

Dreams for the future

Ruston 21 working to 'seize city's destiny'

Laura Bond, *Reporter*

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It's been approximately 18 months since hundreds of city residents shared their concerns and dreams during Community Visioning Day.

The feedback initiative drove plans for Ruston 21, a comprehensive plan for the city's future that covers everything from infrastructure and safety to residents' ideas for the city's future.

"Think of it this way," Ruston Mayor Dan Hollingsworth said. "If you were going to build the city of your dreams that had all the qualities you wished for — the lifestyle, infrastructure, atmosphere, attitude, jobs, creation, schools and cultural aspects — what would you do and where would you begin?"

According to Hollingsworth, Ruston 21 is a long-term planning effort to be intentional about the city's future regarding what should be preserved and what it should become or be known for.



"This is an opportunity for citizens to seize their own destiny," Hollingsworth said.

"In the 2008 Visioning Day, Ruston citizens gave us real insight into their expectations, and we've taken those suggestions to heart. Many of the major priorities will take some years to develop, but we've already seized the initiative on the Quick Response items and gotten a lot done."

Ruston City Councilman Elmore Mayfield said Ruston 21 is the best thing that could have happened in city wards one and two, which are south of California Avenue.

"Ruston 21 is saying the city of Ruston as a whole is wonderful, but it's divided," Mayfield said.

"The two sides don't intermingle very well. The only time the influential, wealthy white residents may come to south Ruston is for medical facilities, if they are debt collectors or they are looking for dope."

Mayfield said Ruston 21 is cutting across the north/south barrier by cleaning up the south side of town and improving infrastructure.

"Ruston 21 has actually brought to us the realization that we are a divided city," Mayfield said.

"It has also brought to our attention what we as administrators can do in order to bring about a cohesiveness in the entire city."

Hollingsworth said Ruston 21 aims at positioning the city for future growth while at the same time preserving its uniqueness.

He said, "Ruston 21 offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our citizens to plan their city's future."

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