

## UPSTATE UPDATE 29

January 7, 2002

As the New Year begins, it's time to reflect on some of the positive developments on land use, conservation and sustainable development issues in the Upstate during 2001. Here's our Top 10 list (not necessarily in order of importance):

### ***1. All Aboard For Alternative Transportation in Anderson County!***

Anderson County emerged this year as a true champion for alternative transportation. Its "4-U transit system" is now a reality, as buses will soon begin running between Anderson College, Tri-County Technical College, Clemson University and Southern Wesleyan University.

But the county did not stop there. It has unveiled an exciting plan for a light rail system linking Anderson and Clemson, with several stops along the way. The county has obtained a \$1.5 million federal grant for the project, \$1 million of which is allocated for the light rail system and the remainder for the bus system.

Representative John Scott of Columbia said it well: "Anderson County is way ahead and has set a precedent and direction the state needs to go in to establish light rail." Anderson Independent, Dec. 16, 2001, p. 9A.

*Upstate Forever* hopes that one of the next steps will be the development of an overlay zoning district along the rail corridor, which will result in a sufficient density of population to make the light rail system economically feasible.

### ***2. Clemson Team Rescues Reedy River.***

Early last year a City-County entity known as the Development Association of Greater Greenville (DAGG) stumbled badly in trying to manage the development of the Reedy River corridor in the Greenville area (from Travelers Rest to Lake Conestee). DAGG came within one vote of approving the construction of a new baseball stadium and the relocation of the Greenville Zoo near the river, even though the public had been given no

opportunity to comment on the proposal. A firestorm of criticism erupted in the community, accusations of slander were made, and lawsuits were filed.

It was a dark day in Greenville, but the City and the County made the wise decision to turn to Clemson University for assistance. It would have been perfectly understandable if Clemson had declined to step into the middle of this mess, but thank goodness they accepted the challenge! Led by Dr. Barry Nocks, an outstanding group of Clemson faculty and students went to work, restored calm in the community, held many meetings throughout the county to hear from the public, interviewed over 100 stakeholders, and last month presented a master plan for the Reedy River corridor.

The plan is an inspiring blueprint for both protecting the river and developing the corridor. It recommends, among other things, a new 80-acre “Meadowbrook Park” along the river in Greenville’s Westside; a 16-mile greenway along the river from Travelers Rest to Lake Conestee, with linking pedestrian and bicycling paths next to the river’s major tributaries; reuse of the abandoned textile mills in the area; mixed use development in the downtown area near the river; leaving the baseball stadium where it is and creating a recreational and educational center at the nearby Lake Conestee.

Thank you, Clemson, for putting us on the right track. Now, let’s make the plan a reality!

**3. *Laurens County Gives First and Second Reading Approval To A Zoning Ordinance And Launches A Community-Based Zoning Initiative.***

November 27, 2001 was an historic day for Laurens County. After decades of bitter debate about zoning, its County Council approved, on first reading and by a vote of 6 to 1, a zoning ordinance for the county. The Council approved the ordinance on second reading last month, and third and final reading will hopefully take place later this month. What would have been unimaginable a few years ago has now happened—the Laurens County Council has voted in favor of zoning!

And that’s not all. The Laurens County Planning Commission will be launching soon a community-based zoning program to explain what the ordinance means and how it would work. The Commission will host several

community meetings in each of the county's 17 fire districts, beginning in the Hickory Tavern district. Based on comments received at the first meeting, the Commission staff will draft a zoning map for the district and present it for public review and comment at a second meeting. The next step would be a referendum in the district to vote on the map.

The program uses the same concept of community outreach and education that has proven successful in implementing zoning in several areas of Anderson County. Stay tuned to Upstate Update and we'll keep you posted on Laurens County's progress!

#### ***4. Green Schools For The Upstate!***

In March of last year, *Upstate Forever* presented its "Green Schools for Greenville" proposal to the School Board and Institutional Resources for the massive school construction project which will involve the building and renovation of over 60 schools in Greenville County. We also brought Mike Nicklas, one of the nation's leading experts on green schools, to the Upstate to present a lecture on the subject at the Governor's School.

A green school may cost a little more to construct, but this additional cost is quickly recouped through reduced energy costs. At the Durant Middle School in Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, the energy savings resulting from the use of natural daylighting paid for the additional \$115,000 in construction costs in just the first two years of the school's operation. Over the life of the school (several decades), these savings will become quite dramatic.

