

UPSTATE UPDATE 38

Upstate Forever's Monthly Bulletin On Important Issues And Events

October, 2002

1. *Greenville-Spartanburg Area Is The 5th Most Sprawling Region In The United States!*

The Greenville-Spartanburg metropolitan region (which includes Greenville, Spartanburg and Pickens Counties) has been ranked as the fifth most sprawling region in the country in a new study released on October 17 by Smart Growth America. The study, Measuring Sprawl And Its Impact, is the product of three years of research and represents the most comprehensive effort ever undertaken to define, measure and evaluate sprawl and its impact.

The study is yet another wake-up call for the Upstate to get serious about planning for growth and taking action to protect our region's quality of life.

The researchers define sprawl as “the process in which the spread of development across the landscape far outpaces population growth.” Sprawl has four dimensions: a population that is widely dispersed in low-density developments; rigid separations between homes, shops and workplaces; a network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access; and a lack of well-defined, thriving “activity centers, “ such as downtowns and town centers. Most of the other features usually associated with sprawl—the lack of transportation choices, relative uniformity of housing options and the difficulty of walking—are the result of these conditions.

Based on this definition and understanding of sprawl, the researchers created a “sprawl index” based on the following four factors:

- Residential density;
- Neighborhood mix of homes, jobs and services;
- Strength of activity centers and downtowns;
- Accessibility of the street network.

The 83 metropolitan areas subject to the study earned a score for each of these four factors, and the scores were combined to create an overall ranking. The average score was 100, with lower scores indicating poorer performance and more sprawl, while higher scores indicate less sprawl.

Here's the list of the 10 most sprawling regions with their corresponding scores:

1.	Riverside-San Bernadino, CA:	14.2
2.	Greensboro-Winston Salem, NC:	46.8
3.	Raleigh-Durham, NC:	54.2
4.	Atlanta, GA:	57.7
5.	Greenville-Spartanburg:	58.6
6.	West Palm Beach, FL:	67.7
7.	Bridgeport-Stamford, CT:	68.4
8.	Knoxville, TN:	68.7
9.	Oxnard-Ventura, CA:	75.1
10.	Fort Worth, TX:	77.2

Now let's take a close look at each of the four factors and how the Greenville-Spartanburg area scored.

Residential Density

Residential density refers to the number of homes per acre and is the most widely recognized indicator of sprawl. Spread-out suburban subdivisions are a hallmark of sprawl and can make it difficult to provide residents with adequate nearby shopping, civic centers and transportation options.

Yet higher densities do not necessarily mean high-rises. Densities that support smart growth can be as low as six or seven houses per acre, typical of many older urban single-family neighborhoods. Such densities allow neighborhoods that can support convenience stores, small neighborhood schools, and more frequent transit service. The study quantifies the amount of land used per acre and measures the degree to which housing is spread out or compact.

The Greenville-Spartanburg area finished second with a score of 71.9, meaning it has the second lowest housing density among the 83 regions evaluated. Only Knoxville is worse, with a score of 71.2.

Neighborhood Mix of Homes, Shops and Offices

One of the most notable characteristics of sprawl is the strict segregation of different land uses. In sprawling regions, housing subdivisions are typically separated—often by many miles—from shopping, offices, civic centers and even schools. This separation of uses is what requires every trip to be made by car and can result in a “jobs-housing imbalance” in which workers cannot find housing close to their place of work. More traditional development patterns, on the other hand, tend to mix different land uses by placing housing near or even within retail and office buildings and by incorporating pedestrian networks that connect destinations. Measuring the degree of mix is therefore an important indicator of sprawl.

The Greenville-Spartanburg area finished in fourth place for this factor, with a score of 50.4. Raleigh-Durham, Riverside and Greensboro-Winston Salem were the top three, respectively.

Strength of Metropolitan Centers

Metropolitan centers—downtowns, small towns or “edge cities”—are concentrations of activity that help businesses thrive, attract residential development, and support alternative transportation modes. They foster a sense of place in the urban landscape.

This is the factor for which the Greenville-Spartanburg area received its highest ranking (98.5)—a result that is hardly surprising in view of the revitalization of downtown Greenville and the exciting work that is now underway in the downtown areas of Spartanburg, Simpsonville and Greer.

