

**MINUTES
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STRATEGIC PLANNING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2017
UNICO
1128 LINCOLN MALL, SUITE #200
LINCOLN, NE
11:30 A.M.**

Advance public notice of the Board of Commissioners meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board and the Lancaster County, Nebraska, web site and emailed to the media on November 22, 2017.

Commissioners present: Todd Wiltgen, Chair; Bill Avery, Vice Chair; Roma Amundson, Jennifer Brinkman and Deb Schorr

Others present: Kerry Eagan, Chief Administrative Officer; Ann Ames, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer; Minette Genuchi, County Board Administrative Assistant; Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Officer; Brad Johnson, Corrections Director; Sara Hoyle, Human Services Director; Kim Etherton, Community Corrections Director; Jim Davidsaver, Emergency Management Director; Sheli Schindler, Youth Services Center Director; Scott Etherton, Mental Health Crisis Center Director; Abby Stenek, Director of Policy and Research, Lincoln Independent Business Association (LIBA) and Cori Beattie, County Clerk's Office

Facilitators: Mari Lane Gewecke, Lane Gewecke Consulting; and Mary Beth Rice, MBR Strategies

The meeting began at 11:30 a.m. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available.

AGENDA ITEM

1. LUNCH AND HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

Gewecke noted that today's outcomes would hopefully include: (1) develop a common vision for the Lancaster County Board; and (2) identify common values and a shared understanding for moving forward with the vision. Rice said a report (Exhibit A) developed by Gewecke and previously distributed to the group would be referenced throughout the session. It included three common themes: (1) the importance of communication; (2) value/priority setting; and (3) a mutual appreciation for others' experiences/talents. Rice said the planned activities would build on these three areas.

Participants were then asked to state their name, their title and what made them most grateful about the work they do on behalf of Lancaster County citizens.

2. OPENING GROUP ACTIVITY

Handouts were distributed regarding a context map activity (Exhibits B and C). Participants were then divided into four groups and asked to develop an overall context for Lancaster County based on the following: Trends/Opportunities and Challenges, Economic Climate, Political Factors, Technology Factors and Uncertainties.

3. CONTEXT MAPPING

Spokespersons from each group reported on their discussion results as follows:

Trends/Opportunities: Private/public partnerships; growing community; University of Nebraska

Trends/Challenges: Growing demand on services; growing demand for lower taxes

Following further discussion, increased diversity was added under Trends/Opportunities and new state/federal philosophies, millennium generation and an aging population were added under Trends/Challenges.

Political Factors: (1) Federal level – new administration, changing regulations, and competing interests; (2) State level – continued pressure to make (budget) cuts and pushing issues to the local level; (3) County level – dependent on property tax, inability to bond without vote and upcoming election cycle (potential changes). Redistricting following the 2020 census was added as a factor under this category.

Economic Climate: Positive market/population growth; stable environment (no high highs or low lows); utilizing positive market growth to benefit employee retirement; low interest rates to refinance bonds. Low unemployment was later included under this category.

Technology Factors: Managing change in technology (economic, speed, education and expectations); adaptation of physical structures to change; meeting statutory requirements.

Uncertainties were also offered by all groups and included such things as:

- Changes within City (of Lincoln) leadership
- Leadership changes and retirements (County)
- Loss of federal and state funding
- Property tax funding
- Healthcare
- Redistricting
- Fiscal concerns for staff
- Agricultural economy (effects of possible decline)
- Population growth (pressure on services provided by the County)
- Positive market (trends can't last forever)
- Relationship with Information Services
- Cost, training/education (related to technology)
- Cybersecurity

4. DEVELOPING A VISION

Handouts were distributed regarding visioning (Exhibits D and E). Participants were again broken into four groups to answer questions about how they might view Lancaster County in the year 2050. Responses were as follows:

- 1a. What does Lancaster County look like in 2050?
 - Population 750,000; municipal county; agriculture land constricted
 - Population 450,000; more urban and diversity; need distribution of wealth; transportation

- Expanded (annexation of Hickman/Waverly); focus on higher education, technology, and diversity; arts and cultural center of Nebraska
 - Metropolis; more privatization/consolidation; government structure example Clark County, CO (Denver)
- 1b. How do important elements within the county interact?
- Public/private partnerships very important; less dependent on agriculture
 - Great expectations of service (public safety); larger version of self (trend toward merging municipality)
 - Virtually; electronic communication
 - Information technology
2. What are the most influential trends in Lancaster County in 2050?
- Distance government; working at home/distance schools; asocial people; environment concerns
 - Less brick and mortar (online services); more mobile population; different sources of energy
 - Population growth; technology, keeping people in Nebraska (higher education); more urban; sustainable
 - Less demand on infrastructure, i.e., buildings
3. How is the County budget funded in 2050?
- User fees; less federal/state money
 - Greater variety of revenue sources (more fee based)
 - Property, sales and wheel taxes; infrastructure/utility fee
 - Shift in sales tax; behavior determines services; diverse tax base
4. In 2050, what are the values of Lancaster County government?
- Stewardship, transparency, community
 - Responsive, accessible, transparent, efficient (RATE)
 - Transparent, accountable, accessible, sustainable, constituent-focused, balanced growth, fiscal accountability, increased focus on staff (growth and development)
 - More specialized in services; increased technology; more focus on public safety; move toward European style of government, i.e., healthcare

Discussion followed on what points should be included in the County Board's vision statement. The consensus was to sort out values and then return to this exercise.

