



# COMMUNITY OF DREAMS

Guide for Preparing A Transformational City Reaching Plan

Making A Difference In The  
Things That Matter Most.

Please find on the following pages a draft copy of the **first section** of the 2004 Partner City Planning Guide.

I welcome your feedback and any suggestions you may have.

*Blessings!*

*C. Michael Johnson*



## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

As Partners, we come from different backgrounds and have diverse gifts and resources. But I don't think I assume too much to say that we all begin this year with an intense desire to reach and transform our cities for Jesus Christ.

Most likely we have all been through the process, to one degree or another, of forming a vision and applying strategic planning to the goal of seeing it materialize. For many of us we simply need a practical, holistic, and most importantly, integrated approach to those plans.

For some of us, there is the nagging feeling that traditional strategic planning alone is not going to help us get a real handle on our task. We're looking for completely new paradigms for planning and organizing in a world and ministry environment that is looking more chaotic every year.

With that in mind, here are some objectives I set for this guide:

1. Create a enjoyable, engaging, and thought-provoking experience that gets to the **heart** of an effective city-reaching strategy.
2. Create a planning tool that, although it may inspire long term vision, will also help you **ramp up quickly**, and definite or refine your short term plans.
3. Knowing that many of my readers are well-read on most of the underlying concepts, I will not belabor them. I will however, provide **marginal notes** in sidebars for further study.

**Sub-strategies** will be linked to other pages or documents (keeping this document lean and easy to use). If you want immediate clarification, please feel free to email or call me to discuss any part.

4. I want this tool to be somewhat **serendipitous**, providing a more thought-provoking and interactive experience, rather than the typically dry, step-by-step, prescriptive strategic planning process. For that reason I will insert generous amount of “what-if” questions and propositions.
5. Finally, this document is meant to be **developmental**. Please freely make suggestions on how we can make it more useful, in various applications, for you and others.

Feel free to share this planning tool with your ministry friends and colleagues , but only in its entirety.

On the following pages is a brief explanation of some of the concepts and terms that form a foundation for the development of Community of Dreams strategies.

## BEGIN WITH THE END.

It's important to get your overall objective clearly fixed in your mind. So let's look at some foundational assumptions of a city reaching plan.

1. God has called you to your **city** (of which your church has a role).
2. What we traditionally call our church is in reality a congregational unit of the city church or the Body of Christ in your area.
3. The glory of God is your city **transformed**.
4. God has distinct **vision** for your city, to live out its own identity, character, and purpose, as a testimony to God's greatness.
5. Success is measured in community **impact**, not church growth.
6. It's a **long term** vision commitment.
7. Creating future opportunities requires thoughtful advance **positioning**.
8. Strategies can be implemented early on that position for **both** long term impact and short term fruitfulness.

## PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION: LIVING YOUR VISION.

I feel that I need to stop and say something at this point because the reality for many of us is that we live with an ongoing conflict between our stated vision and our daily routine. You may have a vision for community transformation, but if your daily focus is church growth there will be problems down the road. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for growing healthy churches. But if that is the preoccupation of our immediate plans and actions, you have a serious conflict.

Unless complete individual and community transformation becomes both stated vision and motivation of daily action, the internal conflict will seriously impede your success.

*Keep your kingdom focus...*

1. **Give It Up.** Ultimately, building the enterprise we call church is the stated responsibility of Jesus Christ. Our job is to pray, go, serve, show mercy, heal, encourage, empower, equip, and lead...and leave the results to God.

2. **Be Relevant.** Without a daily focus on community transformation, we undermine our efforts inside the institutional church. While we may attend the church meeting house a few hours each week, we (the church) all live

Move the measuring stick for your success from church growth to community impact.

24/7 in our community. If you want our attention, lead us into making a difference there. A church-centric pastor will eventually become irrelevant to his audience.

**3. Receive Blessing.** It is hard to imagine receiving God's complete blessing and the active cooperation of the Holy Spirit without an active vision for serving and transforming your community.

Therefore, if you have not already done so, move the measuring stick for your success from church growth to community impact. Write out your vision (mental picture of a preferred future) with as much color, detail, and emotion as you can at this point (more on this later) and read it, add to it, plan by it, and act on it each day.

