



**Jeanne Brooks**

[jbrooks@greenvillenews.com](mailto:jbrooks@greenvillenews.com)

Columnist

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## Soon, we'll all build like this

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**C**ome walk through the house. They want you to.

They want you to see how the future looks. In this particular case, it looks almost exactly like the present, in a wonderfully renovated 1916 style. Wood floors. Generous front porch.

The décor, is tastefully today. But probably the sun tunnels give you a hint what this house represents: There are only 53 like it in the world, only one other in the state.

"I think we have seven sun tunnels," Brad Wyche says. As a result, "Most people that come in the office think we have a light on," it's that bright without electricity.

The place has lights and electricity, they just aren't needed as much.

Wyche is executive director of Upstate Forever, an organization that, among other things, works to encourage wise use of land and natural resources. The house at 507 Pettigru St. in Greenville is now the nonprofit's main office.

What could be a wiser use of land than reusing what's already built?

Moving day was a year ago, in October, after 14 months of renovations. That counts time spent removing the asbestos that was discovered, repairing damage upstairs from what was likely a 1940s-era fire, also repairing the effects of sitting empty for 25 years.

Then work turned to things that make this house use 57 percent less energy from the grid than a typical house.

One day in the not-so-distant future we'll all look back and wonder why we threw so much money away for so long. Compared to what is possible, such as Upstate Forever's office, it's a little bit like we try to heat our homes in the dead of winter with the doors open.

Insulation is part of the reason 507 Pettigru is so efficient. And "the pay-back on that insulation," Wyche notes, "is 12-18 months. So you get your money back in reduced energy bills." From then on out, "You're putting money in your pocket."

Certain other things help too.

But energy efficiency isn't the only nifty thing. There's plenty more. For one example, Upstate Forever spends zero money to water the yard. It's watered entirely with totally free rainwater collected in two 350-gallon rain barrels. No water bills for that.

Plus inside, 507 Pettigru uses 33.5 percent less water than a typical building.

How the renovation was done also matters. As much as possible was recycled — 76 percent of the construction leftovers that otherwise would've gone to a landfill.

Also, all materials and products used in the renovation — with one exception, Wyche says — came from within a 150-mile radius of Greenville. No mistaking the good in that for the local economy.

The renovated house earned the highest possible certification for green construction. In the world, only 53 other buildings have that.