

VISION DOCUMENT
for the COMMUNITY OF LAKELAND, FL
1998

FOUNDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

I. EDUCATION

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have a world class educational system that creates and inspires a hunger for learning and achievement.

Strategies

A. K-12

1. Expect¹ all students of all races to graduate from public or private (including home schools) high schools either ready to go to work, attend a technical/community college or a four year university. Ensure that test scores are in the top 25% of United States standardized testing at all grade levels. Create remedial programs that aggressively reach out to students at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out, to insure they receive their diploma.
2. Increase teacher salaries based on a relationship between performance and pay as a part of a performance accountability system for teacher, administrators, and school boards. Ensure as a community that the school board, administration and teachers are accountable for student performance, regardless of students= race, gender or socio-economic status.
3. Bring all schools to same standards for facilities, teachers and curriculum.
4. Provide discipline authority to the classroom teacher with the support of the administration, school board, community, and parents.
5. Improve teacher competency because this is the second most important criterion in explaining variance in test scores. Support the Leadership Learning Academy.
6. Encourage comprehensive parental involvement at all grade levels. Provide opportunities for parents to be trained and encouraged to assist their children with homework. Increase employer participation in programs that provide an opportunity for their employees to be involved.
7. Encourage employees, parents, the school system and students to understand the wide array of vo-tech careers available in the 21st century economy. Expand and improve the vo-tech schools performance and image while providing the skills training needed by area employers. Coordinate these programs with technical/community colleges. Create apprenticeship programs.
8. Reduce the pupil teacher ratio for grades K-12. Place special emphasis on K-3 elementary children.
9. Research any competitive opportunity that may exist for improving our schools.
10. Bridge the gap between minority and non-minority academic achievement.
11. Create a coalition of higher education, business and professional groups to demonstrate the potential and need for technical and advanced education. Encourage young people to remain in the area after graduation.

12. Include the arts in the core curriculum recognizing their value in all grades to stimulate cognitive learning styles and increased retention and qualitative results. Insure that the national and state standards for arts education are implemented in our schools.
13. Strengthen counselor programs and help students make a decision about the career path they want to pursue and its educational requirements. Ideally this decision would be made between the 8th -10th grade.
14. Ensure that the core curriculum results in students learning life skills, creative thinking, conflict resolution, and self esteem.
15. Recruit quality teachers including the need for additional minority teachers.
16. Maintain motivational enhancement programs with special emphasis on students that are not in the top 25%. This should start with inspiration and influence from the children's parents and other adults.

B. Early Childhood Development.

1. Prepare children to come to kindergarten ready to learn, with values and respect for authority and discipline. Provide enriching early childhood development activities, from parental mentoring to pre-school education. Increase standards and pay for pre-school educators.

C. Skills Development and life-long learning

1. Encourage individuals at all employment levels to understand the need for continuous productivity improvement and to commit to pursue continuous training and lifelong learning opportunities. Provide competitive skills training for new jobs created by expanding and relocating business. Emphasize skills training for the unemployed.
2. Promote and provide parenting, literacy and life skills education. Educated parents will produce an environment for children to learn.

D. Higher Education

1. Ensure that students have access in Metro Lakeland to comprehensive public and private community college and university education that meets the needs of regional employers and Lakeland citizens and recruit students from Florida, the US and globally.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have an economic development environment that attracts quality businesses, improves productivity and retains our youth.

Strategies:

1. Expand our job base by supporting a pro-active and competitively funded public/private economic development alliance that facilitates the creation of value added jobs⁴ through retention and expansion of existing business, creating new business enterprise and recruiting businesses to the region. The alliance will work cooperatively with all economic entities in Polk County, Tampa MSA, Orlando MSA, Florida and the United States. Targeted industries will include: Technology, Manufacturing, Medical, Tourism, Computer and Data Processing Services, Higher paying service industry, Chemical, Food Processing and Entertainment.
2. Develop and promote the I-4 technology corridor in cooperation with Orlando and Tampa, including attracting a microchip manufacturing facility. Prepare for growth by meeting the needs of technology employers through:
 - a. Aligning K-12 and higher education curriculum and programs
 - b. Create attractive Industrial/Office Parks with all required infrastructure and permitting in place
3. Increase individual productivity continuously through:
 - a. Investment in facilities, technology, equipment and infrastructure
 - b. Incentive programs and profit sharing
 - c. Training and education for each employee and management
 - d. Installing modern management processes such as the team concept
 - e. Government review and elimination of all rules and regulations where value does not exceed cost
 - f. Reducing absenteeism and turnover
 - g. Effective child care opportunities, including employer provided child care
 - h. Flexible working hours
 - i. Pursuit of productivity enhancing programs from other successful communities
 - j. Partnerships between schools and businesses that produce graduates ready to enter the workforce and meet the needs of current and future employers
 - k. Coordination with Economic Development Administration and other agencies or foundations with productivity enhancement resources
4. Support vigorously entrepreneurs and the development of value added small businesses through the creative availability of money, mentorships, business planning and technical assistance, small business incubators, and an entrepreneur networking group. Encourage minority business development and fair lending practices.
5. Create and market our image as a major metropolitan area with small town values.
6. Support vigorously our cultural/artistic institutions and programs as economic development assets.
7. Create a competitive tax, regulatory, zoning, utility, and incentive business environment.
8. Attract a local TV station.

