

The Community Meeting

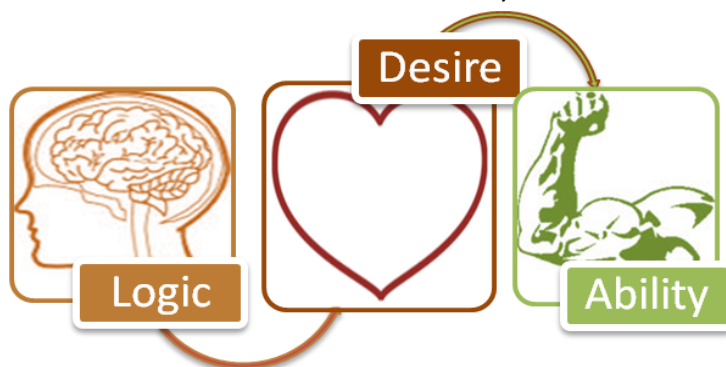
Listening to What the Community *Wants* to Do

A small group of well informed community leaders get together and logically determine the most viable strategies for community and economic development. The same group then meets and considers its limitations relative to implementing the strategies given existing and potential resources (people, technical know-how, funding, etc.) available. A final set of strategies are then selected based on what the community *should* do and what the community *can* do.

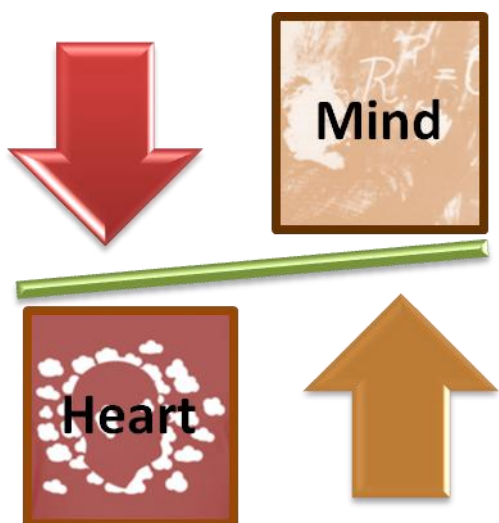
What is missing?

What the community *wants* to do.

An economic development strategic plan is only effective if it has the support of the people affected. After all, who is the plan for anyway?



Economic development strategic planning is therefore about logic, desire, and ability. Any planning process that fully captures these elements creates a plan that can be implemented and sustained by the community.



The challenge to the planning process is to organize and balance the community input session in a way that:

- Informs the community “mind” of its strategic position— i.e. the results of the Strategy Selector session
- Allows the “heart” of the community to be expressed— dreams, vision, ideas, projects, initiatives

This is why the Community Meeting is held after the Strategy Selector Tool is addressed. By first sharing the results of the Strategy Selector, attendees in the meeting:

- Become grounded in the realities of the community
- Gain a basis for providing input
- Become inspired about viable possibilities
- Have time to consider ideas and options

The Community Meeting should be one of the most energizing parts of the strategic planning process. People should be inspired by their possibilities, bolstered by their past achievements, and invigorated to participate in the implementation phase of the work.

Participants should be assured that their ideas are being captured, and that they will have an opportunity to comment on a draft of the economic development strategic plan at a later date.

With this **Mind/Heart** balance, opportunities can be identified and seized. Problems and threats to the community can be avoided. The future of the community can and will be defined.