Accessibility of the Street Network

Street networks can be dense or sparse, interconnected or disconnected. Blocks carved out of streets can be short and small or long and large. Busy arterials that are fed by residential streets that end in cul-de-sacs are typical of sprawl—they create huge “super blocks” that concentrate automobile traffic onto a few routes and hamper accessibility via transit, walking and biking. Compact development generally includes a network of interconnected streets with shorter blocks that allow greater accessibility and a broader choice of routes for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

The Greenville-Spartanburg area received a score of 62.1, the fifth worst ranking in the study.

Measuring Sprawl's Impact

The researchers tested the validity of their index against well known and well accepted measures of travel and transportation, such as vehicle miles traveled, number of cars per household, average commute times, traffic fatalities, and ozone pollution levels. The study controlled for several demographic and socioeconomic variables that might have had an independent influence on these travel and transportation measurements.

Here are the basic findings:

A. People in Sprawling Regions Drive More and Own More Cars.

Compared with all of the control variables, the degree of sprawl was the strongest influence on vehicle miles traveled per person. This was somewhat surprising because some scholars contend that population and per capita income have the greatest influence on the amount of vehicle travel.

Vehicle use increases quite noticeably as sprawl increases. For every 25-unit decline in the Sprawl Index, there is an almost two-mile increase in daily vehicle miles traveled per person. While the numbers appear modest on an individual basis, the cumulative impact is enormous—even a small increase in per capita miles of travel means a significant increase in traffic, emissions and fuel expenditures for an entire metropolitan region.

Residential density also strongly influences the amount of driving per person. A 25-unit increase in this factor corresponds with a decrease of 5.4 miles driven per day per person.

Sprawl is also associated with higher levels of automobile ownership. In fact, the number of cars per household was more strongly related to the degree of sprawl than to the proportion of the population of working age or per capita income. This finding suggests that in sprawling regions, automobile ownership may be more a matter of survival than a matter of personal choice.

B. In Sprawling Areas, Fewer People Get to Work by Taking Public Transportation and Walking.

In more sprawling places, people on their way to work are far less likely to take the bus or train or to walk. The metropolitan areas that are more sprawling than average have only 2.3 per cent of workers using public transportation, while the less sprawling places have 5.1 per cent. In examining whether people walk to work, the degree of sprawl is by far the most powerful predictor; associations with all of the control variables were insignificant.

C. No Effect on Traffic Delays.

The study did not find statistically significant relationships between sprawl and either the amount of travel delay that drivers experience or the average travel time for commuters. One of the arguments most often advanced by “sprawl defenders” is that sprawl reduces traffic congestion and delay. That argument is not supported by the study. Those who believe that metropolitan regions can “sprawl their way out” of congestion appear to be wrong.

D. More Sprawl Means More Traffic Fatalities.

Sprawling places are likely to have more traffic fatalities per person than more compact regions. This is a particularly disturbing finding for the Greenville-Spartanburg area where the traffic fatality rate is 46.63 deaths per 100,000 residents, well above the rates of regions that are well known for high traffic counts and congested roads (Atlanta 35.51, Los Angeles 20.46, Washington, D.C. 21.80). Our area’s rate is also higher than the second and third regions on the sprawl list (Greensboro—Winston-Salem, 34.71 and Raleigh—Durham, 29.21).

E. Air Quality Is Poorer in Sprawling Areas.

The study found a strong relationship between maximum ozone levels and the sprawl index. Of all the variables tested, the degree to which a region sprawls is the best indicator of ozone levels. Every shift of 25 points upwards in the index is related to a 7.5 parts per billion decrease in maximum ozone levels.

The study presents this overall conclusion on the impact of sprawl:

“Even when controlling for income, household size, and other variables, people drive more, have to own more cars, breathe more polluted air, face greater risk of traffic fatalities, and walk and use transit less in places with more sprawling development patterns.”

