

Running out of room

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Ken Richard/Independent-Mail

Darin Culp, left, and Curtis Estola, right, of Suncrest Homes in Greer work on layout for the first phase of a new subdivision on Old Williamston Road in Anderson on Thursday. A new report cites the Greenville area as one of the worst in the country for sprawl, partially because the density of development in the area is so low.

Sprawl affects county

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Ricketson said Anderson County is similar enough to its Upstate neighbors that the same problems and scores are likely to apply.

"There is no avoiding the conclusion that Anderson County would make an excellent poster child for sprawl," he said. "Low density residential development has been a mainstay in the development boom that we've seen over the last several years."

The nation has 320 metropolitan areas of the size discussed in the report, but only the 83 listed had complete data sets available from agencies such as the Bureau of the Census and the Environmental Protection Agency. That is why some obvious sprawl offenders, such as Charlotte, are conspicuously absent, Mr. Ewing said.

On a scale adjusted so 100 is average, the most sprawling region was Riverside-San Bernardino, Calif., with a composite score of just 14.2. Ultra-dense New York scored highest, at 177.8.

The Greenville area's composite score was 58.6, just better than Atlanta's 57.7. Nonetheless, Greenville scored below average on all four sprawl factors. The area scored 71.92 on density (second worst), 50.39 on mixed use development (fourth worst) and 62.09 on street connectivity (fifth worst). It was close to average in the strength of its town and business centers, ranked at 39th with a score of 98.51.

"The really bad news that comes out of this, and not what's getting most of the national attention but what blew us away, is we've got one of the highest traffic fatality rates in the nation," Mr. Eldridge said.

The Greenville Spartanburg area had 4663 fatal accidents per 100,000 residents, which translates to 347 deaths per year, she said. Atlanta had 35.51 fatalities per 100,000 people.

Upstate ranks fifth in urban sprawl

By Kelly Davis
Independent-Mail

The Greenville-Spartanburg metropolitan area ranked fifth of 83 metro areas nationwide for worst urban sprawl in a report released Thursday by the nonprofit group Smart Growth America.

Metro Atlanta ranked fourth in the report, which took into account 22 variables grouped into four major factors: residential population density; the degree of mixing of homes, jobs and commercial services; the strength of downtowns and other centers of activity; and street connectivity versus dead-end cul-de-sacs.

"During the last 10 years, the Upstate's population has grown by over 140,000 people," said Diane Eldridge, associate director of Greenville-based Upstate Forever, a Smart Growth America coalition member. "This report shows the urgent need to establish new policies that will promote better development, more choices in

FULL REPORT

Find the report, "Measuring Sprawl And Its Impact," online at www.smartgrowthamerica.com

housing and a safer, more accessible transportation system."

The same 83 regions were assessed for a variety of outcomes attributed to sprawl, from traffic fatalities to air quality, in order to connect certain development choices to their negative effects on human health and quality of life, said report co-author Reid Ewing of Rutgers University.

The use of so many variables makes the study uniquely comprehensive, said Smart Growth America Executive Director Don Chen.

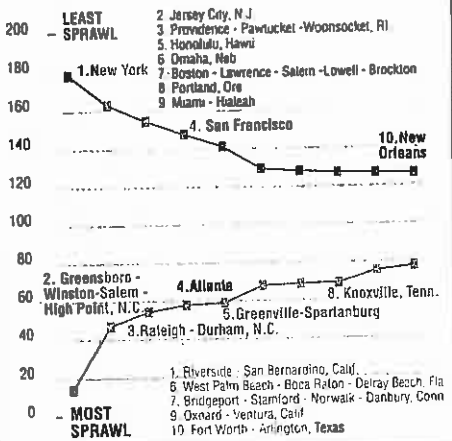
The report used data only from Greenville, Spartanburg and urban Pickens counties, but Anderson County Planning Director Jeff

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Greatest sprawl of all

Southeastern metro areas growing haphazardly

The nonprofit group Smart Growth America scored 83 U.S. metropolitan areas on four factors - population density; the degree of mixing of homes, work places and services; the strength of downtowns and other centers of activity; and street connectivity - to develop a sprawl ranking. This graph shows the top-10 and bottom-10 areas based on a composite of all four scores, where 100 represents the average composite score.



Melissa Lewis/Independent-Mail

A focus on economic development in Anderson County has led to a road system that encourages sprawl and increased car time for residents, Mr. Ricketson said. The county has and continues to write needs to link it to the interstate highway system, a boon to industries but an inducement to build neighborhoods farther and farther from commercial centers.

The report included six policy recommendations:

- ◆ invest in needed commercial and increase urban housing;
- ◆ rehabilitate abandoned property;
- ◆ encourage redevelopment in built-up areas;
- ◆ create or nurture mixed-use centers of activity;
- ◆ support growth management strategies; and
- ◆ focus on smart-growth enhancing transportation policies.

Anderson County is looking for ways to promote more mixed-use development in our high-growth areas," Mr. Ricketson said. "Our ongoing Highway 81 North corridor study will focus on ways to promote mixed-use development in an area which has begun to develop under traditional road-subsidy and low-density residential of the highway."

He said investment in infrastructure such as the Beaverdam Creek sewer line would allow more compact development and boost chances for mixed-use development.

Residents must push for that to take place because developers and local bureaucrats tend to follow market curves.

In fact, part of the purpose of the study is to help sell the public on the benefits of mixed-use development, Mr. Chen said.

Not only does it reduce land consumption and the hazards and health problems associated with lots of driving, it's more convenient because it's easier to get goods and services, he said.

We need to change our policies and ordinances to make it easier to build mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly developments," Ms. Eldridge said.

But public officials must do