

THE Vision's Voice MOVING FORWARD

presented by The Cliffs Communities
by Becky Mann

Vision 2025 was developed by community leaders and area residents who came together to create a vision for Greenville's future. The plan, unveiled a little over a year ago, consists of 16 areas of interest, ranging from coolness to diversity. Its aim is to drive the area's growth by making Greenville and the surrounding region distinct from other parts of the country.

The goal is clear, but how close are we to reaching it? According to some of the people who originally drafted the vision, we're moving in the right direction.

That direction is forward, thanks to the creation of Greenville Forward, which Furman University President Dr. David Shi credits as being the most important development in Vision 2025's progress to have taken place over the course of the past year.

"It will provide energy, resources, and a conduit for communication and collaboration," he says.

Officially named Greenville Forward: The Vision Resource Center, the organization is intended to make sure that the Vision becomes a reality. It will be the connecting point for Vision goals, working to convert the Vision into an operational plan that is understandable and measurable and to build collaborations to measure progress of the plan with groups and individuals who are held accountable for the results.

Russell Stall, Executive Director of Greenville Forward, and Josh Lane, Founding Director, have

worked closely with Shi and other Vision task force chairs to create a tracking and implementation arm to coordinate efforts so that goals are reached quickly, logically, and with as little duplication of efforts and energies as possible. Greenville Forward will provide report cards of progress for Vision focus areas, identify and develop emerging leadership in Greenville, provide guidance and support for non-profit and community driven organizations working to meet goals, and support individual projects that help reach Vision 2025 initiatives.

Along with the driving force, Vision creators see progress in many of the initiatives undertaken. George Fletcher, involved with the Vision from the beginning, sees effort to build the Reedy River Greenway as one of the greatest successes so far. He's pleased to see that Conestee has gotten a grant from County Council and the Community Foundation to make major progress on the southern end and that David Shi and others are working on the northern end. He likes the fact that the City of Greenville has passed a one percent of construction for public art ordinance, and he's excited about the downtown baseball stadium and the movement to turn Joe Jackson's former home into a museum.



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Among areas that haven't perhaps made as much progress as Fletcher would like to see are, he said, efforts to appeal to the creative class. Those efforts, he said, involve diversity, tolerance, and activities that attract and retain bright, talented, young people.

To Shi, the key aspect of the Vision is its potential impact on the living and working environment the Upstate offers. Creating a more knowledge-based workforce and developing a more attractive living/working environment for young professionals are issues that matter most to him personally, he said.

Fletcher is most concerned with the Vision's impact on the economy. "Every region is having to relearn how to compete in this global economy. We have got to encourage education, innovation and entrepreneurship," he said. "We have got to market our regional assets. If we can succeed in maintaining the economic success that has been the hallmark of the Upstate for over 40 years, then all the other aspects of the Vision can happen."

A year in, Stall sees Vision 2025 as a roadmap that will make Greenville the benchmark other communities all over the country can use to improve quality of life.

"Greenville's success is grounded on the vision of a handful of creative and unselfish leaders willing to volunteer," Stall says. "Hopefully, in the next year, we will continue this tradition to make Greenville an inspiring place to build careers, raise families, and enjoy an enviable quality of life other communities can only dream of." ■



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.

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