## THE PATH TO TRANSFORMATION GOES THROUGH DREAMS

Transformation, both personally and corporately cannot be imposed from the outside. This really needs to sink in. Whether your focus is an individual, a community, or a culture, transformation begins from the inside and works its way out. The closer you get to the core, the more transformational the change.

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Modern marketing is built on addressing felt needs, but needs come in levels. The need one feels to hear the sport scores, or having their orange juice freshly squeezed, is not on the same level as the need for health or companionship. Not only are needs on different levels of importance (passion), but they also found with varying degrees of commonality. Although specific tactics may target less common

needs, a comprehensive transformational city-reaching plan must be founded on those universal, relentless, core needs, the ones most deeply and passionately felt. These are the motivating needs that can be relied on to bring genuine, pervasive, and lasting change.

## DREAMS: THE HEART OF THE MATTER.

We give our heart to Jesus, but then we fail to live out of it. We should heed the advice of the old warrior in *Braveheart*, who told young Wallace, "Your heart is now free, have the courage to follow it." As John Eldredge says "We don't have desire, we *are* desire." Whether its a burning flame or smoldering ember, the search for meaning, purpose, significance, and direction is an ever-present, driving force. They are also the deepest, strongest needs we

have in common with pre-Christians, to know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going--and to know how to live out of our heart--that place where our dreams can become one with the dreams of God. We refer to it as ambition, drive, passion, creative spark, inspiration, longing, genius, gifting, high calling, aspiration--all shades of the same need cluster. For our purpose of our discussion I will generalize all of these needs in the word Dream. This 'Dream cluster' of needs is the object and focus of the entire 5 -Year Community of Dreams Strategy.

We may be tempted to see this need-cluster as a side issue. But if we desire ministry that is personal and personally relevant, we have to stay focussed on the heart. As one author once said, "If I had to put into one word the real essence of the spirit of man it would be the word, 'Me'." My spirit is the real me...who I really am, whether I feel connected to that person or not. This is where the Spirit of God speaks and where I hear His voice. While God is the only one who is completely "personal," if we want to be relevant and effective we must become as "personal" as possible.

Scripture teaches us that heart is the "wellspring" of life, out of it flow all the issues of life. Obligation, expectation, guilt, logic and reason, peer influence, security, even a sense of loyalty may produce temporary behavior modification, but only the deepest aspirations of the heart provide sufficient motivation for complete transformation. It is important to be sensitive to surface needs and presenting emotions and be willing to minister to them. But working with and through dreams, bringing them to 'true-north' alignment to the dreams of God, is the primary long-term path of effective, empowering discipleship. Everything else is a sideshow of dead works. This is why we say, the **path to transformation goes through people's dreams.**

Another way to say this is that we need to restore the 'prophetic edge' to leadership, to once again become 'interpreters of dreams.' People come already pre-packaged with dreams. They just need people to come along side them, to be willing to journey with them, to really listen, encourage, provoke, challenge, explore, discover, and help them interpret the true meaning of their dreams, bringing them in alignment with the heart and ways of God.

Only the deepest aspirations of the heart provide sufficient motivation for complete transformation.

I believe the scope and implications of this are enormous. It's the first one of those slight shifts of perspective (we'll look at others) that may literally change everything.

## SYMMETRY: THE BEAUTY OF A HOLISTIC COMMUNITY VISION.

Everything that exists in creation has a systemic order or symmetry in its original design. That includes people (our body-soul-spirit triunity is just one aspect of our created order). A community has an order which can be viewed as a social system, having its own unique physical, geographical, political, cultural, and spiritual purpose. God purposed a certain destiny for your city that brings into one harmonious whole the diverse cultures with honor, justice, mercy, beauty, and celebration—the whole and abundant life Jesus promised.

Only a holistic, systemic, city-reaching strategy will have the enduring impact we seek.

There's an old saying that says, "If you divide a cow, you don't get two cows." And anytime we isolate into fragmented parts something God designed, we cannot truly understand the whole system and consequently the whole solution to its restoration. This is the fallacy of the 20th-century's scientific approach to dissect, analyze, and treat in isolation every human problem. Issues of personality, integrity, holiness, unity, justice, reconciliation, family, and community can never be solved in isolation of their whole systemic order and the original intent of their Designer.

