Future Backwards

Understanding our past and imagining new futures

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For  SPUR Transit + Design
By   Gordon Ross, Vice President and Partner
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Introduction

Meet the team

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Activity: Future Backwards

Future Backwards
Activity: Future Backwards

Origins

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About this method

An alternative strategic planning workshop method that helps widen the range of perspectives a group of people can take on understanding their past and the possibilities of their future. Useful at the start of strategic planning, service design, and policy projects to help surface different perspectives.
Activity: Future Backwards

Why use this method?

- Illuminates hopes and fears within an organization
- Understand which entrained patterns of past perceptions are influencing an organization’s future and break out of those patterns
- Brings diverse perspectives to a problem space and highlights similarities and differences of the past(s) and future(s)
Activity: Future Backwards
What is the future state of transportation infrastructure in San Francisco?
Background and context
**Background and context**

**Prior generation: 1995 Four Corridors Plan**

Shaped 25 years of major transit investments

All four corridors built or under construction now

When done well, such plans can be transformative
Background and context

ConnectSF goals

Equity  Environmental Sustainability  Economic Vitality  Safety & Livability  Accountability and Engagement
Background and context

Key findings recap

Fast paced growth has occurred since 1980, and will likely continue.

Our transportation policies are working, but we need to do more to meet our aggressive goals.

New policies and investments—both incremental and transformational—are needed.
ConnectSF: overall process

Background and context

“What do we need to get to our vision for the future?”

“What are our priorities and implementation strategy?”

PHASE 1

PHASE 2

PHASE 3

STATEMENT OF NEEDS

TRANSIT CORRIDORS STUDY

STREETS & FREEWAYS STUDY
Background and context

Opportunities for engagement

Explore interactive maps available at: www.connectSF.org/about/transportation-needs

In-person outreach in summer/fall 2019

Request a presentation (email connectsf@sfgov.org)
What is the future state of transportation infrastructure in San Francisco?
Describe the Current State of affairs.
Activity: Future Backwards

How it works

Describe the one most significant past event which shaped the Current State.
Activity: Future Backwards

How it works

Now describe the past event that came before that event...
Activity: Future Backwards

How it works

Keep going backwards with past events (one at a time) as far back into the past as is appropriate.
Activity: Future Backwards

How it works

Describe the conditions and experiences of an Impossibly Good Future (best-case future state).
Describe the conditions and experiences of an Impossibly Bad Future (worst-case future state).
Define past events that lead to the Impossibly Good Future and Impossibly Bad Future.
Activity: Future Backwards

Sharing the output

There are different approaches.

- Have a **spokesperson** explain their output as others **rotate** around to see what other groups have put together.
- Groups **take turns presenting** output while others listen.
Activity: Future Backwards

Sharing the output

Various perspectives between groups become apparent.

Acknowledging differences in perspective aids in the process of organizational conflict identification and resolution.
Activity: Future Backwards

Reflection

Did any surprising ideas or issues arise in your group?

Where do you see yourself and your current work on this map?

How might you use this workshop technique and insights from today?
Activity: Future Backwards

If nothing else, remember...

Future Backwards is an alternative planning method that:

- **Illuminates** hopes and fears within the organization.
- **Helps understand** which entrained patterns of past perceptions are influencing an organization’s future and break out of those patterns.
- **Brings diverse perspectives** to a problem space and highlights similarities and differences of the past(s) and future(s).
Thank you

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