

Red Deer's
**COMMUNITY CULTURE
VISION**

Division

Do you think of yourself as a cultural consumer? A cultural creator?
You might be surprised at how much you contribute.



Red Deer's new cultural future was envisioned by people like you.

We asked, you answered! In 2007, The City of Red Deer commissioned consultants to develop a new Community Culture Vision – the original Community Culture Master Plan was created in 2001, and Red Deer has changed a lot since then. To develop a vision that accurately reflected what was important to the community, the consultants talked to, listened to, and worked with people from across Red Deer; with these people's help, they developed a broad vision of culture in our community and a greater understanding of the role culture plays in all aspects of our lives.

The Community Culture Vision is a reflection of our collective voice, and it comes from people like you – community members from all walks of life. Interestingly, while the new vision contains the voices of a wide variety of people, it turns out we all want the same thing: a vibrant, creative community where we can all thrive. The Community Culture Vision is a guide for the community and for The City of Red Deer – because, whether we're civic leaders, members of a community group, business people or private individuals, we're all part of creating the community we want to live in.

The Community Culture Vision will be the driving force behind cultural development in Red Deer over the next decade, and it will help us support cultural sustainability well into the future. This document is an overview of what the vision looks like, what it means to our community, and how you can contribute to Red Deer's cultural development.

*"I see Red Deer in the future being a vibrant cultural centre that is a destination for Albertans to experience a variety of cultural events year-round. Film festivals, music events, winter festivals, theatre events would all be available and would be a foundation for a vibrant tourism industry unlike any other in Alberta. Red Deer will also be the location for artists to live and work. Eventually becoming a place for artists to flourish and take Red Deer to the world."
– James*



What part can you play?

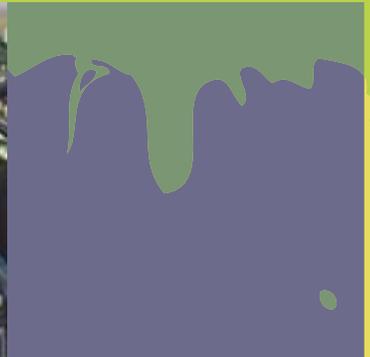
You may be surprised, when you read through this document, to realize how much you already contribute to the cultural vibrancy of Red Deer. You don't have to be an artist or a musician – sometimes all it takes is a sense of community, a wish to connect with others. When you get to the section about spaces and places, a little further along in this document, you'll understand that hosting a community garage sale or block party is a culturally sustainable act. So is enjoying our beautiful parks and trails. The City can't create a culturally vibrant community on its own – it takes all of us, whether we're creating art, creating community, or enjoying the creations of others.



In the Community Culture Vision, we've built on the success of the previous Community Culture Master Plan; we've also put more focus on your experiences, as cultural consumers and cultural creators. Your input and your contributions have been key in developing this document, and they will be essential as we continue to develop the unique, vibrant culture of Red Deer.



*"Culture is a thread woven through everything I do – the clothes I wear, the books I read, where I go, who I spend my leisure time with."
– Janice*



BACKGROUND

"I'm a classical musician by training. When I was studying music at U.P.E.I., I decided to go down to the local church, and they were singing the same music that we were studying in our music history courses. It was life-changing and as a result I have continued to sing in choirs to this day. The connection between the history and the present was amazing. My Dean used to say, 'Medicine prolongs people's lives, but arts give people a reason to live.'"
– Ian

Quality of life continues to show up on surveys as one of the top concerns for Albertans, and new research confirms people rate quality of life largely based on the cultural amenities available in their communities. The same research shows that, in the most desired communities in the world, arts and culture activities and industries are drivers of a creative economy: they result in outstanding quality of life, prosperity, and safety, and they are capable of transforming a community for the better.

There's no longer a question as to whether culture is important to Red Deer's well-being. It is recognized and supported by The City of Red Deer 2009 Strategic Plan, which names culture as one of five pillars that will sustain the city as it grows. The Strategic Plan also emphasizes the value of community-voiced documents like the 2009 Community Culture Vision.

