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# Uncontrolled growth

## Clemson study illustrates the need for growth management

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Urban sprawl will take over 1.5 million acres of the Upstate unless local governments take steps to manage growth, according to Clemson University researchers.

The Clemson study looked at patterns of growth in the Upstate and expanded those trends into the future.

The problem is not the growth itself. The region needs to grow to have a successful economy. The problem is how the region is likely to grow if the counties that make up the Upstate fail to plan for that growth and manage it.

The basic problem is that we are consuming much more land than we need to accommodate new people. The population is growing more slowly than the pace at which we are paving over land.

For much of the region's history, the amount of developed land increased by 0.5 percent for every percentage point the population increased. That ratio grew in the 1990s. Throughout that decade, the amount of developed land increased 5 percent for every percentage point increase in the population.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Upstate's population increased 15 percent, but the amount of developed land increased 80 percent. That growth pattern is not sustainable. It creates the kind of traffic patterns and inefficient use of natural resources that plague the Atlanta area.

The problem is avoidable. The people of the Upstate have the ability to direct the future of their communities, to decide what they want those communities to become.

The key is to plan and manage growth. County councils should look at the management methods suggested by Upstate Forever, a citizens group promoting sustainable development that released the Clemson report.

Those options include countywide zoning, trade in development credits and promoting and providing incentives for abandoned properties to be redeveloped.

Many of these measures were once taboos in this region. They were seen as heavy-handed government interference with the rights of property owners. Those times have changed. Homeowners and neighborhoods have seen the dangers of unplanned and unrestrained growth. They have come to recognize that growth management tools protect the interests of property owners.

These are the tools that the communities of the Upstate can use to plan and protect their future. They should have been implemented long ago. County councils can no longer waste any more time. They must act to channel growth where it is needed while protecting neighborhoods, the region's natural resources and the quality of life of its residents.

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