

Making The Vision A Reality

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presented by *The Cliffs Communities*

A recent headline in North Carolina read: "Raleigh: Greenville with envy." This regional admiration points to the fact that Greenville has become a place where people want to work and live, and other cities would like to find a way to copy that success.

One of the contributing factors to that enviable quality of life is Greenville's Vision for the future. Vision 2025 was presented to the community two years ago, receiving an energetic response. Without an organization to shepherd the vision, the energy could easily have dissipated. Today, Greenville Forward is working to see that the Vision becomes a reality. "Apathy and contentment regarding our community's future have fierce opposition in the name and mission of Greenville Forward," says Baxter Wynn, chairman of the Board of Directors for Greenville Forward. "Part of the mission of Greenville Forward is to serve as a constant reminder that if we are going to have the kind of community we want to have, it is up to us, individually and collectively."

As 2007 begins, Russell Stall, executive director of Greenville Forward, says we're making progress toward becoming the kind of community we envisioned. Task forces involving over 300 people are up and running, and they are working toward goals. The Health and Wellness group, for example, is conducting com-


munity dialogues this month to involve people in recreating health-care in Greenville. The Education Task Force is involved in Graduate Greenville, an effort to attack the dropout rate by helping to find 300 more high school graduates in Greenville County each year. The Parks and Recreation Task Force is involved in efforts including the new TRAC (Tourism Recreation Athletics Coalition) plan and enhancing opportunities for recreation throughout the community.

As a result of these projects and many others, excitement is building about the future of Greenville. "We're showing people that Greenville has a vision and that through the visionary leadership of past people and current people, we're creating a Greenville that is the envy of people throughout the country," Stall says.

One of the benefits of the process is that it has brought people together who may not have had the opportunity to work together otherwise. In the area of education, for example, the task force includes a spectrum of people from early childhood providers to those involved in lifelong learning. In government, joint planning is taking place with people from different municipalities and counties coming together to plan for the entire area rather than just one corner of it.

As goals are met, bigger goals are being set. "One thing I've noticed just over the last year is that people are beginning to think bigger," Stall says. "It used to be that we'd think, wouldn't it be nice to have this little project done. Now, because of the successes people have seen, they're starting to dream bigger, which is really exciting."

Like many young people who grow up in Greenville, Stall left town in the early '80s never expecting to return. The Greenville he came back to, he says, is very different from the one he left. He's pleased to have the opportunity to help make it more attractive for today's young professionals. And the community, he says, is starting to make progress in that area, he says, citing the popularity of the Chamber's new organization for young professionals – PULSE – which in just a year's time has attracted 500 members and favorable comments about their hometown from participants in the Chamber's Youth Leadership Greenville program.

Stall, who says he has the best job in the world, hopes that the work of Greenville Forward will never be done. "That's one of the reasons we're not calling the organization Vision 2025," he says. "I hope there's going to be a Vision 2050, and I hope there's going to be a Vision 2100. The Vision and the Vision for Greenville are always evolving and always changing, and I don't anticipate that coming to an end at all. I think we're going in the right direction, and the arrows are really starting to line up on moving Greenville ahead and moving Greenville forward." 



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.