

Introduction

We shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us.
- *Winston Churchill*

Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.
- *Joel Barker, Futurist*

The City of Glendale has a history of good planning. In recent times the City's downtown area has benefited from two such important planning efforts. The first took place in the early 1970's. The result was the creation of the Downtown Redevelopment Project Area. The first major project was the Glendale Galleria which proved to be the stimulus for the revitalization of our downtown.

The second planning effort took place in the early 1980's. This resulted in the creation of Glendale's financial district on North Brand Blvd. The office towers that followed established a major new employment base for the City, not to mention an impressive skyline.

With the 1990's came the recognition that another major planning effort for the downtown area was needed. However, this time more than just the Downtown itself required attention. By now the inter-relationship between the Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods was much better understood. Each depended on the other, and the issues of one directly affected the other.

The motivation for this new planning effort was twofold: the need to address some emerging problems and the need for a growth management strategy. Candidly, both the Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods were beginning to show some signs of deterioration. The recent recession had left development activity flat and office vacancy rates at unacceptable levels. While the Galleria continued to do well, the rest of the retail market was struggling. Too many store fronts were empty, and efforts to attract key new retailers proved unsuccessful.



The first motivation for the planning effort was the need for a strategy to ensure a progressive and healthy quality of life for present and future generations.

The surrounding neighborhoods were experiencing problems. The impact of the unprecedented building boom of the 1980's was being felt. These dramatic changes resulted in a strong sense of frustration concerning the changing quality of life in the neighborhoods. The issues that need to be addressed are the lack of libraries and park space, overcrowded schools, traffic congestion, public safety, and housing quality.

The second motivation was the recognition that a growth management strategy for the downtown area was needed. With the ending of the recession, Glendale was primed for a new wave of development activity. Such factors as location, an outstanding safety record and the attraction of the rapidly expanding integrated media industry all pointed to significant amounts of new growth. All one had to do was refer to the Southern California Association of Government's (SCAG) growth predictions for Glendale to realize the potential that lay ahead. If we were to learn from the explosion of multi-family housing development in the 1980's, clearly for the 1990's a pro-active growth management strategy was needed to focus on both quantity and quality of growth. In short, a vision for Glendale's future was needed.

In the Spring of 1993 the Glendale Partners, a group of leading Glendale business representatives, joined the City in this visioning effort. This public-private approach was a key theme throughout the planning process. The first major decision was to hire Alex Cooper, a highly regarded urban planner, to help guide us through the process. Following an extensive planning effort, the Cooper Report was published in September, 1994. Shortly thereafter, it was accepted by the Glendale City Council.

The Cooper Report was remarkable both for its insights into Glendale and its vision for our future. It set forth a series of themes and frameworks that would help guide future policies and decision-making. It also made some suggestions relating to implementation. Due to the strategic nature of the report, its real value lay in the exciting vision presented. The specifics of implementation were properly left to others.

To pursue this next step, an Implementation Steering Group was established. This group was comprised of community representatives, business leaders and public officials. Joining in this effort was the Neighborhood Task Force whose focus was on dealing with the variety of issues affecting the surrounding neighborhoods. The Greater Downtown Strategic Plan (GDSP) is the product of this effort.



The GDSP sets forth a series of public actions and private opportunities. We have taken care to remain true to the strategic nature of the initial plan done by Alex Cooper. Accordingly, it is not a

"master plan" or even a "specific plan." It continues to paint a vision, while calling for particular projects. It even suggests sites for these projects. And yet, the concept of flexibility is fundamental to the approach. As the plans for implementation go forward, there will may be the need to make any number of changes. The key is to measure these proposed changes against the original vision. Are we still achieving the same goals and the same vision? Would an alternative be of equal or greater benefit to the community?

Public actions called for in the GDSP include new parks and public buildings, improved street design and public transportation services, more parking, and business development strategies. These will in turn create private opportunities in such areas as new retail, office, hotel, and housing. A key theme in all of this is the synergy created between these public and private efforts.

While the GDSP encourages a certain amount of growth in the downtown area, it seeks to pro-actively manage it. In terms of quantity, the amount of growth called for is approximately one-third of that projected by SCAG. High quality will be achieved through careful negotiations with prospective developers and design guidelines. The GDSP is consistent with the City's Strategic Plan, and does nothing that would cause the population "build-out" projection of 225,000 to be exceeded. The GDSP proposes specific goals, sets forth actions, and clearly defines implementation strategies. The proposed recommendations are organized by Frameworks that build on key principles and themes. At least annual review and comment on these Frameworks by the community is essential in the coming years in order to confirm their relevance through the natural process of inevitable changes.

It is one thing to have an exciting vision and, of course, quite another to be able to pay for it. The GDSP contains an implementation strategy at the end of this report. Each of the specific projects is listed with the following information: size, cost, funding sources, and timing. As this is a Strategic Plan, all of this information is an estimate at best. Several important factors should be kept in mind. First, many of these projects will be a combination of public and private funds. This is consistent with the overall theme for the downtown which emphasizes that synergy is to be gained from such joint ventures. The second factor involves the time frame for implementation. Clearly, a vision of the scale called for in the GDSP will take some time to implement. While some projects may be completed in the short-term (one - five years), others may take as long as 15, even 20 years. Funding issues need to be considered in the context of these kinds of time frames. All necessary funding will come from existing sources. No new taxes are proposed to cover these costs.

The anticipated benefits resulting from this plan are very exciting. Both the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods should see a significant increase in the amount of much-needed open space. Community-based planning strategies will give residents a greater voice in the decision-making processes affecting their neighborhoods. The fun and excitement of Glendale's downtown area will be enhanced with new retail, recreation, cultural arts, and entertainment opportunities. Public transportation and parking supply will be improved. New jobs will be added and City revenues increased.

The Glendale community has long been proud of its quality of life. Such an achievement cannot be maintained by standing still. An on going, pro-active approach is very much needed. As with the previous planning efforts, this Greater Downtown Strategic Plan is designed to serve as a catalyst for the kind of results that will ensure our quality of life as we enter the 21st Century.