Studies have shown that the use of natural daylighting alone improves student performance by ***20 per cent*** on math tests and by ***26 per cent*** on reading tests. Isn't that reason enough to make all of our schools "green"?

The School Board authorized spending an additional \$2 million to perform a detailed evaluation of the green development principles. We hope that this will lead to the establishment of basic green development standards for the entire project. For more information, see the article in our last newsletter, [www.upstateforever.org/newsletters](http://www.upstateforever.org/newsletters).

## 5. *Other Good News for Green Development.*

There was progress on other fronts for green development in the Upstate. In April, Furman University and Johnson Controls hosted a successful seminar on LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a rating and certification system developed by the United States Green Building Council, a broad-based, non-profit organization whose members include the American Institute of Architects, the Bank of America, Target Stores, the National Audubon Society and hundreds of other businesses and groups.

The LEED system provides specific criteria on what constitutes a “green building.” These criteria are grouped into the following categories: innovation in design; sustainable sites; water efficiency; energy and atmosphere; materials and resources; and air quality. For each criterion that is met, credits are given, and different levels of LEED certification are awarded based on the total credits earned, ranging from a basic certification (26-32 credits) to Platinum (52 and higher credits). For more information, see [www.usgbc.org/programs/leed.html](http://www.usgbc.org/programs/leed.html).

*Upstate Forever* kept the momentum going by hosting a major conference at the Palmetto Expo Center on “Green Development: New Directions in Land Use and Design.” The day-long conference began with an overview of sustainable development by Doug Porter, a nationally renowned expert and author of The Practice of Sustainable Development. Doug was followed by experts in the areas of ecologically sensitive site development, tree conservation, environmentally-friendly building techniques and materials, and conservation-oriented regulations and ordinances. It was a great success, with over 175 people in attendance.

Last fall, *Upstate Forever* member and green architect Scott Johnston received LEED certification for the Rosewood House of Recovery in Greenville. It is the second building in the Upstate to receive LEED certification.

## **6. *Great Work Continues On Lawson's Fork Creek in Spartanburg!***

*Upstate Forever* Board member John Lane, Hub City Writers Project Executive Director Betsy Teter, and many other citizens did not rest on their laurels after the highly successful Lawson's Fork Creek Festival in Spartanburg in April of 2000. In a terrific article, "Can Stories Save A River?," published in Orion Afield (Autumn 2001), Betsy describes some of the great work that continued in 2001 on behalf of the river:

"Today is the one-year anniversary of the closing ceremony of our Lawson's Fork Festival, and we are still celebrating. Just yesterday, there was a successful river trash sweep. One group of volunteers pulled 27 automotive tires out of a 100-yard stretch....

"The Palmetto Conservation Foundation, an organization out of the state capital, set up shop in Spartanburg and has just opened two miles of hiking trail along Lawson's Fork. A local foundation has given them \$240,000, and they are currently scouting the Lawson's Fork for more trail sites.

"A group of residents at Glendale Shoals has spearheaded the opening of a small sculpture park on the banks of the river....

"A partnership we launched with an elementary school has blossomed into a two-year-long environmental science and writing initiative....

"Last but certainly not least, a group called Friends of Lawson's Fork, dormant for nearly 25 years, is meeting again with a new generation of river activists. They plan sedimentation patrols to make sure developers have silt fences in place. They've bought water testing kits and will check the water quality monthly."

Wow!! What an inspiration for river protection efforts throughout the Upstate!

## **7. *Spartanburg Herald-Journal Hosts Smart Growth Forum.***

Spartanburg County's population now exceeds 250,000 and continues to increase at the rate of about 7 people per day. Land in the county is being

developed at the rate of about 11 acres per day, which is the equivalent of a brand new WestGate Mall every 6 days. It is the highest rate of land development in South Carolina!

One thing is for certain: The county is going to continue to grow and develop. By 2015, there will be 39,000 more county residents, who will need 14,000 more homes, drive 26,000 more cars, and discharge 5.6 million more gallons per day of wastewater. The great challenge facing Spartanburg County is where all of these new residents will live and work and how their needs will be met.

Hats off to the Spartanburg Herald-Journal for hosting a major public forum to discuss how the county should meet this challenge. *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche joined Spartanburg County Council member Frank Nutt, former Spartanburg Mayor James Talley, Strom Thurmond Institute's Donna London, and USC-Spartanburg Professor Ron Romine, on a panel that fielded questions from the 80-member audience for two hours.

