



The Progress-Index

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Envisioning the future of Petersburg

It is a busy time if you're interested in the future of Petersburg.

We are about to be flush full of visions of the city's future. Consider the past months and years a vision quest — a search for a road to better communities.

We have two of those visions and are about to get another tonight.

First, Petersburg City Council released a document called Vision 2020. The document lays out four vision areas and paints in broad strokes how to get there.

A lot of the details need to be worked out and will require lots of work. For example, one goal is to update the city's comprehensive plan — which is in itself a planning document for the future.

But the council views the future vision as 1) unlimited economic opportunities, 2) community advancement through education, research and technology 3) unique historic and cultural fabric and 4) an open, responsive and accountable government.

The Council plan calls for many things, including working with a group, LISC, that has presented its own plans.

Local Initiatives Support Corp. recently unveiled its comprehensive plans to well enhance rebuilding efforts throughout the city.

LISC leverages available dollars into single family, multi-family, community and commercial developments with far greater reach and impact then through individual efforts.

The local LISC group now advocates a targeted approach and named four specific areas in conjunction with Virginia LISC that his group had developed plans for.

The neighborhoods include Blandford, the Halifax area, Battersea and the Rome Street/Westview/Birdville area. "The goal is to transform some of these areas that were identified as the worst places to the best places," said Rob Robinson with Urban Design Associates.

All four of the neighborhoods serve as gateways to the city.

Already, more than 1,000 residents — from a diverse set of backgrounds — have already participated so far with LISC in the various planning stages.

And now comes the latest effort on vision.

Tonight, a vision will be unveiled that focuses on downtown Petersburg.

After a four-day visit by a team of architects and other experts, the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team will present its recommendations for Petersburg.

The plan is the result of more than a year of work by volunteers throughout the community and is actually quite a victory for the city. Not every city in the nation gets to have experts coming in free of charge to look at plans for the future. The team members were selected by the American Institute of Architects for their specific area of expertise and how it will relate to the development of a plan for downtown.

All eight members of the team have spent the last few days in town listening to the public and developing a plan for the city's downtown.

For those seeking a road map to redevelop the Petersburg community, it is exciting times indeed.

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