



Manage Growth Now

The Vision Dixie process took an important step forward earlier this week with the sharing of a final report during the Washington County Economic Summit.

The report itself didn't provide many surprises. More than 3,000 people took part in the information-gathering sessions throughout the process. The goal was to decide as a community how residents wanted the area to develop in an attempt to better manage growth. Residents clearly wanted to see mixed-use centers in which people can obtain the necessities of life without having to drive long distances. They want better-connected roads and an expanded public-transportation system. They want to preserve the spectacular natural views.

That was the easy part. Now, residents want to see the results of the time spent gathering opinions and weighing options.

An implementation committee of five people will travel to Washington County cities and towns to meet with municipal leaders. During those meetings, the committee will lay out the principles of Vision Dixie and will attempt to get elected leaders to buy into the plan. Because Vision Dixie has no legal standing, it will be up to each individual municipality to implement the proposal in its own way.

There is, understandably, some skepticism in the region as to whether Vision Dixie really will manage growth in Washington County. The process fell off the public's radar screen while the final report was being prepared. Now, however, it is back in the spotlight.

The overall plan for implementation is a good one. A small committee of five people can adequately go from municipality to municipality to share the concepts behind Vision Dixie and determine which governmental bodies are willing to take part.

County Commissioner Denny Drake is a good choice as the chairman as a former mayor. The other participants include LaVerkin Mayor Karl Wilson, Santa Clara Mayor Rick Rosenberg, Ken Sizemore, executive director of Five County Association of Governments, and Kayla Koeber, a resident of Leeds who served on the Vision Dixie steering committee. All the team's member's bring different perspectives.

It will be crucial for elected officials throughout the county to take a good, hard look at their general plans and make amendments to adhere to the Vision Dixie principles - concepts many residents agreed were important for the future of the region.

While issues may arise as the discussions continue, the only pressing concern is time. It could take six months to a year to meet with all of the municipalities, and that's simply wasted time.

As some who attended economic summit said, growth must be managed now.

The implementation team should begin scheduling the meetings now with a goal of meeting with every city and town by the end of March. While aggressive, the timeline is doable, and it will show that the county is serious about moving forward with Vision Dixie.

The public clearly wants the Vision Dixie principles to be enacted. There's no time like the present to make that happen.