



Introduction to the Planning Process

“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” – John Lennon

A comprehensive process was used from 2010-2012 to develop FieldGuide 2030, our community’s latest strategic plan. This was a process that was unlike any other process our community has used before. The process included going to great lengths to collect citizen input and feedback. The goal was to ensure no citizen could claim at the end of the process that they didn’t have an opportunity to provide input. Not every citizen provided input; but all had an opportunity.

The result is FieldGuide 2030 – a community plan; not a “to do” list for local government, but a “to do” list for our entire community. This is a very important point. We will sink or swim together as a community – not by relying on government or any other single entity to take of these things for us. If these topics are truly the most important for our community to address at this point in time, we will collectively either work to improve them or not. Annual reports will reflect our entire community’s progress (or lack thereof) on each chapter and theme, as judged by a set of “adopters” from within the community.

This plan focuses on the inter-relationships between the various chapters, and between the chapters and four broad themes. Given the focus on these inter-relationships, we cannot afford to allow one or more of these issues to be neglected while others try to move forward – they are all linked together. We are asking the community to hold us, as a community, accountable; to monitor our progress; and to “grade” our progress annually.

A) Input to the Plan

The planning process included a “listening tour” to collect citizen input, evaluation of five community assessments, consideration of other organizational strategic planning processes, input from our next generation of citizens and leaders, input from our regional counterparts, and input from the City Council and Greene County Commission. Additionally, “lessons learned” were provided by chairs of the community’s previous strategic planning committees and a set of “mega-trends” were provided by a Horizon Scanning Committee. Each of these inputs is described in more detail below.

The “Listening Tour”

The process began with a “Listening Tour” that was conducted both in-person and via a web survey. Listening to citizen ideas and concerns was at the heart of this phase of the overall long-range planning process. The in-person Listening Tour consisted of 45 meetings with neighborhood associations, professional associations, civic groups, City employees, and K-12 students. The City Manager personally hosted 43 of the 45 meetings. At each meeting, the following four questions were asked of citizens:

- What do you like most about Springfield?
- What would you most like to change about Springfield?
- What is your vision for Springfield in the year 2030?
- How can you help us achieve that vision?

The full report of the Listening Tour, including the K-12 Student Input Addendum, is available on the City’s web site at [\[URL\]](#).

Recent Community Assessments

By chance, our community received five community assessments within a relatively short time period. This provided an opportunity for an honest assessment of “where we are today” – the good, the bad, and the ugly. These five community “report cards” were used by the City Manager to identify the thirteen chapters and the four “themes.”

Links to each of the following reports were provided to each of the strategic planning committees.

- Community Focus 2009
- Springfield/Greene County Social Capital Survey Report
- Safety & Justice Roundtable Report
- Competitive Assessment (relative to education and workforce development, business costs, infrastructure and quality of life.)
- “Next Cities” Rankings (best places to live and work for young professionals)

A comparison of the various community assessments was initiated by the City Manager, with additional input from other community leaders. The results of those five assessments – strengths and weaknesses – were placed on color-coded placards and organized onto a wall in the Busch Building to allow a visual representation and grouping of similar issues. In the end, thirteen “chapter” topics and four broad “theme” topics emerged.

Other Community Plans

This community strategic plan will not replace the individual strategic plans created by the various institutions within our community. For example, Springfield Public Schools, the Springfield Regional Arts Council, the various higher education institutions, and other private businesses and public institutions will continue to develop their own strategic plans. It is not our intention to re-develop or modify the plans for these institutions. However, it is hopeful that these institutions will be able to use FieldGuide 2030, the community strategic plan, to provide a context for their future planning efforts, and that their resulting plans will support these various community-wide initiatives.

Capturing the Voice of the “Next Generation”

The City went to extra efforts to ensure the voice of the “next generation” of community citizens and leaders was heard as this plan was developed. Three strategies were used to solicit and collect input from our community’s younger citizens.

- During the “Listening Tour,” focus groups of elementary, middle, and high school students were hosted to collect their ideas.
- Four student groups presented their vision for Springfield’s future to City Council as part of a competition. Their presentations were posted to the City’s web site, streamed live on the web, and archived for later viewing. The group from Evangel University was the overall winner. Other presentations were received from Drury University, Ozarks Technical Community College, and Springfield Public Schools students. All of the presentations were impressive.
- The Network is an organization of young professionals that work to attract, retain, and engage young professionals in our community. One spot was reserved on each planning committee for a member of The Network to ensure the voice of our future community leaders was heard.