⁴ Value-Added Jobs-In every region, there are jobs that add value for export of goods or services outside the region to the rest of the US and the World. Export of services include non-residents bringing cash dollars to the region as conventioners, tourists, students, medical patients or as the back office operation for a major financial organization. These value-added jobs produce the cash income for the region that provides the opportunity for jobs that are internally focused. These internally focused jobs are either 1) local personal services jobs like barbers, accountants, lawyers, teachers, government workers and bankers or 2) jobs that sell products primarily produced elsewhere such as cars, appliances or clothes.

9. Promote buying within Metro Lakeland and its neighborhoods from an expanded array of competitive shopping opportunities.
10. Accept and prepare for the continuous and rapid change of the twenty-first century.
11. Reduce employment seasonality and the unemployment rate.
12. Promote senior citizens as a viable employment resource.
13. Encourage and promote agriculture, including income, recreational, and preservation of our natural resources.

III. QUALITY OF LIFE

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have a quality of life and spirit that encourages diverse backgrounds to live, learn, work, play and grow in harmony while developing physically, spiritually, mentally, and culturally.

Strategies

A. Family, Elderly, and Youth Issues:

1. Encourage parents to provide the support their children need to grow into successful citizens. Identify those children in distress, and make training and counseling opportunities available to the parents. Provide community based support from churches, synagogues, service clubs, employers, senior citizens, youth organizations, etc., so that each child has at least one adult role model or mentor.
2. Reduce teenage pregnancy.
3. Provide training of care givers for age 0-5 that enhances child development.
4. Increase community involvement to reduce abuse and neglect of our children.
5. Increase opportunities for after school care for children.
6. Increase opportunities for youth to participate in programs at centers in their neighborhood.
7. Expand services and programs for the elderly on a year round basis and provide opportunity and encouragement for senior adults to enhance their quality of life.
8. Encourage and support the faith community to provide leadership in a program of values that results in responsible parents capable of supporting their children in all areas of life.
9. Provide opportunity and encouragement for young parents to be good parents.
10. Improve educational recreation programs, including after school and summer programs.
11. Expand services and programs for persons with disabilities. Provide opportunities and encouragement for persons with disabilities to enhance their quality of life.
12. Encourage and promote resource development and identification to promote healthy marriages.

B. Crime and Safety

1. Pro-actively provide the resources to reduce crime as the area grows in population. Recognize that productivity increases as drug use and crime decreases. Strengthen families and neighborhoods to prevent crime. Reduce the crime rate to a level that people will feel safe without gated and walled communities.
2. Ensure there are consequences when a crime is committed beginning with first time offenders.
3. Increase citizen and neighborhood involvement to reduce crime.
4. Develop a mentor program for first time offenders under age 15.

C. Sense of Community

1. Recognize, support and respect diversity and accept diversity as a cohesive force in the community. Increase the number of friendships across racial lines.

2. Encourage the faith community to dramatically expand their role in enhancing family values, family stability and elimination of racial intolerance, including service to others outside their institution.
3. Make an affirmative commitment to inclusion and expanding opportunities to reduce the gap in per capita income between whites and minorities.
4. Encourage all of our citizens to become involved in the community and neighborhoods.
5. Provide neighborhood centers that serve as youth activity centers, increase cultural awareness and strengthen relationships.
6. Develop continuous community networking forums and dialogue opportunities.
7. Develop events activities and programs needed to attract and keep young people ages 20-40 in Metro Lakeland.
8. Encourage Volunteerism.
9. Focus on our new image and communicate it internally and externally.
10. Encourage senior adults and their organizations to actively participate in implementing the Lakeland Metro Vision.

D. Health Care

1. Provide available accessible quality health care that meets the needs for all our citizens.
2. Promote and develop a healthy community that encourages physical and mental health and freedom from drug and chemical dependency.

E. Arts and Culture

1. Expand arts and cultural activities. Recognize that aesthetics, arts and culture are vitally important and result in increasing tangible benefits including safety, economic value, pride, education and quality.
2. Advance art in public places.

F. Recreation.

1. Develop a comprehensive recreational and sports program. Communicate all sports, recreation available for all age groups.
2. Create additional community events throughout the year like the Christmas Parade.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have Infrastructure that invites economic development and improves the quality of life, and environment.

