

Your Omaha 2020 Summary

Passing by and acknowledging a dozen familiar faces among those commonly seen on your 10-minute sidewalk commute, you arrive at home for a change of clothing after work. Next up is an hour-long meeting of a non-profit board of directors that you have served on for two years. The agency office is two blocks away in a space above one of your favorite food stores. Following the meeting you stop in the market to grab some coffee and a light meal before heading downtown to meet a friend at a highly anticipated show. Utilizing public transportation to get there, you meet your friend who has just walked over from a nearby condo. Neither of you has driven your car today. For that matter, you haven't used your car since you visited your parents over the weekend.

Does this scenario describe a typical Omahan in his or her 20's or 30's? Probably not today. But it may by 2020 if the voices of Omaha's young professionals are heard.

Young professionals are Omaha's next generation leaders 40 and under who want to impact the community and work together to contribute to our city's growth. They expect to see progress in Omaha that will make it a more attractive place to live, work and play. That is why they are sharing a vision for Omaha called Your Omaha 2020.

Highlighted in this report are five vision statements with action items under each. The vision statements and action items are intended to help guide city and regional planning over the next 10 years. More importantly, as city and state leaders work to recruit young talent to Omaha while retaining existing talent, this report paints a picture of a city that will make that task easier. In other words, it describes the Omaha that young professionals will want to call home in 2020.

The following items summarize the themes that emerged during the Your Omaha 2020 vision process:

- Improvements to public transportation options, whether via a new light rail system or through significant enhancements to the current MAT system, are viewed as essential.
- Smaller mixed-use, mixed-income developments throughout the city within walking-distance of retail, entertainment and employment options will make our city more inclusive and will reduce our dependence on cars.
- The creation of a city-wide art master plan will acknowledge the importance that the arts and cultural events have on our quality of life, and will leverage resources to implement such a plan.
- Seeking out and incorporating young professionals' voices as decisions are made that impact the future of our city will decrease a sense of disengagement among young professionals and demonstrate that our city values differences of opinion.

Your Omaha 2020: Building a Young Professionals' Vision for Our Community

Your Omaha 2020 generated feedback on five priority areas that will be further described within this report. It is important to acknowledge that additional priority areas also contribute to the quality of life that young professionals desire in Omaha, such as high-paying jobs, access to health care and community safety. This report, however, summarizes the thoughts of young professionals into the five priority areas that emerged as consistent themes. The priority areas are;

- Arts and Culture
- Community Development
- Inclusive Communities
- Public Engagement
- Public Transportation

Background

The Your Omaha 2020 process was initiated by the Greater Omaha Young Professionals. It is the culmination of a five-year information gathering cycle involving opinions from Omaha area young professionals. Information was gathered from:

- Greater Omaha Young Professionals Survey, 2004.
- Roundtable Issues Forums. 2006-2008. Young professionals and human resources professionals provided feedback at a series of roundtable discussions. Administered by the Greater Omaha Young Professionals.
- Greater Omaha Young Professionals Survey, 2008. Administered by Next Generation Consulting.
- 2009 Mayoral Election Issues Forums. Held in four locations throughout Omaha. (North, South, West, Downtown) Identified issues of importance to young professionals that were addressed by candidates at the Young Professionals Mayoral Debate, March 18, 2009.
- YP Bus Challenge Forums Held in the spring of 2009. Gathered feedback from individuals regarding public transportation in the metro area, personal experiences using public transportation and potential areas for improvement.

The Greater Omaha Young Professionals Public Policy Committee summarized feedback into the five priority areas that are identified in this report. The Your Omaha 2020 Committee consolidated the summaries into “vision statements” that were the basis for further discussion and voting at the Your Omaha 2020 event on November 10, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Convention Center.

