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Upstate Forever is growing concern

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Upstate Forever, a nonprofit organization founded by local attorney Brad Wyche in 1998 to promote sensible growth and protect special places, has grown.

Altogether, the organization, which started with a handful of members has grown to a membership of 2,200 and 18 staffers, according to Wyche. Three new positions were just added.

Upstate Forever has offices in Greenville and Spartanburg.

R. Carter Smith, CEO of Spartanburg County Economic Development Corp., said, "As we all move forward we all will be more interested in assuring quality growth so that our areas will remain a place where people will enjoy living and more people will want to come and live."

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James Wilkins, Furman University's sustainability coordinator said that Upstate Forever has "been able to make clear that they're not against growing, but they are for really deep thinking about growth and what's the best way to do it -- for the environment, for our people, for the local economy -- to try to balance all of those and try to have as little trade-off as possible."

Wyche said, "We can accommodate population growth without becoming a place like Atlanta."

He said it's "very, very encouraging" that there's a growing interest in green development.

"I think a lot of people are very distressed at development patterns that are taking place -- how many beautiful areas are being paved over and lost, how we have not done a good job at establishing strong development standards," he said.

"Businesses want to be in this market, and we can absolutely establish very high standards," he said.

He called growth and development challenges "immense," and said it takes many people and organizations working together, being strategic about the placement of new roads, schools and water lines to create sustainable communities.

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