Group forms to develop vision

City wants to attract more businesses

By Julie Howle
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A group of Pickens residents, business owners and officials has kicked off an effort to improve and develop the city and attract more businesses.

"There's no doubt about the number of empty stores on Main Street that make this an absolute urgent issue that we develop and market ourselves," said Pickens City Administrator Katherine Brackett. "We have so much potential."

She said an 11-member steering committee is being formed to guide the process; it will include the city's five planning commission members, three representatives from the business community and three residents.

The group got an orientation and an overview of the vision process at a planning commission held late last month.

Jerry Sweitzer, past chairman of Pickens County Vision 2025, said some of Pickens' neighboring towns are moving ahead with efforts from bicycle-friendly plans in Easley to a focus on the railroad in Central.

Sweitzer said Pickens could join with Easley on bicycle efforts to tap into cycling enthusiasm.

Another idea is to create a theme — perhaps as an Italian village with people sitting around tables and eating alongside fountains — for downtown Pickens, which could also help bring in more businesses.

He said the four "F's" to a successful small town are flowers, fountains, festivals and food.

"Growth is going to happen in this area," Sweitzer said. "It's either going to be by choice or by chance. … If you just let it happen, you've got no input."

for Pickens

Brackett said all the members of the committee should be in place by Nov. 23, the date of the next planning commission meeting, and said the process include seeking public input.

The hope is to determine how people want the city to be defined and how they want it to look.

"It's good for the citizens," Brackett said. "It's great for the city to kind of get some more stability."

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