

Group names Upstate Forever South Carolina's Outstanding Planning Advocate of the Year

GREENVILLE – 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 honored for its efforts and achievements in promoting land use practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection.

A nonprofit membership based organization, Upstate Forever has more than 1,600 members and serves seven Upstate counties including Greenwood and Laurens.

Its activities included 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 Sen. Greg Bell to the Upstate to discuss the Envision Utah program.

The organization 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.

"Upstate Forever has been a strong advocate for sensible growth in the region by broadening the dialogue and offering a more balanced development strategy," he said. "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."

London is also a member of the Pickens County Council.

"We are delighted to receive this prestigious award from the state's premier planning organization," said Diane Eldridge, Upstate Forever's Director of Education and Advocacy. "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."

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

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