In 2001, the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan was completed and approved by City Council; it served as a guide to cultural development in Red Deer for seven years. During that time, many significant advancements were made, including Red Deer being designated one of Canada's first Cultural Capitals in 2003. Red Deer was named a cultural capital because our application took a community approach to future planning and focused its proposed projects on community input and partnership. The award came with \$500,000 from the federal government, which The City matched for a total of \$1,000,000 for culture development in the community. The momentum created from the cultural capitals award continues to inspire our community – we recognize our potential as a cultural force capable of great things.



Vision

Vision

We knew it was time to update the community's vision for culture – cultural development continues to evolve, and we know it plays an important role in keeping people here and attracting new citizens and visitors. In 2007, The City began work to update and build upon the original Culture Master Plan and assess Red Deer's current cultural situation. Community input was a crucial factor.

Research and community consultation included a cultural summit, focus group sessions, a three-day public open house, community presentations to diverse Red Deer groups, and over 200 one-on-one interviews with the public to talk openly about their best and most memorable cultural experiences.

The quotes you see have been taken from these one-on-one interviews. A wide cross-section of Red Deer citizens participated: cultural providers, teachers and students, business people and artists, civic workers, seniors, and elected officials. We were determined to capture an encompassing snapshot of our community's true thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the state of culture in Red Deer – this helped us to establish where we should go from here.

Our first task was to develop a common definition of culture, based on valuable community input. For the purposes of the Community Culture Vision, "culture is all around us in our everyday lives and can be experienced through the formal and informal interaction of the many forms of creative expressions and exploration of our heritage as a community or as individuals."

"Culture is an evolution of spirit. It is not about singing as much as it is about sharing that wonderful feeling that singing gives me. And I can share that. It is the freedom to express the feeling that even one note gives. Doesn't matter if everyone likes it – I like it, and if I like it, there will be someone else that likes it. Someone else will get something out of it."
– Sharon



A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

DISCOVERY

The new Culture Vision involves you, whether you're enjoying a night out at a local restaurant, using city parks and trails, seeing a play, hearing live music, or taking part in your favourite sport. The Culture Vision is about positive change for groups and individuals who experience culture in a variety of ways.

Through community dialogue and exploration, we identified four main values and five major themes as keystones for the Community Culture Vision. These concepts will be the foundation for future cultural service delivery and facility development in Red Deer over the next 10 years.

As you read through the themes, consider how they link to what you already do, individually or as part of an organization. Do they help you clarify your own priorities? How might they inspire you to take new steps?

"I often believe simply because of where Red Deer is situated – between the two large thriving arts and culture communities of Calgary and Edmonton – that we get passed over, or get the short end of the stick, in terms of cultural opportunities. As we are the third largest city in the province, surely we can do better than that!"

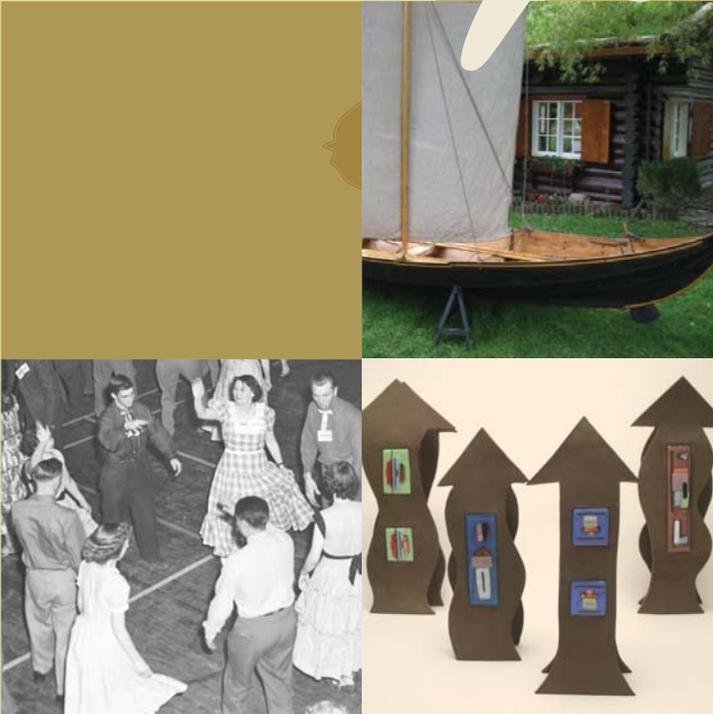
– Caroline



Values Themes

"Culture is a deeper type of experience. It requires some work, concentration, letting go, etc. to be successful. It is a sharing that occurs after much effort to create. Everyone participates in one way or another. It is happening in church basements but also in pubs and formal cultural settings such as theatres and galleries."

