



October 19, 2008

Greenville needs to stay green

By David Shi and Minor Shaw

Why is it so important to keep the green in Greenville? The natural beauty of the Upstate is one of our region's greatest assets. Visitors frequently comment about the variety and abundance of so many majestic trees in the Greenville area, including Main Street itself. In addition, stately trees are an indicator of the health of a community.

Trees combat pollution and help us avoid the chronic smog and congestion problems that have accompanied uncontrolled growth in cities like Atlanta and Houston. Finally, legacy trees in and of themselves enhance our quality of life. We relish their magnificence, their colors, their power and their presence. Stately trees help elevate our thoughts, inspire our reflections, and lift our spirits. As the old Welsh proverb stresses, "Those who plant a tree plant a hope as well."

Four years ago, we had the privilege of chairing a unique community-wide planning process called Vision 2025 (it is available on-line at www.greenvillevision2025.com). That process entailed a comprehensive, year-long effort to create a dynamic long-range plan for improving the quality of life in Greenville. Hundreds of people from the community participated in the public forums and the planning sessions. The results were both fulfilling and compelling.

Several of the initiatives in the Vision 2025 plan have already been implemented. Others are well under way, thanks to the leadership provided by Greenville Forward, the nonprofit organization created to facilitate the implementation of Vision 2025.

One of the primary themes of the Vision 2025 plan is to "Keep the Green in Greenville." Doing so is essential to our future. Throughout the visioning process, people from all walks of life stressed the need for Greenville to sustain its distinctive natural beauty while promoting enlightened development and growth.

Over the years many organizations have emerged to help "keep the green in Greenville" by promoting the planting of so-called legacy trees, planting gardens and landscaping major intersections. They include Trees Greenville, the Greenville Tree Foundation, Upstate Forever, Friends of the Reedy, Greenville Forward, the Greenville County Recreation District, Furman University, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club and the Greenville Master Gardeners.

In recent weeks, these and other groups have created a new entity called The Green Umbrella. Its purpose is to "keep the green in Greenville" by coordinating and championing the efforts of community groups to enhance Greenville County's diverse, vibrant natural landscape. Its first major initiative will be to promote the planting of "legacy trees," hardwood trees that live for 100 years or more. The Green Umbrella will work with other organizations and agencies to help inform the community about the importance of such trees in keeping Greenville so beautiful. The Green Umbrella will also leverage other partnerships and resources from participating organizations to undertake similar projects designed to make Greenville an even more attractive place to live and work.

On Friday, the new Green Umbrella organization will sponsor a day-long symposium at the Younts Conference Center at Furman University. The title of the symposium is "The Greening of Greenville: Embarking on a Healthier Future." The morning speakers will include Marcia Bansley, the executive director of Trees Atlanta; Richard Webel, one of the nation's leading landscape designers and land

planners; Jeffery Allen of the South Carolina Water Resources Center; Vince Graham, developer of the I'On community near Charleston; and James Urban, a nationally prominent urban forester.

After lunch, John Floyd, the editor of Southern Living Magazine, will discuss "Sustainable Gardening" and lead a tour of the Cliffs Cottage at Furman, Southern Living Magazine's Showcase Home. For more details, call 294-2185 or visit the Green Umbrella Web site at www.furman.edu/hortsym/.

The symposium is open to the public, so please join us for this exciting program and help us celebrate the latest initiative growing out of the Vision 2025 plan. With the launching of the Green Umbrella, we will continue to keep the green in Greenville -- and even make it greener!
