



Regional Vision

Residents develop Vision Dixie Principles and Vision Scenario

Location: Washington County, Utah

Partners: Washington County; Envision Utah; Winston Associates; ForeSee Consulting, Inc.



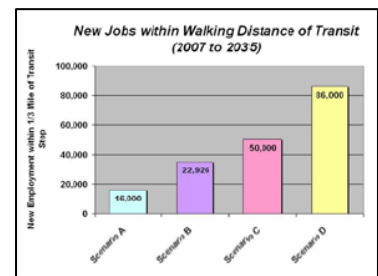
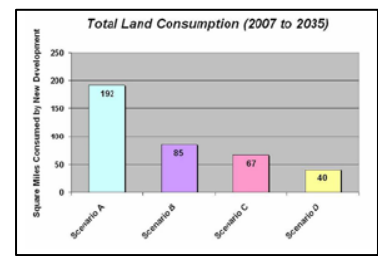
Context: Washington County in Utah’s extreme southwest corner is known as Utah’s “Dixie.” This sun-belt county nearly doubled in population in each of the three decades between 1970 and 2000, and according to some estimates, the population may triple in the next 30 years. Faced with growing concerns about the future, and spurred on by discussions about a proposed federal Washington County Growth and Conservation Act, Washington County decided to develop a regional vision that would preserve the quality of life and ensure an affordable, livable future.

Vision Dixie is about choice—the project used scenario planning at a “big picture” scale to help people understand the consequences of today’s actions. Guided by a diverse Steering Committee and benefiting from the input of over 3000 residents, the project resulted in a set of Vision Dixie Principles and a Vision Scenario. Together, these provide a framework for voluntary implementation that is already guiding elected local officials and residents as they face critical decisions about their local plans, development regulations, and development proposals.

Project Description: Vision Dixie engaged Envision Utah, who teamed with Winston Associates and others, to design and facilitate a series of public meetings and workshops. The project enjoyed extensive public input and media attention from its inception in October 2006. Over 1200 residents attended one of 13 workshops to voice their ideas about how the county should grow. In addition to group discussions and keypad polling, participants engaged in a “chip-game” exercise by placing chips on large maps to represent development. The project team used an array of geographic, socioeconomic and regulatory data to develop a “baseline scenario” (based on existing municipal plans) and three alternative scenarios reflecting the input of residents. They used CommunityViz® throughout the process: to evaluate development pressures, to allocate homes

“It was a great thing to be able to visually and graphically show people the differences among the various scenarios. This proved to be an important and powerful part of the project.”

– Kayla Koeber, Vision Dixie Implementation Committee Member

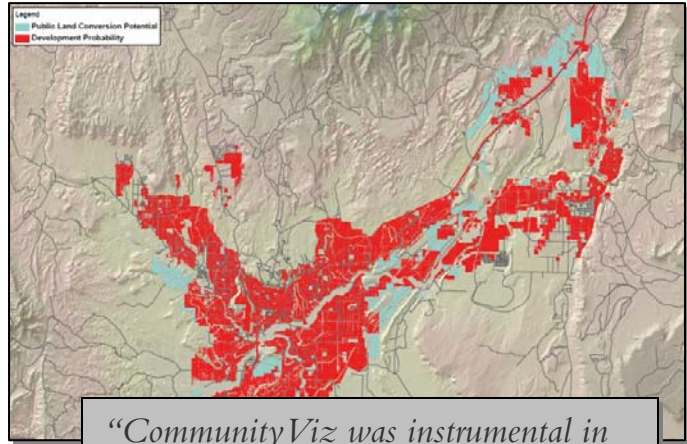


and employment, and to conduct a variety of impact analyses for all four scenarios. Categories of impact analysis included measures of centrality, land consumption and sensitive land impacts, amount of infill, housing mix, vehicle miles traveled, water consumption, housing affordability, and farmland impact.

In Spring 2007, over 500 residents attended one of nine “Dixie Dialogue” meetings where they again used group discussion and keypad polling to respond to the scenarios and impact information. Another 800 residents evaluated the scenarios on-line. Hard copies of the scenarios were printed and widely distributed, and an independent polling firm conducted telephone interviews to gather additional opinions on growth issues and strategies. Based on all of these inputs, the Steering Committee developed ten Vision Dixie Principles, as well as a Vision Scenario to illustrate one way the county might grow in line with these principles.

Technology and Tools: Winston Associates used CommunityViz Scenario 360™ for evaluating development pressures, allocating development and analyzing impacts. They also used ArcGlobe, ArcScene, Sketchup, Google Earth and Winston’s Vizhen for visualizations. Envision Utah made use of its IMPACS tool (Integrated Model for Planning and Cost Scenarios) concurrently to look at water demands and localized infrastructure costs associated with growth. The public was engaged through a series of workshops and dialogue meetings, a chip game exercise, keypad polling, an interactive web site with on-line scenario feedback, and independent telephone survey.

Outcomes: While on-the-ground action will take a number of years to observe, Vision Dixie is already exerting major influence on planning policy at several levels. The final report, “2007 Vision Dixie, Making a Better Washington County” was formally adopted by the County in 2008. A Vision Dixie Implementation Committee composed of a County Commissioner, two mayors, the Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments, and a citizen representative was formed and has met each of the 15 municipalities in the county to present the Vision Dixie project and Principles; by mid-2009, about one-third of the municipalities have adopted the Principles. A participant in the Vision Dixie project raised funds to form a new non-profit organization, FormTomorrow, to provide “nuts and bolts” planning support to local communities in concert with the Vision Dixie principles. At the Federal level, the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act was passed by Congress in early 2009 and was signed into law by President Obama. The act designates hundreds of thousands of acres of land around Zion National Park as wilderness area, creates two new National Conservation Areas, and requires consultation with the County on any proposed land conversions.



“CommunityViz was instrumental in helping convey the quality of life consequences associated with each of the long-range Vision Dixie scenarios. The software framework imbued the process with additional credibility and a ‘gee-whiz’ factor that heightened interest among stakeholders and residents.”

—Ted Knowlton,
(former) Envision Utah Planning Director

KEY LINKS

CommunityViz
<http://www.communityviz.com>
Washington County
<http://www.washco.utah.gov>
Vision Dixie
<http://visiondixie.org>
Envision Utah
<http://www.envisionutah.org>
Winston Associates:
<http://www.winstonassociates.com>
FormTomorrow
<http://www.formtomorrow.org>