5. DEFINING VALUES

Handouts were distributed regarding core values (Exhibits F and G). Participants were asked to provide their top two values. Based on the number of responses per word, the greatest emphasis was on transparency, followed by accountability and integrity and then efficiency, ethics, innovation and stability. The final group of values included competence, democracy, effectiveness, empowerment, freedom, growth, honesty and service.

RETURNING TO ITEM 4

Discussion followed on what the Lancaster County Board's vision statement should include. After further consideration, it was decided that many of the suggestions offered were more in line with a mission statement. Therefore, the following mission statement was developed, "The mission of the Lancaster County Board is to provide sustainable governmental services for a healthy, safe, diverse community."

Many in the group felt strongly that a vision statement was also needed. The following wording was suggested in a bulleted format:

Our vision of Lancaster County:

- Healthy
- Safe
- Diverse
- Vibrant

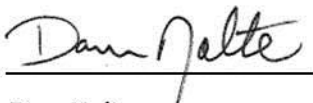
6. CONCLUDING GROUP ACTIVITY

Daidsaver exited the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Participants were paired up and asked to build social capital by sharing with each other the gifts and abilities that they bring to the newly created vision and what they appreciate about others in the room. This information was then shared in a larger group format. The activity concluded with each participant sharing a gift, ability, trait or skill that another person in the room will use on their journey toward the new vision.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 3:27 p.m.



Dan Nolte
Lancaster County Clerk



PLANNING INTERVIEWS

Lancaster County Board

Mari Lane Gewecke
Lane Gewecke Consulting
November 2017

This is a great place to live, work and play.

~ Interviewee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Interview participants.....	4
Summary of most common themes	5
The interviews	9
Working relationships.....	9
External trends	11
Internal strengths and weaknesses	13
Short term priorities for Lancaster County.....	15
Long term priorities for Lancaster County	17
Additional comments	18
Advice on planning	19

Introduction

The Lancaster County Board is preparing for a planning meeting to develop a common vision for Lancaster County and identify the common values and shared understandings necessary for moving toward that vision.

The board engaged Lane Gewecke Consulting to assist with planning. Prior to the meeting, a member of the firm conducted interviews to gather perspectives from county commissioners, county board staff and county department directors. A list of the participating interviewees can be found on Page Four.

This report summarizes the interviews, including opinions expressed by those who participated. A representative sample of direct quotations from interviewees is included in this report, without attribution. To encourage openness and candor, everyone interviewed was assured of the confidentiality of their individual comments.

All direct quotes are indented and in italics, like this.

Interview participants

Ann Ames

Roma Amundson

Bill Avery

Jennifer Brinkman

Jim Davidsaver

Kerry Eagan

Kim Etherton

Scott Etherton

Minette Genuchi

Sara Hoyle

Brad Johnson

Dennis Meyer

Sheli Schindler

Deb Schorr

Todd Wiltgen

Summary of most common themes

Though the sample size was small for this study, several themes came up as common ground among those interviewed. This section summarizes those areas in which the majority of interviewees expressed similar views. Some of the quotes noted in this section also appear in the full report of the interviews, which begins on Page Nine.

Communication is key

The importance of communication was a key theme expressed at various times during the interviews:

Focus on open lines of communication. ...we've got to share information.

A free exchange of information. ... There needs to be good communication, working together, pulling in the same direction.

I don't think we have to agree on everything but we have to state our opinion without fear of reprisal.

I don't think we communicate as well as we could and on a timely fashion with employees and others in county government.

Communication—we're dealing with a lot of elected officials...to get everybody on the same page, to move Lancaster County in the direction we should be....

Because hard decisions have to be made, how are we as a team going to provide timely, accurate, sensitive information?

(Commissioners) have an open-door policy now. ... (Department directors) all meet monthly in management team. I can call on any of them for advice and have.

We need to keep dialogue going.

... open communication, where department directors feel comfortable coming to the board with comments and concerns. We could use a higher level of communication among all of us.

I would encourage us to demonstrate what civic dialogue should be on issues important to the future of our county...an open dialogue about potential disagreements on issues to see if compromise is possible.

Infrastructure as a high priority

The county's infrastructure needs were the most commonly agreed upon short or long-term priority (or both):

Infrastructure is a clear and present problem and will get worse—bridges, roads.

One of the very first is we need to take care of roads and bridges, infrastructure. ... We have got to do something about infrastructure: roads, bridges, outlying engineering buildings, technology.

...how do we make a plan to address roads costs verses money available; how do we keep buildings up to date...?

