



**WANT TO** [Compare](#)



The Greenville News

[Home](#) • [News](#) • [Communities](#) • [Entertainment](#) • [Classifieds](#) • [Coupons](#) • [Real estate](#) • [Jobs](#) • [Cars](#) • [Custom publications](#) • [Help](#)

Thursday

Search  [Go](#)

**Subscribe Now!**

The Greenville News

## Utah's growth a model for Upstate

Posted Sunday, May 23, 2004 - 12:52 am

By Jason Zacher  
ENVIRONMENTAL WRITER  
[jzacher@greenvillenews.com](mailto:jzacher@greenvillenews.com)

Rural commutes, commonplace a few years ago, are vanishing as new developments sprout from the ground like mushrooms across the Upstate.

There is little or no coordination between the counties, environmentalists and planners say — exactly what Charlotte faced 20 years ago and Atlanta faced 40 years ago.

To keep Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson from sharing the same fate, the Upstate needs to band together to plan growth and try to keep the suburban area of Greenville and Spartanburg from stretching from Cherokee County to Greenwood County, say advocates like Ennis Fant, former Greenville NAACP chairman.

"Who wants to drive an extra 10 miles at \$2.03 a gallon?" he asked.

We can learn from their mistakes, said Clemson professor Barry Nocks.

Nocks presented the findings of a new study he directed on Upstate growth to a joint meeting of business groups and the environmental group Upstate Forever last week.

"We want to maintain our quality of life. We want to maintain our beauty. We want to maintain the character of the area," Nocks said. "The idea is to learn from others' experiences and work together."

The Upstate is in the heart of the I-85 corridor that is booming from the Raleigh-Durham area south to Atlanta and into Alabama. It's the megalopolis of the 21st century, Nocks

[e-mail this story](#)

### Related

**Related Web site**  
• [How Utah is dealing with growth](#)

## Top Jobs



CNC EDM

DRIVERS TRAC, Inc

RNs

Machining Associates

JOB HUNTING Most superior sales

[All Top Jobs](#)

- Home
- News
- Business
- Sports
- Clemson
- USC
- Furman
- Auto racing
- High schools
- SAIL swimming
- Outdoors
- Obituaries
- Opinion
- Elections
- Homes
- Health
- Education
- Features
- Flair
- Weddings
- City People
- Nation/World
- Technology
- Weather
- Communities
- Entertainment
- Classifieds
- Coupons
- Real estate
- Jobs
- Cars
- Custom Publications
- Help

said, just like the Boston to Washington, D.C., corridor was to the last century.

The trend is scary, inevitable and exciting, said Erwin Madrey, chairman of the Greater Greenville Forum.

"The question is whether we want to be like Atlanta is now, or a different Atlanta," Madrey said.

### **Business boom**

It's no longer just scaring environmental groups. Business leaders are starting to worry about where the Upstate is heading — especially since the EPA slapped Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson with a "nonattainment" label for not meeting clean air standards.

The 10-county Upstate region will increase from 1.22 million people today to 1.56 million in 2025, Nocks said. He warned that those are numbers from the state, which he said probably understates the growth.

To meet the needs of all those new residents, Clemson predicts the Upstate will need:

- New office space equivalent to six new 40-story office buildings.
- 71 new 100-room hotels.
- Industrial space equivalent to 135 Wal-Mart Supercenters.
- 68 new schools.
- Retail space the size of six new Haywood malls.
- 350 new parks.

And if the area doesn't change its current building practices, an area the size of three Greenville counties will be built up, Nocks said.

Other communities have seen growth slow as pollution and gridlock rise, said Mickey Lauria, director of Clemson's Center for Community Growth and Change. That means it must be managed, not only to protect the natural environment, but also the urban aesthetics Greenville prizes and the Upstate's business climate, he said.

That's what Utah's Salt Lake City region faced in the mid-1990s, said Utah state Sen. Greg Bell. He said good quality of life will attract new business.

"So much of this is about economic development, not the environment," said Bell, a Republican.

### **Solution in Utah**

Bell is a former director of the Envision Utah project, a grass-roots community effort to coordinate growth up and down Salt Lake City's Interstate 15 corridor.

"You can't afford to develop the way you're developing," Bell told *The Greenville News*.

The evidence is Clemson's estimate that the 340,000 new residents moving to the Upstate will cost \$7.5 billion just to keep infrastructure and services at the level we currently see — and already there is some discontent with road projects.

What happened in Utah over the past seven years could be a good model for the

Upstate, said Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever. The 10-county Salt Lake region closely mirrors the Upstate: Residents are very religious and conservative, there are religious conservative universities, there is booming growth and similar complexity of government.

Bell said Envision Utah had to navigate a political field that included 10 counties, 90 cities and 157 special service tax districts. Add to that more than 500 city and county council members, more than 500 planning commission members and 90 mayors, and he said it was not easy getting everyone on board.

The group spent years rallying public support, and gave the public cold, hard facts, including the one that nearly 70 percent of the people moving to Salt Lake City were their children and grandchildren, not "evil" outsiders from California, Bell said. When they saw those facts, coupled with the cost of unrestrained growth, a majority supported planning the growth, as shown in surveys and polls.

That gave politicians the political cover to enact growth restrictions, Bell said.

"It's going to happen whether you plan for it or not," Bell said. "This beautiful rural life you have is so precious and when it's gone, it's gone."

### Can it be done here?

Smart growth advocates, like Upstate Forever's Wyche, say the Utah approach is a good one. Even state Sen. David Thomas, R-Greenville, said if a conservative Republican like Bell can figure it out, conservatives here can do the same thing.

"We don't have to be jammed in like Atlanta and Charlotte, but it's happening as we speak," Thomas said. "Will we simply let it sprawl out, or will we consciously and methodically plan our growth?"

Upstate growth isn't an unknown or abstract concept anymore, said Sam Kondurous, CEO of the Upstate Alliance, and economic development group.

"We will share this region with several hundred thousand more people in the next 20 years," he said. "We all need to be at the same table."

Getting all of the Upstate's governments, and even the seven different road planning agencies, together will be difficult, as it was in Utah, but it is possible.

"If you put the planning horizon out far enough, people put aside their parochial interests," Bell said. "Everybody wants the same thing."

*Jason Zacher covers the environment and natural resources. He can be reached at 298-4272.*