



presented by The Cliffs Communities  
by Becky Mann

The goals for government set forth in the Vision 2025 plan include having an efficient and effective government, reducing the number of independent taxing districts, cultivating an informed and active electorate, and having both district and at-large representation on Greenville County Council. Vision benchmarks are to consolidate function of 15 independent taxing districts, reduce the number of special purpose districts, and have 75 percent of the voters go to the polls in major elections.



The many facets of Vision 2025.  
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How are we progressing toward those goals? According to Michelle Shain, Greenville City Council member, change in government can be difficult. "I think people probably are afraid of being further taxed or seeing a reduction in their service delivery," she says.

Vision 2025 can't happen in bits and pieces, Shain says, likening the plan to a mobile in a child's nursery. If you get one part moving, the others follow suit. Jim Burns, member of Greenville County Council, agrees. "I think the vision comes as a package," he says. "Certain pieces of each thing can probably happen independently, but you don't reach the vision itself – the total vision – without each of the areas having some success."

The government portion is having some success, not the least of which is, Burns says, a general willingness of most of the government bodies to start talking to each other, looking toward common goals, and working toward those common goals. "We're seeing the mayors' group and the city councils reaching out to the legislative delegation and to the county council and saying, here's the goal, here's a project or a goal that we have and we need everyone's support and help to accomplish it," he says. "Sometimes it's the implementation that causes us differences, but if we all agree that we need to achieve this goal then that's a great first step."

Special purpose districts were created years ago to fill a need for fire service throughout the county. The districts fly in the face of regionalism and cooperation, key ideas in much of the Vision 2025 planning and implementation.

The incentive for pursuing the vision goal of reducing the number of special purpose districts is emergency preparation. In 2003, a fire broke out on Paris Mountain. The fire raged for several days while Upstate firefighters from 27 county fire districts joined forces to fight it, a process complicated by communica-

tion between the different entities.

Should a much bigger disaster occur, we would need to be better prepared, Shain says, the lessons of New Orleans providing a frightening example. "If we were to ever have an Oconee nuclear event, we've all kind of moved toward looking at our emergency operations communications in a better way, but are we really prepared? Are we prepared for a pandemic event like avian flu or something else? That's the push for all of us to line up in the event of a disaster – if it's a hurricane, a tornado, or whatever – are we prepared to take care of the people who live here?" she asks.

Shain says new leadership is needed at all levels if we are to achieve Vision 2025 goals. At the same time, she says, we need engaged voters. Burns agrees, placing an informed and active electorate at the top of the vision goals for government. "When you have people that know what the issues are and know where the candidates stand on them and they are active, then government starts to be much more responsible and responsive to that," he says.

Vision 2025 goals, including those for government, are moving forward with the help of Greenville Forward, an organization intended to make sure that the Vision becomes a reality. For more information, go to [www.greenvilleforward.com](http://www.greenvilleforward.com) or call Russell Stall, executive director of Greenville Forward, at (864) 233-8443. ■



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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