



# Embrace the Possibilities

## Community Conversation Highlights

### Summary

On June 21, 2011 more than 100 residents and stakeholders attended the *Envision Prince George's* Community Conversation. Held at the Prince George's Ballroom, the Community Conversation updated residents and stakeholders on progress made and lessons learned during the first year of implementation of the *Envision* Action Agenda. The Action Agenda is the collective vision of thousands of county residents and stakeholders for the future of Prince George's County and was published in June 2010.

Over the last year, 13 Community Acton Teams (CAT) comprised of volunteers who live, work, play, and learn in the County, worked to implement the short-term goals identified in the Action Agenda. During the event, representatives from several CATs shared their personal experiences and lessons learned in that time. Members of the community also had the opportunity to voice their thoughts, individually and collectively, about the progress they want to see in Prince George's County and the direction of *Envision Prince George's*.

Most of the suggestions and comments made by the residents and stakeholders were in line with the six themes previously identified in the *Envision* Action Agenda—**Be Intelligent in How We Grow, Tell a New County Story, Build Upon Our Current Foundations, Become a Genuine Regional Leader, Build Up the Next Generation, and Leave No Community Behind.** Specific examples in these areas included:

- creating laws that mandate developers to hire residents when they decide to build in the County to bring both development and job growth to residents;
- positively branding the County to help bring in additional business and retail opportunities, as well as residents;
- leveraging groups and organizations that already exist to further a network of supportive services to the community;
- establishing *Envision Prince George's* as a formal non-profit that continues to report on and further this work;
- focusing on youth issues and getting younger people involved by utilizing tools like social media;
- continuing open community dialogues that help to ensure that all have a voice.

The ideas shared by participants also formed two new themes—**Reinvigorate *Envision* and Report Results of the initiative**. Attendees found it imperative to Reinvigorate *Envision Prince George’s* through resources—both fiscal and human. Resources include grantors and partnerships that align with the community’s vision. Additionally, many felt *Envision Prince George’s* should be an entity to help the County remain accountable for results with an annual report that explains the state of the County and tracks efforts to reach desired goals.

During the last year, the Community Action Teams and Executive Committee for *Envision Prince George’s* have been working on collaborative partnerships and strategic development that support meeting the ideas embedded in the themes outlined and will continue to do so.

For more information about these efforts and to get involved, please visit [www.envisionprincegeorges.org](http://www.envisionprincegeorges.org).

*What follows is a complete listing of ideas submitted by individuals and through table discussions. Please note that some ideas were edited for clarification (where needed).*

### **Community Conversation Small Group Ideas**

#### **TABLE 1**

1. Collaborate among Community Action Teams to discuss projects within teams to reduce redundancies. Need to get excitement back.
2. Use direct mailers to get the word out about *Envision*. Funding sources must be identified. Consider ballot initiatives.
3. Identify 3 priority goals that can be implemented in a short amount of time and identify funders to carry them forward.
4. Continue to get the word out about *Envision* and how the community can get involved.

#### **TABLE 2**

1. Focus on transit-oriented development; better safe access by metro to institutions of higher learning, great restaurants, and affordable housing.
2. Attract the younger crowd (30-somethings) to participate and be active in *Envision Prince George’s*; get their ideas on improving the County for them and their young children.
3. Successfully engage Federal and state government agencies to locate here within transit-oriented hubs that are vibrant and inviting, as described above (see #1).

#### **TABLE 3**

1. Reignite broader excitement so *Envision* is not viewed as “past tense.”
2. Needs to be simultaneously neighborhood focused and county-focused.

3. Outreach to community to ensure awareness and opportunity for involvement—link *Envision* website with other social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.).

#### **TABLE 4**

1. Establish *Envision* as formal non-profit organization 50/C3 status to generate revenues to move the vision and goals forward. Marketing and PR to get information out.
2. Create an Action Team for landscaping and beautification on litter and maintenance of small neighborhood side streets, street signs, tree trimming.
3. Encourage youth participation. Understanding and awareness multi-cultural communication committee.

