'Regional Vision' off to good start

Upstate stakeholders unveil key principles to address growth

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

GREENVILLE — A planning leader who opened a path to regional cooperation and economic opportunities in Central Florida lit a fire in scores of men and women representing 10 Upstate counties who think they could do the same in South Carolina.

Shelley Lauten, president of myregion.org, caught the attention of stakeholders and elected officials that converged at the Ten at the Top Regional Vision Summit at the Carolina First Center in Greenville on Tuesday.

Participants drove from the region's outer reaches in Abbeville County and Union County and from places in between.

Lauten's message was simple. She said that before myregion.org came on the scene in 1999, Central Florida lacked regional cohesiveness. Lauten said she encountered seven splintered counties that only operated within their borders and distrusted attempts at taking a regional approach to addressing out-of-control growth.

"We've gone from 400,000 people to 3.7 million people, and its projected we're going to double in size," Lauten said of Central Florida.

Lauten said myregion.org started out as a child of the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce. She said questions such as: "What would be the possibilities for the region 50 years out? — And: "How can Central Florida compete with a global economy and still maintain its quality of life? — brought people to the table and had them think about the future.

It's no coincidence that Ten at the Top is hoping to emulate the success myregion.org has had.
TATT Executive Director Dean

SEE GROWTH, PAGE A5

GROWTH: Region

FROM PAGE A1

Hybl spent five years with myregion.org as project manager for its "How Shall We Grow?" initiative.

It's no surprise given the time they've worked together that Hybl and Lauten echoed each other's words when referring to participants at Tuesday's conference: "They have no power except the power of a great idea."

Just as Central Florida, the Upstate region's 10 counties face unprecedented growth in the next 20 years. Experts predict that by 2030 the Upstate could add more than 275,000 new residents, an additional 120,000 new households and see more than 200,000 new jobs created.

Thinking regionally in a global economy is not the end, but the beginning, of a process, Lauten indicated. She said Central Florida now is engaging the Tampa Bay area in partnering to become a super regional powerhouse with greater economic clout.

Lauten said the United

leaders work together

States would add 100 million new residents in the next 30 years with 70 percent of them likely going to mega regions.

The TATT Regional Summit produced a rough draft of five key principles that will be fine-tuned in the coming months during community forums at each county in the Upstate.

The guiding principles are the cultivation of human potential, entrepreneurship, sustainable growth, natural beauty and resources and community vibrancy.

Pickens County will hold its community forum Oct. 5 at DunBurks in Easley. Oconee's forum is set for Oct. 11 at the Gignilliat Center in Seneca.

Hybl expects the final vision to be unveiled in the early spring of 2001 in a setting similar to Tuesday's Summit.

Oconee County was well represented by elected officials, policymakers and business and civic leaders, including State Sen. Thomas Alexander, R-Walhalla.

carlos@dailyjrn.com | (864) 973-6685