Additionally, one of the five recent community assessment reports used to identify community issues was the “Next Cities” Report that focused on the issues of most concern to young professionals. (In the 2009 “Next Cities” report, Springfield was ranked 17th in the category of U.S. cities of a population of 100,000-200,000.)

Meetings with Regional Leaders

“Regionalism” is one of the four cross-chapter themes of our community strategic plan. To promote this spirit, Springfield’s Mayor and City Manager conducted a series of two-on-two meetings with area mayors and city administrators to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. We recognize that “we’re all in this together,” and what is good for the region is good for all residents of our various cities and counties. Additionally, the Greene County Commissioners and County staff regularly meet with area city leaders to host similar conversations.

City Council and County Commission

Springfield’s City Council members and Greene County Commissioners conducted a strategic planning retreat in an attempt to elevate a set of strategic initiatives of importance to both the City of Springfield and the region. The results of this retreat were provided to the planning committees for their consideration.

City and County Staff

Citizen-based planning committees drove the planning process and determined the initiatives of strategic importance to our metropolitan area for the future. However, city and county staff provided research and administrative support as requested by the committee co-chairs. Many city and county staff possess topic expertise and invaluable historical knowledge that benefited the planning committees as they performed their work. However, it’s worth restating – the citizen-based planning committees performed their work without intrusion by city or county staff.

Lessons Learned from the Past

Before beginning this strategic planning process, the City Manager met with the chairs/co-chairs of previous Vision 20/20 steering committees and asked them what worked well in previous planning efforts, what they would do differently if given a chance to do it again, and what recommendations they would have for the next planning process. Their wise counsel was very valuable and likely allowed this planning process to avoid dozens of potential landmines along the way.

We recognize and honor the major accomplishments of prior community planning efforts (Vision 20/20). These planning efforts involved many citizens and literally changed the landscape of our community. Mostly because of the primary needs of the community at that time, these past plans focused mostly on “things” the community needed at that time. Most of the initiatives outlined in those plans have been accomplished – at testament to our community. FieldGuide 2030, however, includes chapter topics and themes that have never been addressed in past Springfield community plans – Diversity & Global Perspective, Public Health, Public Safety, and more. This plan is less about “things” and more about “issues” that our community is either struggling with or needs to struggle with.

Horizon Scanning Committee

Composed of citizens and City and County staff, this committee was tasked with identifying “mega-trends” that they feel will impact our community over the next 20 years. Their resulting report was provided to each planning committee, and each planning committee was asked to carefully consider these anticipated trends as they conducted their planning. [URL]

B) Planning Committees

Based on the community challenges/weaknesses identified in the various community assessments noted above, the City Manager identified thirteen “chapter” topics and four cross-chapter “themes” for FieldGuide 2030. Two “foundation issues” were also identified – community-wide leadership development and building social capital (trust). Subsequently, individual planning committees were created to focus on the thirteen chapter topics. The four cross-chapter “themes” were authored by the Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee after having received presentations about all thirteen planning committees. The Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee also hosted a panel discussion of individuals to discuss the foundational needs of (a) community-wide leadership development and (b) building social capital (trust).

The City and County leadership cooperatively selected the co-chairs of each planning committee. In some cases, the City and County leadership also selected one or more “topic experts” to serve on the committee. Interest in serving on one or more planning committees was solicited from the public at large. The full list of individuals expressing some level of interest in their topic was provided to the co-chairs, and the co-chairs selected the citizen members of their planning committees. The co-chairs were instructed to try to select a diverse mix of citizens. In many cases, the co-chairs selected citizens they did not know.

Individual, citizen-based planning committees were created to address the following thirteen topics:

- Arts, Culture, & Tourism
- Early Childhood Development
- Economic Development
- Education & Workforce Development
- Global Perspectives & Diversity
- Growth Management & Land Use
- Housing
- Natural Environment
- Progressive Management
- Public Health
- Public Safety
- Recreation & Leisure
- Transportation

A number of these planning topics have never been addressed in a Springfield community strategic plan in the past. The community had never directly addressed the topics of early childhood development, public health, public safety, global perspectives & diversity, or progressive management (the internal operation of the City) in previous plans. Thus, the committees addressing those topics were plowing new ground.

