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# Principles of Regional Stewardship

(Working Draft 11/6/03)

## Introduction

The mission of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship (ARS) is to foster collaborative multi-sector regional stewardship as a means for advancing economic, social and environmental progress, while maintaining a sense of place, in America's metropolitan regions. To achieve its mission ARS is developing key principles for "Regional Stewardship," which are predicated on the statement of the late John W. Gardner, where he noted that there can be *"no more regionalism for its own sake. We now need pragmatic regionalism with a purpose."* Regional Stewardship takes Gardner's statement and uses it as the foundation for critical principles to guide public policy and civic engagement that leads to new, open, inclusive, and shared decision-making and governance. These principles are not necessarily new, in and of themselves; but they embody practices that, when used in a regional context, lead to successful communities.

## The Case for Regionalism

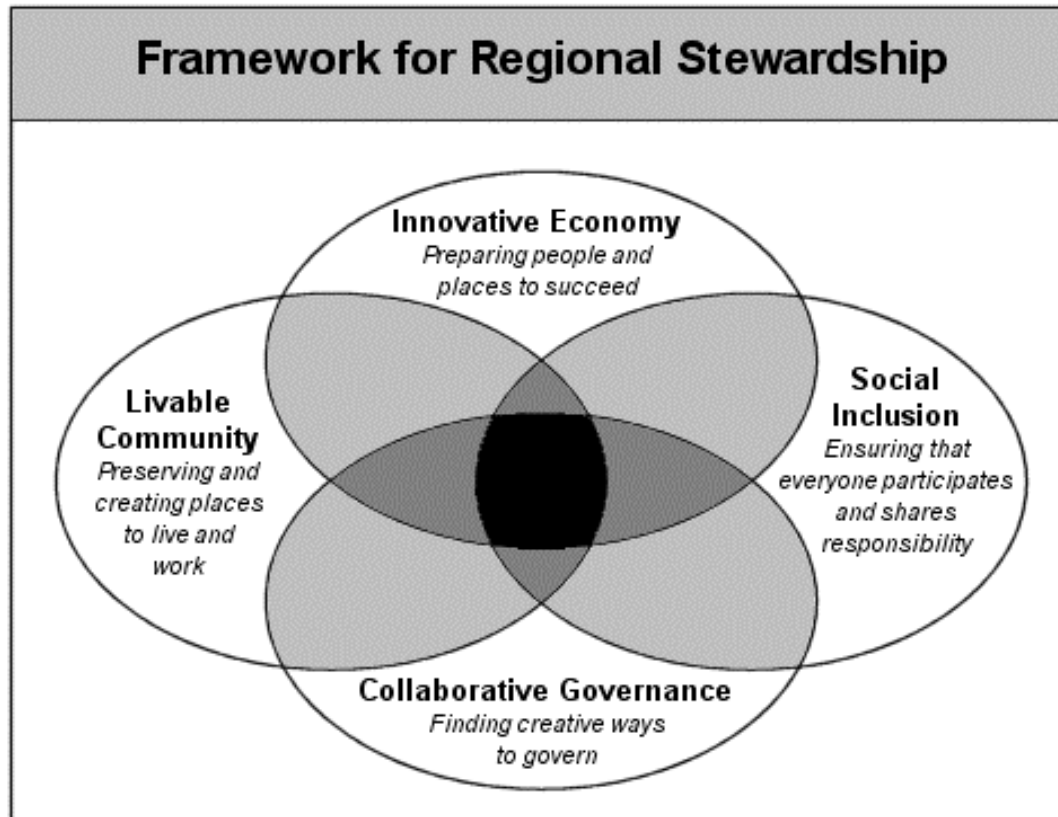
Regional Stewardship recognizes the role of regions as the arena in which many challenges are best addressed. They are of special importance principally because they constitute the de facto places where most human activity occurs. Some of the most innovative and constructive collaborations take place at the regional level.

Regional leaders seek ways to solve problems that spill over city and county boundaries. They know that communities working alone can not effectively address critical issues such as job training, housing, traffic, youth development, gang violence and crime. These problems do not respect local political boundaries. Moreover, they are not limited to government, but also involve business and nonprofit organizations. They require a "regional community" collaborating on a cross-sector regional basis.

Regions are "real places" where people live and work. The institutional boundaries in regions are often dramatically at odds with the reality of the problems people need to address. Regional Stewardship is economic, organic, social, strategic. It reflects directly the pressures for increased efficiency, for cohesion and competitive excellence.

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**Mission:** *To foster collaborative multi-sector regional stewardship as a means for advancing economic, social and environmental progress, while maintaining a sense of place, in America's metropolitan regions.*



**Innovative Economy:** *Preparing people and places to succeed.*

- ❑ The Innovative Economy is one where people work more with their brains instead of their hands. It is an economy in which rapid change is constant; an economy at least as different from what came before as the industrial age was from the agricultural age.
- ❑ The Innovative Economy is a new way of competing based on speed, quality, flexibility, knowledge, and networks. Diverse industries are being fundamentally transformed by the Innovative Economy. It is clear that all institutions – including education, government, and community organizations – will need to adapt to the new rules – rules still being formed – for success in the Innovative Economy.
- ❑ The Innovative Economy emphasizes skills and knowledge as the keys to economic progress. Skilled and knowledgeable people tend to locate in communities that provide a good quality of life and excellent social, cultural, and natural assets. Prosperous communities provide a mix of characteristics that enable firms to compete and thrive in the global economy.
- ❑ A key challenge of the Innovative Economy is to provide jobs that enable all citizens to enjoy a good quality of life; to produce meaningful jobs that sustain families all along the economic spectrum and provide opportunities for advancement.

