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# County Council District 4 candidates tackle land use

## Republicans favor few rules for development

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Regulating land use has always been a touchy subject for the Spartanburg County Council - particularly zoning, and particularly in rural areas.

County Council District 4 is largely rural. There, incumbent Rock Adams faces challengers Jane Hall and Terry Knighton on Tuesday. With no Democratic opposition, the Republican winner will take the seat.

Knighton seems to have the strictest approach to land-use regulations - that is, he doesn't want to see any more of them - with Adams and Hall taking the traditional conservative approach along with a "but ..."

Some political observers point out that the old I-don't-want-the-government-telling-me-what-I-can-do-with-my-property mentality is starting to turn around as rampant development begins to encroach on rural areas where that attitude is traditionally found. People who traditionally held that view are starting to feel the need to be protected against development.

And then there's the question of what it would actually mean to implement countywide zoning. The county is in the middle of a long process of having a consultant catalog and analyze its land-use policies and recommend how to move forward. One point the consultant has made is that the county already has a land-use regulation system in place similar to zoning, only it's not called that and there's no map attached to it.

"I am against a lot of these regulations against people trying to develop land, because there's enough government regulation already on the books to cover things," said Knighton, 60. "I'm against a lot of the zoning areas and stuff because it's forcing stuff on people, and I am less government instead of more government."

Knighton says laws on the books, like those aimed at keeping junk cars from cluttering property, are enough.

Adams, 72, said he wouldn't favor zoning, largely on the basis that land-use regulations need to be tailored to specific areas. What works in Cross Anchor, for instance, might not work in Pauline, he says.

But he points to the traffic jam that is Boiling Springs and said something has to be done to prevent that happening elsewhere.

"It's an educational process," Adams said. "The next big boom in Spartanburg County is going to be on the west side, I-85 to the Pelham area. ... We've got to watch it real close to make sure there's not anything that takes away from the property values."

Adams used the affluent Willow Creek subdivision off Highway 101 as an example of the market taking care of itself. In other words, high-value homes cause the neighboring property values to increase, therefore making that land undesirable (and financially unsound) for, say, a junk yard or mobile home park.

He added: "But you can't go out and tell a man how to do with his property, either."

Hall, 55, took a similar stance but qualified it with a need to make sure natural resources are protected. And people with land that, for instance, borders a river need to be protected from vandalism and trespassing from behind - from people who might land there in canoes, or to go camping, she said.

"If something is mine, I need to be able to make the decision as to what I want to do with it," Hall said. "Less government is better government. And I really do feel in this case that we cannot dictate to landowners what they can or cannot do. But that doesn't mean there shouldn't be something in there, that if a housing development goes up, and it's a nice, posh housing development, then you (couldn't) come in next door and put in a junk yard. So, we need to protect other citizens from the devaluation of their homes. It's a catch-22."

Hall said she's heard two arguments about zoning - some people cry out for it in the county, and others say the desire to escape it is why they moved out of the city. A number of public forums are in order before any decision is made, she said.

In February, the nonprofit group Upstate Forever introduced a Clemson University report that said the rate of growth in the Upstate means this area will look like Atlanta by 2030 unless planners take a more "sensible" approach. Last month, the group formally presented that report to county council, which led to an awkward discussion and no action taken.

