

Forever Green

Upstate conservation group converts timeworn home into earth-friendly offices

Looking around the brightly lit offices of local nonprofit Upstate Forever, one might not notice that nearly every element of the building, from its doorframes to the brick paths, has a former life. The conference room shelves were once sunflowers nodding in a field. Decades ago the heart-pine flooring supported machinery and workers in Upstate textile mills. And the director's office floors—a mosaic of earth tones—were once lowly shipping pallets.

Tucked into downtown's Petigru Historic District, Upstate Forever's offices are housed in a 1916 single-family home.

When the nonprofit bought the space in the summer of 2007, it had been vacant for more than twenty years and suffered from fire and termite damage, asbestos, and

rotten woodwork.

Over the course of fourteen months, more than thirty individuals and companies (many of them local) gutted the house—diverting 75 percent of the waste away from the landfill—and performed what they call a "green retrofit." Now, the staff of twenty works in an office that boasts solar panels, which provide one-quarter of the building's electricity, a green roof featuring living plants, nine separate temperature zones, and rain barrels for irrigation of the native-species landscaping.

The nonprofit's director, Brad Wyche, says making an existing building green makes more sense than building new because the old outnumber the new by a hundred to one. Sadly, Upstate Forever's offices represent one of only a handful of green retrofits by businesses inside the city limits—this, despite realizing a 50-percent savings in energy bills in a space that is actually 200 square feet larger than the group's former office. And employees report higher morale and exceptional comfort.

That's one green transformation that's worth the green.

—A.A.M.



All Jazzed Up

Artisphere festival features "explosively hot" ensemble

It's that time of year again, when Upstate artists come out of the woodwork (and watercolors and clay) to showcase their wares at downtown's signature festival,

Artisphere. Main stage performer Suzanne Vega will headline the event. But, making a return appearance as "roving" entertainment on Saturday and Sunday is the Firecracker Jazz

Band. Their shows pay homage to the pioneers of early twentieth century jazz (think Louie Armstrong) with

tunes from Dixieland to New Orleans funk. Trombone player Earl Sachais has backed Sammy Davis Jr., while Firecracker's pianist (who also plays banjo, ukulele, and saw) performs with the fusion band, Squirrel Nut Zippers. With kids activities, international food vendors, and loads of local art for sale—Artisphere promises something for everyone. —H.C.W.



Want to go?

Artisphere takes place in downtown Greenville Friday, May 8-Sunday, May 10. Visit www.artisphere.us or call (864) 271-9355.

PHOTOGRAPHS (2) ABOVE LEFT COURTESY OF UPSTATE FOREVER; PHOTOGRAPH (1) COURTESY OF ARTISPHERE

Datebook

The Magazine of Greenville will be sponsoring the following events. Plan ahead to join us!

What better way to celebrate Mother's Day than running for a good cause?

The **Harbor Run**, benefiting Safe Harbor's shelter and crisis center, provides much-needed support for Upstate victims of domestic violence. Choose from an 8K road race or two-mile fun walk/run. **West End Stadium, 945 S. Main St. Saturday, May 9, 8 a.m. \$20-\$30. (864) 467-1177, www.safeharborsc.org**

Raising money for charities since 1984, the **BI-LO Charity Classic** features a party, breakfast, auctions, and awards banquet. This year's goal is to break 2008's record-breaking totals of more than \$5.6 million raised for 500 charities in four states. **Locations vary. Saturday, June 6-Monday, June 8. \$850. (864) 286-5895, www.bi-locharityclassic.com**