Recommendations

The report concludes with six policy recommendations that are aimed at addressing the four factors and the transportation outcome measures:

- ***Reinvest in Neglected Communities and Promote More Housing Opportunities***
- ***Rehabilitate Abandoned Properties***
- ***Encourage Development or Redevelopment in Already Built Up Areas***
- ***Create and Nurture Thriving, Mixed-Use Centers of Activity***
- ***Support Growth Management Strategies, such as Careful Planning for Development in Designated Areas and the Preservation of Open Space***
- ***Craft Transportation Policies That Complement Smarter Growth, such as “Fix It First” Policies that Favor Maintenance and Improvement of Existing Roads over the Construction of New Ones and that Provide Incentives for Transit-Oriented and Pedestrian Friendly Developments***

This report is the latest in a series of studies released over the last four years that demonstrate the urgent need for the Upstate to take steps to address the challenges posed by growth: the aggressive driving study (Upstate Advocate, June, 1999); the United States Department of Agriculture study on the rate of development (Upstate Advocate, April, 2002); the United States Forest Service study on the loss of forest land (see item 4 below); and American Rivers’s study on the connection between development and water supplies (Upstate Update No. 37).

How many more studies do we need to convince our leaders and officials that the patterns and methods of development in the Upstate are threatening and undermining our region's quality of life?

The entire report can be found at: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/>

2. *Vote Yes On Zoning In Laurens County On November 5!*

This Election Day, November 5, the voters in Laurens County will have the opportunity to say whether or not the time has come for zoning in Laurens County.

It is one of the most important votes in the history of the county, and we urge Laurens County citizens to vote yes. Laurens County Citizens for Quality Growth, a local "pro-zoning" group, and *Upstate Forever* have published a booklet entitled "Protect and Improve the Quality of Life in Laurens County: Vote Yes To Zoning on November 5," which will be posted on our website shortly. It explains the basic provisions of the proposed ordinance and why the benefits of zoning far outweigh the burdens and costs. If you would like one of the booklets, please let us know, and we will be glad to send it to you.

3. *"Penny for Parks" Referendum Is On The Ballot In Greenville County.*

Another important referendum will be on the ballot on November 5. In Greenville County, the voters will decide whether to approve adding one cent to the sales tax in the county for no more than one year in order to implement an exciting plan for new and expanded parks, greenways and neighborhood improvements.

If approved, the penny would make the following projects a reality:

- 10 new parks throughout the county, including the acquisition and protection of the Poinsett Bridge, the state's oldest bridge, and parks at or near North Greenville College, Lake Conestee, Simpsonville, and Fork Shoals;
- 16 park expansions; and

- Sidewalks, streetscapes and other neighborhood improvements in the various municipalities in the county.

By state law, all proceeds from the penny must be spent on the projects described in the plan. (They also will be listed on the ballot). The penny would remain in effect from May 1, 2003 to April 30, 2004 or until \$50.5 million is raised, whichever first occurs.

Parks and open space are essential elements of a community's quality of life, providing wonderful places to play, walk or simply relax. Passive parks such as natural areas and greenways provide habitat for wildlife and contribute to improved air and water quality. It is no coincidence that the perennial winners of the "Best Places To Live" contests, such as Austin, Texas and Boulder, Colorado, have made parks and open space a top priority. For the best and brightest workers being sought by every community, the place is now as important as the job. They are looking for places with good schools, high quality developments, many cultural opportunities, and lots of parks and green space.

On November 5, the voters will have the opportunity to say whether parks and open space are a priority in Greenville County. Are they willing to provide better and more accessible recreational facilities for a population that is growing at the rate of 16 people per day? Does it matter that the county's young people should not have to play games late at night and travel long distances to find a field?

Land is being developed in Greenville County at the rate of 9 acres per day—that's the equivalent of a brand new Haywood Mall every 10 days. Isn't it time to strike a better balance between development and conservation in the county?

Roads are being built and expanded throughout Greenville County. Shouldn't parks also be built and expanded?

No one likes taxes, but this one has several features that make it much less offensive than most others:

- It cannot last for more than one year.
- All of the proceeds from the penny have to be used for the projects listed in the plan.

- Residents and visitors from other places will pay for some of it.

There is a window of opportunity that is quickly closing shut in Greenville County. Already there is insufficient land in 4 of the 12 County Council districts for new parks. Since it was created in 1969, the Greenville County Recreation District has not been allowed to use any of its tax-generated funding for parkland acquisition. If this referendum is defeated, another one cannot be considered for two years, and by that time many potential park sites will have been lost. Soon it will be too late.

Greenville County Council and city leaders should be commended for giving voters the opportunity to make a big difference for the quality of life in Greenville County. We hope they say Yes!

4. Urbanization Is Principal Threat To Southern Forests.

The Southern Forest Resource Assessment is an impressive study of the status and likely future of forest land in the South. More than 25 scientists and analysts spent two years compiling, reviewing and interpreting data and information and producing a report whose executive summary consists of almost 100 pages.

