



HEARING IDEAS: Part of the crowd last week at County Square for the Imagine Greenville presentations.

Charles Sowell/Staff

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Panel pushes sustainability

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Dealing with issues of sustainability, transportation and the environment were the key points in last week's presentation by the Imagine Greenville Citizen Committees.

Originally scheduled as a short presentation with questions and answers at the end, the session ran long and officials were forced to close it after a group of citizens vehemently opposed to several of the citizen committee proposals demanded to know how the county planned to pay for the plan.

Members of the committee said they were not charged with paying for the proposals, rather they were told to come up with the best plan possible and leave it to the political leaders to work out details.

In large part the citizen committees reflected input by the public in a series of meetings held around the county in the spring.

In places the recommendations echoed initiatives urged by conservation groups such as Upstate Forever.

For instance, in the land use and transportation plan, presenter Pat Dilger said her committee wanted see action taken to ease the burden of urban sprawl through aggressive public awareness and education campaigns, sustainability measures put in place and enforced, and better tools for implementation and enforcement of regulations.

They also wanted to see more information about the actual cost of building roads, sidewalks and the like.

She said the price of gasoline is hurting residents badly and the county should "start now on a county-wide transportation plan that would be

completed by 2010."

Katherine Monteith, a Realtor who presented the natural resources committee report, said her group would like to see aggressive measures taken to protect the most valuable and vulnerable resources in the county.

Specifically, her committee would like to see action taken outside the box of typical regulations and implement plans that would offer much needed incentives and rewards for responsible action rather than just baseline requirements that give no positive reinforcement.

Community facilities presenter Curtis Askew said there is a need for better coordination, efficiency, sustainable practices, transparency and adequate tools for implementation to make sure residents of Greenville County have the infrastructure they need.

The cultural resources committee said there is a need to start thinking about things other than history when considering cultural. A new entity, or an existing one, should be charged with coordinating groups that handle cultural resources and should take charge in providing better service to the resources and the county, said Jennifer Furrow, cultural resources presenter.

Brian Reed, economic development panel presenter, said policy and administration investments should be made to ensure a more sustainable market that realizes its full potential and cuts back on lost opportunity.

On housing, committee presenter Rob Hanley said the county needs to move beyond the idea of basic shelter and take into consideration things such as transportation and open spaces as the rule, rather than the exception.

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