– Dennis



RURAL ROOTS
LEADERSHIP

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is personality and a sense of place – that which makes our community distinct. It's the sense that what we build reflects our collective nature as the people who dwell here during this time. **Rural roots leadership** reflects our desire for shared community action. Our community leadership is an extension of our prairie heritage. We still hold the pioneer spirit close to our hearts. The community draws on its longstanding tradition of sharing responsibility for one another to make powerful things happen. We believe the community knows best what it needs and knows how to do it – the wisdom we need is within us. **Diversity** places importance on our differences. We are welcoming and respect difference; we try hard to be inclusive in our activities, organizations and planning. **Connections** is about our place on the earth and the way we belong in the environment. It relates to how our built spaces connect to one another and to the environment itself. We believe that all neighbourhoods and cultural venues should be connected via parkland arteries, which allow for healthy circulation by walking and biking. In a similar way, connections across generations and between diverse communities allow for healthy exchanges among cultures.

DIVERSITY

CONNECTIONS

Values

RURAL ROOTS LEADERSHIP



The four core values, of authenticity, diversity, connections, and rural roots leadership helped uncover five main themes for cultural development in Red Deer.

AUTHENTICITY

"I would define culture as a mutual respect for, and a HUGE appreciation of, each other's unique qualities, experiences, gifts, emotions, skills and heritage. At the same time, I think culture is acknowledging at some base level that we are all the same."

– Linda



"My experience with culture leads me to suggest that culture is how a person connects – to their neighbourhood, community, society, and then comes to know themselves."

– Laura

DIVERSITY

"Look at Revelstoke or Fort Langley. We need to look at some of the smaller cities that are doing it well. We don't need someone coming from a large city to tell us what to do. We could do driving tours of the country and it would be a whole experience – you could visit artist studios and then come downtown at the end of the day for a lovely meal. It's what I want to do when I go to another city. These are the things that I would like to see in Red Deer."

– Donna



CONNECTIONS



DIVERSITY

Diversity resonates in the new vision as both a value and a theme. It speaks loudly to the community's belief that differences amongst our citizens are important and make us richer as a whole. Ideally, Red Deer will flourish as a visibly diverse community celebrating the talents and supporting the quality of life of all its residents.



"Combining music, visual art, crafts, food... people are involved through hands-on experience, watching art being made, talking to the artists, taking art home to continue the experience. A beautiful park setting, sunny skies... the joining of efforts from performers, artists, volunteers, including large stakeholders, creating this wonderful synergy. The joining of diverse skills, talents, ages, occupations resulting in communal joy and connectedness."

– Karen



"We are immersed in our culture; we should live it as we go about our daily activities rather than putting culture in a special category to be enjoyed only when we go to the symphony or visit an art gallery or museum. That's why public art is so important – it's a part of our daily lives."

– Larry



"My first taste of sushi three years ago at Shiso. It was at my best friend's grandpa's birthday – slightly rushed, talking, eating, suddenly... raw fish! Mmm... not too bad. Squishy, bumpy texture... YUM! It opened me up to tasting and trying other foods from other cultures. Like haggis. Haggis opened the door for me to Celtic music and an interest in that culture. The music then introduced me to its art, and so on and so on..."

– Avery

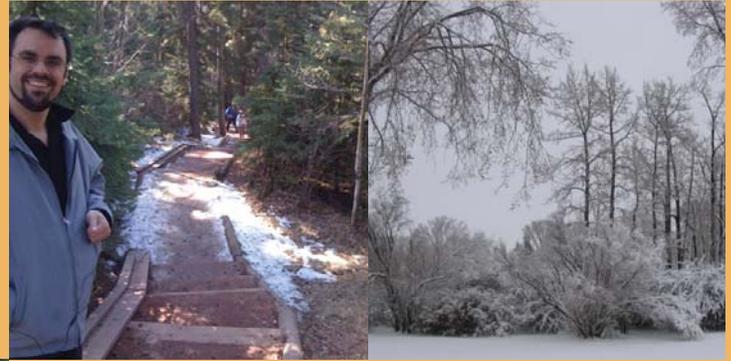


GREEN SPACE

Green Spaces are an extension of our place in the aspen parkland. We as a community feel strongly that the land exists first and the built environment second. We believe that we should exist with nature rather than tame and subdue it. Ideally, Red Deer's park system will be seen as an integral component to the cultural life of the city with easily navigable trails linking cultural spaces, "town spaces," and all neighbourhoods together in both the warm months and in the winter.

