



Values-Driven Community Planning

Using Scenario planning in the small town of Victor, Idaho

Location: Victor, Idaho

Partners: Envision Victor; Orton Family Foundation; Sunrise Engineering; Placeways LLC



Context: Set on a broad plain and surrounded by mountains, Victor, Idaho—population 1,800—provides a beautiful location for agriculture, recreation, and small-town life. Generations ago, the area was settled by farmers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the “LDS Church” or “Mormons”), and agriculture and church life remain staples for a large part of the community today. But there are also strong forces of change, as farming becomes increasingly difficult and new people move to town. Just a commutable 45 minutes away, on the other side of Teton Pass across the Grand Tetons, the resort town of Jackson, Wyoming attracts active young adults and

wealthy second-home-owners, many of whom are discovering the small-town attractions of nearby Victor. For several years leading up to the housing boom and bust of 2007/2008, Victor’s largest industry was construction and hundreds of new homes sites were platted. But when housing crashed the new homes and platted lots were left empty, and the people of Victor—now a mix of long-time residents and newcomers—found themselves reassessing their community, their values, and their plans for the future.

A coalition of local organizations pooled their resources and energy into a new project called Envision Victor, whose mission was to “to implement a new kind of planning in our City, a process that is focused on engaging our citizens, bridging our divisions, and honoring our shared values, in order to realize a vibrant and enduring Victor for years to come.” Over a two-year period and through a financial and operational partnership with the Orton Family Foundation, Envision Victor coordinated a large variety of community engagement and community-building activities. Among them was a new approach to planning decision-making based on the concept of “value mapping.”

Project Description:

Envision Victor engaged local firm Sunrise Engineering and Placeways to help build a public-friendly CommunityViz analysis that would support the value-based planning process. The immediate points of focus were Victor’s Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and Main Street plan, but the broader goal was to articulate a set of community values in a way they could be used as a guide for all kinds of future planning decisions.

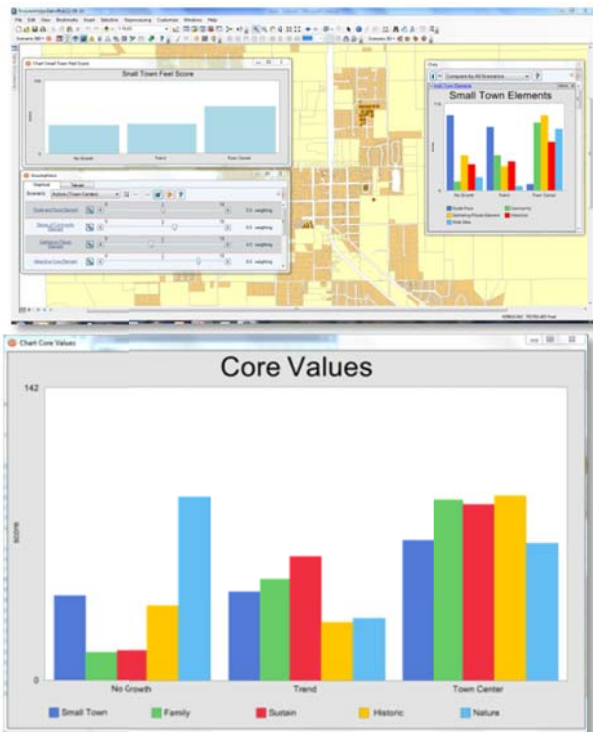
The project started from earlier work by Envision Victor that had drawn out and articulated five “core values” of the community: widely cherished, fundamental characteristics of the town and life within it. Their titles were Family Friendliness, Small Town Feel, Connection to Nature,

“The CommunityViz model that we built with Placeways helped the public make the connection between their growth pattern choices and the community’s core values in a direct and powerful way. When the impacts of different development patterns became clear, we found that we had a lot more in common than we anticipated.”

— Dahvi Wilson, Project Manager,
Envision Victor



Sustainability, and Cultural History. In this project, through a series of dialogues and expert processes, each core value was broken down into component elements (e.g., family housing, walkability), which in turn were analyzed for their relationship to physical form and planning policies or actions the City could take. The resulting logic tree of community values and cause-and-effect relationships created what is known as a value map. The consultants built this value map structure into a CommunityViz analysis that allowed alternative future scenarios to be assessed with respect to their impact on Victor's core community values. For example, a future scenario that offered abundant family housing would perform better with respect to the Family Friendly core value than one that did not.



The value mapping logic was not truly complete, however, until it was further enhanced with public dialogue. In a series of public meetings featuring interactive keypad polling (also known as “audience response systems” or “clickers”) and live

CommunityViz analysis, the project solicited group input on the subjective aspects of the value mapping. The consultants knew that family housing and walkability contributed in some way to Family Friendliness, for example, but only Victor's residents could say how *relatively* important each consideration was to them and their sense of the community's character and values. With the benefit of that public wisdom, the CommunityViz analysis was refined in real time and used to elucidate the benefits and drawbacks of alternative planning scenarios and policies.

Technology and Tools: CommunityViz Scenario 360™ and Scenario 3D™ Version 4, TurningPoint Response Cards, and ArcGIS Desktop 10.

Outcomes: The Envision Victor project ended successfully, having equipped the community with a clearer understanding of its values, a set of growth principles that are being embraced by City Council as a framework for decision-making, and an established process (including a keypad polling system) for cooperation between government and citizens. In addition to the CommunityViz-based value-mapping workshops described above, another CommunityViz-based engagement process led by Sunrise Engineering used Scenario 3D to look at alternative Main Street designs (e.g., bike lane placement and medians) and assess them with respect to Victor's core values.

KEY LINKS

- CommunityViz
<http://www.placeways.com/communityviz>
- City of Victor
<http://www.victorcityidaho.com>
- Placeways LLC
<http://placeways.com>
- Sunrise Engineering
<http://sunrise-eng.com>