

Visioneering Wichita – Chattanooga City-to-City Visit

Lessons Learned

- You can change a city and its perception of itself. Chattanooga went from a low self-image to a strong community identity over time.
- Cities and regions must change and reinvent themselves, and do it before the city hits hard times or crisis.
- Changing a city takes teamwork, public input, leadership, hard work, investment in itself, a plan, focus, and especially patience.
- Teamwork among public sector at all levels and among private and public sectors is essential.
- Public engagement with all voices in the region is important first step. Chattanooga began theirs in 1983. We had the benefit of many more people providing input to Visioneering Wichita.
- Leadership means hard work and commitment to progress. It's important to develop an environment that fosters the confidence to invest.
- Invest in ourselves and our community's future because companies and people locate where communities invest in progress, including downtown development, people of all ages, and securing good jobs and diverse economies. Recognize your resources and use to transform the community.
- Plan because communities must know where they are going. Then focus on priorities and be persistent. Be cautious of the marginal, and press for the grand vision that works for your city. Create a city of distinction through design.
- Setbacks will happen and not all efforts will be perfect, so learn, revise, be persistent and move forward.
- Downtown development never ends. Keep tweaking the model and looking for ways downtown can be useful to customers, retailers and businessmen.
- Some of the best ideas for urban development can be ruined when someone tries to claim sole ownership. Spread the credit around.

Participant Roles

- Share – information with your networks. As a community leader your opinion matters.
- Comment – in the media, on reader/viewer comments, Opinion Line and letters to the editor. Help hold information and people accountable to what you learned.
- Help out – there will be times during the downtown development and economic development plans that you can participate, learn, facilitate, etc. Encourage your networks to show up and be heard too.
- Stay in touch – make sure you're on the list for notices from Visioneering on these and other initiatives. If you're not, let Suzie Ahlstrand know at sahlstrand@wichitachamber.org or 268-1135.

- Ask – if you want to do more than what’s listed above, let Suzie know.

As CreateHere from Chattanooga said – “It takes a lot of work to love a city.” Thank you for your work.