

Each month, we take a look at a different aspect of Vision 2025, a plan for Greenville's future unveiled late last year. Sixteen areas were examined in the plan and will be explored in the column: the arts, coolness, diversity, economy, education, environment, families and social services, government, health care, international issues, parks and open spaces, public safety, planning and infrastructure, sense of place, transportation and taxpayers. This month the topic is coolness, and input is provided by two young professionals – Erin Hartness and Brian D. Coker – who recently participated in a focus group conducted by Russell Stall of Greenville Forward: The Vision Resource Center, designed to gain information on the best ways to attract and retain young talent in Greenville.

THE Vision's Voice WHAT IS COOLNESS?

by Becky Mann
presented by The Cliffs Communities

Is Greenville cool?

Erin: Yes.

Brian: Absolutely.

What is your definition of cool?

Erin: Something with strong local flavor and character.

Brian: Fun times, dynamic people, inspiring places, and widespread opportunity.

What makes Greenville cool?

Erin: Downtown, great shopping, great restaurants, Falls Park.

Brian: Laid-back lifestyle; weekends on Main Street; Fall for Greenville; movies under the stars at the Peace Center Amphitheater; Downtown Alive; safe streets; convenient travel to lakes, mountains, beaches and other cities; and the genuine pride that our citizens take in Greenville's preservation and advancement.

What keeps Greenville from being cool?

Erin: Diversity of many different cultures and more industry... I don't think we have enough young professionals here.

Brian: Irresponsible growth and zoning; traffic; a sparse offering of events and activities in the winter season; an emerging, yet currently unfulfilled cultural potential; and the apathy shown toward political issues affecting Greenville.

Can these deterrents be changed?

Erin: Yes. I think with time Greenville will grow and that growth will bring a multitude of other cultures and industries.

Brian: Certainly, but not without time and effort. It requires a greater commitment by me and all other Greenvillians to take an interest in the affairs of our city and to invest our talents in the process of improving quality of life.

What can Greenville do to retain and attract people like you?

Erin: Continue to grow in a positive direction and advertise to let people know it is here.

Brian: Stay true to its small-town charm but continue to strive for big-time progress, particularly increased tolerance and harmony within a rapidly diversifying citizenship and responsible land use.

What's your idea of a city that's cooler than Greenville?

Erin: Charleston.

Brian: Chicago, but there's far more to a city than being cool.

When people your age choose not to locate in Greenville, where do they prefer to live and why?

Erin: Bigger cities and mostly for jobs.

Brian: Charlotte, Nashville, and Richmond, to name a few, because greater and broader employment opportunity exists for young adults in these cities. However, I believe that the legitimacy of this perception is becoming less valid with the passage of time.

Are you encouraged by the fact that people with input into the Vision 2025 plan see the value of being cool?

Erin: Absolutely!

Brian: Definitely. Critics may assert that the concept of "cool" is too abstract, but its value to the prestige and quality of life of a city, though intangible, is significant and must be appreciated.

Any other thoughts ...

Erin: It's really a wonderful place to live. My friends come from other places and say, "Wow, this is Greenville. I had no idea!"

Brian: Yes, what makes Greenville cool may not fall in line with what those living outside Greenville think is cool. And that's just fine.

Erin, 28, is a reporter with WYFF-TV who grew up in Gainesville, Ga., and graduated from University of Missouri. She has lived in Greenville for almost three years. Brian, 29, is an attorney with Patterson & Coker, P.A., who was raised in Greenville, earned a bachelor's degree from Clemson and went to law school at University of Notre Dame. ■



As Vision 2005 paved the way in the 1980s for the incredible quality of life Greenville enjoys today, Vision 2025 spearheads projects that will further elevate our city, culturally and commercially. The Vision's Voice is one of the many ways that The Cliffs is committed to promoting growth in Greenville.