

## Navigating the Future: Our Journey through Strategic Foresight

By Alexa Naudziunas, Envision Executive Director, Jeff House, Envision Board Member, ChatGPT

As Greater Green Bay continues to drive toward a preferred future, our ability to shape an effective response to change proves both necessary and challenging. Strategic foresight, a methodical exploration of potential future scenarios, has emerged as a valuable tool for individuals, organizations, and governments navigating the complexities of our quickly changing world. Seeking to help create a resilient and adaptable Greater Green Bay, we turned to the University of Houston's Foresight Certification Program. The intensive five-week program, designed to empower individuals with the skills needed to engage in strategic foresight, becomes a sort of compass for smart decision-making.

The program boasts a team of experienced and industry-relevant faculty members led by Professor Andy Hines. In all there were five University of Houston experts who have been engaged in strategic foresight for several years. They have practical, real-world experience that helped guide participants through the applications of strategic foresight. This blend of academic rigor and practical insights made the program feel realistic. And the case studies they provided gave rich context to the lessons.

One of the program's strengths lies in its comprehensive curriculum. We dove into areas one would expect in strategic foresight such as scenario planning, trend analysis, and strategic foresight methodologies. But the program taught even more, like systems thinking, for example. Learning to think in terms of systems, we came to understand how one component of a system influences another – or how one *system* might influence another *system*. For example, one might think of the heart, lungs, and brain as individual systems. However, they function as part of a larger system called the body. This “body” might be part of a larger system called a family, and so on. At the end of the day, we learned, all systems are connected, but *how* they are connected is the key. Systems thinking helps the practitioner determine the domain, build scenarios, and capitalize on the intervention points (where a targeted action can effectively interrupt the functioning of the system and open opportunities for change). This was valuable learning for us to bring back to the Green Bay community.

Our class was divided into six groups, and we were charged, collectively, with building strategic foresight in automation, circular economy, extended reality, mobility, public health and safety, and space exploration. It was a challenge! We were not in the same group. One of us worked on foresight about automation and the other on foresight about space exploration. The University of Houston leadership team led us through the process of building a future in our respective categories. This included homework each week, meant to be done collaboratively with our teammates.

The opportunity to really explore systems thinking was, of course, an eye-opener because, at the end of the day, everything is related. But this course also clarified the “STEEP” approach for us, particularly the “T” for “technology.” Following signals about technology can be really challenging because technology is so vast, it touches everything. But we learned that we should consider only the technology related to the issue we're tracking. That really helped us focus our scanning. We also came to the realization that this school of thought has reached a global scale. In fact, one of our classes was taught by instructors who were temporarily in Paris for a foresight conference.

Any graduate of Envision's Strategic Foresight workshop might want to consider joining this foresight certification program. It helps decision-makers align strategies with emerging trends, stay ahead of the

competition, and spot and manage risks early. Plus, it encourages long-term thinking for sustainable development.

We think the University of Houston's Foresight Certification Program is an invaluable resource for Greater Green Bay residents who aspire to play an active role in shaping the future of our community. With a robust curriculum, industry-specific insights, practical learning experiences, networking opportunities, and flexible delivery methods, this program uniquely equips participants with the skills necessary to confidently navigate the uncertainties of tomorrow right here in our backyard. [Learn more about the University of Houston program here.](#)