

UPSTATE UPDATE NUMBER 25

September 4, 2001

1. Upstate Is Being Developed At The Rate Of A New Haywood Mall Every Three Days!!

Land is being developed in the Upstate at the rate of a brand new Haywood Mall about every three days, according to the data compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture.

| LAND DEVELOPMENT IN THE UPSTATE | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| County | Total Area (Acres) | Developed By 1982 | Developed By 1997 | Acres Per Day 1982-1997 | County Rank 1982-1997 | County Rank Overall |
| Anderson County | 484,800 | 76,598 | 103,747 | 4.90 | 8 | 5 |
| Greenville County | 510,100 | 85,697 | 136,197 | 9.22 | 3 | 1 |
| Laurens County | 462,000 | 25,872 | 35,112 | 1.69 | 26 | 22 |
| Oconee County | 431,100 | 33,626 | 49,577 | 2.91 | 18 | 14 |
| Pickens County | 327,600 | 37,346 | 55,692 | 3.35 | 14 | 7 |
| Spartanburg County | 524,300 | 79,169 | 138,415 | 10.82 | 1 | 2 |
| Total Upstate | 2,739,900 | 338,308 | 518,740 | 32.89 | | |
| South Carolina | 19,939,300 | 1,355,872 | 2,093,627 | 134.80 | | |

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Resources Inventory. Data contact: Jeff Goebel (301) 504-2270.

Here is how we made the calculation. As the USDA data indicate, land is being developed in our region at the rate of 32.89 acres per day. Haywood Mall is 88 acres in size. So that's about one new mall every three days.

And that's not all. Four Upstate counties are ranked in the top seven of South Carolina's 46 counties in the amount of land developed from 1982 to 1997: Spartanburg is number 1, Greenville is number 2, Anderson is number 5 and Pickens is number 7. ***We hope this information will be a wake-up call for better land use planning and funded conservation programs in the Upstate.***

During the 1982-97 period, as shown in the chart below, population in the Upstate increased by approximately the same number--33 persons every day. So, during the past 20 years, ***one acre of land was developed for every new person in the Upstate!!***

| POPULATION GROWTH IN THE UPSTATE | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| County | Year | | | Per Day Increase 1980-2000 |
| | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | |
| Anderson County | 133,235 | 145,196 | 165,740 | 4.45 |
| Greenville County | 287,913 | 320,167 | 379,616 | 12.56 |
| Laurens County | 52,214 | 58,092 | 69,567 | 2.38 |
| Oconee County | 48,611 | 57,494 | 66,215 | 2.41 |
| Pickens County | 79,292 | 93,894 | 110,757 | 4.31 |
| Spartanburg County | 201,861 | 226,800 | 253,791 | 7.11 |
| Total Upstate | 803,126 | 901,643 | 1,045,686 | 33.22 |
| South Carolina | 3,121,820 | 3,486,703 | 4,012,012 | 121.9 |

Source: Based on data from U.S. Bureau of Census, Population Census 1980-2000.

The Upstate's present course is eerily similar to the Atlanta region, now one of the nation's worst examples of out-of-control growth. But we have time to change direction and avoid "Atlantification" of the Upstate. Extensive tracts of undeveloped land remain in the region. We must take steps now to acquire, or protect through conservation easements, many of these tracts. It is outrageous that a region growing and changing as rapidly as the Upstate provides almost no funding for acquiring and protecting natural areas, prime farm land, valuable wildlife habitat, and historic sites—the very places that make our region so special.

There are numerous strategies that can help us provide the same services and opportunities to our residents while using fewer of our precious resources. Upstate Forever's Ten Point Plan for Sensible Growth discusses many of these, such as traditional neighborhood developments, concentrating services in the areas where we want growth, alternative transportation, stream buffers, and so forth. See www.upstateforever.org/ten_point_plan.

It is more important than ever that *Upstate Forever* members and concerned citizens urge our local leaders to establish well funded conservation programs and to implement the measures explained in our Ten Point Plan. Growth is inevitable, but let's grow it in a way that conserves our natural resources, saves land, and enhances the quality of life for everyone!

2. Upstate Forever Urges Greenville County School Board To Establish Specific Green Standards For School Construction Project.

As we reported in our last Upstate Update, the Greenville County School Board approved an additional \$2 million to incorporate “green thinking” into the massive school construction project. Last week we sent the following letter to Institutional Resources (the firm supervising the project) and the School Board, recommending how a substantial portion of these funds should be spent:

“As you know, Upstate Forever is keenly interested in how the Greenville County School Facilities Plan is implemented. This massive project will determine the kinds of places where millions of students in our county will learn for decades to come. We have a truly historic opportunity to implement the project in a way that will improve student performance, reduce energy costs, and set the standard for school construction projects throughout the country.”

