

How to Develop Vision Statements, Objectives, Quick Wins and Actions

Vision Statement

The foundation of the project plan is the vision that is created by the people who live, work, learn and play in the neighbourhood. Residents can drive the change that they want to see when they clearly articulate a vision for the future of their neighbourhood. The vision is for the neighbourhood, created by the project team and endorsed by the neighbourhood.

The vision should:

- Be concise, identify what is possible and create a picture of the future of the neighbourhood.
- Be inspiring and inspirational.
- Explain why the neighbourhood is creating this project plan.
- Explain where the neighbourhood is heading and what they are trying to achieve.

Steps to create a vision statement:

- Select a facilitator and recorder
- Make sure sticky notes, pens, flip chart paper and markers are available

The facilitator will:

1. Explain to the project team the purpose of the vision statement.
2. Ask the team to review the asset map and neighbourhood profiles. Ask the team to consider the following questions: Based on our assets and issues, what do we want our neighbourhood to look like in 5 years...10 years...20 years? How do we build and enhance our assets? How do we address our needs? What is possible?
3. Give each team member a sticky note and pen and ask them to write down ONE idea of what they want their neighbourhood to look like in the future. Give the team 10 minutes to think, reflect and complete.
4. Facilitate a “go around” by asking each team member to speak to their idea. Have the team discuss each idea. The recorder will capture the main ideas on flip chart paper. The facilitator will then ask the team to group ideas together into major themes. Get agreement on the major themes. Ask the group, “Did we miss anything?”
5. Write each theme on a flip chart and post around the room. Give each team member one sticky dot and have them place it on the theme they think is most important. The themes with the most dots are most important for prominent inclusion in the vision statement.

It is important that the team not wordsmith a vision statement as part of this exercise. Have one or two team members, the facilitator and City staff take away the major themes, put some sentences around these themes and bring this work back to the group for discussion at the next project team meeting. This will save the team time and frustration and allow them to move on with the development of goals and objectives. Once your vision statement is complete, do a REALITY CHECK. ASK: Can this be achieved?

Goals and Objectives

Once the Vision Statement is created and endorsed by the project team, the next step is to create the goals for the project, based on the main themes developed during the visioning exercise. People often get confused about what is a goal, an objective and an action.

Goals are general guidelines that explain what you want to achieve in your community. They are usually long-term and represent global visions such as “protect public health and safety.”

Objectives define strategies or implementation steps to attain the identified goals. Unlike goals, objectives are specific, measurable and have a defined completion date.

Actions are more specific and provide the “how to” steps to attaining the objective.

Here is an example of what a vision statement, goal, objective and action might look like.

Vision: We want our neighbourhood to be known for its safety, walkability and friendliness.

Goal: Create a safe environment for pedestrians in our neighbourhood.

Objective: Increase pedestrian-friendly features on Main Street.

Actions: Plant trees; install benches and calm traffic through bump-outs along Main Street.

Is there a Quick Win? A quick win is an action that can be achieved in a couple of months using minimal resources, shows early success in the neighbourhood and creates a “buzz.”

Important note about the process:

While the final project plan will clearly present the vision, goals, objectives and actions in a way that makes sense to the reader, the creation of this work is often less ordered and cohesive. Often residents will focus on the immediate tasks or behaviours they would like to see change in their neighbourhood to meet their vision, without being able to speak about how these ideas fit into broader goals and objectives. Experience in other cities suggests that sometimes the goals and objectives emerge out of a number of concrete actions that can be grouped together to create the goals and objectives. Because of this, it is important to keep a record of all ideas that emerge during discussions so that no idea gets lost.

Steps to develop goals, objectives and actions:

- Select a facilitator
- Make sure flip chart paper, markers, pens and sticky dots are available

Session 1

1. Using the main themes developed during the visioning exercise; break the project team into small groups (ideally 4-5 residents).
2. Give each group one theme each and have them brainstorm as many ideas as they can think of that would help achieve the vision/theme. Have the group record all these ideas as clearly as possible on flip chart paper and appoint a spokesperson to present these ideas back to the larger team.

