

UPSTATE UPDATE NUMBER 11
October 16, 2000

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
- Cocktail Party for 10 by Ambrosia
- 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
- And much, much more!!

It's not to late to donate an item to the auction. Please
Contact Elizabeth Lyons by phone at 233-2652, ext. 307
or by email at elyons@palmettoexpo.com

1. *DAGG GONE!! WHAT WENT WRONG??*

The Development Association of Greater Greenville (DAGG) seemed like such a wonderful idea: a non-profit organization supported by both Greenville City Council and Greenville County Council to lead the way in planning the development of the Reedy River corridor from downtown to the river's headwaters near Travelers Rest.

Its 11-person Board of Directors included Greenville Mayor Knox White, Greenville County Council Chairman Dozier Brooks, and representatives from Greenville's "West Side." DAGG seemed to personify what "working together" is all about.

But over the last few weeks, everything has fallen apart. It has been like watching a plane smoothly take off, only to suddenly and horribly come crashing down. Mayor White removed his five appointees to DAGG, but Chairman Brooks insisted that DAGG would continue without them. Then, Southern Infrastructure, the company seeking to develop several projects in the corridor, sued the City and persuaded the Greenville County Court of Common Pleas to issue a temporary restraining order preventing the City from taking any action in controlling land use along the river. Mr. Brooks himself filed an affidavit in support of the lawsuit against the City! Southern Infrastructure's attorneys added fuel to the fire by accusing Greenville City Council member Garry Coulter of slander.

Wow! How did this happen? What went wrong?

DAGG made a critical mistake when it issued on June 1 of this year an RFP seeking "creative proposals" on how to develop the Reedy River Corridor. It was an unusual RFP to say the least—an RFP typically seeks proposals on very specific projects, such as a highway or school building.

Only one developer, Southern Infrastructure, responded to the RFP. (There was another response but it was more in the nature of an objection to the RFP than a proposal). In its response, Southern Infrastructure proposed the following plan for the area on the west side of the Reedy between Academy and Willard Streets: a new Triple A baseball stadium, a new site for the Greenville Zoo, a Disney-like virtual reality restaurant and a park. An IMAX theatre was mentioned as a serious possibility. The total estimated cost: \$110 million.

The proposal created a firestorm in the community. Greenville Zoo officials and supporters cried foul, saying they were not consulted on the plan. Leaders in Richmond, Virginia, where the Atlanta Braves' Triple A team has played for years, became quite upset. Residents in the Golden Strip area objected to moving the existing baseball stadium on Mauldin Road where they have been attending games for years. Many in the community wondered if virtual reality restaurants and IMAX theatres would result in "Myrtle Beach on the Reedy."

Upstate Forever objected too. We have strongly supported a proposal made over two years ago to establish a magnificent new 80-acre public park along the Reedy's flood plain between Westfield and Willard Streets. The Reedy would be the centerpiece of the park, surrounded by a wetland area, recreational lakes, walking trails and plenty of green space. This park would not only protect the river but it would be a huge boost to the economic revitalization of Greenville's West Side. For the last two years, we have saying over and over, "Whatever you do, keep the buildings and the asphalt out the flood plain! Keep the area green!"

Unfortunately, the Southern Infrastructure plan has the zoo and most of the parking lot for the baseball stadium in the flood plain. (No one has ever answered the question, "What do you do with the animals when it floods?"). Moreover, the park, squeezed between the zoo and the parking lot, stops at the western bank of the Reedy. There is no proposal at all for the other side of the river.

In the middle of this community outcry, DAGG made another bad move. They actually took a vote on approving Southern Infrastructure as the developer. The Board deadlocked 4 to 4 (3 of the members were absent), but the closeness of the vote intensified the community's concern that the river corridor was going to be developed on a "ready, fire, aim" basis. This led to Mayor White removing his appointees to DAGG and the pending litigation.

We need to stop, take a deep breath and start over. No damage has been done. Perhaps some egos have been bruised, but no ground has been broken, no permits have been issued and no commitments have been made. The Reedy is just as beautiful and has just as much potential as it did before DAGG was ever created.

