

Ruston 21 to unveil plans for future

Laura Bond, *Reporter*

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Fred Blake dreams of living in a city with businesses and streets lit up at night and many sidewalks to guide the way.

He would also like to see more walking trails and upscale shops built and satellite police stations set up at a couple of locations in Ruston to accommodate the growing population.

The visions of the 50-year Ruston resident will not remain in his mind; He is voicing them to decision-makers.

Blake is one of about 20 local residents on the advisory committee for Ruston 21, which is the city's long-term master plan.

In November 2008, more than 400 local residents attended Ruston 21 Community Visioning Day, where they expressed their likes, dislikes and desires for the city.

On Tuesday, Ruston 21 leaders invite local residents to attend one of two presentations at the Ruston Civic Center, where progress on, as well as future, Ruston 21 plans will be unveiled.

"This is an opportunity for the public to get some insight into what our thinking is and where we're headed," Ruston 21 consultant Ken Tipton said.

Ruston 21 initiatives have emphasized recycling, developing minority leadership and improved pedestrian safety, to name a few. Future projects will focus on a wide variety of areas, such as the building of new parks and revitalization of the community core.

"The idea is the core of our community is our new frontier," Tipton said. "The core is bigger than downtown. It includes old historic neighborhoods and the university.

"What we're looking at are opportunities to encourage development in the core in a new way that encourages pedestrian activity and a culture for the core for young people as well as those in their 50s with children out of the home."

Blake said because of Ruston's proximity to three universities and central location among several large cities such as New Orleans and Dallas, it offers many opportunities. He said he expects Ruston to grow into a smaller version of Austin.

"We can visit all these larger cities and still live within a little small family-oriented community," he said. "Although (Ruston) is bigger than it was, the atmosphere is still the same. It's kind of got that Mayberry/Andy Griffith-style atmosphere."

Ryan Kilpatrick, another Ruston 21 advisory committee member, agreed the city has a friendly atmosphere.

"I think that there's a difference between growth and managed growth, and I really believe Ruston 21 will manage the growth in a way that reflects Ruston's values and traditions," said Kilpatrick, a Ruston native. "There's something unique about Ruston. I don't know if there's one word to describe it. Growing up in Ruston, I always described it as Camelot because of the family atmosphere — people helping other people. I think there's something to be said about the people who come to visit our city and think something positive about it."

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To attend the meeting

What: Ruston 21 Community Visioning Day update

When: 10-noon or 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Ruston Civic Center

Contact: City Development Services Manager Lori Faile, 251-8644

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