“In March of this year, we presented our “Green Schools for Greenville” proposal to Institutional Resources and the School Board, urging the Board to require that all work on the project meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards established by the United States Green Building Council. The LEED program has been approved for many projects around the country, including Hipp Hall at Furman University.”

“In May, we arranged for representatives of both the School District and Institutional Resources to visit three green schools in the Raleigh, North Carolina area that were designed by Innovative Design, Inc., one of the nation’s leading sustainable architecture and design firms. Headed by architect Mike Nicklas, Innovative Design has worked with school districts throughout the country to design schools that incorporate sound principles of green development and thus provide long-lasting benefits to students and teachers. We then arranged for Mr. Nicklas to present a lecture on green schools at the Governor’s School on May 29. Over 100 persons attended.”

“We are disappointed that the School Board, in authorizing the project, did not accept our recommendation to adopt the LEED standards. But we are encouraged that the Board did approve Institutional Resources’ request for an additional \$2 million to incorporate “green thinking” into the

project. We understand that Institutional Resources will be making a recommendation to the School Board in the near future on exactly how these funds should be expended.”

“If the LEED standards are not adopted, we strongly urge Institutional Resources and the School Board to use some of the \$2 million to retain an expert to develop a specific set of green standards for the project that are at least as stringent as LEED. As you know, other school authorities have done this, such as the State of Texas and Clarke County, Nevada.”

“It is essential that a rigorous set of green standards govern this monumental project from beginning to end. This will ensure that we are not just “thinking” about it, but actually doing it! The end result will be facilities that cost less to operate, are cleaner and healthier, and improve student performance. A win-win-win!”

“Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to continue working with you and the School Board on this important project.”

3. Shouldn't Spartanburg County At Least Study Consolidating Some Of Its Seven School Districts?

In an August 19 editorial entitled “Closed Minds,” the Spartanburg Herald-Journal criticized school superintendents and board members for refusing even to consider consolidating some of the county’s seven school districts. The editorial points out that consolidation may well result in a more efficient and cost effective school system in the county.

Upstate Forever Executive Director Brad Wyche weighed in on the issue in a letter to the editor that was printed in the August 24 paper. We emphasized the growth and land use benefits that may result from consolidation:

“I wholeheartedly agree with your August 19 editorial that the legislative delegation should consider consolidating some of Spartanburg County’s seven school districts. One good example of why consolidation might make sense is the financial plight of District 1. Some people believe that the solution is to “increase the tax base” by attracting a lot of growth and development to District 1. That

approach, however, contravenes the Spartanburg County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which designates about half of the entire district as “rural residential.”

“Wouldn’t it be a much better idea to consolidate District 1 with the financially healthy District 5? This could solve District 1’s problems, without destroying the beauty and quality of life in the northern part of the county. At least it’s worth serious study.”

4. West Georgia Corridor Study Shows Why Zoning Is Essential.

The staff of the Greenville County Planning Commission is drafting a detailed land use plan for the West Georgia Road corridor, one of the fastest growing areas in the Upstate. The plan is important in its own right, but we believe it also serves as an excellent example of why zoning is absolutely essential to effective land use planning.

Jimmy Forbes, Executive Director of the Planning Commission, presented a draft of the plan to the Commission at its July meeting. The plan identifies current land uses and zoning, existing traffic counts, current sewer flows, existing water and sewer lines, school capacities and current numbers of students. Based on these findings and reliable modeling techniques, Mr. Forbes and his staff presented three basic “build-out” scenarios and the impact each would have on roads, water, sewer, and schools. (The plan has one glaring defect in the absence of any protection of open space, but hopefully that will be corrected as work continues on the draft).

The basic premise of the entire plan is that the area is zoned. Thus, the build out scenarios are based on different assumptions about zoning. One scenario analyzes the situation if no changes are made in current zoning. The other two scenarios assume that certain changes are made in the zoning.

For example, under the existing zoning scenario, the plan states that at “build out” there will be approximately 8,000 new residences in the corridor and approximately 5,900 new school students. With this information, the School District and the infrastructure providers can take steps now and be ready for this growth.

Without zoning, none of this would be possible! It would be impossible to predict a build out scenario with any reasonable degree of certainty. Zoning is the essential tool that gives local officials and service providers the ability to plan for growth and to properly serve a growing population.

5. *Quote of the Week.*

“It is up to the people of the Upstate to determine what kind of region we want to create for the future. Our elected leaders on the local and state level should take the initiative to engage people in this discussion. As citizens, we can collectively decide what type of communities we want to develop, or we can simply let chance create our future.”

Spartanburg Herald-Journal
August 8, 2001