Prior to the forum, the Herald-Journal published an editorial written by Brad about growth in Spartanburg County. You can read it on our website at [www.upstateforever.org/UpstateUpdate27.pdf](http://www.upstateforever.org/UpstateUpdate27.pdf)

#### **8. *Sirrine-Haynie Redevelopment Plan.***

In the heart of the Greenville's downtown lies a long-neglected and economically distressed area known as the Sirrine-Haynie Neighborhood. Last summer *Upstate Forever* Associate Director Diane Eldridge participated in an exciting public planning process called a design charrette to create a master plan for revitalizing this neighborhood. She joined a team of planners, architects and landscape designers organized by The Lawrence Group of Davidson, North Carolina to develop the plan.

One of the project's most important components was the inclusion of all possible stakeholders in the planning process. During a week long workshop, the study team met with neighborhood residents, property owners, city government representatives, community leaders, county planners, developers, realtors, service providers, and transportation engineers and used their input to develop the plan, updating it each day.

At the end of the workshop, the master plan was presented in a public forum. It essentially calls for the transformation of the SIRRINE-HAYNIE neighborhood into a thriving, pedestrian-friendly, urban village that retains its intrinsic historical character and includes a variety of mixed-uses and affordable housing opportunities. One notable recommendation is narrowing the six-lane stretch of Church Street that blasts through the neighborhood into a four-lane boulevard with sidewalks, safe crossing points, and landscaping.

The entire SIRRINE-HAYNIE master plan can be seen on the City of Greenville's website at [www.greatergreenville.com/development/SIRRINE-HAYNIE%20Closing-sm.pdf](http://www.greatergreenville.com/development/SIRRINE-HAYNIE%20Closing-sm.pdf). It will be considered by the Greenville City Council later this month. The plan is a wonderful model for other urban revitalization projects throughout the Upstate.

**9. *Upstate Forever Receives Grant To Conduct Special Places Inventory for Greenville County.***

The Community Foundation of Greater Greenville awarded ***Upstate Forever*** a grant to conduct a Special Places Inventory for Greenville County. The inventory will list ecologically sensitive areas, unique and critical wildlife habitats, important historical sites, prime farm lands, critical riparian lands, scenic vistas, and other special places in the county. The study will be highly useful as the county finally begins to seriously consider the establishment of a funded program to acquire and protect many of our special places before it is too late.

The success of the project will depend on active participation by the public. ***Upstate Forever*** is developing a brochure and creating a web site in order to receive Special Place nominations from the public.

The Greenville County Historic Preservation Commission is providing assistance to ***Upstate Forever*** on the project.

**10. *Pickens County Develops New Development Standards and Hires Its First Full-Time Planning Director.***

In 2001, Pickens County Council took two important steps toward more effective management of growth and development in the county: It

made substantial revisions to its Development Standards Ordinance and it hired its first full-time Planning Director.

Unarguably one of the nation's most beautiful areas, Pickens County boasts the spectacular and biologically rich Jocassee Gorges area, three major lakes (Hartwell, Keowee, Jocassee), over 800 miles of rivers, and scenic Highway 11.

It's no wonder that Pickens County has become one of the Upstate's fastest growing areas, with a population that increased by 40 per cent in the past twenty years!

With so much at stake, it's hard to believe that the county has historically done so little to protect the very resources that make it one of the brightest jewels in the Upstate. With no zoning, the county has been vulnerable for far too long to the ravages of poor development like massive land clearing, the destruction of critical riparian areas around its lakes and streams, and more than its share of shoddy mobile home parks and tacky signage.

But Pickens County Council is now focusing on the problems and starting to take action. It has given first and second reading approval to substantial revisions of its Development Standards Ordinance, including the establishment of a 50-foot buffer around Hartwell, Jocassee and Keowee Lakes, the imposition of more stringent standards on manufactured housing developments, and providing incentives for conserving open space in new residential subdivisions. We hope that third and final reading approval of the revisions will take place later this month.

Another positive step is the hiring of Mark Bassett as the county's first full-time Planning Director. Mark previously served as the assistant city administrator for Simpsonville and was responsible for all planning-related issues in the city as well as for coordinating special events. He holds a bachelor's degree in business from Virginia Commonwealth University and a graduate degree in city and regional planning from Clemson University. The future looks bright for Pickens County!