# Pickens Vision 2025 looks ahead

## Plan has already met some goals, looking now at tourism, leaders say

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Pickens County Vision 2025 has accomplishments under its belt — and more to go — after almost three years of efforts to implement objectives from the plan that is designed to serve as a roadmap for Pickens County.

The plan, which was created from resident input through town hall meetings, focus groups, individual interviews and online surveys, was presented to the community in September 2007, and an implementation team was formed in January 2008, said Jerry Sweitzer, past chairman, who is on the corporate board of directors for Pickens County Vision 2025.

Michael Sheriff, Pickens County Vision 2025 chairman and mayor pro tem on Liberty City Council, said the vision plan identifies five goals — healthy, safe community; planned community; working community; sense of place; and educated community — with numerous objectives in each area.

Accomplishments so far include encouraging bike-friendly activities, which Sheriff said can be seen through efforts like a PEL-COR, or Pickens-Easley-Liberty Corridor, resolution that has been passed by the three city councils.

Sheriff said other accomplishments include work toward creating a three-county small business incubator and said Vision 2025 has also exhibited at local festivals where people can learn more and sign up to help.

He said to make implementation of objectives successful, they partner with "vision partners," described as organizations, businesses, civic groups, government entities, churches, individuals and others who work together and achieve the initiatives.

"We're at a crucial point," Sheriff said. "A lot of work needs to be completed. Some work has only just begun."

Sweitzer said Pickens

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County Vision 2025 and other partners, like the city of Pickens and Pickens County Cultural Commission, have also received a $5,000 Appalachian Gateway Communities Initiative: Natural & Cultural Heritage Tourism Development grant.

"I think the key is that it launches us in terms of developing our natural culture, natural resources and the arts part of the cultural area," he said.

Sweitzer said the grant is for a two-day workshop, possibly in February, to discuss how to develop cultural heritage, artists and parks and blend them for cultural tourism.

A local match is required for the grant and can be done with cash and in-kind services, he said.

Sweitzer said the study area stretches from the city of Pickens up to State 11 with boundaries including State 8, State 183 and State 133.

"We see this going beyond the workshop because we recognize that this part of the state, the Upstate and Pickens County, we have a lot of wonderful assets," he said. "It's a matter now of pulling what we see as these features together to create a more viable tourism attraction than we have now."