Sacramento Area Council of Governments

S A C O G

Lessons Learned in Scenario Planning

New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
Smart Growth Tool Box Training Session

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February 7, 2013

Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG)

6 Counties

22 Cities

2.4 Million people

31 Board members

SACOG Involvement in Scenario Planning

- Started in 2002 as COG and as MPO
- Success due to resources
  - Political
  - Staff
  - Funding
  - Technical tools
  - Communication skills

Blueprint Growth Principles

- Housing Choices
- Transportation Choices
- Compact Development
- Use Existing Assets
- Mix Land Uses
- Protect Natural Resources
- High Quality Design

However, we have seen other regions that have not had the same result.

So here are some thoughts on the scenario planning process.

A Definition of Scenario Planning

- A group of <u>participants</u> engaged in a <u>data driven</u> <u>communication process</u> that seeks to ask questions and develop answers, to come to agreement or consensus on common problems.

- What are the key components?

- What are factors that drive their development?

Participants

- Includes decision makers, their staff, and interest groups (and often their staff)

- That have a broad range of interests, perspectives, assumptions, data, and often time schedules.

- All are important and should be brought to the process and accommodated.

Data Driven

- Requires an inventory of observed facts (Data)

- An understanding of the connections between and among these facts (Research)

- A mechanism for modifying some of the data to estimate the effects on other parts of that system (Model).

Communication Process

SACOG

- Gathering the participants in a series of meetings.

- Providing them with the means to effectively and efficiently have a dialogue or conversation.

- That assists them in working together and getting to agreements.

Each component has a complex structure,

That can be successful,

But often requires significant time and resources.

However, with timelines for decision-making and group dynamics being what they are, scenario planning must be quick and agile to keep up and remain relevant.

Plus there are always limits on money, staff, data and patience.

- Success is possible, but not always.
- There are too many cases where limitations in one or more of these areas have resulted in, if not failure, then severely limited accomplishments that did not have much shelf life.

So, What To Do?

- Adjustment/compromises must be made from the ideal,
- To get maximum efficiency,
- Without losing too much quality.

What Does All This Mean For The SmartGAP Project?

- With all of the interest in urban growth planning and successes in research, data, and communication

- This project sought to find the "sweet spot" between <u>Comprehensive</u> and <u>Efficient</u> in Data and Tools.

- This tool brings together many improvements in data and analysis,

- Puts it into in a flexible framework,

- That can be used to "lower the bar" for communities and regions who have the desire but limited means.

Final Thoughts

- The SmartGAP tool has made great strides in improving the "data driven" toolset, in a flexible framework to assist the "communication process".

- SmartGAP presents an opportunity for broad advances in many regions which I think can see much success.

- We'll see.