

What local goals would you declare?

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by Mike Whitehead

As I anticipate the July fourth holiday and glance at my calendar, thoughts of fresh barbecue, fireworks and cold watermelon come to mind. Although quite enjoyable because of great memories of past picnics with family and friends, there is so much more meaning to this particular holiday.

The Declaration of Independence is one of the most meaningful documents ever written, not only for its rich content but because it created a context for a completely new world. Jefferson, Adams, Franklin and its other signatories were people who agreed that things could be much better, so they decided on a radical action. With a quill and ink and a piece of parchment, they began to write the future we now live in.

An incredible amount of work and sacrifice was necessary to back up the words penned in that document. But the Declaration of Independence laid the groundwork for the actions that created our country. It also demonstrates that the power of words, shared agreement and commitment to a common purpose can create something from nothing.

A bold move

Declaring a vision and commitment is a bold move – and a major component of leadership. Each of us can commit ourselves and our time to making Charlotte a community that works for everybody. What's more, this kind of leadership is available to everybody.

Can we be as bold about our city as our forefathers were about our country? Can we envision a future and fully commit ourselves to bringing that vision into existence? What would it take for you to sign your name to a declaration for the city's future? Here are some of the community goals that we are working towards:

An equitable and high quality education system.

A safe environment for all Charlotte neighborhoods. Environmental integrity with responsible planning, development.

Access to affordable quality health care.

Strong social capital – trust and connectedness among races, cultures and classes.

In service of a community that works for everyone, what would you add to this list?

When the Declaration of Independence declared “a right, [a] duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards,” leaders of this emerging nation weren't looking to operate within the old system, the known, the evidence – they were declaring a right and a duty to create something new. They were declaring a right and a duty to be independent of what they as men, and as a country, had experienced before.

Sometimes leaders do not have the evidence their visions can come true.

For centuries, people refused to sail because “the world was flat.” Visionary leaders challenge us to think beyond what we believed is possible. Strategy and tactics flow much easier from a clear and compelling vision. The “how we do it” is much clearer once the where we are headed” is agreed upon.

Can we count on you?

The Declaration of Independence also declares that some truths are “self-evident, among these, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Pretty hard to disagree with – and that is the point. The authors agreed to align on where they were headed. They agreed to hold the truths as self-evident.

After creating the vision, and declaring their alignment, the founding fathers signed their names – gave their word – to this promise: “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

So this Fourth of July, I will reflect a bit deeper. I will be forever grateful for the sacrifices made by so many before me and as I write this now. I will think intently about what I am willing to pledge my word to and yes, I will still enjoy my barbecue and watermelon.

I invite you to consider what is important to us as a community. What, are we willing to give our word to? If you were to declare an intentional future for this community – what would it be? And what can you be counted on for?

I welcome your responses.

Community columnist Mike Whitehead of Charlotte is principal of Whitehead Associates Inc, a leadership and culture development consulting firm. Contact him at mike@whiteheadassociates.com.