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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Upstate Forever Wins Statewide Advocacy Award**

(Greenville, SC) - Upstate Forever has been named South Carolina's Outstanding Planning Advocate of the Year by the S.C. Chapter of the American Planning Association (SCAPA). Upstate Forever was recognized for its efforts and achievements in promoting land use practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection, which include advocating for a parking lot standards ordinance in Greenville County; assisting in the drafting and defense of Pickens County's Development Standards Ordinance; serving as coordinator of the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium; and leading efforts - along with Clemson University and the Upstate Alliance - to open a dialogue about regional planning by bringing Utah State Senator Greg Bell to the Upstate to discuss the Envision Utah program. Upstate Forever also advocates for development standards that provide incentives for protecting open space and natural resources during development and for land use policies that encourage the creation of pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use communities.

Upstate Forever was nominated for the award by Dr. James B. London of Clemson University's graduate program in City and Regional Planning. Dr. London said, "Upstate Forever has been a strong advocate for sensible growth in the region by broadening the dialogue and offering a more balanced development strategy. The organization has worked with grassroots citizen groups and elected officials on educational and advocacy programs to address issues and options for development in the region. In a region not accustomed to proactive planning initiatives, Upstate Forever is making inroads, not only asking questions but offering viable solutions that are positively affecting the planning process in the region." Dr. London is also a member of the Pickens County Council.

SCAPA Awards Committee Chair Rick Green explained why Upstate Forever deserved the award. "The overall quality of the organization and their body of work are excellent. Projects developed by Upstate Forever have a consistently high visual as well as professional quality. The committee liked the potential of transferability of these quality products to other parts of the state. Upstate Forever is willing to look beyond municipal and county lines to find solutions that benefit entire regions. Innovation was also an important factor. Upstate Forever truly thinks 'outside the box' in studying issues and proposing solutions. The committee found Upstate Forever to be an important friend and ally of planners in their ongoing effort to improve the quality of life in South Carolina." Mr. Green is the Government Services Director for the Appalachian Council of Governments.

“We are delighted to receive this prestigious award from the state’s premier planning organization. It is gratifying to have the support of the very professionals who write and enforce the state and local policies and ordinances for which we advocate,” said Diane Eldridge, Upstate Forever’s Director of Education and Advocacy.

The award was presented at SCAPA’s annual conference in Hilton Head Island in November.

**Upstate Forever** is a non-profit membership based organization serving the Upstate region of South Carolina through its three programs, Education, Advocacy, and Land Trust. The Education Program seeks to better inform the public and local government officials about land use and growth management issues. Through their Advocacy Program, Upstate Forever promotes and advocates for resource-conserving development practices and the protection of sensitive resources. Under the Land Trust Program, they work with property owners wishing to protect their lands through conservation easements. Founded in 1998, Upstate Forever currently has more than 1600 members and serves Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties. The main office is located in Greenville and a second office opened in Spartanburg earlier this year.

**The South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (SCAPA)** has been a leader in planning activities and an active resource for planners, communities, citizens, elected and appointed officials, and allied professionals throughout the state for more than 25 years. SCAPA’s 350 members include professional planners, planning commissioners, zoning board of appeals members, building officials, neighborhood group leaders, urban designers, economists and students of planning and community development.