Our infrastructure needs are huge—we've got a lot of roads and bridges out there.

We need to continue to work on infrastructure....

Infrastructure—bridges and roads. As the city gets larger it goes further out in the county, which changes the dynamic for the county.... Do you stop it? What do you do?

We need to get a handle on our infrastructure—working with the county engineer, get a handle on infrastructure needs and develop some type of plan.

Infrastructure—bridges and roads. We are proposing to piggyback on a study by the city, involving a professional team to review and make a plan to implement rather than leave bridges closed.

State government most noted external force

Challenges raised because of something the state does – or doesn't do – were cited by a majority of those interviewed:

The state has a big impact on Lancaster County—politically, laws that are written, policies. ... Those impact funding, how we move people through the system—all those things are influenced by the political side, depending on who's in office. That impacts us economically as well.

Legislative statutes affect us.

The Legislature is very involved in state corrections and a lot of those things trickle down to the county. The mental health component...lack of funding from the state, creates hardship.

State decisionmakers and employees vying for certain county decisions being made. Those politics didn't exist as much before.

The state has an impact on us. In terms of budget, mandates, expectation of what the county should do. The state will remove programs and the county becomes payer of last resort.

Juvenile justice has seen changes at the state level—I don't think the county has experienced the full effect of that.

State funding—we receive some federal money but reductions at the state level have really challenged us since 2008; we've become much more conscientious about that.

Fiscal issues facing state. There's a tidal wave coming, less funding at federal and state level. County is payer of last resort and we are going to see significant challenges in the coming years. ... The state will shift costs down to property tax. They're not saving money; it's just a shift. ... What we want is for the state to step up and share responsibility. They're not going to. We're caught in the middle. We're not able to look long term because so much of what we do is dictated by the state.

Finding common goals ideal but challenging

Another area of commonality was in the desire for a common goal, tempered by an intrinsic belief it may not be possible to achieve:

The ideal is we all work as a team for the same purpose. That's not realistic because government work requires different perspective and opposing objectives.

...collaboration, trying to reach toward common goals. I don't think it's always possible because of competing interests.

...the five of us have different perspectives and represent different parts of the county with different needs.

It goes back to—we all have our different experiences. We all have different perspectives.

...each (commissioner) has an idea of what they'd like the county to be—the ideal would be to combine that into one, two, three agreeable things.

We need to function internally also as a team. This place moves at a snail's pace...I guess it's because the five don't share the same ideology.

Appreciation for one another was universal

By far the most common theme – expressed in some way by nearly every interviewee – was appreciation for one another:

We have a lot of really good people who've been here a long time. They're doing it because it's the right thing to do.

We're all trying to serve the community the best way we can with what we have.

I like working with the county and for the county board. ... I don't feel there's any I couldn't talk with at any time. I feel that I have a good relationship with them.

We do have some very committed people.

Our county board does a good job with listening to what the issue is.... Sometimes hard decisions have to be made and our board does a pretty good job with making those decisions. The department heads and elected officials work well together.

People are pretty flexible and receptive.

None of the commissioners are in it for self-promotion. They are good people trying to make a difference.

We have some very talented elected officials and department heads.

I love this job...I have never walked through doors and dreaded being here. I really feel supported by most of the commissioners. My hope is that all directors feel that way. I know they want what's best for this community. Kerry, Dennis, County Board staff—they're all very accessible, down-to-earth, supportive. I get honest feedback from them.

I have no doubt everybody wants the best for the community.

I think the strength of the board is they are willing to step up and serve. I give them kudos for what they do. It's not easy. Also Dennis and his role. Kerry knows the legislative statutes and the law—he's able to say 'This is what we could do or cannot do' and is able to advise the board.

I think we have a very dedicated group of people ... (They are) dedicated, talented, want to serve.

We've got a lot of good people.

The interviews

This section reports on responses to the interview questions, including a representative sample of direct quotes from interviewees in response to the questions.

When asked, at the outset of the interview, what motivated them to work in county government, interviewees described varied paths to their current role. Almost half are where they are because an opportunity arose, noting in their comments that a “position opened up” or “seat opened up” or “opportunity arose.” Others rose to their current role through the ranks of the county system, whether in their current department or from elsewhere in county government.

Working relationships

Asked about the ideal relationship among county commissioners, county board staff members and county department directors, the majority mentioned – in one way or another – the importance of communication. The challenge of managing by committee as well as concerns about partisanship were also mentioned. Working as a team as well as looking at the big picture were noted as key to the working relationship. Sample quotes from interviewees are included below.

The majority of those interviewed noted communication was key to an ideal working relationship:

A free exchange of information. ... There needs to be good communication, working together, pulling in the same direction.

Focus on open lines of communication. ...we've got to share information.

I don't think we have to agree on everything but we have to state our opinion without fear of reprisal.

An open dialogue about potential disagreements on issues to see if compromise is possible.

