

## What Will *Drive* our Community's Future?

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You read an article in the November edition of *Horizons* about how your Envision Board has been using Strategic Foresight to help us all shape the future of the Greater Green Bay area. In that article I detailed for you how we created a domain map for Green Bay as a “community of choice.” On that map we identified the key characteristics Green Bay possesses as a community of choice. Based on those characteristics or elements, we formed signals teams to look for signals and trends related to the future in each area. These teams identified hundreds of signals in their areas related to:

- Upward Mobility
- Arts, Culture and Entertainment
- Livable Neighborhoods
- Health and Well-Being
- Leading Edge Economy

While scanning for signals, the teams analyzed each signal's time horizon of potential impact – paying particular attention to the Horizon3 signals which could impact our world **from 2028 to 2035**. The teams then grouped their signals into clusters and identified the *drivers* of change that arose from the clusters. You'll remember a driver is -

A thematic cluster of related trends/signals that is a significant force or factor that influences change in a system or domain, often having broad and deep impact on shaping the future.

With their drivers identified, the signals teams began considering the potential impact of each one – individually and in combination – on the future of Greater Green Bay.

Before we go further, let's consider what a futurist *is* and *is not*. **A Futurist** is a professional trained to study the future by using foresight techniques to help anticipate potential outcomes and *make informed decisions*. As we employ the Strategic Foresight process for the Greater Green Bay area, we are **NOT** predicting the future and what will happen. Conversely, as the Envision Board presents the results of our efforts, what we *are* doing is:

- Creating awareness of Strategic Foresight as a discipline
- Teaching about signals and trends
- Teaching about drivers of potential change
- Presenting scenarios of *plausible* future outcomes based on drivers identified

Now, let's step back and look at the work our signals teams are doing as they review the potential impact of these drivers of change. The strategic foresight process involves writing four scenarios of what could potentially happen based on these drivers. The four scenarios are:

- Continuation of the current status
- Decline/Collapse of the system
- New equilibrium for the system

- Transformation of the system

It is important to understand that drivers could have a positive or negative impact on the future of Greater Green Bay. The nature of the impact will depend on a variety of factors, including: the relative strength of each factor; counter balancing factors/drivers; and the decisions and choices – and execution of those choices – local organizations make on how to plan for and impact or influence those drivers. Each of the five signals teams drafted these four scenarios for their area: Greater Green Bay as we know it continues, declines and collapses, evolves into a new equilibrium, or dramatically transforms.

After completing their four scenarios, all the signals team leaders worked with [Garry Golden](#), a futurist that Envision has worked with since 2017. Garry teaches our [introduction to Strategic Foresight course](#) each spring and fall. (Many of you have already met and worked with Garry.) Together we worked to consolidate these scenarios into one set of four *plausible* futures for Greater Green Bay. Envision is planning to present these four scenarios at [World Futures Day 2025](#).

In contemplating our future, one might remember Scrooge from Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*: *"Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be only? ... Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"* It is our hope as the Envision Board that these four **plausible** scenarios will inspire you, your business and your team to take action to ensure Greater Green Bay is a community of choice when the year 2035 is upon us. Your actions and the actions of your peers will affect how the drivers will impact our area in the future and what Green Bay will look like. Just as Scrooge was given an opportunity to change the future, we too are given an inspiring opportunity to create the Green Bay of the future by our actions today – so please join us in making our shared vision a reality!

In addition to presenting the four plausible scenarios of the potential future of Green Bay, the Envision Board will share the *drivers of change* we have identified which formed the basis for these scenarios. The signals teams identified six “universal” drivers of change which we believe will impact all the characteristics or elements that support a community of choice. In addition, each signals team identified drivers specific to their area. We believe this information will be meaningful for you and your team in looking at the future of your organization and all Green Bay in the years ahead.

And, it is no surprise that Strategic Foresight is a continual process. After presenting at World Futures Day, Envision and our teams will continue searching for signals and following the Strategic Foresight process for the next year. We encourage your organization to get involved with Envision, begin using Strategic Foresight in your organization, and help us all make informed decisions to *shape* the future of the Greater Green Bay area.