3. Once all groups have reported back, post each flip chart paper theme with ideas around the room and give everyone a chance to walk around, make comments or additions to each piece and discuss informally.
4. Give the flip chart paper themes, including any additional ideas, back to the small group and have them group the ideas that seem to go together into broad objectives. Next, discuss the objectives and come up with some ideas on potential goal statements. If the project team does not have time to refine the goal statement and objectives to their satisfaction, have them get together between meetings to work on the statements (or ask a facilitator or City staff do this).

Session 2

1. Start the meeting with a quick reminder of the vision and themes that were created at previous meetings. Present and explain that the dotmocracy tool will be used for each goal statement and each objective.
2. Re-convene the same small groups and have them review the work from the last meeting, make any changes and then present the goal statement and objectives to the larger project team for clarification. Do NOT wordsmith the goal statement during the discussion but do ask “So what?” – what is the difference that this goal/objective could have on the lives of residents or the neighbourhood?
3. Have each group use the dotmocracy tool for each of the goal statements and objectives.
4. Post each goal statement around the room, give the residents 2-3 minutes per goal statement (so if there are 6 goal statements, allot 15 – 20 minutes for this exercise) to write any comments or revisions on the statement and fill in their dot. Have them initial the sheet.
5. Post the objectives under the goal statement and again give the residents time to walk around the room, read each statement, add any comments and fill in their dot. Make sure they initial each sheet they vote on.
6. The facilitator will wrap up the meeting by summarizing where the major priorities in the project team are and let the team know that at the next meeting the goals and objectives will be presented back, in order of priority, as identified through the dotmocracy tool.
7. The facilitator, City staff and one resident from each small group take away the goal statements and objectives, with comments and revisions, to prioritize and wordsmith before the next meeting.
8. Present back the first draft of the goals and objectives, with preliminary action ideas captured within the objectives. Once agreement is reached that these are correct, it is time to consult with the community to get their input.

This is a good time to take your vision statement, goals and objectives out to the neighbourhood for consultation. You can use this consultation to refine the goals and objectives and collect more ideas for actions for achieving the vision and goal statements. This consultation should let the project team know if they are on the right track. If the consultation gives you results that are very different from the vision, goal statements and objectives drafted by the team, the team needs to take this new information into consideration and “course correct” their vision and goals.

Below is a table to record the vision, goals, objectives and actions. Goal A, Objective 1 and Action 1 are provided as an example.

What?	So What?	How?
List objectives based on neighbourhood consultations and project team meetings organized by categories.	Explain what the difference achieving this objective could have on the lives of the residents of the neighbourhood as a whole.	List, if possible, a quick win that would be a first step to achieving this objective.
Goal A: Create an accessible and safe environment for pedestrians in our neighbourhood.		
Objective 1: Increase pedestrian friendly features on the street. Action 1: Create curb cuts at all formal pedestrian crossings; install benches; and, paint a mural in the main intersection.	Proper curb cuts would make walking more accessible to people in our neighbourhoods. Benches would provide a convenient place to rest. Traffic calming and slower car speeds would make crossing the main intersection in the neighbourhood safer and more enjoyable. This would increase the number of people choosing to walk which would both increase safety in the neighbourhood and improve people's health.	Residents could host a neighbourhood meeting to identify prime locations for benches to be installed along primary pedestrian routes in the neighbourhood. Residents could apply for a Neighbourhood Matching Grant to install the first bench.
Goal B:		
Objective 1:		
Objective 2:		
Goal C:		
Objective 1:		
Objective 2:		

The How to Develop Vision Statements, Objectives, Quick Wins and Actions tool was adapted from the Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Planning Toolkit, Tool J – How to Develop Vision Statements, Objectives and Quick Wins. View Hamilton's Toolkit at bit.ly/2hRLt6H.