The study's good news is that only a "few places" in the South are experiencing a significant loss of forest land. The bad news for us is one of these places is the South Carolina Piedmont!

The principal cause of the loss is urbanization, which the study describes as a "force of change" that has "the most direct, immediate and permanent" impact on the extent, condition and health of forests. The timber industry has hailed this finding, saying it supports their position that builders and developers, not foresters, are the ones responsible for the loss of green space in rapidly growing regions.

They are basically right, but the industry is certainly not beyond reproach. Some timber companies have real estate divisions that are actively involved in selling and developing their "excess land," making them very much part of the problem. The "best management practices" that have been established to reduce the environmental impact of logging operations are not always followed.

The dramatic increase in pine plantations is disturbing. The study projects that South Carolina will lose 35 per cent of its natural forest types from 1995 to

2040, while pine plantations will increase by over 50 per cent during this same period. Pine plantations will, of course, appear on a map as a forested area but biologically, they are not at all like natural forests.

Nonetheless, the study makes it clear that it is asphalt, not the chain saw, which poses the greatest threat to forest lands. Even a clear-cut forest can be replanted, but seedlings don't do well in pavement.

You can read the entire report at the following website:

<http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/sustain/index.htm>.

5. *Mark Your Calendar! Conference On Growth To Be Held In Spartanburg.*

Upstate Forever is a proud co-sponsor of "Partnering for Prosperity," a one-day conference in Spartanburg that will explore connections between economic development, environmental sustainability, and livable communities. The conference will feature nationally recognized speakers as well as a panel of local elected officials and business and community leaders. The Palmetto Conservation Foundation will present the event on December 4, 2002 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Cleveland Park in Spartanburg.

The agenda includes a discussion about land use as a public health issue by Dr. Katherine Staunton of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and an examination of the economic costs of growth by Dr. Robert Burchell of Rutgers University. *Upstate Forever* Executive Director Brad Wyche will participate in a Community Leaders Roundtable to discuss growth issues specific to our region.

The registration fee is \$25.00 per person and includes lunch. For more information, call the Palmetto Conservation Foundation at (864) 948-9615. To download a registration form, visit the following website: <http://www.palmettoconservation.org/pfp.html>

6. *Rosewood House Of Recovery Receives National Energy Award.*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recognized the Rosewood House of Recovery in Greenville with its "Energy Star Award." The new facility, where housing and counseling services are provided to women recovering from substance abuse, is a 9,206 square foot building that features several environmentally friendly and energy efficient systems, including super insulated

windows, a radiant heat barrier beneath the roof, compact florescent lights, occupancy sensors, and a highly efficient air conditioning system. The facility also maximizes the use of passive daylighting and recycles its “gray water.”

And it works! The new facility uses 67,500 kWh less electricity and 4,400 less therms of natural gas per square foot per year, which saves nearly \$7,000 per year in energy costs and prevents the release of 200,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, the energy saving features did not increase the overall budget for the facility. Congratulations to the Rosewood House and to the architect who designed it—*Upstate Forever* member Scott Johnston—on this well deserved award!

7. *Nominate Your Special Tree!*

The Hub City Writers Project in Spartanburg needs your help in creating a full-color coffee table book called Noble Trees of the Upcountry, to be published in the fall of 2003. They are asking Upstate residents to nominate a tree and explain why you consider it “noble.” Trees can be nominated based on their beauty, size, historical value or status of endangerment.

To nominate a tree, visit www.hubcity.org and click on the Noble Trees icon. Nominations are being accepted through the end of 2002. Your tree may be one of the winners!

This project is co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Noble Tree Foundation and individual donors.

8. *Lots O’ Links.*

A Project Inspired by New Urbanism Comes to Life. Birkdale Village near Charlotte looks like a traditional downtown, with a main street, apartments above the shops and a nearby neighborhood of single-family houses and townhomes.

<http://www.charlotte.com/mld/observer/news/4267652.htm>

Why Not a 40mpg SUV? Technology exists to double the efficiency of the gas guzzlers, so what’s the holdup?

<http://www.technologyreview.com/articles/fischetti1102.asp>

Atlanta Is Growing Like Kudzu Along I-85. Atlanta's economic influences have extended from a few counties around the city to an area hundreds of miles wide. This new Atlanta megalopolis could eventually stretch from the South Carolina line into Alabama and to the fringes of Chattanooga.