(Commissioners) have an open-door policy now. I don't feel there's any I couldn't talk with at any time. I feel that I have a good relationship. (Other department directors) all meet monthly in management team. I can call on any of them for advice and have.

We need to keep dialogue going.

One where there's open communication—where department directors feel comfortable coming to the board with comments and concerns.

Challenges of managing by committee were mentioned:

Managing by committee is very difficult.

The board should make policy, county board staff should manage department heads and then department heads manage their employees.

On the city side, you have the mayor; on the county side, you have five different bosses. Commissioners should discuss and agree on approach rather than one call with one idea and another call with a different idea.

It's a fundamental challenge because you have five individuals with different opinions. You'd like unanimous agreement, but sometimes you don't. That's one of the challenges. It's like we have five mayors and it takes three to make a decision. Ultimately, having a clear objective and having difficult conversations about what the plan is.

There was some concern about the potential for partisanship:

I see party lines and I don't think we have to adhere to it here.

I think the ideal would be the ability—I don't know if it's achievable to operate and implement the programs we're responsible for outside of political pressure.

I should be told if I'm being pulled into politics...I have no doubt everybody wants the best for the community. It's difficult to be in the middle of political philosophies to meet all the needs of each commissioner. It throws in five more variables you need to think about in every decision you make.

Work as a team:

The ideal is we all work as a team for the same purpose. That's not realistic because government work requires different perspective and opposing objectives.

One of collaboration, trying to reach toward common goals. I don't think it's always possible because of competing interests.

Every four years you can have different people so that changes. ... In the past, the board came to consensus behind the scenes.

Look at the big picture:

I'd like to see everybody looking at the bigger picture, not just 'my little piece.'

External trends

Interviewees were asked if they were aware of any political or social trends, economic forces or other developments that could have a significant impact on Lancaster County, either positively or negatively. Nearly all responses were about trends that create challenges for the county.

Issues related to the state and federal government were most frequently mentioned as challenging. Growth – of the city and county – was also cited, both as a challenge and an opportunity, though more often as a challenge. Trends in politics and political partisanship outside of the county were stated as a concern by several interviewees.

External Trends

(in order of most frequently cited)

1. State government, including policies, fiscal issues and the legislature
 2. Population growth in the city and county
 3. Politics and partisanship
 4. Revenue challenges, including valuations
 5. The federal government, including changes in available funding
 6. Human services, including the aging population and health care
-

Below are sample quotes (some interviewees cited more than one external trend):

Revenue is always a big concern. We're so dependent on the property tax. And everybody hates property tax, so you're always under assault. Unfunded mandates is always a concern, especially with limited revenue.

When you look at D.C., you see political parties playing a big part and no middle ground...I want to see what's best for the county, regardless of party. There are some trends with valuations, with a lot of homeowners seeing huge valuation increases; those can affect us either positively or negatively. Do we help taxpayers out or try to get something done with those additional funds?

First, it filters down from the federal government, then to state, then to county. ... Politics is a huge force which it shouldn't be. It should be nonpartisan here.

Fiscal issues facing state, less funding at the federal and state level. The county is payer of last resort and we are going to see significant challenges in the coming years. It will further impact reliance on property tax. ... The state will shift costs down to property tax. They're not saving money; it's just a shift.

The city's growth and how it's keeping up. Everything changes and county government is going to change with that growth in jail population, services, mental health, social services. Those things increase when the population grows.

The aging population of our county and Nebraska. As our population ages, demand on some of the programs we operate will be stretched. There is political pressure to continually reduce the tax burden. ... Pressure to continue to grow Lincoln and some of our other communities, like Hickman. It does present challenges in more needs for judicial, policing, corrections.

The whole expanded Medicaid and what's happening with health care. There's unrest about what will happen for those in need. Federal grant dollars are being depleted..... As Lancaster County approaches the 300,000 threshold (population), there's going to be a lot of impacts.

Internal strengths and weaknesses


Interviewees were asked to consider the internal operations of the county and identify significant internal strengths and weaknesses. The most frequently cited are listed below, in order of frequency.



Internal strengths

1. People – the board, department heads, staff
2. Partnering with others

Internal weaknesses

1. Technology
 2. Same old, same old
 3. Communication
 4. Financials
 5. Duplication with city
- 

Below are sample quotes:

Internal strengths are members of the board, who are capable, dedicated, not as interested in partisan victories as I expected. ... We have too much duplication of services—the county, city, UNL, etc. We have some success in merging of purchasing and human resources. But we have engineering in the county and roads in the city and they do the same thing. Law enforcement, too.

...Sometimes to get everybody on the same page, to move Lancaster County in the direction we should be, it's tough to get people to buy into things. Change is a huge factor here—it's tough to get people to buy into even if in the long run it's going to be better. That includes me, too.

Our county board does a good job with listening to what the issue is and, in the majority of time, finding funding when it is needed. Sometimes hard decisions have to be made and our board does a pretty good job with making those decisions. Department heads and elected officials work well together. There is an interest in collaborating, regardless of political views. We get things accomplished without involving politics.