Since the Parks Department had recently completed its community-based strategic plan addressing recreation and leisure, a summary of that plan was used to provide the “Recreation & Leisure” chapter of this plan.

The Progressive Management Planning Committee was an internally focused planning committee consisting of City staff. Another topic that had never been included in past community strategic plans, the purpose of this committee was to develop a plan outlining how the City should transform itself and its services to better support the citizens of our community and the other initiatives contained within this plan. All cities have dump trucks, buildings, parks, etc. So what separates great city government from average city government? The staff and the work processes. It is our intention to optimize both.

Currently, government is not allowed to fail. Any failure or mis-step, no matter how small or relatively insignificant,

often results in a firestorm of criticism (typically from the media and self-appointed “watchdog” citizens). While government should be watched and transparent, government should also be allowed to take risks and occasionally fail. “Playing it safe” out of fear should not be the strategy du jour. This chapter attempts to address how Springfield’s city government should change to better accommodate the changes that are coming and participate as a partner in implementing the goals and objectives within this plan.

The Four Themes

While trying to determine the major community issues from the five community assessments, the City Manager noticed that there were four topics that seemed broader than the others. In fact, these four topics seemed to cut across the other topics – they were impacted by most or all of the other issues, and they impacted most or all of the other issues. Thus, these four issues were extracted and became “themes” that were to be addressed by each of the planning committees. In this way, the hope was that the plan would include a rich and diverse perspective of how to address these four critical issues – civic engagement, minimizing poverty, regionalism, and sustainability. In essence, all thirteen planning committees were asked to address these four themes in addition to their chapter topic. This gives us thirteen perspectives on each theme.

The Foundation Issues – Building Community Leadership and Social Capital

Two “foundation issues” – building community leadership and social capital – were stressed at the start of the planning process. The Planning Committees were asked to “keep these in the back of their minds” as they developed their plan chapters and addressed the four themes.

The intention has been for the open, citizen-based process to help increase both of these important community characteristics. By involving more than 300 citizens in the planning process, plus seeking and receiving feedback from hundreds more, we’ve hidden nothing. But the process has hopefully helped some of our citizens feel they have a voice in setting the path for the future of their community and, subsequently, will increase their likelihood of engaging in future civic processes to contribute their leadership skills. Likewise, the process has hopefully increased the level of trust between citizens and between citizens and local government. Oftentimes, local government gets painted with the same broad brush as state and federal government. However, we feel that local government works best. The Social Capital Surveys of 2008 and 2010 indicated that, while trust in federal government went down, trust in local government increased. We don’t exactly know why, but we are hopeful that the transparent and inclusive community strategic planning process is the cause for at least a portion of that increase.

Our “Welcoming Deficit”

Let’s face it – our community has what one community member called a “welcoming deficit.” There are members of our community that resist the trend of increasing diversity in the Springfield region. Most of that resistance is tacit, but it exists. This is the first time in a recent history that our community has taken this issue head-on.

Some in our community still believe that increasing vs. decreasing diversity is a choice – it is not. Our community is becoming more diverse. (Statistics from recent reports). The only question our community must decide is how we will respond to our increasing diversity. Will we resist it? Will we welcome it and use it to make our community stronger? How our community responds to our increasing diversity is one of the keys to our future, and that’s why “Global Perspectives and Diversity” is one of our community strategic plan chapters for the first time.

One interesting observation is that our next generation seems to not only embrace diversity, but is demanding it. As we consider our community’s “brain drain,” we need to ask ourselves whether a more diverse community will entice more of our college graduates to remain in the Springfield area. The Next Cities Report indicated [I need a copy of this report to review]

C) Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee

The architects behind the development of this community strategic plan are the members of the individual chapter Planning Committees and the members of the Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committee was comprised of one of the co-chairs of each of the Planning Committees, plus another set of at-large citizens.