"I'm curious about new things. I enjoy going to market areas or local cultural places to get to know the people. I want to get below the veneer. It would be like coming to Red Deer, if you just went to the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame or the Museum – you wouldn't really get to have a sense of the people. You need to go to other kinds of local spaces."

– Harley



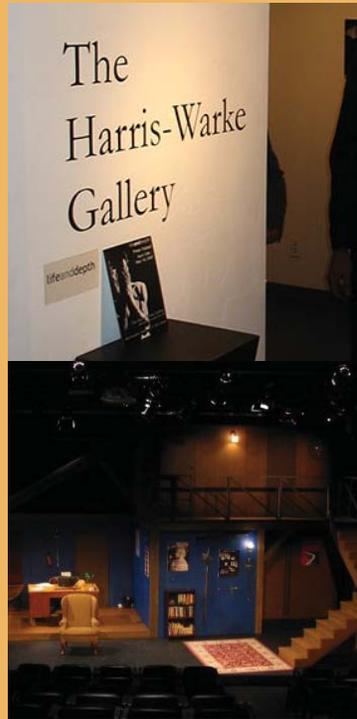
Themes

The three themes, Green Space, Agora Space, and Built Space, all relate to the space we inhabit and how we use it. Immediate, short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions need to be taken and continually focused on, along with sustainable planning, to ensure we build and use our spaces in the best possible ways to enhance our cultural identity.



BUILT SPACE

"I came to Canada as a young child. I realize that my love of this country and how I personally understand and interpret it – its landscape and its people – have been shaped to a very large extent by people expressing themselves in many different art forms. Fiction, poetry, popular music, visual art, theatre, architecture, radio, etc. In my ideal future all these art forms – and many others – would thrive here as forms of telling the stories, and making sense of our place and our people. It is rich, diverse, authentic, tolerant and interesting."
– Torben



As we continue to work toward this vision, our Built Spaces will establish Red Deer as a home of world class arts and heritage facilities that showcase our authenticity. Built spaces invite exploration of an emerging urban parkland culture and its connections in the world. The quality and relevance of our built spaces will be evident in both the public and private architecture throughout Red Deer.

As the first four themes point out, spaces and places are crucial to our cultural experience. Do you have ideas as to how you – individually or as a group – might better use our beautiful green spaces, or encourage the growth and use of agora spaces?



Themes

"I would like a building that incorporates a concert hall with a little theatre and an art gallery and cultural offices. We could have so much cool stuff if we had the space. I love going to Europe and finding little concerts and plays going on all over the place. We need to invest in things that are long term."
– Anne



AGORA SPACE

Agora Space will ideally include busy, public, informal, and unstructured gathering places for social interaction. Their purpose will be to reflect Red Deer's authentic nature and personality. Visitors and citizens will be provided with the richness and diversity of urban living and with real opportunities to interact, dine, relax, listen to music, read, breathe, meditate, converse, and grow as a community.



Themes



"I always think of what the Riverlands could be. I imagine walking down Ross Street on my way to the Riverlands to sit at a café or read. In my vision the buildings around me have historical integrity and give a sense of Red Deer's roots. I say hello to people. The streets are busy and I do shopping along the way. I feel connected to the community and safe. Riverlands is pristine and well maintained. There are boardwalks, flowers, lots of public spaces that invite you to sit. There are boutiques. There is a high standard of architecture, and there are a number of residential apartments with balconies. There is lots of activity on the street level, yet quiet in a welcoming way."

– Tara

"Ideally, in Red Deer, we will have a venue that can support the increased demands for a wide variety of arts activities across the city and we will be considered a place that artists from around the province, country, and internationally will want to perform in."

