

Rapid growth will require cooperation

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By Jason Zacher
ENVIRONMENTAL WRITER
jzacher@greenvillenews.com

The Upstate will look like Charlotte in 20 years, a new Clemson University study shows, and it will cost taxpayers \$7.5 billion to maintain the current level of services for schools, police and roads.

"If we don't work together then we've invited Charlotte and Atlanta to come down the highway and meet in Greenville," said Barry Nocks, the professor who directed the research.

The report was given to a group of Upstate business leaders and environmentalists Thursday night. That group also heard from a former head of Envision Utah, a Salt Lake City group that has successfully managed growth there — in a community with politics very similar to the Upstate.

Clemson's numbers, which came from the state Budget and Control Board, showed 340,000 more people coming to the 10-county Upstate region by 2025.

"Now, it's 'Pick a spot that's vacant and build on it.' That's not going to work," said Enis Fant, a former county NAACP head and now director of Project GENESIS. "We have to be as conservative as we can and get the best bang for our buck."

At the current rate of growth, Nocks predicted the Upstate will need 3,000 more teachers, 68 new schools, new office space equivalent to downtown Greenville and industrial space the equivalent of 12 BMW plants.

Greg Bell, a Republican state senator in Utah, said the Salt Lake area realized it couldn't afford a similar rapid rate of growth, so the people who live in that area's 10 counties, 90 cities and 157 special service districts came together to protect their quality of life.

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Unrestrained development will ultimately lead to less economic growth, he said. Several of the business leaders in the crowd said they hoped a similar grass-roots community group could start here.

"He looked 20-30 years away and tried to anticipate the problems. Isn't that what our job is," said Sen. David Thomas, R-Greenville. "Rational planning makes sense."