Strengths—we have a lot of really good people who've been here a long time. They're doing it because it's the right thing to do. Department heads know their areas really well. ... As for weaknesses, we have no master plan for technology. When we cut corners, we limit productivity.

There's a huge benefit to institutional knowledge but how can we marry that to new ideas. Residents have high expectation of services from the county.

What we're good at, one of the neatest things about Lancaster County is willingness by elected officials and department directors to embrace looking at current research and re-evaluating assumptions—such as alternatives to corrections and the juvenile justice system. We are good at partnering with other governmental entities. Lincoln and Lancaster County are great partners. We also work with LPS, which provides services at the Attention Center.

We need to make our website more intuitive; it needs updated. We work very well with our peer counties and the Nebraska Association of County Officials. ... We run a lot of pilots—we try things.


One of the strengths is our relationship with the city—it's very strong and beneficial to taxpayers. There's a lot of efficiencies. There is a collaborative spirit with LPS, through juvenile alternatives and human services. That's a strength that should be highlighted. ... The county is not doing well at succession planning. That's expensive. It might be an opportunity for change.

One of the strengths is the commissioners always listen. I feel they take time to consider before making a decision. The Board has always recognized the need to take care of human life and they have supported those needs. A weakness is the way the county and city are set up, duplicate efforts; streamlining could make it more efficient.

Short term priorities for Lancaster County

Interviewees were asked for short-term priorities for the county, defined for this planning effort as three years or less. Some of those interviewed noted multiple priorities. The list below begins with the most frequently mentioned priority.

Short-term priorities

- 
- 1. Corrections: the jail and alternatives, including juvenile detention**
 - 2. Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, the South Beltway, and county facilities, buildings**
 - 3. Technology; computer software**
 - 4. Staff retention & succession planning**
 - 5. Budget and resources**

Sample quotes:

The jail is filling up dramatically faster than expected, largely due to legislative actions. It's the largest budget in the county. We need to house only those individuals that need to be housed. We need to focus on the relationship with the legislature to provide valuable insights and perspectives of how things affect us at the county level.

Road and bridge funding is a big priority. Corrections is a big priority. We have a brand new jail and it's filling up rapidly. Changes in the Legislature will fill it up more rapidly. The Justice Council has a goal to reduce the jail population or come up with alternatives.

...We have got to do something about infrastructure: roads, bridges, outlying engineering buildings, technology. We have people with different versions of Microsoft; the criminal justice system is DOS. People have said 'we can get by for another year.' We have to take care of how we communicate. Technology is the way we communicate. Short-term, we need a strategic plan. We need to update our policies. We need to update the county website.

Get a handle on the jail population. The maximum when built seemed a long way off; we're close now. We're looking at retirement of department directors and elected officials—make sure strong public servants step up. There is an increasing amount of computer needs. We have aging mainframes we are going to have to be replaced. Software is different now and we still operate a lot of old systems. The time clock system is antiquated.

Re-evaluating alternatives to incarceration for youth and adults, whether it's addressing underlying causes or the cost of more people in our jails. ... Evaluating and modernizing the way we do business: some people still use WordPerfect and we have several different iterations of software. Get a comprehensive look at hardware and software and know when we are going to replace. County facilities and buildings don't have HVAC or bathrooms. We need to review roofs, expansions. We need a renovation and/or relocation study.

We need to get a handle on our infrastructure—working with the county engineer, get a handle on infrastructure needs and develop some type of plan. Same for public buildings. We need to focus our attention on those two things. Through no fault of anyone, there's a misallocation of resources. We need to do short-term planning for the long term. Come to resolution with juvenile detention alternatives—in the next three years we need to have an understanding about what we're doing with juveniles in detention.

We've got some computer software issues we've got to deal with. We've got a payroll system on its last leg. We've also got a program the sheriff, police and jail work with that needs to be updated. We need to get some stuff upgraded. Sometimes, in the governmental word, we hold ourselves back and utilize software that people outside government would wonder why we're using it. Other infrastructure needs—roads and bridges are both short and long-term priorities. Some we need to do now and some we'll need to do later. Another short term/long term priority is the jail population. At the beginning, we thought it would last 25 years and now, eight years in, it's an issue.

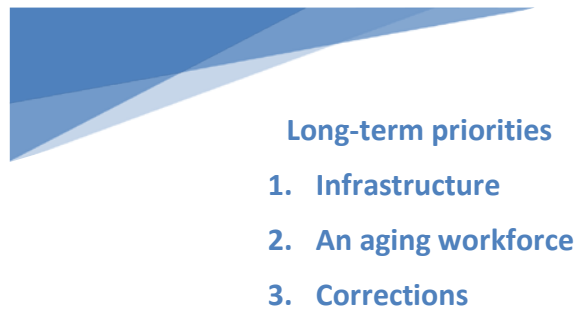
How do we manage to get enough resources to serve the needs of the county without increasing the tax burden? Since the city is growing and the county isn't—in population—there is an internal dynamic in the way we budget that results in increasing budgets. Not everything you do is essential. The desirable things take on the quality of being essential.

