

UPSTATE UPDATE NUMBER 10 (September 29, 2000)

The Electronic Bulletin to the Members of Upstate Forever

**Come *Bid and Boogie* at
Upstate Forever's Annual Party and Silent Auction
Tuesday, October 24 7 pm – 11 pm**

Some of the Silent Auction Include:

- **Dinner for ten prepared by well known caterer Don Rizer and served by none other than the Upstate Forever staff**
- **Two one-week stays in the mountains**
- **Original framed photograph by Tommy Wyche**
- **Guided and catered weekend canoe trip on the Edisto River**
- **Perception kayaks**
- **Outfit from Alley Cat**
- **Original artwork by Diane Hopkins Hughs**
- **Case of wine**
- **And much, much more!!**

It's not to late to donate an item to the auction. Please contact Elizabeth Lyons by phone at 233-2562, ext. 307, or by email at elyons@palmettoexpo.com

1. Greenville County Planning Commission Approves Amendments to Clustered and Open Space Development Ordinance. Your Help Is Needed To Strengthen The Ordinance!

For several months, Upstate Forever has been urging Greenville County Council to extend the County's Clustered and Open Space Development Ordinance to the two new rural zoning districts. See Upstate Updates No. 1 and 7. An important step in that direction was taken on Wednesday of this week when the Greenville County Planning Commission approved amendments to the ordinance that would allow clustered developments in these districts. The amendments will now be considered by the County Council's Public Service and Development Committee.

Upstate Forever supports the amendments with one exception, and that involves the minimum percentage of open space in the RR-3 district (one unit per three acres). We have urged local officials to adopt 70 per cent for this district, but the Planning Commission approved only 50 per cent. (Three of the nine Commissioners voted for 70 per cent). It is in the low density rural areas that we have our best opportunity to protect truly significant amounts of open space, and it should not be difficult to meet the 70 per cent requirement in the RR-3 district. On a 100-acre tract, for example, that would still give the developer almost one acre for every lot (70 acres set aside as open space; the 33 permitted houses would then be built on the remaining 30 acres).

Please call or write the members of the County Council Public Service and Development Committee to urge them to increase the amount of open space to 70 per cent in the RR-3 district and then to approve the amendments to the ordinance. The members are:

C. Wade Cleveland, Chairman
P.O. Box 2848
Greenville, SC 29602
Home: 288-2290
Fax: 241-4140

Allen Lee "Bunk" Johnson
4 Welcome View Drive
Greenville, SC 29611
Home: 269-6348
Fax: 269-6348

Mark C. Kingsbury
12 Blanche Dr.
Greenville, SC 29617
Home: 294-6586
Fax: 294-6586

Xanthene S. Norris
209 Ackley Road
Greenville, SC 29607
Home: 271-6798
Fax: 271-6798

Dana Sullivan
18 Meadowsweet Lane
Greenville, SC 29615
Fax: 467-7358

2. *Pickens County Council Hosts Growth Summit*

Approximately 35 Pickens County policy makers and community leaders gathered in Clemson for a summit on planning and growth last weekend. Dr. Terrence Farris of Clemson University's City and Regional Planning program kicked off the conference with an overview of basic smart growth principles. Dr. Farris emphasized the need for long-range planning on a regional basis, citing as an example the Upstate where numerous municipalities, special service districts, and school districts make decisions that impact neighboring communities. Dr. Farris told the group that planning for the future is up to them – they are charged with the responsibility to look ahead, predict growth trends, and put policies into place that will guide the county toward the kind of future they envision for their citizens.

Wes Cooler, chairman of the Pickens County Planning Commission, presented a summary of the county's proposed Performance Zoning Standards Ordinance, which would establish stricter regulation of certain land use activities in the county. The product of a cooperative effort involving citizens, planning commissioners and staff, the new ordinance, which was highlighted in Upstate Update Number 9, was well received by Summit attendees, who viewed it as a step in the right direction.

Several in the audience expressed concern that some of Pickens County's recent rapid growth has had consequences that could have been avoided by better planning and regulations. For example, there are no current regulations that protect riparian zones, the critical protective buffers at the edges of all streams, rivers and lakes. The proposed performance standards require a 100-foot setback at the shores of Lakes Hartwell, Jocassee and Keowee and set restrictions on the removal of trees larger than 6 inches in diameter. In addition, the proposed ordinance addresses such issues as mobile home park requirements, cell towers, and signage.

Following Mr. Cooler's presentation, Donna London of the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University facilitated a discussion of the key planning issues in Pickens County. Those in attendance were asked to share their ideas about where planning efforts in Pickens County should place the most emphasis.

The issues were listed and later ranked by the group in order of importance. Overwhelmingly, the number one issue was that of communication, especially as it relates to the coordination of infrastructure plans made by all stakeholders. The Summit attendees agreed that the special service districts, school districts, water and sewer providers, and municipalities in the counties should meet on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate plans. The consensus of the group was that such meetings will lead to smarter growth in the county.

Environmental issues emerged as a top concern as well. Discussions centered around topics like protection of water quality, stormwater management, loss of scenic vistas, and the protection of open spaces. It was generally agreed that many of the other issues addressed by the group were directly or indirectly tied to the protection of the environment, such as solid waste disposal and the development of recreational opportunities. The group expressed their desire to address these issues as the county moves forward with a plan for its future.