– Kimberley

ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMMING

"I feel much richer as a person to experience things that are less than mainstream. Culture is music, art, dance, drama, people, events, celebrations, sports, and buildings all symbolizing the people in the community."

– Tania

"Art is a commonality of experiences. The artist takes an element of risk in developing something that makes us feel alive, engaged, afraid, happy, etc. It takes personal risks to do great things."

– Rob

Themes

"I would like to see a celebration recognizing ALL the arts, including, but beyond visual, music and performing arts. We lack opportunities to celebrate other art forms such as literary, cinema, ethnic, etc. I would like to see a week highlighting the arts with each day dedicated to a specific art form, i.e. a film night, poetry readings, gallery openings, etc. Something going on all the time with such support that there is a palpable energy in the city."

– Pat

Activities and Programming, the last of the five themes, relates to how we use green, agora, and built spaces. It's not a surprise that the community wants to use the space to celebrate diversity, craft a sense of place, create art, showcase culture, and expand our ways of thinking about ourselves and the outside world.

This theme is specifically about what people do when they are not at home and not at work. With the spaces to do so, the community wants to engage in activities that are sometimes fun, sometimes educational, and sometimes enlightening. These include an array of festivals, from film, literary, music, theatre, and winter, as well as specific celebrations of cultural significance such as Chinese New Year, Canada Day, Carnival, Diwali, Eid, and First Night.

What do you envision for our green, agora, and built spaces? What do you do when you're not at home or at work? Consider how this might fit with the cultural development in your community.



UNFOLDING OUR VISION

The new Community Culture Vision contains 12 recommendations. Some are for City administration or Council, and some are for the community. All 12 recommendations were developed to help all of us support cultural sustainability in our own ways and to move forward in a defined direction.

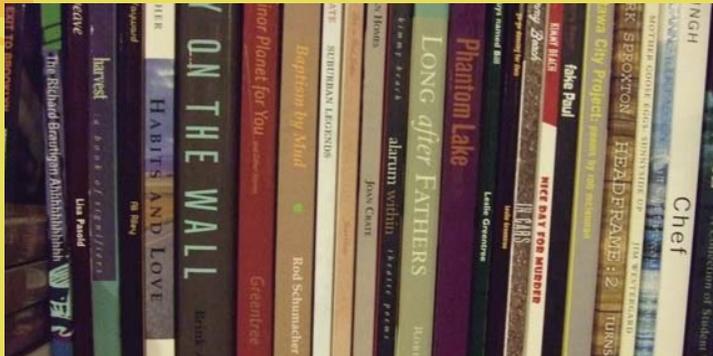
The recommendations emphasize how important it is to incorporate the values and themes of the vision into all facets of municipal planning. For cultural development in the future, we will focus on the importance of committing resources, coordinating planning for the development of arts and cultural experiences, and reviewing funding for programs and services. The recommendations recognize that cultural development is an investment in our community, which promotes economic, social, and environmental development. Culture improves our quality of life.

For a detailed description of the 12 recommendations, please see The City of Red Deer website at www.reddeer.ca. You'll find the complete Community Culture Vision on the Culture Services page.

At the heart of the new vision, the community invites collaboration and wishes government to “blow gently on the embers” of cultural initiatives in Red Deer; to foster gently, plan, and be ready to respond to today’s requests and to anticipate future needs.

“Red Deer was named the Cultural Capital of Canada. Things changed here. It was a turning point for us. We’ll take risks, we won’t be bogged down with bureaucracy. We’ll let our imaginations go. There is a culture of ‘yes we can’ at the City, not ‘no we can’t.’”

– Lorna



THE CITY'S COMMITMENT

The City of Red Deer has embraced three overarching principles for healthy cultural development:

- 1) The vision must be fostered and encouraged.
- 2) The work must be coordinated by someone whose primary purpose is the implementation of the vision.
- 3) Projects and opportunities have the greatest power when physically connected.

The Community Culture Vision strongly endorses The City's commitment to cultural sustainability. It was developed with the community and is a continuation of Red Deer's Community Culture Master Plan. This timely outline for action aligns with The City's Municipal Development Plan, Strategic Plan, Greater Downtown Action Plan, Community Assets Needs Assessment, Waskasoo Special Gathering Places Study, and the Trails Master Plan.