A priority is maintaining essential services in a way that doesn't short change the population and the people we serve.

I'd like to see the county develop guiding values and a mission and filter down to all departments so we can communicate that to the community. I'd love to see a more team-oriented culture.

Long term priorities for Lancaster County

When the topic turned to long-term priorities for the county, ten or more years out, a big-picture approach was common, but three long-term priorities were mentioned by multiple interviewees, the first listed below noted by the majority.



Sample quotes:

Our infrastructure needs are huge—we've got a lot of roads and bridges out there. The growth of Lancaster County over 10 years and it will still be growing and with that growth will come all kinds of things: public safety, sheriff, courts.... Hopefully we'll be getting those beltways in by then. Property taxes are a huge issue; I tend to think that's a short and long-term issue because it won't be solved easily.

Infrastructure—bridges and roads. As the city gets larger it goes further out in the county, which changes the dynamic for the county, with acreages, with agriculture. Do you stop it? What do you do?

More comprehensive plans: How are we going to address growth? How do we make a plan to address roads costs versus money available? How do we keep buildings up to date? Do more things with towns and villages; we interact with them very little. Plus, a transition plan for baby boomer employees.

The east beltway. Lincoln is expanding. It's growing. We are going to have to cooperate with the city on how we manage that growth. We have to deal with RUTS program, roads, jail population. Human services will grow as the community grows.

Infrastructure—bridges and roads. Economic development—from the county's perspective, it's not our main, but we help administer tourism funds. Aging population—what that means for the county.

We do have an aging workforce. We're just starting to see that now. In spite of a retirement program people think is a Cadillac, people have to stay because they can't afford to retire and they are staying longer with the health and disability costs that accompany an aging workforce.

We have an aging workforce in local government. How are we effectively marketing local public service to millennials? The city continues to grow. How are we going to provide an increasing amount of services to the increasing number of residents—emergency management, etc. that we help fund? Diversifying our revenue streams so we don't rely solely on property tax.

We have to make sure we are continuing to invest in efforts to keep residents safe and improve people's lives.

I don't know where the county wants to be in ten years. We're not able to look long term because so much of what we do is dictated by the state. I'd rather be in a place where the county knows what it needs to do.

Additional comments

Before they were asked the final question of the interview, each person was given the opportunity to raise an issue or topic not already discussed. Several commented:

We have a tendency on the county board to focus a bit too much on bricks and mortar. ... I think we could de-emphasize the bricks and mortar and focus on the right people, right place, right skills.

The county is good at looking where their money is spent.

The records program is making progress, getting into the 21st Century. We keep a close eye on the Legislature. Intergovernmental cooperation has always been big in the city and county and you have to continue to consolidate and leverage resources.

I believe one of my responsibilities is stewardship of assets, property, finance, workforce. When you steward a workforce, you provide opportunities for training, travel for training, equipment to do the job. It all comes back to property, money, workforce. You have to have an involvement in the community—human services, economic development, safety and security. And finally, transparency. We need to provide transparency for everything we do in the community. The website needs to be more user-friendly. We need to use every means to communicate with people: Facebook, Twitter, the newspaper. We need to be more coordinated in efforts to communicate.

Just because of the way the county is structured, I have little confidence in our management—the five of us have different perspectives and represent different parts of the county with different needs.

We do a lot of two on two meetings because if there are three of us it's a public meeting. We govern differently because we all have a different set of facts. (We need a) higher level of trust and openness among commissioners and staff. ... We could use a higher level of communication among all of us.

Advice on planning

Prior to the close of the interview, each person was asked, “What is one key piece of advice you would share regarding planning for the County Board?”

Responses covered a range of advice including working together, budgeting and everyone doing the best they can. Responses from each interviewee follow:

Out of this planning, what we need is a plan that everybody has come to the table to agree on—what are our priorities and getting everybody to buy off on those priorities. Understanding there’s all kinds of other things, these are the things we need.

We’re all trying to serve the community the best way we can with what we have. We need to work together to make that happen.

They need to insure they continue to involve key players in county government. They’re jack of all trades—they have so many issues they have to rely on so many others’ expertise. The Justice Council is a good example. I hope that collaborative spirit continues.

To not be scared of having a conversation about these larger issues in public. Every time we are together in a room it’s an open meeting. That’s scary. But if we can’t have open dialogue, it becomes positioning. I would encourage us to demonstrate what civic dialogue should be on issues important to the future of our county. How do we structure these kinds of conversations? We react emotionally because we are briefed for 15 minutes then have to act on an issue. That won’t work on larger issues.

I’d like them to figure out how to work together as a team. There seems to be old undercurrents. If we could put that to rest and move forward.... They need to place more emphasis on employees. I realize it’s cost-based. ... I also think we need to function internally also as a team.

Focusing on the big picture and...share and appreciate each other’s perspective. Having clarity—being clear and committed to the process.