The church has a long history of carrying the banner for moral integration (sometimes it carried it well, sometimes not). But the reign of God's kingdom will be extended into every sphere of life (see Primary Spheres of Transformation), until the "restoration of all things" and His glory "covers the earth." We are the change agents of this transformation. The Church can no longer excuse its lack of vision by claiming an exclusively "spiritual" focus. The truth is, as each crisis of recent history shows, every sphere of our common life needs a regeneration of spirit and a restoration to the design and purposes their Creator—a realignment to the dreams of God's heart.

I believe there is a revival coming, characterized by a realignment of the foundational importance of wholeness in every sphere of life, mission, and ministry.

Remember the reason we started this exercise--we've come to the realization that ministry and outreach no longer works the way it should. We see temporary gains in one area, only to lose in three others. Every year we see diminishing return, and although we may have isolated successes, on the whole we're losing ground. Maybe it's because no one ever told us to have a vision for the whole.

Only a holistic, systemic, city-reaching strategy will have the enduring impact we seek.

## A PLAN FOR YOUR PLAN.

With an eye toward creating your city-reaching plan, let me first give you an overview of what a holistic plan could include. Then, so you are not left feeling overwhelmed, I'll give you some handles to grab onto, as you begin fleshing out your own plan.

Here's a quick outline of components of a good city-reaching plan. This is not exhaustive by any means, and though it may be only one way to approach the task, I think it will provide a good framework for us to begin planning.

Twenty-two years of community outreach with over 2,000 client churches and hours of research form the base of this plan. But the real value will come through the experience of all of us working together, sharing insights from our own on-site experience. Through our partnership in the months and years to come we'll refine it considerably. It can only get better.

It's exciting to think about what God may have in mind!

# OVERVIEW OF A HOLISTIC, CITY-REACHING PLAN

**1 Core Strategy: The Power of One.** If you could create a personal one-on-one strategy that hardly ever failed to arrest attention, engage intimate dialog, led to genuine transformation, awakened continual, internal self-motivation, led people to see their whole life in a new way, and in turn guided them to reach their goals through this kind of transformation and empowerment in others, thereby reproducing and replicating a movement throughout their own spheres of influence, it would form a very powerful foundational core strategy for community transformation. And, it would form the core strategy of every other strategy component in your city-reaching plan. If, you can do it well with one, you can do it well with thousands.

## *Sub sections:*

- ◆ You Want Partners, Not Members.
- ◆ DNA of the Dream Path
- ◆ The Language of Dreams
- ◆ A Dialog of Dreams (example at the end of this document)
- ◆ Dream Tools to Build Relationships

**2 Something To Talk About: Creating A Viral City-Reaching Strategy.** Word-of-mouth has always been the best form of promotion. In a Internet-connected world it can be even more powerful. But the question is how do you get people to talk? In this strategy component we will create a plan to make your message "go viral." We will address both the "something" (in the something to talk about) AND the tools that can multiply the self-generating "talk."

## **3 Neighborhood Strategy: Redeeming Community of Place.**

Neighborhood is the place we all live. But more than any area, a workable, effective home & neighborhood strategy has been the missing component to our outreach. We've gone inot all the world, but turning our neighborhood into our 'Jerusalem' remains the last frontier of the commission we were given.

We need a neighborhood strategy that is thoroughly 'with-reach' in approach, that works naturally with the way our members want to relate to their own neighbors, fosters the kind of community and friendships God wired us to

desire and seek, and is integrated seamlessly and synergistically with other key city-reaching components. This is not a flash-in-the-pan, event strategy. It is visionary and has far-reaching implications. I strongly believe that if we build right the potential is staggering.

4 **A City-Reaching Media Plan.** To support your core strategies, you will need to develop a comprehensive, fully-integrated media and communication plan that is relevant to the real-world needs of people, reaches their heart in a powerful and sensitive way, and works seamlessly with a relationship-oriented, grassroots, community strategy.

*Sub sections:*

- ◆ Identity and Image Positioning
- ◆ How media supports your core strategy
- ◆ How media supports your viral strategy
- ◆ How media supports your neighborhood strategy
- ◆ Leveraging funds through publicity and other guerrilla-marketing strategies
- ◆ How to use the Internet to support your integrated plan
- ◆ Listening well: Planning based on the heart of God and the heart of those you want to reach.
- ◆ Research well: Planning based on real-world community intelligence.