The members of the chapter Planning Committees developed the thirteen chapters, and each contributed toward the development of the four cross-chapter “themes.” The draft chapters developed by these committees were submitted to a Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committee was given the following responsibilities:

- Review the draft chapters developed by the various planning committees, and encourage each planning committee to keep their chapter strategic and relatively brief in length.
- Determine each chapter’s “reasonableness” for implementation. This included determining whether the specific initiatives recommended for the five-year action plan can reasonably be accomplished or initiated during the next five years.
- Identify gaps, redundancies, or inconsistencies between the thirteen chapters.
- Solicit “adopter organizations” to help measure the community’s progress (or lack thereof) each year toward the objectives within the chapters and themes, and provide a community “grade” to each annually.
- Develop specific performance measures to be used annually to assess the plan’s implementation
- Analyze and determine the major inter-relationships between the various plan chapter topics, between the chapter topics and broad themes, and between the initiatives proposed within each chapter and theme.
- Consider and recommend how our community should address two over-arching, long-term challenges:
 - o community-wide leadership development
 - o building social capital and trust

The Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee reviewed multiple drafts of each of the chapters and themes. While the Planning Committees had “ownership” of their chapters while under development, in most cases, the Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee took “ownership” of the chapter after the second draft was submitted. At that point, it was the Coordinating Committee’s responsibility to ensure the thirteen chapters and four themes were woven together into a single tapestry.

Once all thirteen of the chapter drafts had been reviewed and refined at least once, the Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee hosted a community feedback “open house” event at Mediacom Ice Park. Even though, or perhaps because, the event was held on a Saturday, attendance was poor. The “lesson learned” was that we should not expect significant numbers of our citizens to “come to us” – instead, we should go to them. And we did. Shortly after the open house, the Strategic Plan Coordinating Committee hosted a booth at Arts Fest to solicit citizen feedback. This proved to be much more effective, with hundreds of citizens providing feedback on one or more chapters. The committee also hosted a similar citizen feedback booth during Cider Days, which was also successful. The Coordinating Committee also accepted and reviewed feedback from online comments received on the City’s web site where the chapters were posted.

The Coordinating Committee, to be honest, had difficulty generating wide-spread community

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discussion about the plan and its individual chapters. Even the Springfield News-Leader tried to help generate discussion by posting a weekly review and commentary on each of the chapters. The result, however, was not much chatter, even on their online discussion board (which at the time was a hotbed for anonymous critical discussion).

In the end, no citizen could claim they didn't have an opportunity for review and feedback, although a relative few seemed to take that opportunity.

Lessons Learned

This planning process has taken twice as long as anticipated by the City Manager. The decision not to hire an external strategic planning consultant who can focus on the plan development full-time was mostly a financial decision (in an attempt to save money during the worst recession in fifty years). For future iterations of the community strategic plan, the City may consider hiring an external consultant in order to move the process along more quickly.

During this process, there were other lessons learned, as well, such as the following:

- When seeking citizen feedback, go to them; don't expect them to come to you. (We experienced low citizen turnout when we hosted a weekend input/feedback event at the Mediacom Ice Park. When we hosted a booth at various community events, such as ArtsFest and Cider Days, however, we received considerably more citizen feedback.)
- Require that Planning Committees to submit their draft chapters using the template. It takes too long to re-format those chapters submitted in a non-standard format, which delays the process.
- Don't get bogged down in any graphical portion of the plan.
- Select a plan name early in the process.
- Be vigilant and ensure that planning committees provide cost estimates. No entity will be able to provide better cost estimates than the planning committee.
- Ask each planning committee to address both of the "foundation issues" – community-wide leadership development and building social capital (trust) – in addition to the four cross-chapter themes.
- Should have stressed the two foundation issues – building community leadership and building social capital – more throughout the planning process rather than only at the beginning.

Inter-relationships Between Issues/Topics

Perhaps the most significant focus of this plan (other than the fact this is a community plan) is the emphasis placed on analyzing the inter-relationships between the various chapter topics and the four cross-chapter themes. After studying these relationships for some time, we have determined two conclusions:

- The chapters and themes are tightly interwoven and greatly impact one another – the inter-relationships exist and are strong.
- We're not exactly sure what to do with these inter-relationships or how to use them to our advantage, but we must continue to this analysis.