The recommended strategies and initiatives span a 10-year timeframe. They vary from immediate (0-12 months) to short-term (12-24 months), medium-term (3-5 years) and long-term (6-10 years). The City will use the Community Culture Vision as a planning document. We will consider each recommendation and see how it fits within The City's overall corporate goals and priorities.

"We need leadership that pushes the envelope and gives people permission to do things that haven't been done before. Bringing the community together with different ideas. We need to create new spaces in Red Deer for culture, protect old spaces, and connect spaces to both the natural and virtual world."

– Dean

"Culture is like a plant. You can't just ignore it, you have to look after it."

– Donna



"My ideal future includes arts facilities that are visible and accessible. There would be physical connections among spaces – all places could be reached through a greenbelt. Weekends would be car-free downtown and the farmer's market would be moved downtown with closed streets."

– Rick

Your involvement in cultural development

We invite you, as an individual, business person, or a member of a community group, to get involved in the new vision by adopting these values and themes and recognizing the significant value that arts and culture have in our lives.

This vision is a dynamic and direct reflection of how your community sees itself culturally and what it wants to see in the future. By embracing the spirit in which this vision was developed and understanding how each of us can further strengthen cultural initiatives, we can enhance our quality of life and help our community reach its full creative and economic potential.

What caught your attention most in reading about the community values and themes? Did this snapshot of the Community Culture Vision give you any ideas? Want to talk more? We'd love to hear from you. Contact us.

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or visit the City of Red Deer website at www.reddeer.ca and search "Culture Vision"

"There is a friendliness in this town with which I am thoroughly impressed... a vitality and a belief that this community has something to offer. That kind of energy is like gold... and it needs to be encouraged. How to do that? Money and conversation."

– Morag

Images in order left to right:

Cover: Dawn Candy, "Unfolding the future," charcoal on paper, 2008 (detail)
2009 Chinese New Year Celebration, Mr. Liu Liang
Central Alberta Refugee Effort
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery, MAGnificent Saturdays
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery
Anne of Green Gables, Red Deer and District Archives
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery, MAGnificent Saturdays
Anne of Green Gables, Red Deer and District Archives
Red Deer Public Market (Farmers' Market)
City Hall Park, Culture Capital of Canada 2003 Banners
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery
Paul Boulton, "Going Home," charcoal and chalk pastel on paper 2008 (detail)
Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery
Viking Ship at Laft Hus, Julie Macrae
Red Deer and District Archives, Square Dancing
Shirley Rimer, "Sanctuary of the Goddess group," 2008, clay and fused glass
Circus Camp
Norwegian Laft Hus Society, Julie Macrae
2009 Canada Day Celebration, Paul Harris
Mayor's Garden Party
Paul Boulton, NIMBY, installation at The Harris-Warke Gallery, Paul Harris
Young performers at 2009 Chinese New Year, Mr. Lui Liang
Venay Chafekar, Spruce Drive Heron, 2003 Wood carving
Mountview Escarpment, Paul Harris
Hoar Frost, Paul Harris
Lower Heritage Ranch, Paul Harris
2009 Canada Day Celebrations, Paul Harris
Richard Tosczak, "Be-Bop," Welded & painted steel, 1995 from the AFA permanent collection, Paul Harris
Porter, 2009 Canada Day Celebrations, Paul Harris
The Harris-Warke Gallery, Paul Harris
Red Deer Symphony Orchestra
Matchbox Theatre, Deathtrap Set
Conversing at the Bilton, Paul Harris
The Drawing Room, Recreation Centre
Canoeing at Bower Ponds
2009 Alexander Way Arts Festival
Centennial Plaza Park splash pool
Mayor's Garden Party
2005 Alexander Way Arts Festival
Red Deer Public Market (Farmers' Market)
2009 Alexander Way Arts Festival
2009 Alexander Way Arts Festival
City Hall Park, holiday lighting
Sunworks Bookstore, Paul Harris
"Pathway to the future," Waskasoo Park, Paul Harris
City Hall Park, Paul Harris
Bower Ponds, Paul Harris
Bass and conductor, Red Deer Symphony Orchestra

Vision