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Simpsonville taking page from downtown Greenville

Published: Sunday, April 15, 2007 - 7:13 am

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Downtown Greenville used to be an open space with little atmosphere to draw crowds. No Soby's. No Downtown Alive. No Westin Poinsett.

And when the idea to narrow Main Street to just two lanes came up, some thought it ridiculous.

But today, notes land-planning advocate Brad Wyche of Upstate Forever, the area is a thriving economic machine that offers an eclectic mix of trendy lofts, restaurants and boutiques.

Simpsonville Mayor Dennis Waldrop grew up in Greenville and remembers when city planners planted trees up and down Main Street.

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When work on Simpsonville's \$628,000 streetscape project is completed, he hopes the city will have accomplished something similar to what Greenville residents and visitors enjoy today.

There won't be as many curbside trees but the plan, as it was in Greenville, is to slow traffic and make downtown a place where people can walk.

"Your downtown area is the heart of your city and it's what people remember more than anything else when they (visit)," he said.

The first step is to finish burying utilities along the area where most of the work will be done. Waldrop said Duke Energy complete the work in the next two months.

From there, the project will move forward with landscaping and the placement of turn lanes in the middle of Main Street.

The work will take place around College, Cook, Trade, Hedge and Maple streets.

While city officials see the project as a plus, Linda Curtis, owner of Antiques Unlimited, has a wait-and-see attitude.

She does believe the project is a good idea, but isn't sure the changes would happen fast enough to benefit businesses along Main Street.

Curtis is concerned that businesses could be hurt if the city directs traffic away from them.

She also said customers and people eager to open up shops wouldn't necessarily flock to Simpsonville just because of pretty streets.

"I'm just being realistic and I look at the cold, hard facts," she said. "I'm not saying it's a bad thing. I think anything you can do to improve any area is a good thing."

STORYCHAT 
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