To somehow come to an agreement on what they would like—each has an idea of what they’d like the county to be—to combine that into one, two, three agreeable things. Not forget employees are constituents also—don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater when looking at budgets.

I worry sometimes budgeting is shortsighted. Low taxes have become a political philosophy. You delay maintenance to balance the budget; it doesn’t go away. Don’t look at the budget as a one-year cycle. Look at a larger horizon.

You get what you pay for and there are some things you just have to pay for.

What is our duty? I think, more than anything, it is stewardship. We are given four years to do something positive. What we need to do is steward our resources and do the best we possibly can. Where can we do the most good? And I believe in change.

I sometimes struggle with strategic planning because I have a hard time seeing how the work we do affects the future. I want to do things today. I'd like short term goals and how they play into the long-term goals. You get so focused on the problems of the day, it's hard to take time to set aside for the future.

I'm sure merger will be a topic for the future. We ought to put a priority on it.

They need to decide to what level they want director partnership or if they want directors to simply follow. And make sure they let the directors know. And, truly believe—going into this—that their directors have the best interests of the county and its constituents in mind.

Consider a broad perspective. Not that they would be narrow or short sighted. Give some consideration that decisions made today or tomorrow will affect Lancaster County next year and after, not just next week. Like knocking over the first domino, the cascade effect.

Not to lose sight of why they wanted to be an elected official. There's a Thomas Jefferson quote, 'The care of human life and happiness...is the first and only legitimate object of good government.' When every one of those commissioners ran for office, they had a priority that their constituents' needs were met. Once you're in, you get pulled in a lot of directions. Just remember why you wanted to be a commissioner.

Lancaster County Board Planning Retreat

CONTEXT MAP ACTIVITY

Context: the whole situation, background, or environment relevant to planning.

The purpose of this activity will be to examine factors that affect Lancaster County today and how they might impact the future.

The following categories should be considered in completing your group's context map.

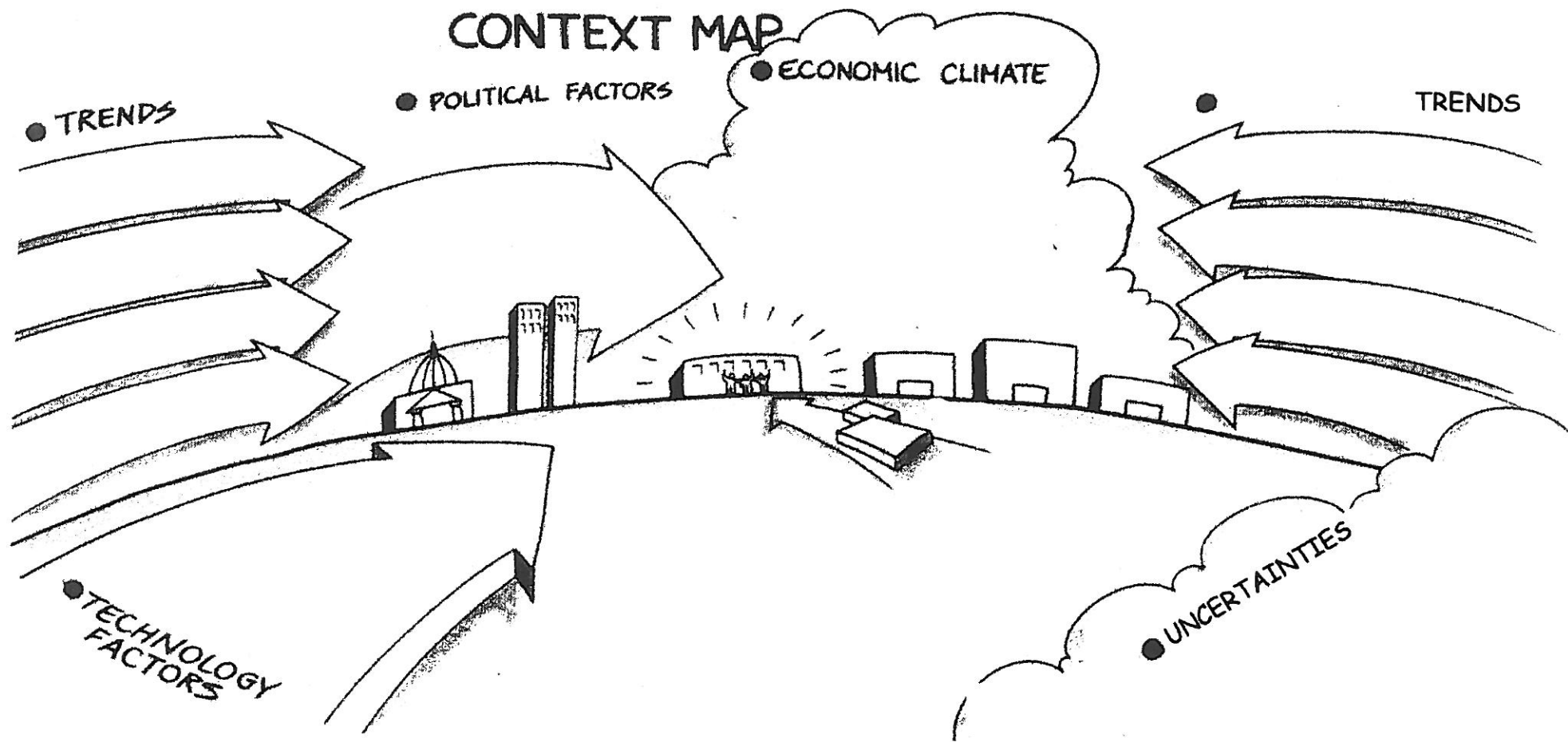
1. **Trends:** opportunities and challenges; internal and external
2. **Governmental or political factors:** include regulations, shifts in political leaders, funding, etc.
3. **Economic climate:** includes stock market trends, interest rates, jobs, growth areas, etc.
4. **Technology Factors:** such as communications, automation, software, new tools, etc.