- ❑ The challenges of the Innovative Economy relate to workforce readiness and issues of development, transportation, housing, open space, and social inclusion that cannot be adequately addressed by traditional political boundaries and leadership models. They must be examined on a regional level, where economic, environmental, and social concerns all merge.
- ❑ Economic development extends beyond cities to regional economic clusters, environmental issues exist within bioregions, and social issues cut across neighborhoods within regions. In short, the region is where the action is.

**Livable Community:** *Preserving and creating places to live and work.*

- ❑ Place matters in Regional Stewardship because people matter. Thus, Livable Communities must ensure the public safety and the well-being of their citizens. Livable Communities must provide adequate housing and ensure that public education affords opportunities for all members of the community. Livable Communities must ensure that living wage jobs are available so that people can live in the communities in which they work.
- ❑ New visions of urban design—including compact development, transit-oriented housing, walkable neighborhoods, safe and secure communities, and protected open space—are critical aspects of livable communities.
- ❑ Traditional land use decisions that promote sprawl, congestion, and separation of uses undermine the livability and sustainability of communities and regions.
- ❑ Livable Communities create and sustain unique urban amenities, vibrant street life, top-notch entertainment, museums, galleries and cultural institutions.

**Social Inclusion:** *Ensuring that everyone participates and shares responsibility.*

- ❑ Social Inclusion recognizes that the interests of neighborhoods are connected to the future health of the region and vice versa. Moreover, long-term regional prosperity is linked to reducing poverty and inequality in metropolitan areas. Thus, equity must become a part of regional strategy, not just an afterthought. The more community residents participate in skilled, career-oriented work, the higher value-added the regional economy can produce and the greater the increase in living standards.
- ❑ People matter in the collective decision-making of community-based regionalism, where everyone is included in the development of regional strategies; and decision-making structures and systems support broad inclusion.

- ❑ Regions are a growing mix of increasingly diverse populations and perspectives. Residents must be engaged and participate as contributing members of a “regional society.”
- ❑ The growing complexity of problem-solving means community problems cannot be effectively addressed without regional support and regional problems cannot be solved without community engagement.
- ❑ Bridging differences and building trust and relationships necessitates the need for safe civic spaces for public dialogue and conversations and the appropriate tools to support public decision-making and civic engagement.

**Collaborative Governance:** *Finding creative ways to govern.*

- ❑ Governance—how people come together to address common problems—is more than government. At the regional level, it involves citizens, business, labor, nonprofits, educators, and government working in various ways to set directions, solve problems and take action.
- ❑ Today’s regions are a complex system of overlapping, interrelating jurisdictions—much like a network. Collaborative Governance requires facilitation of resources, information, ideas, and power.
- ❑ Collaborative Governance requires more facilitation and less control. It is bringing together disparate parts and repairing broken connections. It means crossing boundaries and including diversity. Collaborative Governance is constant openness to experimentation and the search for better outcomes. Collaborative Governance is distributed governance.
- ❑ Collaborative Governance relies on participants’ social capital. Social capital is the networks and norms of trust and reciprocity required to advance civic cooperation. Social capital addresses the need for strong relationships among participants engaged in Collaborative Governance; these relationships are a critical foundation for the success of Collaborative Governance.
- ❑ Informed participation is critical to Collaborative Governance. Transparent information empowers citizens to participate in the decision-making process that determines the future of their regions.
- ❑ Collaborative Governance encompasses process and structural changes that emphasize coalitions and actions across jurisdictions *and* across sectors.

NOTES: Option A, Friday, November 7, 2003, 10:30 am

## **Principles of Regional Stewardship**

Scott Fosler, moderator

(Various participants identified by surname—refer to registration list for full identification.)

Fosler: When ARS began to look for a graphic model to express the kind of interaction we thought was necessary to help regions succeed, we became increasingly aware that four simultaneous conversations – with evident overlap – were taking place: one on social inclusion, another on collaborative governance, a third on livable community, and a fourth on innovative economy. These conversations correspond to the spheres in the Venn diagram that now has been adopted as the ARS logo. The overlap in the middle – what we often call the “creative space” – is the area of opportunity for stewards of place.

The Principles of Regional Stewardship (previously called “Principles of Pragmatic Regionalism”) are an attempt to expand upon the nature of the four conversations with sufficient generality to stimulate creative, integrated and constructive dialogue in different regions. You have all received copies of the draft “Principles,” and we’re interested in your reactions.

Doege: The current model seems to overlook institutions of representative government, which makes me wonder whether elected officials would feel threatened by it.