The graphic representing the strength of the inter-relationships between the chapters (also given the name "the colorful ball of yarn") indicates that the inter-relationships are both many and varied in strength. (See graphic ____)

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The graphic depicting the inter-relationships between the thirteen chapters and the four cross-chapter themes also indicates a variety of relationships. (See graphic ___)

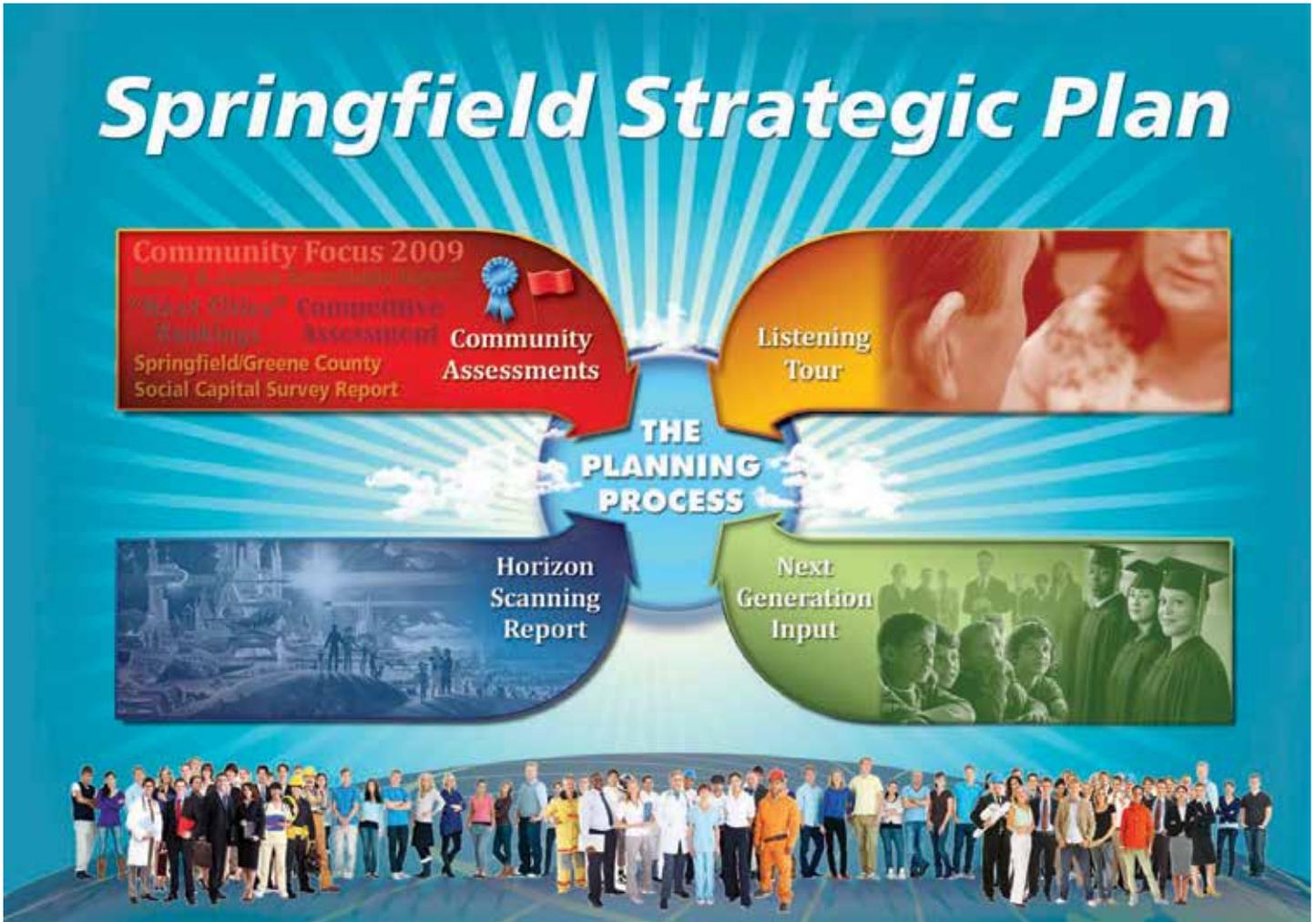
While we suspect a causal relationship between the chapters and themes, we have not yet been successful in assembling all thirteen chapters and all four themes into a single model that accurately reflects all of the relationships.

We will continue to study and refine these models over time as this plan is implemented.

