

Lake Robinson area faces growth issue

Study will aid in the development of expanding community

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A 28-square-mile area north of Greer around Lake Robinson is outpacing population growth for Greenville County as a whole, and experts and residents see more coming.

The population grew by 42 percent between 1990 and 2000, while the county-wide growth was 18.7 percent, according to a new report.

The area around the lake grew another 5.2 percent between 2000 and 2002 to a current population of 6,759, according to the study by Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

The area is bounded by State 11 to the north, State 101 to the east, state highways 290 and 253 to the west and Milford Church Road to the south.

Lake Robinson area resident Tom Faulkner said the study is "the beginning of the next step in a process of organizing people around a concern about preserving the beauty of the environment."

He said residents want "to encourage the public and private sector to have foresight in our planning and development efforts such that we don't experience anything close to Woodruff Road again."

The rapid population growth on the county's Eastside overwhelmed Woodruff Road and nearby routes before widening projects relieved congestion.

Faulkner and other Lake Robinson residents concerned about rapid growth initiated the study after organizing into the Lake Robinson Area Alliance in late 2002.

Faulkner said their concern was prompted most immediately by news that the planned Blue Ridge Plantation development, which is being built, will add 1,100 new residences and businesses to the lake area.

"We quickly realized the size of the development was going to have a significant impact on increased traffic and increased demand for services such as schools and other things," Faulkner said.

"It was also to try to work with County Council and other public bodies to anticipate the growth that was coming to our community better than what happened

in the Woodruff Road area."

Since the Lake Robinson Area Alliance wasn't a nonprofit group, its members asked Upstate Forever, a tax-exempt nonprofit organization interested in growth and land-use issues, to submit an application to fund a growth study.

A \$10,000 grant from the John I. Smith Charities paid for the study, and the professional planning firm of Arnett Muldrow did the work.

The 22-page report represents the first time that quantifiable numbers have been generated to put the growth in the Lake Robinson area in perspective.

It details growth trends, such as increases in population, income, traffic and development. It also discloses current land-use information, three growth projection scenarios, options to cope with the growth and other information.

The study's objectives were to "research and document growth trends, engage area residents in a discussion of the future of the area, establish common goals and to propose options to secure those goals."

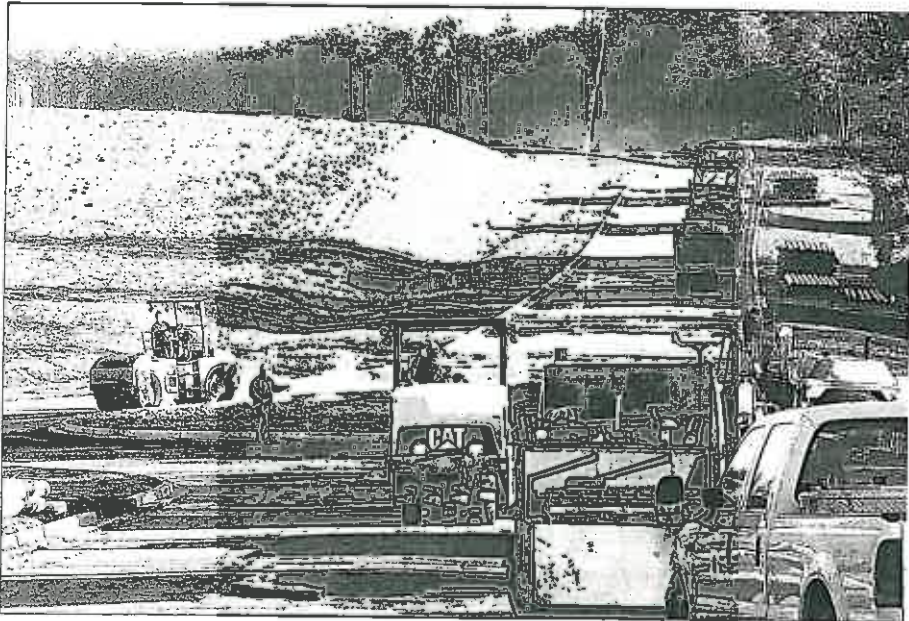
Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, said reasons for the rapid growth include its natural beauty near the mountain and the proximity to good schools and Greer without being inside the city limits.

Tripp Muldrow, of Arnett Muldrow, said the northern part of Greenville County is the next logical place for growth to accelerate even more because other regions are beginning to run out of space.

"You can drive down the roads there and realize the area is growing. It shouldn't come to anyone as a surprise at how rapidly the area is growing," he said.

Greenville County Councilman Joe Dill, who represents a lot of the northern Greenville County area, said he knew when the Greer Commission of Public Works built Lake Robinson that it would just be a matter of time before lots of people would be living around it.

"I see what's going on there, and we're trying to stay ahead of it with police protection, EMS and roads," he said. "It's almost impossible."



More development: Work has begun to build more than 1,000 homes at Blue Ridge Plantation in the Lake Robinson area.