

# Wynn Again...

by Baxter Wynn

Brad Wyche agonized about leaving the comfort and security of a wonderful law firm with terrific colleagues. The decision was not easy, but Brad was extremely distressed by what he saw taking place in our region. In fact, he was frightened by the terrifying prospect of the Upstate looking like Atlanta within 25 years. His pride in the region's growth and business development was mixed with feelings of dread and frustration over our "inordinate consumption of land and the loss of important natural areas and historic sites."

More alarming to Brad was the fact that few people, including public officials in positions of leadership, were even talking about our looming environmental difficulties. The lack of attention to the unintended negative consequences associated with our poor planning and out-of-control expansion, was astonishing and disconcerting.

In 1998, Brad made the decision to leave the law firm. Compelled by the conviction that there are no excuses for indifference, and inspired by the fact that we cannot change reality by ignoring it, Brad founded Upstate Forever, a non-profit organization that "promotes sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate."

In the course of pursuing his passion, Brad has connected with thousands of others across the Upstate who share his concern and vision. He is an extraordinarily

gifted leader who not only has informed insight and creative ideas, but also possesses a natural ability to sensitize, inspire and motivate others to respond to the environmental challenges facing our region.

In creating Upstate Forever, Brad has given us a pathway for positive and meaningful involvement. Nearly 1,800 members of this growing organization are concentrating energy and resources on various issues, including working with landowners to protect significant properties and resources, promoting economically, socially, and environmentally sound growth, and working to improve the quality of air and water throughout the Upstate.

Brad Wyche is pro-business. He is in favor of the growth and business development our region is fortunate enough to be experiencing, but also believes fervently in the necessity of smart and sensible growth, creating and sticking to development plans that enhance, rather than diminish, our quality of life. In his view, being pro-business does not mean rolling over (and rolling out a red carpet) for every new development opportunity that comes our way, regardless of potential long-term, negative consequences. He believes it is absolutely essential for us to rise to the challenge of becoming "a region that prospers both economically and environmentally."

What do we want things to look like? How do we envision our community, our region? What do we want to leave for our children, grandchildren and for all future generations who will live in the Upstate? These are questions with which Brad encourages us to struggle. He is frustrated by the fact that it seems to be very difficult for citizens, and especially some government

officials, to look at issues from a long-term perspective. He is equally frustrated by the lack of "big-picture thinking." The existence of so many water, sewer, school and other special-purpose districts – what he terms a dysfunctional system of government – creates resistance to looking at the big picture. "It is regrettable that so few are looking at the big picture, when the reality is we live, work and function as a region." Brad believes that the time to make wise and careful decisions that will protect and enhance the quality of life for future generations in the Upstate, is now!

Alongside feelings of frustration, there are many hopeful signs. Brad is encouraged by the fact that there is a trend toward electing public officials with a pro-planning, pro-growth management platform. He cites officials such as Butch Kirven, Jim Burns, Cort Flint and Diane Eldridge, as examples of strong leaders who are in the right place to make crucial, long-term decisions. Brad also finds hope in seeing an increase interest in providing funding for parks, conservation and green spaces.

Congratulations Brad, and thank you for having the courage to follow your dream. You have become a strong and clear voice for a better and smarter way to grow. ■

For more information, contact [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org)

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