#### **TABLE 5**

1. Stronger sense of community and collaboration.
2. Tie in more existing community organizations to increase membership for the Community Action Teams.
3. Integration and collaboration of all the fore mentioned goals with results of how we collectively are effecting and targeting these goals demographically.

#### **TABLE 6**

1. Identify leadership within the community, and produce effective leadership resources.
2. Integration of church community and school community realizing that the mix will vary among communities.
3. Build a knowledge base, then search for sources of funding and other resources. Identify models to replicate.
4. Educate people and organizations about good government accountability and ethics on all levels of government and provide models for holding leaders, agencies and organizations accountable.

#### **TABLE 7**

1. Include the youth in *Envision Prince George's* activities and planning efforts more often to move the county forward.
2. Get more local residents to tell/share the Prince George's County story—currently too often dominated by media perception of the County and politicians' actions.
3. Focus *Envision Prince George's* resources towards existing shopping centers at transit hubs within the County—build upon what we already have.

#### **TABLE 8**

1. Work toward a consistent branding campaign to portray a positive image of Prince George’s County.
2. Better collaboration between businesses and non-profits—better engagement.

**TABLE 9**

1. Creative marketing campaigns to increase local participation.
2. Increase leadership development starting at earlier ages.
  - a. If I were a mayor...
  - b. If I were police chief...
3. Advance mechanisms for greater community knowledge through a filtered and more broadly disseminated process keeping public informed of progress. Increase visibility of branding/ logo.

**TABLE 10**

1. Bring grantors to Prince George’s County.
2. Bring better employers to Prince George’s County.
  - a. Career fairs
  - b. Top employers
3. Have business development open and thriving here.

**TABLE 11**

1. Continue to promote community involvement. Put the logo with web address out there. Get logo and hyperlink on county website, 27 municipalities and local news. Tell the positive news stories through news releases and local media. Public broadcast local television.
2. Feedback—tangible results of *Envision* activities in particular communities. Small community meeting.
3. Guerilla marketing—*Envision* “app.” All grocery stores as outreach partner.

**Community Conversation Individual Ideas & Themes**

1. Be Intelligent in How We Grow.
  - Create more clean-up committees for area.
  - Teams that work on combining business and community/ home owners/ civic association communication and needs to be met.
  - There should be an Action Team for landscaping and beautification.
  - Promote and develop community health partnership throughout county.
  - Create laws to mandate employers to hire at least 33% of Prince George’s County residents that are quality.
  - Teams for economic development.

- There should be an Action Team focused on cleanliness and letter maintenance.
- “Upgrade” cities in county.
- Bring better employers to Prince George’s County.
- Make Prince George’s County cleaner and greener.
- Realize that community leadership varies among institutions and organizations so *Envision* should support a diverse network.
- Don’t delay new interests in the county.
- Cultivate from within better networks.
- Connect the organizations and services to their function.
- Innovation training to educate teams on how to innovate.

2. Tell a New County Story.

- Publicity of vision.
- Outreach:
  - Engagement of the media
  - Hyperlink municipalities with *Envision*.
- Gorilla marketing.
- Electronic marketing:
  - Cell phones
  - Email advertising
  - “App” for *Envision*.
- Branding of Prince George’s County.
- Marketing and PR action teams to get information out.
- Consult *Envision* website to learn what resources are available.
- Positive message.
- Retelling the Prince George’s story from the perspective of residents rather than via politicians and the media—media partnership.
- Formatting the *Envision* website to serve as a portal of information for best practice models of community building.
- Format the *Envision* website to serve as a portal of information and resources for community building.
- What is the brand that the city has—what is the brand that is needed?
- How do we promote the county benefits:
  - UMD
  - RFK
  - Joint Base Andrews
  - National Harbor
  - Gateway to the attractions.