We need to focus on the three following major steps:

1. The City and the County must reconcile their differences and start working together again on what is undoubtedly the most important project in Greenville's history. The Reedy River flows for over 40 miles in Greenville County, from Travelers Rest to the Laurens County line. Protecting the Reedy while properly developing the corridor will require an enormous amount of good will and cooperation

among city and county officials. This is no time for petty political sniping and grandstanding.

2. We already have a master plan for the 80-acre park between Westfield and Willard Streets so *steps can be taken now to make that plan a reality*. Fortunately, the City already owns about half of the land in this area, but we need to begin assembling the rest of the property. One major achievement would be moving the City's public works facility on Hudson Street out of the flood plain.

3. *Of paramount importance is a master plan* for the rest of the Reedy River corridor and Greenville's West Side. Over the last few years, community leaders have been to Portland, Baltimore, Chattanooga, and last month to Birmingham, England and Valencia, Spain to visit the great projects in these cities. The consistent and overriding message from each trip has been to "**PLAN, PLAN, PLAN.**" A master plan that is developed with extensive public input and prepared by qualified experts is the absolute key to the success of this project in Greenville.

In this week's Greenville Journal (Oct. 13-19, p. A4), architect David Moore II, on behalf of himself and the other eight architects who participated in this year's visit to England and Spain, explained it well:

"We believe that if Greenville is going to enjoy the redevelopment successes of Birmingham and Valencia, Greenville must first establish a community vision that can be translated into a county-wide master plan. Through extensive public input, this master plan can identify community-friendly development opportunities not just along our historic waterfront, but also throughout our entire community. To ensure the entire community's interests are addressed, we recommend that this master plan be publicly funded and independent of any current or ongoing development planning.

"We recommend that Greenville secure such a master plan through an open design competition,

or by inviting would-be master planners to respond to a Request for Proposal, which sets forth stringent qualifying requirements. An independent jury consisting of nationally recognized qualified design professionals and diverse

community representatives would then evaluate and select the master planner.

“The selected master planner would then be engaged to develop the master plan with community input that will be vital to ensure a comprehensive community endorsement that is needed for any master plan to survive.”

Mr. Moore is exactly right. A project of such critical importance to our community requires nothing less.

2. Furman University Students In Residence At The “Eco-Cottage”

Eight Furman University sophomores volunteered to be a part of an “eco-experiment” this year to raise environmental awareness on campus. Living in a cottage that has been retrofitted to save energy, the women students are measuring the savings in both energy and dollars.

The Eco-Cottage, located near the lake on Furman’s campus, uses only fluorescent light bulbs and low-impact faucets and toilets. Solar lighting fixtures, energy-efficient windows and doors, and extra insulation have been added to increase energy savings. The university plans to add recycled carpet and vinyl flooring made from recycled drink bottles along with a high-efficiency refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, and dryer.

Most of the time, the cottage runs “off the grid” with power generated by photovoltaic cells that are capable of generating up to 95% of the energy needed to keep the cottage comfortable and to perform everyday household chores such as laundry and dishwashing. When the energy generated by these solar panels is greater than that

needed by the cottage, the excess energy goes into the campus electrical grid and the meter actually runs backwards!

The students have agreed to use only low-impact cleaning products, recycle whenever possible, and to compost their household waste. They use only recycled paper products and limit their energy and water use.

The university is monitoring consumption at the Eco-Cottage and comparing it with other residences that use traditional energy sources and products. According to Furman's Dr. Bill Ranson, the students living in the cottage are providing an example to other students by making a "smaller footprint on the environment." For more information about the project, call Dr. Ranson at 864-294-3364.

Congratulations to Furman and the eight students for showing us what "thinking globally and acting locally" is all about.

3. *Quote of the Week.*

"So tonight we commit ourselves to a process that will be fair and open to all ideas. Nothing is on the table and nothing is off the table. The only goal is a West Greenville, Southernside and a river front that makes us all proud to call Greenville 'home.' "

Greenville Mayor Knox White
October 10, 2000