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## Officials update residents on 'Ruston 21' initiative

Plan described as 'blueprint for city's future growth'

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The city of Ruston updated its residents on a still-developing master plan for how the city will grow.

In 2007, Ruston began developing the "Ruston 21" plan and touted it as a blueprint for the city's future growth and development. City officials are trying to stress smart growth, a balance between development and preserving existing open, green space while lowering infrastructure costs for developers. Officials hope to unveil the finished plan by spring 2010.

Mayor Dan Hollingsworth has said he wants the community involved in the plan, and the city held a "Community Visioning Day" earlier this year to hear from all parts of the city. On Tuesday, city planners presented residents a slide show based on the consensus of those opinions.

Lori Faile with Ruston Planning and Zoning said more than 200 people attended the two community update meetings and learned of the city's long- and short-term priorities.

"We looked at what we're doing now, which is directly related to the Community Vision Day," Faile said. "It was based on aspirations from the community, things that we identified we could be working on right now rather than wait on the plan to come out."

The current work includes renovation efforts near the Vienna Street and Railroad Avenue area to make it more accessible and attractive.

For the long term goals, planning officials have stressed improving primary and secondary education by partnering with Louisiana Tech University, enhancing property standards and diversifying transportation in the city.

By way of example, Faile offered the possibility of working with the state Department of Transportation and Development to secure grants for pedestrian and bicycle traffic in addition to car traffic.

The city has implemented an 18-month moratorium on the construction of apartment complexes, duplexes and high-density subdivisions until the Ruston 21 master plan is complete. While the hold on building is opposed by the Ruston-Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Faile said the moratorium received no negative feedback during the community update. She said she still expects the plan to be complete by the spring 2010 deadline.