Upstate Forever commends the Pickens County Council for arranging the planning summit and would like to see similar conferences undertaken in every upstate county. We are proud, too, that each of the summit's three presenters is a member of our organization, a fact that underscores the importance and credibility of Upstate Forever's voice on land use and growth issues.

3. *Making Rail A Reality*

About 250 community leaders and interested citizens convened in Greenville last Tuesday for the Rail Summit 2000, hosted by the Upstate's Chambers of Commerce. In welcoming the audience, Greenville County Council Chairman Dozier Brooks set the tone for the meeting by stating that "roads are not the answer" to the region's transportation problems and that rail must be established as a feasible alternative.

Other speakers included Dennis Rash, Senior Vice President of Bank of America in Charlotte, who stressed the importance of addressing transportation on a regional basis. Mr. Rash pointed out that traffic congestion and poor air quality can drive economic development out of a community and stated that “What we are selling in our region is quality of life. If we lose that, business will go someplace else.” Mr. Rash urged local governments to implement smart growth principles like higher density development, limiting expanding infrastructure that contributes to sprawl, and reducing traffic on roadways, all of which will help the region maintain its high level of economic success by protecting the very resources that make it attractive to new industry and residents.

Transportation consultant and Atlanta City Council member Doug Alexander emphasized that rail can offer relief to growing congestion on roadways, but that people will ride trains only if service is reliable, trains are frequent, and the cost is reasonable. South Carolina Department of Transportation Executive Director Betty Mabry cited funding as the biggest hurdle facing alternative transportation in the state. Ms. Mabry emphasized the need for a new funding source to develop plans for a rail system in South Carolina, stating that current transportation funding is woefully inadequate and cannot even maintain the state’s current road system. No state or federal funds are available for rail studies or infrastructure, and new, creative methods of financing will have to be devised before rail is a reality in this state.

Upstate Forever salutes the Chambers of Commerce for their hard work and foresight in presenting the Upstate Rail Summit 2000. This is just the type of forum that is needed to inform the public about ways to reduce our reliance on the automobile.

4. Major Steps Taken Toward Removal Of Camperdown Bridge

In 1960, a massive structure of concrete and steel—the Camperdown Bridge—was built directly over Reedy River Falls in downtown Greenville. Today, people visiting the river shake their heads in disbelief and ask, “How could this have happened? How could we have built a bridge right across the most beautiful and distinctive natural resource of the community?”

The answer lies in the attitude most people had about the Reedy River 40 years ago. It was a neglected, abused and polluted resource, and no one cared about it or thought twice about building a bridge over its waterfall.

During the last 10 years, however, the public's attitude about the river has dramatically changed. Over one million people visit Cleveland Park every year, which is now at risk of being loved to death. The famous Reedy River Run takes racers along the river for over two miles. There are weddings at Falls Park; local residents are fishing below the Lower Falls; there is even a kayak course on the river! Developers are scrambling to draw up plans for projects near the river.

We now realize that the Camperdown Bridge was a bad mistake. Rather than having to live with that mistake forever, community leaders are taking steps to correct it by removing the bridge. Probably the most difficult hurdle was cleared last week when the Greenville Area Transportation Study Committee (GRATS) unanimously approved a recommendation to the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to take the bridge out of the State highway system and transfer it to the City of Greenville. Yesterday SCDOT officials approved GRATS' recommendation and transferred authority over the bridge to the City. The next step is a public hearing on removing it, after which the City Council will make a final decision. Indications are that most, if not all, of the City Council members support its removal.

In Old Greenville, Charles David writes, "The Falls were the one thing that Greenville folk was prouder of than anything else. When a stranger arrived in town and before his name was dry on the hotel register, he was taken down to see Reedy River Falls, which Greenville folk believed to be second only to Niagra." Hopefully, in just a few months, we will see this hideous structure removed and the beauty and dignity of this special place restored. And we will be proud again.

5. *Anderson Continues To Impress.*

In prior Upstate Updates, we have written about the remarkable progress being made in Anderson on petition zoning. See Upstate Update Numbers 2 and 8. But there are many other good things happening in the county. A new county library recently opened. Yesterday's Greenville

News reported that the county is seriously studying the feasibility of a commuter line between Anderson and Clemson. The City of Anderson recently received the coveted designation as an All-America City. The Anderson Independent said it well:

“The All-America designation was not because Anderson is perfect, but because Anderson is trying to be better. It’s a community where we have much to teach each other, and yet much to learn. Anderson is more than a spot on a map of South Carolina; it’s a place where people of different ages and races and dreams have chosen to put down something permanent, to add their individual histories to the long history of the area.” [September 22, 2000]

Anderson----keep up the great work!!

6. *Upstate Forever Board Member Named To Greenville County Planning Commission.*

Upstate Forever Board member Joan Peters was recently appointed by County Council to the Greenville County Planning Commission. Joan has a degree in civil engineering from Clemson and is the owner of her own engineering consulting firm, J. Peters & Associates. Congratulations, Joan!!

7. *Quote of the Week*

“No one goes there anymore because it’s too crowded.”

Yogi Berra