3. Build Upon Our Current Foundations.

- Re-activation or repurpose the ambassadors as community liaisons to keep vision alive and facilitate events.
- Stay connected to larger community forums.
- Support for state government.
- Revamp political structure and culture.
- Establish a partnership with county government.
- Talk with council members.
- Talk at citizen meetings.
- Form a (policy) arm with an initial force on good government, transparency, ethics, and campaign finance.
- Leverage organizations and groups that already exist.

4. Become a Genuine Regional Leader.

- Create collaborative actions and training.
- Park and Planning, County Executive, Economic Development Council, Board of Education partnerships.
- Stronger sense of community collaboration.
- Where are elected officials on *Envision*? County Executive? Enhance participation.
- Develop a more powerful dialogue and informed voice.
- Define how areas are targeted?
- What are the best practices that other communities use and how can they be improved here.

5. Build Up the Next Generation.

- What about the 30 year old?
- Fix school system.
- Get the youth involved.
- Parental engagement in school system.
- Get younger people more involved:
  - Use Twitter/Facebook
  - Have happy hours or other events.
- Have “child friendly” sessions.
- Focus on youth issues.
- Reenergize youth—action oriented.
- Higher education school improvement.
- Young people.

6. Leave No Community Behind.

- Annual county-wide meeting.

- Recruitment—neighborhoods.
- Involvement:
  - Merchants
  - Schools
  - Churches.
- Identify and tap dormant skills of Prince George’s County residents.
- Food as seed? Grocery stores.
- Cable (local).
- Engage grocery store as outreach partner.
- Coupon campaign.
- Develop a reward process for residents.
- Top private sector companies pay their staff well. Volunteer staff must be compensated in other ways.
- Motivate individuals to participate. List of functions desired skills etc.
- Community conversations.
- More involvement of the municipalities.
- Small community group meetings at the municipalities.
- Open mic dialogues.
- Getting more people involved.
- As a resident of Prince George’s County I agree with the direction of *Envision* to build and create sustainable communities. As a skilled labor craftsman of Prince George’s County, how can I be assured that I would have a part in the *Envision* projects?
- Join a team to get more involved.
- Reach out to friends and associates to get involved.
- Direct mailers.
- Ballot initiative.
- Faith based organizations.
- Community involvement.
- Associations.
- Go out into community to get across *Envision* goals and to recruit new members.
- Work with talented community leaders to tap their knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm:
  - Civic leaders
  - Council members
  - Religious leaders.

## 7. Report Results

- Accountability: Annual yardstick report tangible results.
- Feedback.
- Incentivize the flow of ideas and feedback with instant praise, along with feedback.
- Show results of how we are achieving our vision or impacting the county.
- Make forums and meetings happen—show results.
- What are tangible results of *Envision*?
- Have each team have one annual project that can be sustained by each community it impacts.
- Meet regularly and report on progress; set goals for the next meeting.
- Need to get the statistics/ data.
- Progress (visible and spoken).

#### 8. Reinvigorate *Envision Prince George's*

- Establish *Envision* as a formal non-profit organization 50/C3 status to generate revenues to move the vision and goals forward.
- Reinvigorate *Envision* with membership based organization with membership fees—self-finance.
- Bring grantors to Prince George's County.
- Raise money: donations, grants, etc.
- Find a major Federal grant that *Envision* can partner with other county or regional organizations.
- Institutionalize this—self sustain.
- Become charity; tax donation givable/deductible. National, state, and local funding.
- *Envision* members need to be empowered as ambassadors to the county's wellness. This can be done through corporate and academic backing.

#### 9. Miscellaneous

- Program.
- Training – clinical process.
- Communications strategy at script/AV presentation script.
- Technology/ innovation steering committee to connect at senior leadership.
- We should consider forming a multi/intercultural awareness communication committee.
- Sustain team forums and tours.
- Change old guard of school (maybe referring to leadership).
- How can we encourage and teach civic responsibility to our citizens?



- How can we assure that *Envision* can provide safety for the community as well for its residents in moving forward?
- Pledge to spend more money in Prince George's County.
- Push agenda at council meetings.
- Development and environment professional capacity for cities planning.