6 **Building Community Through Dream Teams and Incubators.** As a new relationship begins, you need creative environments to foster dynamic growth and build contexts for personal and community transformation. I like to think of these as Dream Teams and Dream Incubators. They can take a hundred different creative forms, but all have a common goal, to move an awakening heart (a dream of God) along the path of their journey, outward to the community, to the place and people who await what their God-birthed dream was meant to provide. Small groups and teams are meant to be (as John Eldredge calls them) little 'fellowships of the heart' that dynamically move outward to flesh out (incarnate)

in the context of the community, the dreams God placed in us. And as we bring about transformation in the world, we too are changed... both the dreamer and the dream.

**7 Reaching Pivotal Community Spheres and Cultures.** A city-reaching plan is not complete if it leaves out a plan to reach any people group and the vital contributions they were meant to provide. This starts with humility and a willingness to honor those contributions. It also begins with a recognition that we can't do it alone. Our solutions are incomplete without the other members of the Body of Christ in our city that we will need to come along side of us. There may be certain cultures or communities we are called to reach, but it is much more powerful if done in sync with a city plan. You might not get every one to work together (that may not even be God's plan), but even working cooperatively with a handful of complimentary churches has great potential to create a city movement.

*Sub sections:*

- ◆ Practical, Cooperative City-church Strategies
- ◆ Honor, Healing, and Reconciliation
- ◆ Living God's Heart of Mercy in Community
- ◆ Community Vision Development
- ◆ Leveraging Funds through Community Partnerships
- ◆ Legacy Partnerships

**Feedback Loops**

**Working Your Plan**

**Building On Your Plan**

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## A Dialog of Dreams.

Dialog areas that can be used in Dream Conversations. Each question represents a whole line of questioning and is meant to suggest purpose-oriented dialog that can be used in various With Reach contexts.

- 1 What is the story within your story?
- 2 In your life, what did you enjoy to the point of getting lost in it?
- 3 What gifts and abilities do you most naturally use and use well?
- 4 What do the people who love you most, love the most?
- 5 What things naturally draw your attention and compel your interest?
- 6 What is your vision of a preferred future and what part attracts you the most?
- 7 Toward that end what role would you most enjoy playing?
- 8 Paint a picture of your ideal creative, ministry, or work environment.
- 9 What kind of relationships would most support you?
- 10 How would your gifts best support them?
- 11 What frequent rewards and feedback keep you motivated?
- 12 At this time in your life what do you desire the most?
- 13 Considering all that we've talked about, what is the most compelling dream to which you feel drawn?
- 14 For what present need in the world does your dream provide a possible solution?
- 15 Would you consider your dream as a calling?
- 16 Does your dream rise up out of the deepest part of your heart?

- 17 Is it representative in some way with who you really are?
- 18 If you began to live more out of this core heart identity could it positively affect and eventually integrate the other areas of your life?
- 19 What are you actively doing to pursue your dream?
- 20 What can you do?
- 21 Are the obstacles to your dream real or insurmountable?
- 22 What creative ways could you imagine to get around them?
- 23 Would you enjoy creating a visionary, yet workable plan for your dream?
- 24 Would you enjoy meeting regularly in a stimulating environment with others who are pursuing their dream?
- 25 Once dream building becomes natural to you, would you enjoy mentoring others or helping create “dream incubators?”
- 26 What environments or institutions in our community would work better if they functioned more as incubators of people’s dreams?
- 27 Considering the value of the diverse gifts, assets, and functions that each part of our community provides, what would happen if they began to work synergistically to nurture dreams?
- 28 How could that help the people you care about, your children, your grandchildren, or generations to come?
- 29 What would our city look like if it really became a “Community of Dreams?”
- 30 Would it be possible to create a model that would inspire other dream builders?
- 31 Does that inspire a dream in you?
- 32 Is it a legacy worth leaving?

## How to make our Partnership work better.

In church-dom, too often we look for the next "program-in-a-box." The reason we feel that Breakthrough's media products and strategies have been so successful, is that over the last 20 years we've shied away from creating in a vacuum. We prefer to create within a tri-part development team (Breakthrough, our client churches, and the unchurched as both participant and audience).

The Partner strategy is a plan to **create together**. We'll guide the process, provide stimulating information and innovative emerging strategies, and through your interaction with those ideas and concepts, we'll form an integrated, field-tested, city-reaching plan. The more you engage with us in the process, the more you will get out of it...and the better the plans and models for city-reaching will become.

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