County takes first look at 2030

Community initiates work on next comprehensive long-range plan

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Pickens County will soon have a road map, of sorts, for the next 20 years.

More than 30 people gathered last week for a public kickoff of work on a 2030 comprehensive plan for Pickens County.

The plan will lay out goals for Pickens County by 2030 — how the county will look and what it will include — and offer tools like ordinances or polices that could be used in implementing those goals, according to Chris Brink, director of community development for Pickens County.

"We've got to have a vision of where we want to go," Brink said. "We need to know what you think."

He said the state requires the county to do a comprehensive plan every 10 years and mandates nine elements must be covered in the plan: economic development, community facilities, cultural resources, natural resources, transportation, housing, population, land use and priority investment.

For Ann Soenen, a Pickens County resident who is on the advisory committee for the plan and lives near Table Rock, a big priority is making sure that State 11 keeps its scenic highway status.

"In the fall it is just absolutely beautiful," she said, describing how she thinks people are drawn to the area for its natural beauty and activities like kayaking.

"I'm all for tourism and growth, and I want it with common sense," Soenen said. "I don't want us to become like Gatlinburg."

Brink said the advisory committee has 59 members currently, but can grow if more people want to participate. The committee, along with Planning Commission and county staff, will steer the 2030 plan process.

Those involved hope to have a draft of the plan by November or December, Brink said, and expect final approval by this time next year. Pickens County Council must vote on the plan.

Brink said the process includes more opportunities for public input, including open houses and a Web site and wiki site for posts and discussion.

He said they don't have the Web and wiki sites yet but are working on them.

Patrick Lark, a Pickens resident who is also part of the advisory committee, described growth as a "necessary evil" and said that if people, particularly younger people, don't take part in the process the county might grow in directions they don't want it to.