What Makes a Good Regional Plan?
What Worked, What Didn’t and What to Do Differently

Professor Andrew Beer
Director
Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning
University of Adelaide
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Agenda

• Taking a Long View
• Strategic Planning in Regions: Reminding Ourselves of the Fundamentals
• What is Needed for A Good Regional Plan?
• How Does a Great Regional Plan Differ from a Good Regional Plan?
• Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?
• Conclusion
Taking a Long View

• Local and regional economic development as we currently know it originated nationally in the early 1990s

• Greater locality focus placed a greater emphasis on regions both showing leadership and planning strategically
  – McKinsey & Co (1994) discussed this explicitly
  – See also World Bank Local Economic Development Primer (2003)
A central issue is how best to deploy resources to maximise the attainment of specified goals

(McLean and Voytek 1992 p. 2)
Strategic Planning In Regions:
Reminding Ourselves of the Fundamentals

Strategic planning.... is a way for the community to envision its future and take steps to achieve that future. In addition to identifying strengths and weaknesses in the local economy, strategic planning involves reaching consensus on goals, identifying resources, developing strategies to achieve goals and agreeing on plans for implementation.

(McLean and Voytek 1992 p. 2)
Strategic Planning In Regions:
Reminding Ourselves of the Fundamentals

• Standards steps/components in developing a strategic plan
  – Audit the economy
  – Formulate a mission statement
  – Audit local resources
  – Develop strategies
  – Consult and revise
  – Implement an Action Plan
  – Evaluate the results
    • Monitoring, updating and adjustment
What is Needed for a Good Regional Plan?

• A clear statement of intention
  – a vision for the region
  – an understanding of the current environment, risks and opportunities

• Stakeholder buy in
  – Community engagement with, and acceptance of, the plan

• A clear process for implementation
  – An Implementation Plan
  – Resource allocation
  – Saying no to some things

• A clear process for monitoring of goals
• A process for review and renewal
How Does a Great Regional Plan Differ from a Good Regional Plan?

• A great regional plan is:
  – Edgy, provocative and says something about the region
    • It should be disputed by some
  – A statement of a region’s unique identity
  – Intellectually coherent
    • Informed by, but not limited to, strong background investigations
  – Informed by current and past research on regional growth processes
  – Focussed
  – Regularly consulted by those within the organisation
  – Looks outside the square and acknowledges that the future may look very different
    • Not be captured by established industries alone
  – About opening up opportunities not closing down possibilities
Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?

• **First.** They make a statement about what the organisations is, and what it stands for.
  – It’s a crowded market still.
    There are too many government ‘development’ organisations with too little co-ordination and co-operation. We were struck by the number of organisations operating at a regional level with the objective of supporting economic and business development.
  – Noted the need for mechanisms for greater strategic co-ordination.
  – RDA structures represent – in part – the realisation of this agenda for change
    • But the challenge of strategic co-ordination and planning remains
    • Other regional/development entities remain.
Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?

- **Second. They guide the actions of those within the organisation.** Beer et al 2003 – most effective actions of regional development practitioners

  - **Australia** – business development and advice; infrastructure development and service provision; networking/partnerships; sector planning/development; tourism promotion/special events
  
  - **England** – business development and advice; infrastructure planning and development; training skills/labour market programs; land preparation and site development (a least effective action in Australia); networking and partnerships; inward investment and promoting the region
  
  - **US** - Business support/advice; land preparation site development; provision of grants or loans for business; networking or partnerships; inward investment/promoting the region
  
  - **Northern Ireland** – Business support/advice; training skills labour market programs; working with the community; networking/partnerships; managed workspaces/business incubators
And Why Were US Organisations the Most Effective?
Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?

• Reason Three. They are the shopfront to your region for government agencies and businesses seeking to invest.

• Governments seeking to invest in a region look for assurance that these are true regional priorities.
  – Some regions do this very, very well.

• They can form the basis for co-investment
  – Can form the foundations for an enduring story of success

• Large (and small) corporations/businesses need guidance on where a region’s priorities lie.
  – Eg Social Licence to Operate
Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?

• Reason Four. They are a statement to your communities that you value them and are working for them.

• Regional agencies need to build legitimacy and create trust.
  – Strategic plans are a first statement of intent to which you can be held accountable.
  – They signal to stakeholders within the region where your priorities lie
    • And therefore make the process of co-ordination easier
Why are Robust Regional Plans Important?

• Reason Five. They help guide growth and build excellence in the selected parts of the economy.

• Good regional plans should create capacity
  – Socially, economically, culturally and with respect to infrastructure
  – Each should become a foundation for further development

• Can be a tool for either the diversification or specialisation of the economy
  – depending upon needs and opportunities
Conclusion

- Being involved in regional development is a privilege
  - An opportunity to shape the future of your region
    - Applies equally to Board members and professional staff
  - Regional strategic plans are the tool for setting a course and keeping on course
    - They ensure that the important issues are addressed
    - They help prioritise task and keep track of shifting priorities
      - They are a tool for the legacy of individuals and the organisation
Conclusion

• Ultimately people make a good strategic plan
  – By their thoughts and actions in formulation
  – By the measures and actions they take to implement the plan document
  – Those who generate good strategic plans tend to run good organisations