
Upstate Forever, a nonprofit that promotes sensible growth and

30-40 percent savings on energy bills.

land protection in nine Upstate counties, celebrated its 10th anniversary this week.

The group has protected more than 10,000 acres of Upstate land and brought the energy-efficient EarthCraft homes program to the state.

"If you asked me in 1998 if we would have 3,300 members, 18 staff and two offices I would have said, 'No way,'" said Brad Wyche, who founded the nonprofit after leaving his family's law firm a decade ago.

Wyche says he hopes Upstate Forever will have 10,000 members in another 10 years, at least two more offices and another 100,000 acres saved.

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As part of its 10th anniversary celebration, Upstate Forever is planning a 10-site conservation easement property tour in October. On Sept. 16 the organization will host a 10-course locally grown meal, and on Nov. 1 it will hold a 10k Swamp Rabbit Tram-Trail run/walk.

Homes in Upstate South Carolina are increasingly going green, according to Angela Viney, director of Sustainable Communities in the Spartanburg office of Upstate Forever.

The Elements, a new condominium and townhome community in Greenville, is being built by Nick Gilley of TRV Developments, according to EarthCraft and Energy Star standards.

Water runoff is drained from the roof and stored under a parking area, rainwater is collected for use in garden plots, and lumber used in the project was harvested from sustainable forests, meaning that for every tree cut down, two new ones are planted.

Underbrush that can't be used is ground up and used as mulch, and instead of hauling away excess shingles, the company grinds them up to use as a subbase under the street. Carpets used in the homes are 100 percent recycled, and paints have no volatile organic compounds. The company says homes are built to result in a