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Upstate

Pickens to unveil plan for growth

Ideas meant to guide economic, natural resource development

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PICKENS—The staff of the Pickens County Planning Commission is expected to present a draft of the county's long-range development goals and objectives Monday.

The draft, called "2030 Pickens County: A Comprehensive Plan," will be presented to the Planning Commission, which will ultimately present a final plan to the Pickens County Council for approval.

Once approved, the plan will serve as a guide for future economic and natural resource development in the county.

Nathalie Schmidt, county planner, said in a statement that the draft plan is the result of several visioning and work sessions held by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. That process started in the spring of 2009.

That group held its final meeting June 29, and the planning staff has been working since then to complete the draft plan document, Schmidt said.

At the June meeting where more than 40 people gathered, people at times raised their voices and talked over each other, disagreeing about whether the plan was necessary and what impact it would have on the county.

Some residents and property owners have raised questions over what they see as the county's efforts to gain greater control over development.

Others, including Dennis Chastain, a Pickens County resident and advisory committee member, have said the county is at a "crossroads."

"If Pickens County does not take affirmative action to determine its own destiny, we will by default become a bedroom community of Greenville," Chastain said.

South Carolina requires counties to formulate a comprehensive plan every 10 years and update the plan every five years.

The state mandates that nine elements be covered in the plan: economic development, community facilities, cultural resources, natural resources, transportation, housing, population, land use and priority investment.

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Schmidt has said the draft plan includes long-term goals such as the possible implementation, if feasible, of a public transportation system that would connect municipal areas of the county, colleges and neighboring county centers, as well as efforts to encourage economic and tourism development.

Monday's meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium at the county administration building.

Schmidt said the draft plan will be available to the public after Monday night's meeting.

Another public hearing on the plan has been scheduled at the Oct. 11 planning commission meeting.