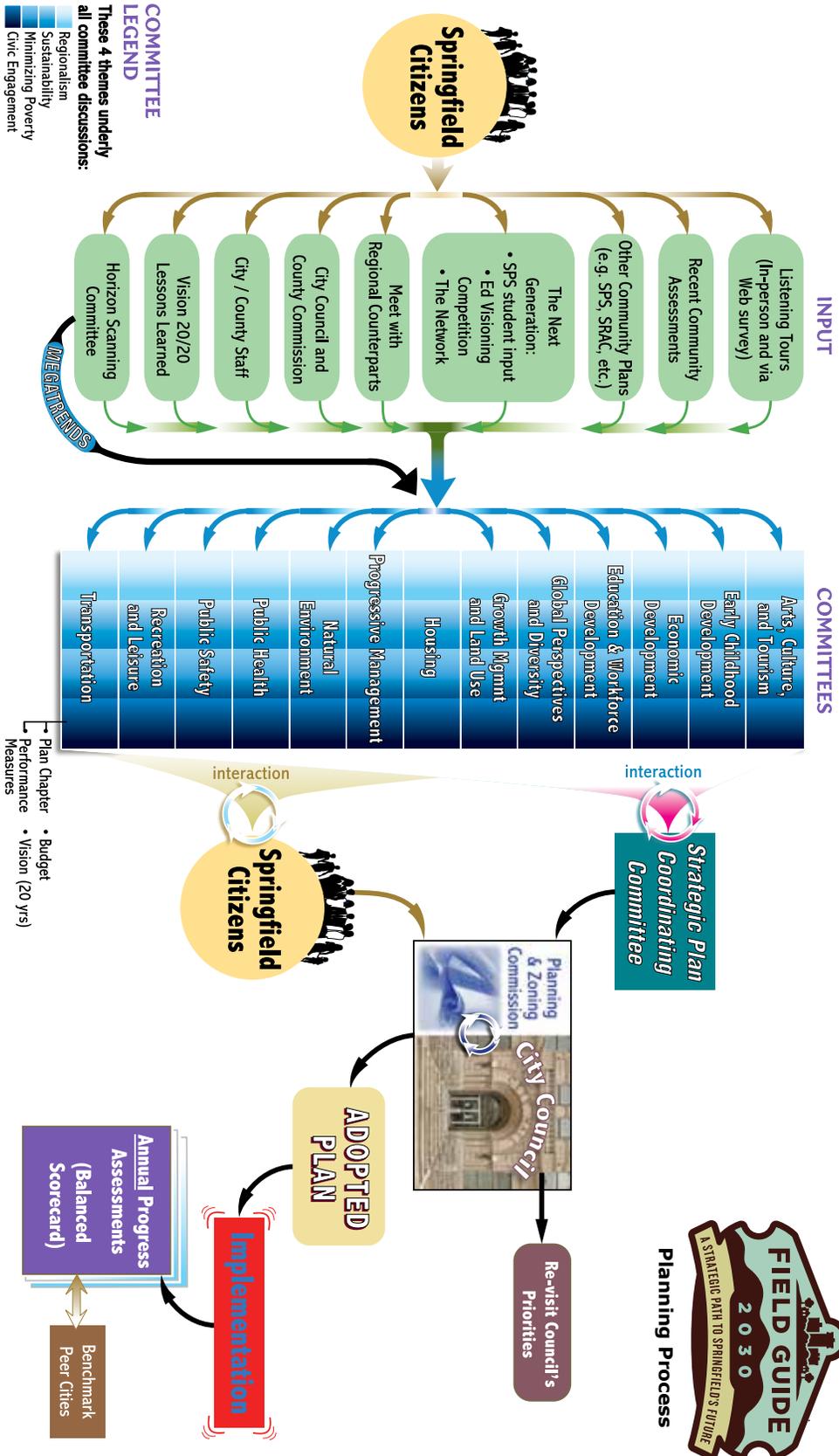
Some may say that we should not include this many initiatives in a plan – we can't afford to implement all of these things over the next five years. True, we will not be able to afford all of them at once, but we can likely make progress in most or all. This plan serves as a "roadmap" to allow us to better sense how all of these topics weave together into a tapestry to move our community forward. We understand there are some who will maintain we don't need to move forward – "things are fine just the way they are now." We respectfully disagree with that viewpoint. The Springfield community has some issues it needs to face. Hopefully, this plan allows us to face these issues head-on and not ignore them and hope they just go away or solve themselves. This is a long-range vision – as a community, we must keep the end in mind.