The Your Omaha 2020 vision process was interactive, inclusive and grass roots. A variety of committees and working groups - comprised of Omaha young professionals who share a passion for making our community a place where they can continue to live, work, and play - volunteered their time and talents to ensure that this process resulted in a workable vision. The Your Omaha 2020 committee was comprised of 20 members. The November 10, 2009, event involved 40 volunteers. 275 participants voted for vision action steps in person and/or online during a 48 hour voting window that started with the Your Omaha 2020 vision event on November 10, 2009. Online voting closed at midnight on November 12, 2009. The results of the voting are summarized in this report.

Your Omaha 2020 Partnering Young Professionals Organizations

All About Omaha
Greater Omaha Young Professionals Council
GOLGBT Professionals
Next Generation Omaha

Your Omaha 2020: Building a Young Professionals' Vision for Our Community

Omaha Jaycees
UNO Young Alumni
Urban League Young Professionals
Young Jewish Omaha

Your Omaha 2020 Committee Leadership

Chairman: Lee Denker, UNO Alumni Association
Logistics Co-Chair: Anna Detrich, CoCo Key Water Resort
Marketing & Vision Statements Chair: Andrea Fox, Senator Heath Mello's Office
Logistics Co-Chair: Aaron Luneke, Werner Enterprises
Process/Format Co-Chair: Craig Moody, Verdis Consulting
Process/Format Co-Chair: Ryan Wade, Union Bank and Trust
Technology Coordinator : Jenny Zimmer, Alley Poyner Architects

Vision Statements and Action Items

Arts and Culture

2020 Vision: Acknowledged for its role in defining and transforming our community, Omaha's creative sector is integrated into all aspects of public life. Known as a vibrant cultural destination, our community is supported by a dynamic cultural plan that leverages creative capital to bring about unforeseen models and possibilities.

Suggested steps for achieving our vision:

1. Improve awareness of arts and cultural events through more effective advertising and communication campaigns.
2. Create and implement a community-wide art master plan with coordination by a local arts council.
3. Use vacant real estate to promote artists.

Community Development

2020 Vision: Integrated with mass transit, our community's walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods are diverse and sustainable.

Suggested steps for achieving our vision:

1. Develop smarter, denser developments throughout town.
2. Improve public transportation.
3. Rehabilitate existing homes and buildings making them functional spaces.

Inclusive Communities

2020 Vision: United as one Omaha, legitimate opportunities for success are available to all people in our community. We are welcoming and inclusive, and have intolerance for intolerance.

Suggested steps for achieving our vision:

1. Create incentives for mixed-use and mixed-income developments.
2. Continually improve educational opportunities and make them available equally to all.
3. Build community-wide WiFi.

Public Engagement

2020 Vision: Empowered by knowledge, skills, and opportunities for decision making and action, our diverse community is engaged in transparent decision-making processes with leadership that is responsive and accountable.

Suggested steps for achieving our vision:

1. Include more young professionals in decision making or community leadership roles.
2. Create city-wide events that build a sense of community and promote civic engagement.
3. Ensure that our community officials actively represent their constituents, and that the constituents have the ability to hold their representative officials accountable.

Public Transportation

Vision Statement: Supported by a multi-modal transportation system, all community members have access to reliable, affordable, and efficient transportation that connects the metro area and neighboring communities. In our community, development supports the transportation system, and having a car is an option not a necessity.

Suggested steps for achieving our vision:

1. Build an accessible and efficient light rail or streetcar system.
2. Improve and expand the current bus system.
3. Encourage bicycle transportation with safe bike lanes and bike trails.

Conclusion

This report is intended to be shared, discussed and moved forward. Initial roll-out in 2010 will include presentations to the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, to young professionals' organizations, to community and state leaders, and at the 2010 Young Professionals Summit. It is expected that interested young professionals will seek out opportunities to begin implementing the suggested steps within this report. Because the vision statements refer to Omaha ten years from now, it is fully possible that those who will step up to build Omaha 2020 will include many people who were not involved in the development of this report.

Future young professionals leaders may choose to revisit this vision plan after 3-, 5- or more years. Perhaps they will revise it annually. The expectation is that it will continue moving forward.

Find your place in Your Omaha 2020!