<http://www.accessatlanta.com/ajc/business/horizon/1002/14growth.html>

Bird's Eye View of Urban Sprawl. Satellite imagery illustrates 200 years of progressive growth in Baltimore region.

http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2002/11oct_sprawl.htm?list628166

River Terrace to be World's Most "Environmentally-Correct" Building. New residential high-rise being built near World Trade Center site is leading the way for sustainable architecture.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/15/nyregion/15GREE.html>

Finally Paradise Would be Paved. What would happen if every city and county in Florida implemented their land use plans? A map from 457 land-use plans has the answer, and illustrates the importance of regional planning and conservation.

<http://www.tampatrib.com/MGAI3CY9B7D.html>

Costly I-75 Upgrade Could Increase Congestion instead of Decrease It. The proposed plan to widen I-75 near Cincinnati will cost nearly half a billion dollars. A study shows that while it should lessen congestion in the suburban counties, it would increase congestion in the urban area.

http://enquirer.com/editions/2002/10/17/loc_75widen17.html

9. *Upcoming Area Events.*

November 1 - Garner's Natural Foods Customer Appreciation Day

Upstate Forever volunteers Virginia White and Charles Gentry will be representing us during this event at Garner's Natural Market and Café at 60 East Antrim Drive in Greenville on Saturday, November 1. They will be sharing information about our mission, soliciting new members, and selling *Upstate Forever* decals. Please plan to attend this event and while you're there, stop by our booth and introduce yourself to Virginia and Charles (and purchase a decal!). If you are not currently a member, we invite you to join our more than 1000 members who are helping us to promote sensible growth and protect special places in the Upstate region of South Carolina.

November 9 - Upstate Forever's Annual Meeting

All *Upstate Forever* members are invited to join us for our Annual Meeting at beautiful Table Rock State Park on Saturday, November 9. A short business meeting will begin at 11:00 followed by lunch at noon. After lunch, we will offer three guided hikes of varying levels of difficulty (easy, moderate, strenuous) and a tour of an historic home in Pickens County. For more information, please call our office at (864) 250-0500. Each *Upstate Forever* member will receive an invitation in the mail shortly.

November 10-11 - Grow Strong Dreams

Arctic explorer Ann Bancroft will share her inspirational story about the power of dreams, and how she overcame all obstacles to become the leader of the first duo of women to ski across Antarctica. There are two separate events: a presentation at the Peace Center on November 10, and a benefit luncheon at the Westin Poinsett on November 11. Call (864) 675-1617 for more information.

November 11 - Air Quality Summit II

Make plans to attend this half-day conference to discuss the unique Early Action Plan to improve air quality in the Upstate. The workshop will include presentations by representatives from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and an overview of the impacts of air quality on public health, the environment, transportation, and industry. The conference will be held at the Palmetto Expo Center in Greenville from 8:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. (registration begins at 8:00 a.m.) The \$45.00 registration includes brunch and must be made in advance. To register, call the Spartanburg Development Association at (864) 585-1007.

November 16 – Lend A Hand

Please put this date on your calendar! *Upstate Forever* is joining hands with the Haynie-Sirrine Neighborhood Association, Greenville First Baptist Church, and the City of Greenville to coordinate a cleanup day in the Haynie-Sirrine neighborhood near downtown from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. We would love for you join us and other volunteers to pick up trash along the streets, streams and on vacant lots in the community. Lunch will be served to all volunteers. Watch your email for more information about this event or call our office at 250-0500.

December 11 - Upstate Forever Fundraiser

Please join us at Centre Stage on Wednesday, December 11 for *Upstate Forever's* 2002 Fundraiser. It will be a festive and fun-filled event featuring a terrific play, *Holiday Diva*, and a live auction. The evening begins with a reception at 7:00 followed by the performance at 8:00. Tickets are \$35.00 per person, with almost all of the proceeds benefiting *Upstate Forever*. Please call our office at (864) 250-0500 for more information.

10. *Quote of the Month.*

"We believe zoning is necessary if Laurens County is to grow. A plan must be in place to attract industry and fuel that growth. Otherwise, the county will become a dumping ground for other counties' refuse."

Laurens Advertiser

Editorial, September 25, 2002