Given this focus on interrelationships between the chapters and themes, we cannot afford to allow one or more of these issues to be neglected while others move forward. Studying the interrelationships, however, strongly suggests that a narrowed approach would hamstring all of the identified topics by the simple fact that . . . they are all tightly interrelated.

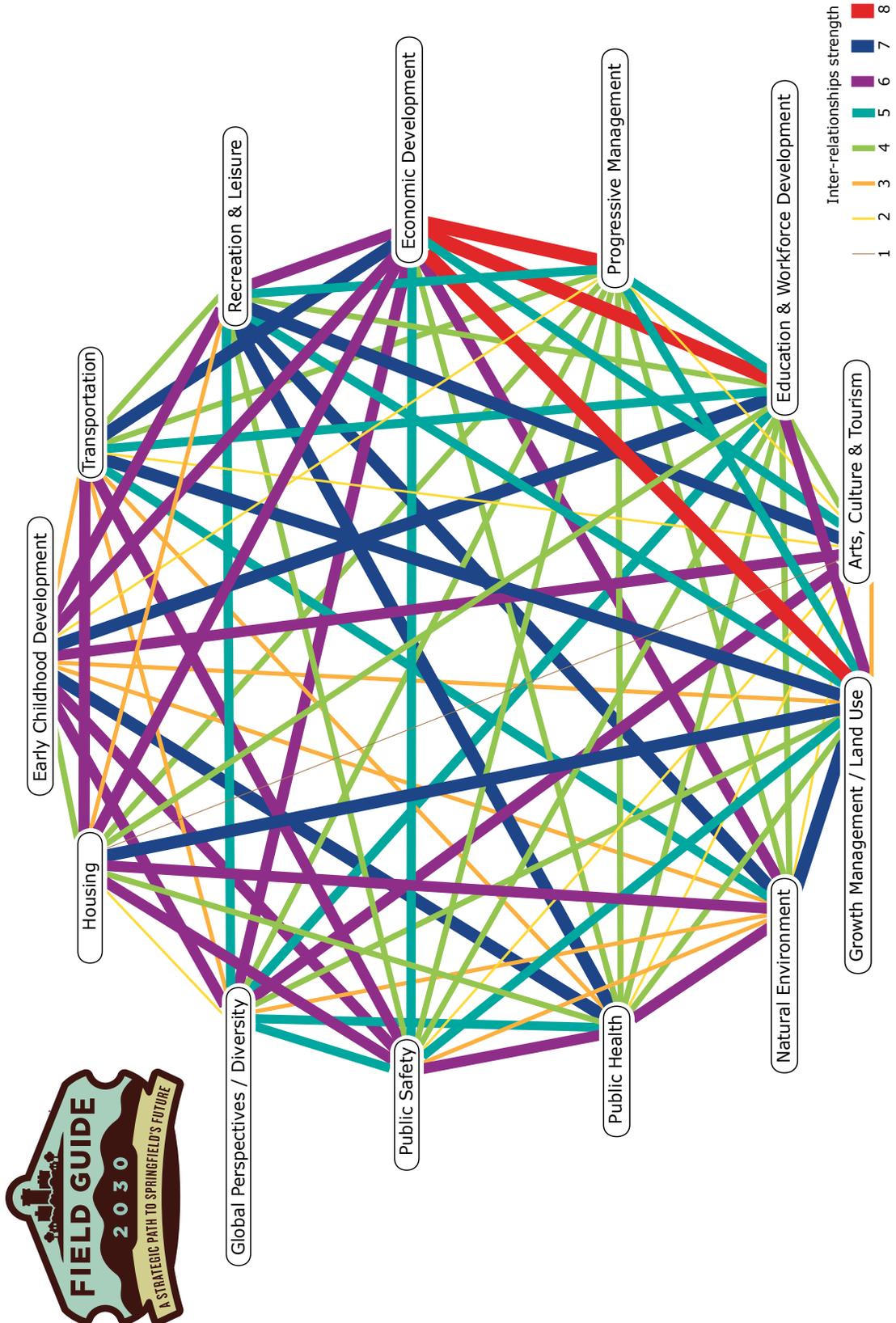
Graphic 1: Input



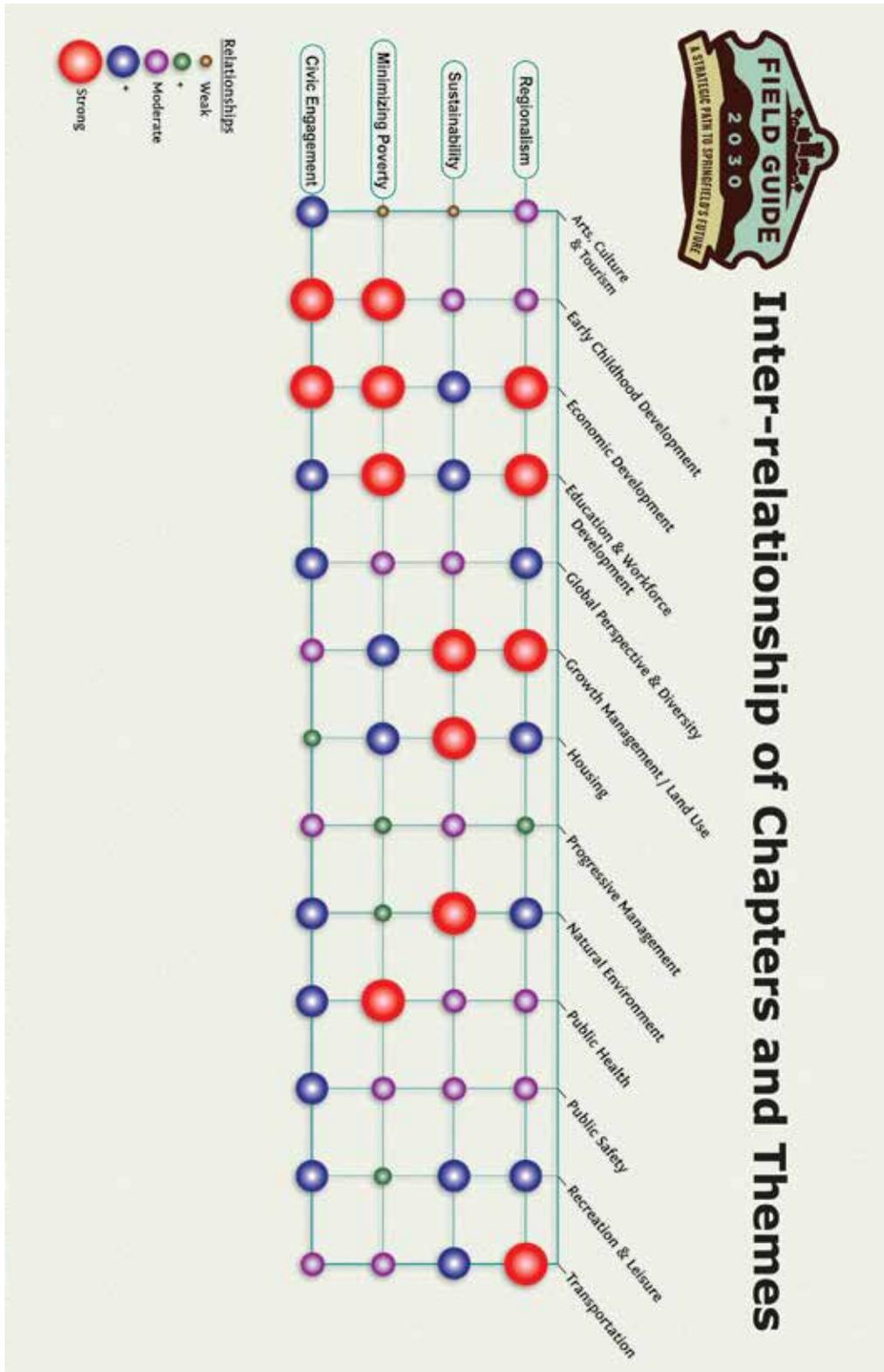
Graphic 2: Planning Process



Graphic 3: Inter-relationship of Chapters



Graphic 4: Inter-relationship of Chapters & Themes



Graphic 5: Brain Development vs. Education Investment