+

- Uncertainties:** include issues, concerns, forces that can go several ways, and areas where we don't have enough information.

Each group will record the discussion results for their category on the poster and give a summary report.





VISIONING

Visions do not predict the future, they create the future.

~ Russ Ackoff

Definition

The vision is the dream or overarching goal – a mental picture of an ideal tomorrow.

A vision statement is a vivid description of what the organization will be like when its mission is fulfilled. A vision is the overarching goal (the mission is the reason for being).

Examples of vision statements:

The mission for NASA was to explore outer space.

The vision for NASA in the 1960s was *to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade.*

The early mission for Ford was to build quality automobiles.

The vision for Ford in the early part of the 20th century was *to build a car for the multitude...so low in price that any man making a good salary will be able to afford one.*

Walt Disney's vision for Disneyland: *The idea of Disneyland is a simple one. It will be a place for people to find happiness and knowledge. It will be a place for parents and children to spend pleasant times in one another's company: a place for teachers and pupils to discover greater ways of understanding and education. Here the older generation can recapture the nostalgia of days gone by and the younger generation can savor the challenge of the future.*

Martin Luther King's *I have a Dream* speech outlined a vision of racial equality in the United States.

Practical matters

It can be difficult to arrive at a single vision statement that is broadly accepted. Instead of focusing on a single overarching goal, consider developing several. This may make the images more concrete and tangible, and easier for people to connect with directly.

A vision statement (or statements) should:

- Be clear and simple
- Avoid buzz words
- Be easily explained and understood



Hover Car to the Future

Imagine that it is the year 2050 you are in your hover car viewing Lancaster County from above.

It is your job to describe Lancaster County by answering the questions below.

1. a) What does Lancaster County look like in 2050?

b) How do important elements within the county interact?

2. What are the most influential trends in Lancaster County in 2050?

3. How is the County budget funded in 2050?

4. In 2050, what are the values of Lancaster County government?

CORE VALUES

Core value defined: An intrinsic belief or philosophy

The word “value” comes from the French verb *valoir*, meaning “to be worth.”

Values describe how we intend to operate, on a day-by-day basis, as we pursue our vision. A set of values might include:

- how we want to behave with each other;
- how we expect to regard our employees and county residents; and
- the lines we will and will not cross.

Values are best expressed in terms of behavior: if we act in the way that we should, what would an observer see us doing? What would we be thinking?

Examples of core values

Expressed as values statements:

Lancaster County residents are the core of our existence. We will succeed by serving the residents, not by serving ourselves.

We will satisfy both the letter and the spirit of our commitments.

We will seek to attract, develop, and reward the best talent to ensure the future success of our employees, our county and residents of our county.

We will remain innovative by promoting a culture that encourages our employees to develop and implement ideas.

Or as bullet points:

- ❖ INTEGRITY: We adhere to standards of ethical conduct.
- ❖ HONESTY: We are truthful, fair and open with our fellow employees and the people we serve.
- ❖ RESPECT: We are responsive, compassionate and courteous in all of our interactions.
- ❖ ACCOUNTABILITY: We are accountable for our behavior and the quality of work performed individually and in teams.

Or, simply expressed in one word:

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Honesty
- Efficiency
- Transparency

VALUES CHECKLIST

From this list of values, put a check by the **TOP TEN** you feel are most important to Lancaster County. Feel free to add values to this list.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountability | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Stability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Industriousness | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration | <input type="checkbox"/> Influence | <input type="checkbox"/> Status |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competence | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> Tranquility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competition | <input type="checkbox"/> Law-abiding | <input type="checkbox"/> Transparency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compromise | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Truth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality | <input type="checkbox"/> Location | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conformity | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation | <input type="checkbox"/> Merit | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Democracy | <input type="checkbox"/> Openness | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dignity | <input type="checkbox"/> Order | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Participation | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecology/environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Power | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effectiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Residents | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> Respect | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growth | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony | <input type="checkbox"/> Security | |