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Suspense builds as Walhalla saga reaches final chapter

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This is the part in a movie where the music grows tense and suspenseful. Walks its fingers up and down your spine.

If it were a movie, this story about Walhalla, we'd be in those last few moments before whatever fate to befall the main character / hero happens.

It's where you find you've forgotten to breathe.

Because you know how movies are. Life, too.

Advertisement

No guarantees.

The thing that someone worked so hard for can slip from a grasp in an instant.

We've seen it a million times in a movie or the newspaper. The thing that was anguished over, defended, held to someone's heart like a baby. Gone.

Or won. Hooray! Break out the crepe paper streamers. Kiss the children and swing them high. Pump your neighbor's hand. He can't stop grinning.

That's what movies and life can do sometimes, make you cry or make you cheer.

Which will it be for Walhalla?

And which will it be for the rest of us?

For basically all the same elements at play in Walhalla are at play every week, maybe every day, somewhere in the Upstate.

Because this area is beautiful -- still forested, much of it. You can look up at the mountains and still see what drew people here 200 years ago and long before that.

We still have fields and wildflowers. You can still see stars at night.

These are gifts.

They are gifts that absolutely floor people from crowded cities of high-rises and tract homes packed elbow-to-elbow for miles.

Where woods and streams were bulldozed and buried under concrete or asphalt so far back no one remembers they used to be there.

Where traffic is loud and heavy. And no one ever sees the stars.

Of course those people want to live here!

They've already begun to come.

South Carolina, one of the smallest states, is only 40th in size but ninth in the nation when it comes to the number of acres being developed, Brad Wyche, of Upstate Forever, notes.

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this story.

The population here is expected to increase by another 25 percent in just the next 15 years.

The state wants to prosper, and the newcomers bring money, plus talent, expertise, ideas.

The trick is to grow without bulldozing every gift until none is left. The trick is to save the best places.

So what Walhalla did is say no to developing Stumphouse Mountain. Some things you keep. You owe them to the generations who'll come after you.

Anyone who followed the town's story knows what reaching that decision took.

Then afterward came a race to complete an application to the South Carolina Conservation Bank in two weeks to make the deadline.

They did it!

Now, after all that, the wait.

The bank meets June 20 in Greenville (location to be announced) to vote on which projects to fund.

You can go. The meeting's public.

Applications up for consideration came from around the state and total \$41 million.

The bank has only about \$18 million to give.
