

THE Vision's Voice A MASTER PLAN

presented by The Cliffs Communities
by Becky Mann

It's hard to have a meaningful discussion if you don't have the right people at the table. That's why the Vision 2025 Parks and Open Spaces Task Force has brought Greenville County together with a make-up that includes representatives from Upstate Forever and Friends of the Reedy River, along with recreation directors from Greenville County and each of the cities in the county – Travelers Rest, Greenville, Simpsonville, Mauldin, Fountain Inn, and Greer.

The goal is to come up with one big county master plan instead of having each area's plans and needs remain separate. According to Allen Hamada, task force chair, this is a significant first step. "This is something that doesn't happen overnight," Hamada says. "It's taken 20 years to get to this point. We have a core group of people now, we have a nucleus, we've met for a year and a half consistently, and I think that in itself has been our biggest success that we're starting to talk together, and we're knocking down these city/county barriers."

Part of that master plan will be not only building new parks but maintaining the ones that already exist. This, Hamada says, has been a source of some negative comments from the community – that we shouldn't add new parks if we can't maintain what we already have.

Both can happen, Hamada says. But the perception points to the need for public awareness of what the task force is doing and what the needs are in Greenville County for parks and open spaces. To increase that awareness, the task force has posted its goals on the Greenville Forward web site (www.greenvilleforward.com), is considering hosting a symposium, and will report to the public through the Greenville Forward annual report.

Soon the group hopes to have information to report on the status of the Rails to Trails initiative. Though not involved in finalizing or driving that effort, task force members are keeping their



An graphic explanation of the many facets of Vision 2025. For more information, contact Russell Stall with Greenville Forward at 233-8443 or rstall@researchwrks.com

ears to the ground on progress. Should the rail line not be held under private ownership when all is said and done, the Parks and Open Spaces Task Force would assist with development of a trail system. And since the system would involve the cities of Travelers Rest and Greenville, this would be the perfect project to make use of the task force's ability to bring the separate entities together for the good of Greenville County as a whole.

The greatest obstacle to progress in the parks and open spaces area, Hamada says, is funding. "It keeps coming back to funding," he says. "If we can figure out creative ways to secure funding then we can really drill down into the details and say, here's the master plan of Mauldin. Does it fit into the over-

all vision of the county? Is there duplication within Simpsonville and Fountain Inn?"

Hamada, who works in marketing for Rockwell International, got involved with Vision 2025 through the Leadership Greenville Alumni Group, which took on the task of implementing Vision strategies. The group later realized the need to have one organization dedicated to overseeing implementation and Greenville Forward, headed by Russell Stall, was organized to make sure that the Vision becomes a reality. Hamada now serves on the board and is secretary/treasurer of Greenville Forward.

Hamada, who grew up in Wisconsin has lived elsewhere but loves calling Greenville home and values his involvement in making it a better place. "I've seen how it's

done in the Midwest, and I've lived in the upper East Coast, and nowhere else have I seen a city that is so forward thinking and so open minded about change. It really gets back to key community leaders. It's a lot of talk, but they walk the walk as well. I want to be part of that," he says. ■



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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