Schneider: I don’t think they’d feel threatened, I think they’d just overlook it.

Lemoine: Without a specified role, I think they’d feel left out.

Doucette: In addition to government, the role of the business community is under-emphasized.

Lemoine: In the Venn diagram, the spheres representing “innovative economy” and “collaborative governance” don’t overlap—is that deliberate, suggesting business and government don’t interact in this model? Also, the spheres are labeled with three nouns and one process—“social inclusion.”

Grow: I’m uncertain of the audience; if this document is intended for the general public, it may be written with too much “planner speak.”

Abernathy: I’m struck by the vision of regions as “real places,” because they are and they aren’t—it depends on the context. What I’ve noticed is that form follows function.

For example, in the Research Triangle area, the COG region consists of 6 counties, the transit region 7 seven counties, and the airport region 26 counties.

Grow: The definition of region certainly depends on context; there's a natural scale to each issue.

Abernathy: To return to the Venn diagram, there are places in the Research Triangle area where all four spheres overlap—and other places where there's negative overlap, almost like a clash of matter and anti-matter.

Covert: The interaction of issues and geography reminds me of the "big here/long now" model, wherein both the space affected and temporal reference are far more expansive – and fluid – than often supposed.

W. Snyder: I wonder whether the level of the necessary stewardship conversation couldn't be captured in a matrix that arrayed the content/issue area on one axis and geographic scale on the other.

Peirce: A matrix model would impose too much tidiness on the geographic or jurisdictional level—a blurry boundary line separates every content area or issue. For example, where does a commuter shed really end?

Grow: Most local decision making is short term and reactive, which is to say it doesn't take into account the notion of a "long now"; regionalists typically accept a more distant time horizon.

Schneider: The Principles should include some reference to outcomes and accountability.

Miller: And government, power and the mobilization of people; all issues we gravitate towards implicate politics and power.

Fosler: Remember that the Venn diagram represents the overlap of four dynamic conversations—we don't assume the model to be static.

Mustian: In Orlando, our process [through MyRegion.org] has focused on three spheres: economic development, education and environment; the intersection of the three represents "branding" [i.e., Orlando as the center of the region and readily recognizable identifier] and fragmentation [i.e., reaction by other regional communities against the notion that their identities are engulfed or overwhelmed by Orlando].

Lemoine: I'm not sure I know what you mean by governance—do you mean government?

Doucette: Stewardship cannot take place outside the context of government.

Fosler: Government generally refers to formal institutions, where governance denotes a process of people getting together, building consensus and initiating action.

Hollingworth: I represent a region of multiple sub-regions, with a port – hence, “Gateway Cities” region – and a history of shipping and manufacturing. Regionalism, for us, is whatever we want it to be, a function of the issue at hand. What’s appealing about this document [the “Principles of Regional Stewardship”] is that it talks about human beings. Government documents talk too much about economic development and not enough about people.

Grow: We [the stewardship movement] are not about power; we’re about solving problems—mobilizing power to solve problems.

Lemoine: We want to influence locally powerful decision makers.

Schneider: We must deliver the message without overwhelming the elected officials who sit at logical points of leverage on a given issue.

Vradenburg: Some part of stewardship is about stimulating business-nonprofit collaborations that serve different constituencies directly, and may, in fact, bypass government at times. This requires decision makers in those organizations to think differently about the investments they make.

Fisher: In Canada, in teaching civics, we term use the term “moral suasion” to describe the process I think you’re talking about. Could “governance” be too strong a word?

Miller: Maybe what we’re talking about is the application of soft power, exercised informally and outside any specific institutional context.

Peters: The model of governance we’re discussing here is accomplished through ad hoc agreements and informal arrangements—this model assumes the ability of regions to develop a functional “adhocracy.”

Schneider: Is the form of government, perhaps, better captured by the term “alliance,” as in international cooperative action.

Lemoine: Nomenclature can be very powerful. For example, “urban planning” in “suburban communities” often is dismissed merely because suburbs are doing it!

Grow: The best way to promote understanding of the model is to introduce it in terms issues that are obviously and clearly regional – and water supply and transportation – in order to dramatize its power.

Miller: The case for regionalism and regional solutions is in the serious, festering issues that we don't address and are shockingly apathetic about [e.g., education, affordable housing, etc.].

Covert: Governance, as I understand it, is collective, inclusive decision making at a neutral table. People, upon leaving the table, put their institutional hats back on and vet, sell and advocate those decisions in their respective formal arenas. Elected officials want "peace in the valley," and perhaps the governance model is a means of achieving it.

Cotter: Since we're discussing nomenclature, I wonder whether there aren't alternatives to "livable," as in the "livable community" sphere. "Livable" suggest the barest adequacy—a guaranteed minimal standard. Shouldn't we be aiming higher?

Vradenburg: How about "improving lives"?

Fosler: The challenge remains to locate vocabulary that expresses what we want to say without threatening or turning off important potential stewards and constituents.

Vradenburg: What is the audience for this document?

Parr: Leaders and practitioners in communities who are seeking to make the case for regional problem solving.