

LLI-Manassas educates on World Class Community

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A resident of Dunbarton, a 55 and older community in Bristow, Jim Anderson moved to Prince William County in 2006.

He wanted to know more about his new county.

He asked himself, "What is the vision?"

The question brought Anderson and about 35 others to the Northern Virginia Community College's Manassas campus when Lifelong Learning Institute-Manassas presented a public forum called "Defining and Attaining World Class Community Status for Prince William County."

Moderated by Paul Moessner, citizen and community activist, the program highlighted perspectives on Prince William's long-range planning through 2030.

Woodbridge District Supervisor Frank Principi and Bette Dean, coordinator for the Coalition for a World Class Community, reviewed the process and results of the Prince William 2030 Study and what residents really want.

"World Class Community" became central to the study and presentation.

The term relates to what is called the "Seven Golden Threads."

Those are, according to Dean's presentation: "live, work, play and retire community; active, engaged citizens; sense of community; accessible community; infrastructure matches population; partnerships equal success; leading the way."

Principi said that, in spite of the recession, Prince William is "absolutely making progress" toward the vision described by the Seven Golden Threads.

However, Dean said that she wants to make sure the threads remain in the forefront, that the 2030 plan doesn't collect dust on a shelf but "remains a living document."

She explained the significance of the thread metaphor: that pulling out one thread can unravel an entire garment.

Keeping the vision alive was Dean's motivation for coordinating the Coalition for a World Class Community, a local citizens group organized to take actions on measures necessary to meet the goals of the Prince William 2030 Study.

Dean said the coalition began with a dialogue between human services organizations and spread to local businesses and nonprofits. Concerns and ideas were then communicated to the Prince William Futures Commission.

To complete the study, Principi said, the Futures Commission held 25 meetings and received briefings and training. The commission also held 58 community meetings, including meetings with 2nd, 8th and 12th grade classes.

Statistics were gathered using data from the 2007 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, an online questionnaire and e-mail correspondence. About 1,800 residents participated, representing more than 75 organizations.

Principi's presentation showed that study participants want to see the county be home to at least five Fortune 500 companies. They also desire continuing education opportunities for seniors, historical and interpretative programs, trails and natural areas, high-end shopping, easily accessible government services, and more.

Concerns included affordable housing, cuts to human services and education, transportation and the environment.

Dean and Principi stressed that every member of the community should be involved in helping to create a vision.

Dean said one way to do that is to join the coalition's discussion at worldclass.ning.com, where members are seeking solutions, not government handouts, as they look toward 2030.

The LLI audience responded positively to the forum, adding concerns of their own, many of which relate to seniors, the fastest-growing population in Prince William.