Visioning and Visualization

People, Pixels, and Plans

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Introduction

The purpose of *Visioning and Visualization* is to assist urban professionals, public sector leaders, and the public to navigate two complex and evolving fields: public involvement and digital visualization as applied to planning. To that end, this book is based on the authors' experiences in developing sophisticated public involvement processes and applying information technology to planning and design.

Two remarkable phenomena have affected the practice of planning over the past two decades: the rise of public involvement as an integral component of urban decision making, and the technological innovations that enable the visualization and simulation of physical reality. Together the two phenomena anticipate the future, turning the planning process into a journey of discovery for professionals and laypeople alike.

The book is not a "how to" publication. It does not focus on the procedural steps of public process techniques or on specific technical features of digital visualization tools. Rather, the book suggests ways that digital visualization tools can be integrated in a public process to offer participants clear choices and help them make informed planning decisions. Evidence from communities throughout the country shows that public involvement supported by visualization leads to better plans and more livable communities.

The book is organized in six chapters:

- *Chapter 1,* "The Context," presents an historic overview of the public involvement and digital visualization fields. It traces the trajectory of public involvement in planning from confrontational and adversarial tactics to the present emphasis on cooperation and inclusion. It expands on the evolution of representation techniques from perspective drawings to computer-aided visual simulations.
- *Chapter 2*, "Benefits, Principles, and Lessons Learned," outlines principles to guide the integration of public process and visualization tools in a democratic decision-making process. It also explores lessons learned in the application of digital visualization tools to planning activities.
- *Chapter 3,* "Public Involvement Techniques in Planning," illustrates visions, charrettes, and other techniques that invite the use of visualization tools.
- *Chapter 4,* "Visual Simulation Tools," introduces specific tools and their uses in planning, including representing existing conditions, visualizing alternatives, and monitoring impacts.
- *Chapter 5,* "Implementation," describes formal and informal ways the implementation of a plan can benefit from feedback opportunities created by visualization tools.
- *Chapter 6,* "Case Studies," presents four case studies spanning from the regional to the neighborhood scale where public involvement and visualization tools were used to help the public make informed decisions.