectories of opportunity.

The philanthropic community will be able to help identify bridges between low income communities and regional economic opportunity. Heartland 2050 envisions foundations as intermediaries for conversations with our anchor institutions, partners in identifying individuals and organizations that have the ability to take on new forms of leadership, and advancing equity related issues that will impact the long term economic resiliency and competitiveness of our region.



First Steps to Achieving the Vision

4

MAPA's Regional Leadership Role

There is much work to be done to begin and maintain implementation of the Heartland 2050 Vision. Once a compact has been agreed upon and signed, MAPA will serve as the lead convener and as the administrative agent of the compact. As the lead convener, MAPA will pull together and support stakeholder Implementation Committees and provide the framework for identifying and building capacity of the organizations agreeing to undertake the actions listed in each goal area.

Specifically, MAPA commits to the following actions in support of the organizational structure of implementation:

- Manage the implementation process and chair the Heartland Executive Committee
- Provide staff, organizational and funding support
- Handle correspondence, notifications and stakeholder lists
- Act as liaison to local governments and agencies, and the MAPA Board
- Monitor progress on strategies, actions and performance metrics
- Carry out semi-annual Implementation Summits
- Prepare annual implementation progress reports

The MAPA Council of Officials meets quarterly and is comprised of mayors and leadership from other organizations, including utilities, education, natural resource districts and others in the MAPA region. The Council of Officials will provide a venue where communities and organizations can provide input and remain connected to the Heartland 2050 process.

Within each of the goal areas, multiple agencies and organizations are already working diligently on achieving these goals. For example a consortium of health care providers have been meeting to discuss opportunities for regional coordination. It is these providers and others who should be invited to become members of the various Implementation Committees to establish communications, share data and learning experiences, and determine whether an existing group should be commissioned as the backbone organization for a particular action, or if a new group should be established to orchestrate the implementation of an initiative.



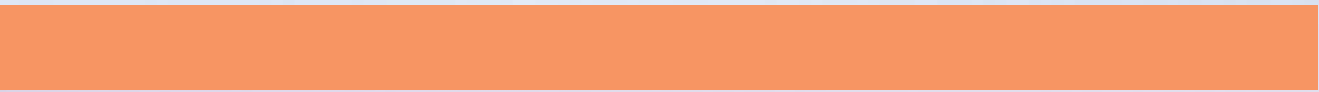
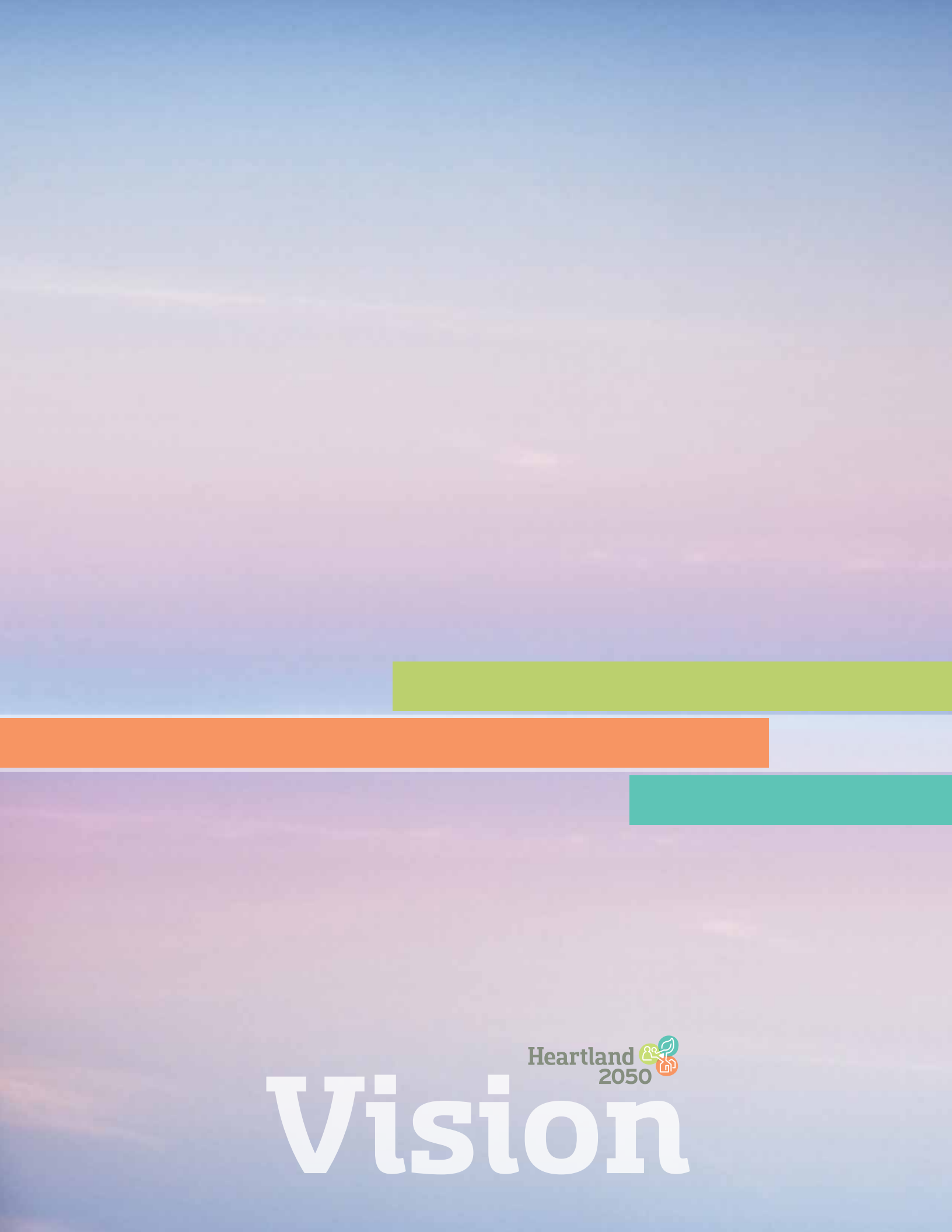
Our region is changing and we need everyone's help.

You or your organization can take actions that move us toward our goals. **Working together, we can implement our vision equitably throughout the region** – for all residents in all neighborhoods in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

1. Encourage local government and organizations to sign the Heartland Compact
2. Take on a project from the Heartland 2050 Action Plan
3. Attend the semi-annual Heartland 2050 Implementation Summit meetings
4. Invite MAPA to speak at an organization meeting
5. Participate in one of the Heartland Implementation Committees
6. Learn about volunteer opportunities

Stay informed and find out how you can get involved:

www.heartland2050.org



Heartland
2050



Vision