A. Infrastructure Development

1. Provide office/industrial parks with infrastructure and all permitting in place that will attract technology industries.
2. Create and maintain a quality image for I-4, Polk Parkway and all entrances into the Metro Lakeland.
3. Maintain state of the art communication infrastructure that provides Metro Lakeland businesses, schools, libraries, governments and homes with globally competitive access.
4. Create a transportation network that serves all of Metro Lakeland while maintaining the environment, the integrity of neighborhoods (to the extent possible), including but not limited to a northern bypass.
5. Ensure that Lakeland has a stop on any future commuter transportation system.
6. Maintain housing affordable for all age and income levels, including programs like Habitat for Humanity and appropriate public housing for the low income. Make public housing more available for persons who have been incarcerated and have been rehabilitated. Increase programs to assist in reducing our homeless population.
7. Maintain a risk management plan for natural disasters including a category 5 hurricane.
8. Maintain a comprehensive plan for Metro Lakeland that includes all elements of infrastructure being built in concert with residential, commercial, office and industrial development. The quality and criteria for development will be the same outside as inside the City of Lakeland. Elements of the plan will include:
 - a. Multi-modal transportation including public transportation and air transportation
 - b. Potable water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, and storm water
 - c. Recreation including parks, bikeways and land reserves for neighborhood centers
 - d. Education, public safety, other government facilities and arts/culture.
9. Develop and enforce a Metro Lakeland code that establishes minimum acceptable standards for the physical appearance, safety and occupancy of housing, all other buildings and associated landscaping.
10. Maintain performance vs. prescriptive regulations.
11. Create regulations that allow and encourage a mix of housing types.

B. Environment

1. Create an attractive physical and natural environment, including improving the quality of our lakes.

C. Neighborhood Revitalization

1. Focus the resources, comprehensive support, and infrastructure required to improve the quality of our neighborhoods.
2. Develop active neighborhood associations throughout Metro Lakeland that use the wealth of talent within the boundaries of each neighborhood to improve the neighborhood quality of life and environment.

3. Create inner city neighborhood images that mirror the images of downtown Lakeland.

V. GOVERNMENT

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have a comprehensive system of government that is effective, efficient and diverse while responding to the needs of all its citizens.

Strategies

1. Expect all levels of Metro Lakeland Government to endorse the Lakeland Vision and actively work to make the visions and strategies a reality. This includes Lakeland and Polk County governments, Polk County School Board, Higher Education Institutions, and elected state and federal representatives.
2. Invite and encourage all city governments within Polk County but outside Metro Lakeland to join in the collaborative implementation process by reviewing the Metro Lakeland Vision, provide input and develop strategies for implementation where there is a shared consensus.
3. Annex all urbanized areas within Metro Lakeland into the city of Lakeland.
4. Create a joint County/City planning commission.
5. Maintain an organization of neighborhood associations and citizen advisory boards throughout Metro Lakeland that provides input to government based on broad, diverse, and representative citizen input.
6. Maintain consistency in zoning throughout Metro Lakeland.
7. Form coalitions among relevant communities that will provide opportunities for staff and elected city and county officials to meet on a regular basis to coordinate government programs and long range planning.
8. Address the issue of elected vs. appointed school superintendent.
9. Restore faith and trust in all levels of government, through providing effective and efficient government with integrity, compassion and accessibility.
10. Simplify government regulations and taxation to reduce small business expense.
11. Create innovative ways to have more participation at town hall meetings and other government forums.
12. Ensure that no one is denied a job or advancement because of race or gender by governments.
13. Include human services and resources in all planning considerations.
14. Consider alternative revenue sources due to the impending deregulation of electric utilities.
15. Expect government to develop innovative technical assistance that supports the average citizen in participating in dialogue, assuming leadership roles and providing input.

VI. PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERSHIP

VISION

Metro Lakeland will have diverse private sector leadership that will make our vision reality.

Strategies

1. Expect all for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to endorse the Metro Lakeland Vision and adopt strategies they are uniquely qualified to address during the Collaborative Implementation Process. For example: a.) Maintain an alliance of religious congregations that are actively involved in Vision Implementation and b.) Create an alliance of Chambers of Commerce in Polk County to review the Vision, provide input and agree to Collaborative Implementation on strategies with a shared consensus.
 2. Create partnerships/alliances between public and private entities that work toward equitably sharing our limited resources.
 3. Create an organization of neighborhood associations and citizen advisory boards throughout Metro Lakeland that engages in Vision Collaborative Implementation.
 4. Develop a partnership of private industry with early childhood centers, K-12, technical centers and higher education systems.
 5. Encourage and facilitate minorities to join community organizations, participate in the leadership training processes, and become actively involved in leadership. Encourage business persons to give their time to serve as mentors for student organizations.
 6. Encourage our leaders to take their turn in providing government leadership by accepting board appointments and running for elective office. Support these leaders during their term in office as they inevitably experience the conflicts and challenges of making difficult decisions in the best interest of the community at large.
 7. Foster harmony among all of our citizens.
 8. Provide leadership training for all sectors and age groups and encourage the alumni to be active in community activities.
 9. Encourage additional funding for both social services and education programs that demonstrate positive output results, eliminate program duplication and eliminate excess overhead cost. Accomplish additional funding without merely shifting funds from one program to the other.
 10. Vigorously encourage and increase volunteerism and commitment to community service across all segments of our community.
 11. Encourage our citizens to communicate with local governments on issues they are concerned about and be willing to accept a "no" without taking it personally or with bitterness.
 12. Expect the newspapers to provide more coverage of neighborhood activities.
 13. Create opportunities for people with self interests to bring their interests to the table and seek consensus that is best for Metro Lakeland.
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